

Gender and Performance.

Theatre / Dance / Technology

Don.Juan.Who?/ Don.Juan. Kdo?: From Cyberspace to Theatre Space

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"*Don Juan. Who?* set off with the most challenging of desires – to build bridges between artists across the cultural and linguistic divides, and to focus on one of the most provocative of our common myths – that of the priapic man himself – the expression of a force that permeates all our histories. And, courageously, to leave open what the final meaning might be, to enter into unknown territory. Literally. The group dived into the myriad possibilities of cyberspace, exploring the dangerous freedom of a medium where players could hide, and risk, create and re-create themselves – *the modern equivalent of Don Juan's Masque Balls.*" Stephen Lowe [1]

1 Like so many things we make, this project began with the smallest of ingredients – a word and a hunch. In 1997 I was in Vienna with a production I had directed for the city arts complex *Cankarjev Dom* in Ljubljana. An adaptation of Peter Handke's *Kasper (Speech Torture)*, created in an ex-Yugoslav country with the brutal Balkan conflict still rattling on in the east. Our project referred to the rape camps, ethnic cleansing, as well as the rapid modernisation and Americanisation of former communist countries such as was evident in Slovenia. In one of many conversations during the process with one of the actors, Zeljko Hrs, about men and war and sexual politics, I learnt the word *inat* that translates amongst other things as 'pugnacious male stubborn pride' – the stuff of warmongering, by which Zeljko would explain how his former country had fallen apart.

2 Our dialogues continued over the next year or more of this production's life, mostly, being geographically separated, on email that was beginning to take root in our ordinary lives, in that strange location that we call cyber space. What is cyberspace? It is imagined, it simulates, it is both there and not there, both dream and reality, a notional realm and a site of trading. Crucially it is a place of communication and transmission. For Donna Haraway, cyber space is the venue in which the cyborg might perform. The cyborg being 'a hybrid of machine and organism' that she claims we have all become since the late 20th century, with the advent of technology in our daily lives. Haraway in her "Manifesto for Cyborgs" also argues that the cyborg is a creature in a post-gendered world, for she can actually operate outside or beyond her purely physical, material reality. She is a condensed image of both "imagination and material reality"(Haraway 50). As I became a cyborgian habitué of cyberspace in the 1990's I was struck by, and became increasingly curious about, the effect this virtual space might have on our sense of who we are as presences for each other, how ideas of gender might shift as we evolve with new technology, indeed about the impact on intimacy itself. I wanted to put cyberspace at the service of our work on sexuality and gender relationships.

3 The idea for *Don Juan. Who?* began took root. Zeljko and I agreed to making a new work on this still loose concept as we drank brandy next to a freezing Austrian ice rink on a break from production duties. Our

project was initially called *A Balkan Don Juan*, since our original question was how Balkan masculinity had exerted itself through appalling acts of violence, machismo and brutal sexualisation of the enemy. But why Don Juan? He is not a warmonger, yet he kills without remorse. He is not a rapist, yet he seduces without love. He is never a territorialist, preferring to vanish from places he has inhabited without a trace, a man without possessions and perpetually on the run, a nomad. Why? Because Don Juan is a protean masculine figure, a noun and an adjective, describing what I would like to suggest as the “problem” of masculinity – the phallic-driven machismo that has not yet left our collective consciousness. So he could become a reference point, a mirror if you will, in to which we could all look and find ourselves in all our contradictions.

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone. (Lord Byron 71)

4 Don Juan the man is a legendary fictional libertine, whose story has been retold by authors of plays, poems, novels, operas, and films over five centuries. The name is used figuratively as a synonym for "womaniser" – generous with his appetites:

To be faithful to one woman
means neglecting the others.

My feelings are so
wide-ranging and extensive,
I'd have all the women share them.

But they, alas, can't grasp this fine conception;

my generous nature they call deception. (Mozart Act ii, scene i)

Many thousands of websites today will attest to the deeply rooted idea of a Don Juan as a virile seducer. As an existential anti-hero he represents Man for whom conventional morality and religious authority hold no sway, hence his irrepressible need to escape marriage and reproduction. Psychoanalytically he is the *puer aeternus* (eternal boy) who can never let intimacy mature into relationship and who has a compulsion to keep returning to the seduction game (repetition neurosis) where he can replay out his opening moves, always in control. He arguably survives most vigorously in contemporary popular culture as James Bond, a high-tech version of the swashbuckling hero – sexy, adventurous, invincible – and always on the move. Except that Bond saves us from evil, whereas Don Juan, classically, is punished for his sins.

