

## Yves Degryse on the quest for justice.

Date: 5 May 2012

The celebrated Belgian collective, Bart Baele and Yves Degryse, strangely called Berlin, are making their first visit to the UK to appear at the Brighton Festival in their latest production *Land's End*. The piece, featuring a mixture of live performance, filmed interviews and ingenious contraptions, revolves around a murder in a small Belgian community. From his home in Belgium, Yves told me about the production.



Yves Degryse and Bart Baele

### Is this piece really based on a true story?

Yes. Actually it's a story which happened in the 1996 in Belgium, and it was the murder of the owner of a pancake factory. He was found dead in the trunk of his car and after two months of investigations by the police it was clear that his wife had given the order to a French contract killer to murder her husband. They were both in prison, she was in a Belgian prison and he was in a French prison but there were many contradictions in the witness statements that they had both made.



The prosecutor decided to organise a confrontation between the two, so that the evidence that each was offering could be tested in a court of law to discover which elements were true and which were false. But there was a judicial problem in that France doesn't send its citizens to another country for an interrogation. So it was physically not possible for the Belgian prosecutor to interrogate the French contract killer. The prosecutor thought for a long while that he would never get the trial but then he managed to find a solution.

He found a farm that was on the border of France and Belgium, I mean right on the border. The line of the border passes right through the living room of the house and so, after solving all the judicial issues, they ended up putting one chair on one side of the border and one chair on the other side of the border. The Belgian wife sat one side and the French contract killer sat the other side the trial commenced.

### Is it a very intense piece?

The thing is that the story of the murder case itself started out our interest in this project, we studied it for nine months or more and I think, more than the intensity, you really feel the absurdity of the situation in which the prosecutor finds himself. The regulations and the bureaucratic system made it almost impossible for him.

### It seems incredible that two countries so close could have such different rules.

Exactly, that's what was mentioned in all the articles that were published in newspapers at that time. We are supposed to be in a united Europe but we all have our own national regulations too. It was a very big problem for this prosecutor that a confrontation seemed that it would never be legally possible, all because of an invisible line.

### This is your first visit to the UK. How did you get involved with the Brighton Festival?

I'll have to think a little about that, to remember how we first met Sally Cowling (Associate Producer of Brighton Festival). Oh yes, she saw us when we were performing in Vancouver with a piece called Bonanza for the first time and then we contacted Sally to propose our new project and asked if this could be an interesting addition to the Brighton Festival and so we developed *Land's End*, this site-specific "reality theatre" experience together.

*Land's End* by Berlin Theatre Collective will be performed twice daily from 10 – 13 May at 6.30pm and 9.00pm in The Old Municipal Market, Brighton.