

The IAN Model

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The IAN Model – that sounds rather awful. What does it mean?

Let me give you some background information.

In 1998, the cultural administration in Århus decided that practically every cultural institution (theatres, orchestras, galleries, museums) on the city's cultural budget was to be professionally evaluated and various ad hoc consultants were hired to carry out these evaluations. Naturally, this resulted in much diversity in the different evaluation reports, both in scope and in method. The aim of these evaluations was to give the city's elected officials a broader basis for and greater insight into the decision-making process on cultural policy. It is debatable whether these evaluations made in 1998 led to anything substantial, for example to any changes in cultural policy. However, it is certainly a fact that an increased awareness of the evaluation process of cultural institutions did occur. Taking things a step further, the municipality of Århus and the Danish Ministry of Culture decided jointly to carry out a project in Århus running from 2000 to 2003 with the aim of "developing methods and creating an evaluation model that can be used in the areas of theatre, dance and music". The main emphasis of this co-operative effort was "to produce a common frame of reference for the assessment of cultural institutions and projects in the fields of theatre, dance and music". The model – the frame-work – was to be used both locally and more widely, by municipalities throughout the country as well as by the national arm's length bodies.

The agreement between the municipality of Århus and the ministry implied that the local cultural administration could hire a consultant firm to carry out the project. However, the municipality decided not to do so and instead engaged a small group of researchers from the university for the task. The reason for this was, undoubtedly, that it was hoped that the outcome would thus be more easily accepted by the various cultural and artistic groupings in the city. By the same token we – the group from the university – accepted this assignment because we felt that we would be more capable of creating safeguards against over-simplified tendencies such as regarding quality and public success as

one and the same thing, or using quality as a tool to reject the new and to favour the traditional art forms. In our opinion much of the discussion on artistic quality ends in pure relativism or in an anything-goes attitude. So, all things considered, we felt that this was a challenging problem to tackle - both professionally as well as with regard to an arts policy.

Now, one can ask oneself: What is the point of all this evaluation? Wouldn't our time be better spent producing performances and concerts rather than using it on evaluation exercises which seem to have no effect. This is a perfectly natural and, of course, legitimate train of thought. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the increasing craze for evaluations in the public sector and now, as of late, in the cultural sector as well, is something that is here to stay. This has its roots in some fundamental changes that have taken place in society, in public administration and in art itself. On a societal level it has been said that we live in a reflective age. It is not an age of spectacular long term plans and programmes but rather a time of limited actions which are constantly reflected upon and analysed before the next step is taken. Did we do the right thing? Did we accomplish our goals? And this applies to the personal as well as to the social and the political level. In public administration the implementation of new practices as, for instance, New Public Management has emphasised among other things the delegation of power, management by objectives, and decision-making leeway being given to the lower levels of the public administration. However, these changes require new control-systems. And frequent evaluation is one of these. In the arts, the cross-overs between the various art forms and genres and the tendencies towards new forms of dissolving the work of art itself, in short, the breaking of new ground, has made it even more imperative – especially since cultural policy has economic restrictions – to continually develop a basis from which one can grasp the new phenomena in the arts. In fact, one can say that the more art moves in new directions, the greater the need for evaluation. From a positive angle, one can argue that all this evaluation, if it is done rightly, will lead to a greater public awareness regarding priorities in cultural politics. Thus, a democratic perspective, that is, an open public debate, may be an essential element in all this evaluation.

And, in reality, there is nothing mystical about evaluation. We evaluate constantly, alone, together, informally, without calling it evaluation. We ask ourselves: What was our purpose? What did we do? What did we accomplish – and why? However, what we are focusing upon here, is a more formalised system of evaluation, one that is designed and readily accessible for others.

It is easy to imagine that the evaluation of art institutions and projects is a simple case of economics, audience attendance, PR, organisation and management, thereby judging these projects and institutions on a basis of whether they are well managed in economic terms and at the same time meet the public's needs. However, the truly essential question is: Did the institution or project produce something that has artistic quality? These days there seems to be no limit to the amount of discussion on artistic quality in the cultural policy context. The notion of artistic quality has evolved into an abstract idea that no one can disagree with and, at the same time, no two people have the same conception of.

Our project does not encompass the arts as a whole. It is focused on the performing arts. Nevertheless, it may be possible that our model could also be applied to other art forms and institutions such as visual art and galleries or museums.

Our intention is not to create a grading system for the assessment of artistic quality. Instead, we wish to construct a better basis on which one can discuss artistic quality.