5 I wanted to explore this complex, challenging and stubbornly enduring archetype in terms of the paradoxical intimacy of physical absence. In the virtual world we might find an environment for extending ourselves beyond any of the controlling mechanisms our better, cleaner, tidier, politically correct selves might bring to the topic. Cyber space can function as a confession box, a fantasy world where, because we are both untouchable and invisible we are free to roam in our unconscious, unbridled imaginings. And If Don Juan is protean, then so could we be in order to 'get inside his head'. We too could come and go as we please, enjoy our online encounters without having to justify them or even own up to them. Crucial to the project, we could remain anonymous. And so we partied textually together, ludically, on-line, playing with our Don Juan without writing a play, performing ourselves and others, imagined and real, met and unmet, gender-bending and free-associating.

6 If I wanted to speak of Men and masculinity today, then of course I would want men to speak of this as well as women. And we cannot speak of men without speaking of women, for we cannot speak of gender without speaking of how it is constructed, both out there and deep inside ourselves. Don Juan as an archetype suggests primarily a heterosexual paradigm. He expresses a sexual force between men and women, men's phallic drive, and, importantly, the unlocking of women's desires. This idea of Don Juan as the liberator of women is perfectly dramatised in the 1934 Korda film with Douglas Fairbanks' *The Private Life of Don Juan*. Don Juan is rumoured to be coming to town. A cinematically brilliant sequence shows woman after woman coming out onto her balcony in a flurry of feminine gossip and giggle to *share* the good news with other women that He is coming, presumably to penetrate them all. There isn't a shred of jealousy, though in another scene one woman desperately wants to outstrip her rivals and, for him, be the best. Later, Don Juan has feigned his own death and turns up at his own funeral to see the whole town, hundreds of women, processing in tears- those that had known him, as lovers, and those who were grieving because they hadn't. In this one ironic scene we have the important idea of Don Juan as the man who really knows *what women really want*, who unlocks women's desires and permits her to feel in control of her sexuality, unhooked from the pressures of marriage and fidelity.

7 Marina Warner warns that we might to take care with this kind of lure. She points out, when discussing Valmont

a fantasy of control will always seduce the disenfranchised [...] prostitutes solicit business by boasting of their dominatrix methods. This is perhaps the final twist in the seductions of Don Juan, that the victims are flattered into believing themselves in charge. (Warner 105f.)

8 This sleight of hand in which the powerless believe themselves powerful is provocative. Given the contemporary 'post-feminist' discourses into whether for example pornography oppresses or liberates women, the debate in our field about feminist neo-burlesque and the even more troubling images of female soldiers torturing prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, we seem to be currently at a very muddled and confusing moment in considering female power. Ideas of 'woman's erotic power' and 'the empowering features of seduction' mean little if they are uncoupled from discussion of the economics of social relations. Further, promiscuous, non-reproductive sex, based on a pleasure principle is one thing (for both sexes), for certainly (sexually transmitted diseases aside) consensual sex can be fun-for-all so long as contraception and emotional detachment are also on the agenda. The connection between sex and babies is quite another matter, implying the imperative of remaining in, or at least returning to, the cave so as to participate in rearing the young.

9 With the story of Don Juan as an irresponsible seducer, follows the story of Don Juan the quitter. For Don Juan – as our performance returned to again and again – “doesn't stay for breakfast”. In our text a woman performer says

I have to imagine each man is Don Juan somehow, loving and leaving me, jumping from windows post-coitally, foregoing scrambled eggs and coffee, all that shit. I have to imagine each man is Don Juan unless proved innocent.[2]

Later in our performance after a huge and violent physical fight (played as a fugue simultaneously by 3 couples) a man apologises to a woman for not staying for breakfast, for "letting eggs go to waste." She apologises to him for wanting babies. The scene ends with her telling the audience that "eggs are a metaphor"— for not staying for breakfast also means not marrying, not reproducing, in short not conforming to religiously controlled social tradition. Though in our piece, women are also ambivalent about whether they want this man to remain in their lives. Sometimes in charge and sometimes victim, or hurt, angry and abandoned, we acknowledged that even these roles could fluctuate in any one life.

10 The abandoned woman is an enduring theme in the Western tradition. Lipking suggests:

The majority of great heroines and prima donnas, in Western tradition, have been abandoned women.

Even the word 'heroine' reflects that tradition. It derives from Ovid's *Heroides* or *Heroic Epistles*, the classic book in which fifteen famous women, from Penelope to Sappho, write letters of passion and despair to the men who have left them. Again and again the pattern is repeated: the lover stamps his image on the woman's heart and goes; she stays, pursues him with her thoughts, and gradually turns her sense of abandonment into a way of life. ... It was only with the rise of the libertine, however, that the modern abandoned woman really came into her own. For the business of the libertines is precisely to make as many abandoned women as he can. (Lipking 37f.)