Artistic quality, as we define this in our model, is a combination of **intention, ability and necessity**. [Draw the model]. This is an open model – not a restricted one – and it is to be conceived as providing a platform for discussing artistic quality.

Intention, Ability, Necessity (IAN)

Intention, ability and necessity are not always apparent in an art performance and it is not something that is easily grasped by the man in the street. To determine the intention, the ability and the necessity of an art work requires knowledge and analysis.

Intention

The artistic intention consists of a will to express and communicate. It is a commitment which is urged on by an inner fire that makes it imperative for the artist to express exactly what he or she expresses, here and now. Thus, the work of art is urged on, conveyed to and conceived by the audience as having the quality of genuine commitment.

Artistic intention can both encompass a very strong consciousness concerning the traits of the work or of the institution and its communicative aspects and, at the same time, be the result of a high intellectual level of reflection – or it can be traced in an amateur context where genuine commitment may be interpreted as a will to communicate.

The artistic intention includes a number of pitfalls as, for example, if the intention is forced or guided by private interests. An intention based upon the motivating factor of becoming famous is a private intention which may obstruct and limit the performance. Another pitfall is when the intention collides with the ability – in other words, when the artist's capabilities fall short and become forced and finish up by becoming pathetic and private.

Ability

The artistic ability comprises specific skills that vary from artistic field to artistic field. These skills are trained and sharpened, partly through artistic schooling, a kind of apprenticeship, and partly through years of practice and experience. Artistic ability is a prerequisite for expressing and communicating, and the demands to artistic ability are often highly specialised. Success is dependent upon mastering the artistic forms of expression and this applies to the arts in general. But what characterises the performing arts is that the artist must fulfil the intentions of a director, a conductor, a playwright, a composer or a choreographer. This type of artistic performance is practically transparent. The artist has to give the work credibility and vitality while simultaneously placing his or her artistic ability at the disposal of someone else.

The struggle within the arts, here meaning when the traditional and the new art forms meet, is often fought over the question of ability as the traditional accuses the new of not sufficiently mastering their skills. But of course the requirements for artistic craftsmanship are ever changing just as the media through which we experience the art are constantly evolving. Therefore, artistic ability is not a firm and fixed conception but is dependent upon the time, the circumstances and the artistic milieu in which the art work and the artist is situated. On the other hand, artistic ability is not so ambiguous and vague as to mean that great art just happens without any skill or expertise – therefore artistic ability, the skill and expertise, may indeed be an item for assessment.

Artistic ability without personal involvement and commitment may “run idle”, so to speak. Skills can be so over-estimated and fixated on the maintenance of traditions that they become just a cover for artistic bankruptcy – here we are talking about pure form or equilibrium. Neither ability nor intention can operate on their own.

The demands for artistic ability vary and are dependent upon whether it is a playwright, a composer, conductor, choreographer, dancer, musician or an actor that we are talking about, and of course these demands vary from art form to art form. Nevertheless, the question remains: Are there certain universal criteria for artistic ability which are valid in all artistic contexts? In our opinion there are.

A crucial demand for artistic ability is the requirement of *unity in diversity*. An art work comprises a variety of different elements. And it is essential for the artist to be able successfully to bind this diversity together. The interaction between segments and the whole entity plays a major role as to whether the art work is considered as having the mark of quality. This entity or unity of an art work may consist of a variety of aspects. For instance, it may be a certain principle of composition that organises and structuralises the tone, the words or the actions on the stage. Or it may be a specific point of view running throughout the work, accentuating different elements of importance. It can also be a certain set of ideas which binds together a multitude of details. Often one will find that the greater the tensions and contradictions which are successfully integrated within an overlying artistic perspective, the better the art work will be. But again, this is not an absolute requirement. Minimalistic forms of art are indeed characterised by employing few elements. And what binds the multitude of details together may just as well be an aspect of disruption which gives rise to a structure that is split in many directions.

Technical ability is another major requirement which, as mentioned before, varies from art form to art form. But of course the more the artist masters the techniques within his or her field of work the higher the quality of the art. This also holds true for the media which is used to support the artistic idea.

A third important requirement is the activation of *intellect and emotion*. What characterises good art is its ability to arouse intellectual and emotional feelings in the recipient. The experience of art cannot be compared to the solving of a mathematical equation – even though there may, in mathematics, be an emotional activity involved. The experience of art comprises elements of the

individual's entire state of being and involves the full register of experience. However, if an art work is too intellectual it may be conceived as being dry and uninteresting; if it is too emotional, it is a true tear-jerker.

Necessity

Nevertheless, the combination of artistic ability and artistic intention is not sufficient to form the core of a framework for the discussion of artistic quality. There is one more thing to consider, and this holds true especially for the performing arts, namely, the relation to the audience, to the surroundings, to the society in which the work of art is performed. Necessity is what we call this aspect. This implies that a good work of art must consist of some kind of necessity which reaches beyond the artistic intention and ability. The art work – the artistic initiative – must evoke a response in a reality populated with smaller or larger groups of people, characterised by specific social and psychological traits. The work of art must be characterised by acting upon these people and upon their social and psychological situation in a way which appears revelational, believable and imparts a sense of immediacy. This should not be interpreted too rigidly. It does not imply some kind of external demands which are forced upon the art work. But, on the other hand, it is an attempt to verbalise the crucial point that in order for an art work to have the mark of quality in a cultural-political context, it cannot function as an enclosed reservation where the relation to the audience is without any interest. When we say that art has to be revelatory to have the mark of quality, this means that without being idyllic or escapist it must relate to the audience's living circumstances – for better or for worse – and, thus, place these elements in a series of perspectives, thereby adding new aspects and other dimensions to life.

To discuss artistic necessity involves deciding whether an art work proves equal to the problems of today, to lifestyles and to ways of thinking as well as deciding whether the art work in question moves people in a direction both liberating and thought-provoking. Thus, artistic necessity is the dimension that brings the aesthetic and the ethical together.

In the case of cultural institutions, guidelines and agreements with the public authorities may form an easily accessible part of their necessity. However, this does not imply that artistic necessity can be reduced to the fulfilment of an institution's objectives. Their necessity is broader-based and meeting their goals and guidelines is only a part of their business.

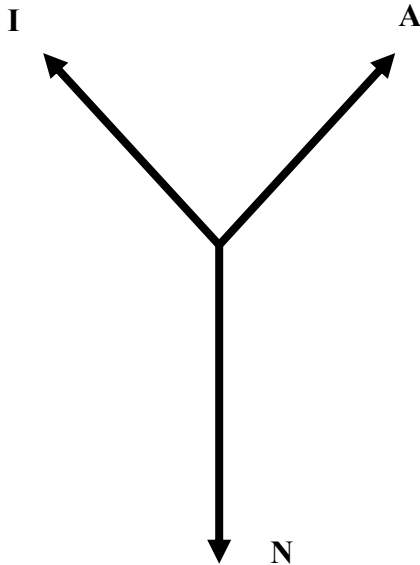
Our aim with this model is that it has to be both robust and sensitive. Furthermore, the model has to be easy to remember and able to raise associations while at the same time forming a basis for detailed analyses and discussions. The model should be capable of being used on a political level, for instance, if one chooses to upscale the ability-dimension in relation to the priorities in cultural politics. Moreover, the model is also supposed to be used to evaluate applications for public subsidies where arm's length councils assess projects and institutions on the basis of the model's three dimensions. Finally, it is intended that the model should be used to evaluate projects as well as institutions.

The inspiration for this model is derived partly from an extensive check-list developed and used by the Children's Theatre Association in their internal discussions on artistic quality, and partly from personal experiences with arms length councils concerning the consignment of subsidies.

In our opinion, it is of primary concern that a model of this nature succeeds in outlining procedures for evaluation which contribute to an open and democratic approach to the evaluation of art. There is no point in a rigid model – but there is a point in the attempts to raise the level of democracy and of debate in cultural politics. And this is what we would like to contribute to.

THE IAN-MODEL – A SYSTEM WITH THREE VECTORS

In constructing our model we have chosen not to place Intention, Ability and Necessity as three angular points on a triangle which it is, of course, possible to do. However, this would result in closing the model. On the contrary, we conceive Intention, Ability and Necessity as three vectors which point in each direction and thus form a core from which the discussion on artistic quality takes its starting point and to which it can return. Figure 1 illustrates the basic outline of our model.

Figure 1**The IAN-Model**

Artistic quality is then determined by an interplay between Intention (I), Ability (A) and Necessity (N).

As with other models, this one is not a reflection of the total reality. The model is rather to be conceived as a tool for discussions or for structuring discussions and statements about artistic quality.

In a model of this type one could suppose that the vectors were of different length. This could, among other things, indicate that the artistic intention in the specific case is more profound than the artistic ability.