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11 Don Juan is not only enjoying his conquests but is running away, from responsibility, monogamy and reproduction. In fact, he is constantly on the move: Renos Mandis proposes that this jumping is part of a kind of hyperactive syndrome, an inability to remain, to stay put:

Don Juan is in perpetual motion. He cannot stop. If anything, masculinity is experienced as a "lack". It is something that you have to have which means that you don't "have" it. And you can "have" it only by doing it, in the sense that to know that you have to it, you have to have an outward manifestation of it, and outside guarantee that you have to acquire again and again. In other words, it is only other people [who] can guarantee your masculinity. Or, you need this guarantee and feel you have to have it in order to survive.[3]

12 Of course, aside from anti-bourgeois promiscuity and contra-bourgeois mobility, our libertine Don Juan is above all anti religious, existential even. By ignoring social laws he is rejecting a Godly world order in which a dull, married, private life is governed by religious ethics. Kierkegaard in his 1843 interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in *Either/Or*, dialectically opposes ethics as boring and dull to the irresponsible bliss of aesthetics. This bliss is also phallic, compulsive and possibly even perverted from Nature, for, as Foucault says, "Don Juan is human character led against his own will by the obscure craziness of sex."(39)

13 Jonathan Miller in his *Don Giovanni Book* identifies this sexual "craziness" as human arrogance. Don Juan (in Mozart's opera) is about the dangers of overreaching. Miller, comparing Don Juan to Faust, says that he does in fact come to grief in Hell by failing to recognise that human powers are bounded.[4] You cannot include all experience in one life, know all women. We can't have everything, for, as the comedian Steve Wright has joked "where would we put it?!" Don Juan's unquenchable sexual appetite, phallic and pleasure-driven, is also, I would argue, melancholic. This lack that Chesler is talking about, this compulsion to move to the next conquest, is also surely a quest for something that he can never quite find, or hold on to. "Don Juan is forever in search of perfection, in other words something that does not exist in the world" (14) says Von Horvath in the preface to his *Don Juan Comes Back From The War*:

And time and again women want to prove to him, and also to himself, that it is possible for him to find in the world everything he is searching for. The misfortune of these women is that their horizons are worldly – Only when they suspect, to their horror, that he is not searching for life but yearning for death, do they recoil from him.(ibid.)

Don Juan as a depressive, with promiscuous sex as an anaesthetic against existential pain is a provocative, contemporary interpretation of the presence of Don Juan in our contemporary psyche. Though this harks back to the Romantic rebel character as a loner, a suicide, and a saint.

14 The impulse to rescue such a Man is many a woman's motive for getting involved. In our piece, in a section we called "The Don Juan in Your Mind", one of the men says:

"I am the Don Juan in your mind and I'm depressed..."(cf. *Don Juan. Who?* Unpublished Production text.)

The chorus of women run to him compassionately "ohhhhh" and he snaps them away with:

"I'm sick of all the lies people tell.I wish I could make you all happy but nobody wants to know. They all want a cat and a casserole."(ibid.)

15 Women do run out of steam caring for a restless Don Juan, however charismatic he might be, however good a lover, and however they might hope he will eventually settle down and "choose them". For who is Don Juan when the aging process kicks in? In Jim Jarmusch's film *Broken Flowers* (2005) a middle-aged, crumpled, Don Johnson protagonist, mooches on his suburban couch watching the Douglas Fairbanks movie. None of his old girlfriends wants to know. He is alone. Existentially. In our piece Don Juan declares he is leaving with (forced) bravado. He tries to swagger. He says he's going to Hell. She begs him to go to Hell, saying she's exhausted. We suddenly see a Man who cannot easily leave. Once she has let go of him, he vacillates. The whole company yells at him to go, to leave, to take the leap, till finally he reluctantly jumps off the ledge into a pile of pillows.

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16 How did a geographically dispersed company, with all such ideas of Don Juan confront these themes from our own experiences, not all of which are purely heterosexual, to produce a text about gender, ironically in an environment that offered the possibility of being gender-less, many-gendered or simply many. If Don Juan the figure was a thematic tool, our research instrument was what I call our *cyber studio*. This was intended to mimic all the requisites of an ideal theatre base: studio, reflective space, and research archive. With a small grant from the British Council I was able to commission a Slovene designer to programme this which in fact was an assemblage of existing programmes using the *Linux* operating system. This included a cyber-performance programme created in New Zealand called *Upstage* (<http://www.upstage.org.nz>). *Upstage* permitted privacy and anonymity. By adding to our site *wiki* and storage possibilities as well as a blog, we were able to write live together and store all our logs for everyone in the company to refer to whenever they wanted. People also wrote offline in the interim, anonymously if they wished. We could, in our studio, upload movies and share texts.