However, the model does not suggest that the perfect work of art should consist of arrows of equal length so that everything is well-balanced. It is not meant as a normative model in that way. On the contrary, it can be used to become more conscious of the fact that in discussions about artistic quality some would place emphasis on artistic Ability, while others perhaps attach more importance to Intention or Necessity or to the coherence between some of the vectors or all of them.

The flexible nature of the model makes it applicable to single pieces of art work as well as to the entire life of cultural institutions. It may be applied to institutions which organise and/or produce

performing art. And it can be used as a principle of structure in relation to applications and when the outcome subsequently is evaluated. Finally, the model may be used as a basis for self-evaluation.

The following few examples will illustrate how one can begin to reflect and discuss artistic quality in the light of the model. The examples are deliberately simplified in order to encourage the imagination and to raise associations. Furthermore, the examples we have chosen all illustrate how one can discuss shortcomings in relation to artistic quality. We should point out that the intention with these examples is not to classify specific art forms but rather to illustrate the possibilities of the model and how it can be used to discuss and define artistic quality or the lack thereof.

Figure 2

Certain Forms of Amateur Art

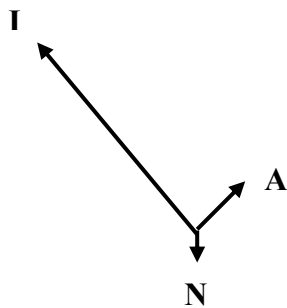


Figure 2 depicts how the model can be used to discuss certain forms of amateur art. Of course this does not hold true for all amateur art. In this example one can picture an evening-school class in which the students have received a brief course in different forms of theatre. Based on this short introduction they are eager to stage a show about themselves. They are filled with high intentions, but their ability cannot measure up to this. And because of the limited nature of their performance, the show lacks necessity as it only appeals to the participants themselves (and perhaps their families and friends) and not to a wider audience. In other words, we have a case here which exemplifies an art form in which the participants have high intentions but low ability and practically no necessity in a wider context, that is in relation to an audience.

Figure 3

An Art Institution on its Deathbed

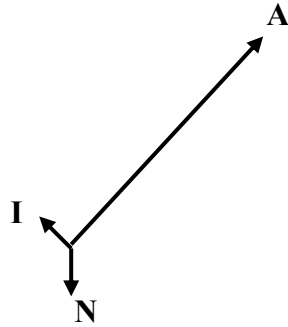


Figure 3 is an example of a traditional art institution with the productions being planned and taking place with the only *raison d'être* to fill out the plan for the repertoire. The artistic ability among the artists is high, but their engagement is close to zero. The performance can be best described as a piece of drudgery, not done *con amore*. And in a broader perspective, the performance does only have little relevance and necessity.

The point of these examples has been to demonstrate the basic outline and usage of our model. Initially, the examples indicate how our model can be used as a means of starting a discussion from which it is possible to form a structure for analysing the basic elements of artistic quality. With this structure one is able to focus the analysis and the questions being considered. However, it should be obvious that we are not talking about a kind of checklist or a quantitative grading scale.

It should be pointed out that certain performances do not aim for artistic quality but instead strive to fill a social function, entertain a certain audience or to simply just make money. This is of course perfectly legitimate, but these criteria should not be confused with artistic quality. In the examples above, artistic quality has been the question under discussion – not social or monetary qualities.

Context and Time Perspectives in Evaluating Performing Arts

When evaluating performing art it is important to keep in mind that the object under evaluation is not a static one. The quality of the production and/or the institution in question may develop in a positive or a negative direction, i.e. the quality of an art work may improve or worsen over time. Therefore, in producing art as well as in evaluating art it is of vital importance to have an eye for potential artistic qualities – qualities which under the right conditions may develop and grow. Art itself and the support of art is thus concerned with the act of taking chances and gambling on something that is not yet fully developed. This aspect of time, inherent in artistic processes, should also be reflected in the evaluations of art. Often an evaluation tends to be a momentary snapshot, covering a short period of time. To ensure that the evaluation leaves room for artistic development it is necessary not only to focus on the “here and now” but also to be aware of artistic processes and the situation both before and after the evaluation. If the evaluator does not have this sense of artistic processes and potential artistic development, then art forms in the course of development may very well be thwarted and thus come to nothing.

Besides the aspects of time, inherent in artistic processes, it is important to be aware of the context for the artwork. This context may include many different elements, for instance the political climate, prevailing trends in art, audience expectations and so on. In relation to our model the context primarily consists of the resources available. These may be human, technical, or economic. It is of vital importance to break away from the illusion that the arts exist on free and equal terms. This is an illusion as long as some producers dispose over large economic resources, often received through public funding, while others receive less or none at all. To bring the artistic intention in a project or an institution to full development is, among other things, dependent upon the resources available. A director may have excellent ideas for a performance; however, these are of no use if he is lacking the economic resources to hire the right actors who are able to transform his ideas to the scene. On the other hand there will always be a tendency to rationalise failure as being due to lack of resources: “If only we had received a larger public grant, if only we had a larger staff, then”.

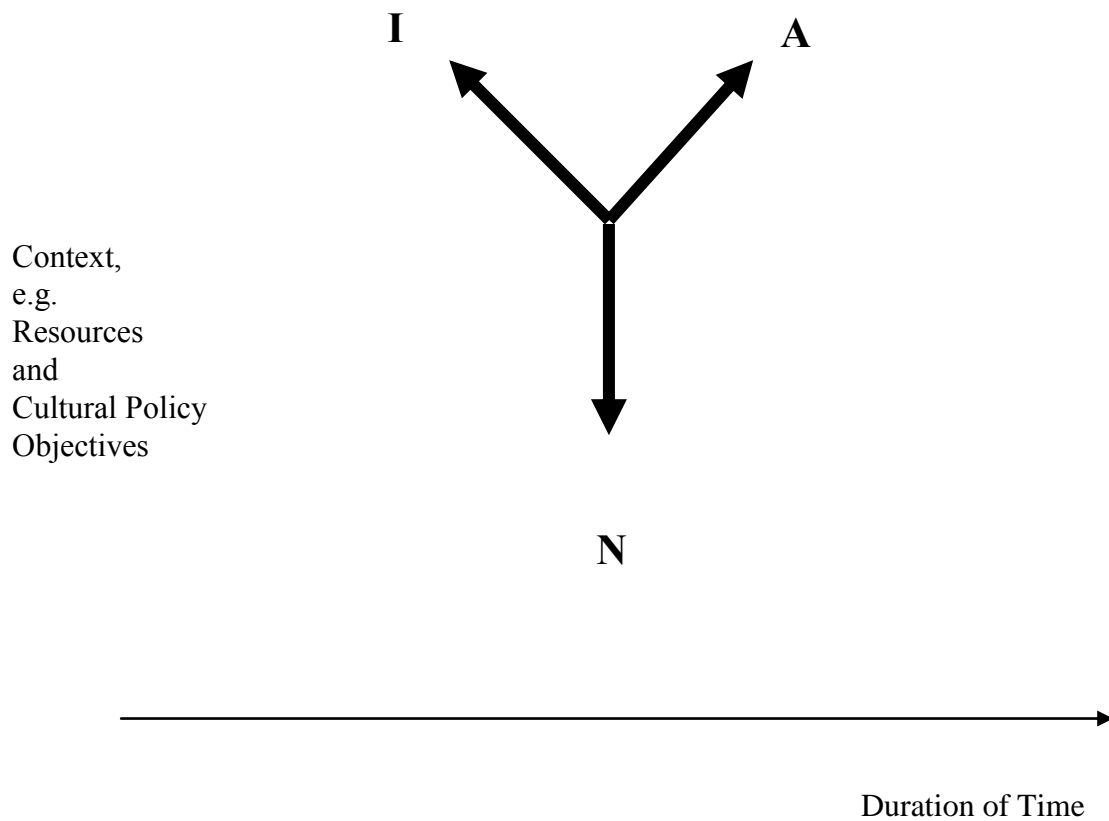
Apart from the resources, another contextual element of importance is the objectives of cultural policy, relating to the art phenomenon under evaluation. One should not consider these objectives as

untouchable. Often it is necessary to include these and to discuss and analyse the objectives critically in order to understand why a certain art phenomenon is what it is, and also in order to reveal alternatives.

With the aspects of time and context added, our model can be illustrated in this way:

Figure 6

The IAN-Model and its Relation to Time and Context



Oskar

I will now proceed to Møllen's performance of *Oskar*, analyzed on the basis of the IAN-model.

Oskar is a play about loss and survival. It is a play about the deep and near losses, about death and about life. It's a play about 9-11, but also about life afterwards and before, the bombing of Dresden and its obliteration during the Second World War.

Oscar is a play about Oskar's loss of his father who died on 9-11, about Ron's loss of his family in a traffic accident, about the grandparents' loss during the obliteration of Dresden – and even more grotesque: the mute grandfather's loss when he moves back to Dresden because his wife, Oskar's grandmother, becomes pregnant even though the grandfather has declared that he does not want to have any children. And, finally, it is about Black's loss of that specific key to a safe-deposit box which becomes a leitmotif throughout the performance.

Oskar is also a play about aspects of life. The play has Oskar as the main narrator, but with the entire crew as privy and captivated narrators, multi-narrators. In the play many voices speak and, at the same time, only one voice speaks and from one point of view. *Oskar* is a play of wide range: from the deep and heartfelt tragedy when Oskar tells about the call he didn't answer from his father trapped in the burning tower – to the grotesque, imaginative and comic situations: for instance, the various Blacks, played by Klaus Andersen, and the doctor's struggle with his wig. The subtle comic scene related to the grandfathers muteness and his written answers or the fight between him and the grandmother concerning the suitcases.

Oskar is a play about emotions, revulsion of feelings and the exuberance and magic of theatre. When the actors enter the scene they immediately capture both the room and the audience. There is eye contact and intensity: we are invited into the play. The play-ness is emphasized again and again in various new ways throughout the performance.

Oskar is also a musical-play with music which supports and contrasts feelings – with the use of pauses and transitions between images in the play, or sometimes directly as background music.

Now, the question is: What is the intention of this play? It will be to tell a story about a person who is left behind after 9-11, a 10 year old boy who is a bit of a nerd. It will tell a story about deep loss and about the upheaval, which the loss resulted in. And the play will tell this in a way which does not betray

the feelings and the complexity (for instance the father's fifth call, which Oskar keeps as a secret, or the call to the mother's cell phone which she keeps private for quite a while during the performance). And it will tell this in a way which, on the other hand, inspires the audience with courage, creates a coherence (with the grandparents) and contrasts the emotional aspects with grotesque humor. This makes the contrasts even greater. The pain becomes more intense but the ability to deal with the pain grows stronger as well.

Through this very special story the play also succeeds in installing this story with more general, universal perspectives. Due to the play's emphasis on Oskar, it also deals with other losses of people around one. It sounds as a paradox, and so it is! Oskar as an example becomes exemplary. The people around him all carry losses in their personal baggage.

The performance is a thoroughly musical piece. The room changes constantly. The bed is the central scene of action, rolling in and out according to what is needed. The scenography is a music machine which besides its functionality emits an aura of something used and applied. The black costumes send signals of the heredity from Eastern Europe – while functioning as a classical choir and filling the role as helpers for Oskar.

The actors' strengths are that they individually are outstanding performers who are able to jump in and out of various roles, create high jinks and heartfelt emotions. At the same time, they are part of an entirety, an ensemble. They are capable of being individuals on the stage and at the same time being part of a community. They are attentive and complement each other because they have a common mission: that is, namely, to tell an important story. The performance includes slap stick humor, kept in a tight grip, as well as deep sensitivity at times when things become emotionally unbearable.

The performance includes many tempo shifts, all very sharp and well-defined. The actors are also musicians. The expression towards the audience is multi-faceted and manifold. The stories interlace in and out with each other. Only gradually, the family situation is brought to light. The performance creates a network of stories – a complex web.

The only objection I have, all be it a minor one, is that the complexity, especially concerning the background music, from time to time seems to be too abrasive. That is to say that the complexity overshadows the clarity.

Lastly, one can ask: Why is this play performed at present time? What is the artistic necessity?

First and foremost, it is important to know, that this play is performed for children from 12 years and up. Accordingly, it is a performance for teenagers and young adults. To deal with grief and loneliness in a constructive and sensitive way is important if theatre is to be used as a way to deal with problems and existential thoughts youngsters may face and grapple with in the world of today.

Furthermore, the necessity is rooted in the ambition to deal with the experiences from 9-11 and similar situations or catastrophes. As the world is today, where everything has become closer and interconnected, it is the right time also for a Danish audience of teenagers and young adults to be confronted and deal with the experiences and consequences of 9-11.

The necessity lies in formulating and picturing the things people can and are able to do when they are exposed to situations of catastrophe around the world. Its goal is neither to negate nor to create a false optimism as ‘everything is going to be fine’, but rather to offer images and experiences which one can both empathize, identify and sympathize with.

It is evident, I think, that Oskar is an outstanding performance. It is a performance which embraces an entire world.

If the performance is discussed in relation to the IAN-model, which has been the intention here, it is without doubt a theatre performance of pure artistic quality.

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The books are only available in Danish. They can be bought from www.klim.dk