17 Each week for eighteen months, every Sunday evening, for two hours, the company of performers, translator, and occasional invited guests, such as an ex-professional dominatrix, would encounter each other in that virtual, imagined space, where real, visible words would flow. I would set a theme and writing structure and then sit back and enjoy the dissolution of my directorial guidance – for the most part – only occasionally stepping in and identifying myself to refocus the work, if it had gone astray.

18 There was a certain pleasure (that Helene Cixous has called "jouissance" – an untranslatable word combining joy and orgasm) in this collective, anonymous writing process. As words tumbled in front of our eyes, we learnt to hide in the screen, to nest, to flirt, to challenge, to argue, to flaunt, to cry and laugh "out loud", to cheat, to lie, and most vitally, to masquerade and mimic each other in an environment in which there was, by design, no gender stability. Most of us admit to metaphoric cross-dressing. Many have now forgotten our individual authorship, such was the writing-pleasure-trance that we plunged into, losing ourselves as *cyborgs* for a brief hour or two each week. We collaborated in building our text, its poetry and its rhythms by removing censors and allowing ourselves to be interrupted by the unpredictable timing of words becoming visible as dictated by our on-screen tool. We learnt to play with interruption. We became, accidentally, a Chorus. Though virtual, the experience was undeniably embodied. As Zelijko wrote of this process:

The word is my body as I enter into the screen. The word signals my point of view, my emotional state, my view of the world. (*Don Juan. Who?* Unpublished production text.)

To return to Cixous, we were writing from our bodies in the sense that our grammar, our syntax was vomitic, impulsive, ebullient and uncensored. We wrote what came out. But *vis* Haraway, even our gendered bodies, in the moment of writing, might be said to have ceased to be corporeal. For as we wrote, we found ourselves in a heightened state, a period of intense concentration and cooperation, alone in our rooms across several countries and even continents at times, but connected, a condition where distinctions between our individual identities and the writing tool we were using became leaky. As Haraway says, the "boundary between physical and non-physical is very imprecise for us." (53) Binaries borne of the mind-body split, the difference between the artificial and the natural, the self-developing and the eternally designed, she argues, are all rendered ambiguous by our lively machines, our computers. If we were consciously using mimicry and

masquerade in our writing together, we were also using dis-appearance. We were and we were not. Present and absent. He and She. Self and Character. Autobiography and Fiction. I could go on. We might have entered into the world of Jean Genet in which the hall of mirrors that is appearance and reality is both eternal and erotic.[5] Here is what we, the collective voice wrote of the experience of being in the moment of live writing together:

as I touch the keys, I jump into darkness as I touch the keys, I feed myself a new form of lonely nearness When I touch the keys I am not I my flesh melts, evaporates and am only words when I touch the keys, I realise, that through them I can only express fragments of my thoughts and emotions to touch is to echo, the touch is a word and different from a word it tells stories, feelings, longings ... (From the 24th live writing session, 29/9/2006, unpublished.)

Zeljko wrote of the heightened state we found ourselves in:

Words flowed through the screen, sometimes frenetically, sometimes recklessly, sometimes just poised on the lookout, when only the cursor pulsed into nothing and announced the next torrent of words. The emotional charge one could feel from the rhythm of repeated words or the "silence", that is, the absence of words was incredible. The stream of words was the collective result of our presence, without a guide to guide us. Everybody had to be prepared for constant adaptation and had to let their thoughts be forced into another direction, contrary to their original intention. This openness and readiness to subsume your ego for the collective together with the technology of writing itself (where words fall into a common stream with a slight time shift, forming unexpected meanings) produced a new alloy composed of ten points of view. For everybody involved it was a remarkable experience and a test. (*Don Juan. Who?* Unpublished production text)

19 Creating the raw material of our work from this deliberately non authorial strategy, these private cyborgian improvised performances on screen, was most definitely a particular, sui generis, contemporary version of collective creation an exercise in what Gestalt therapy might call "collective dreaming". But however utopian our virtual process, cyberspace was never to be used in any technophilic commitment to deny live-ness when it came to making theatre for a live audience. Our protracted meditation as a company on our topic led to very old-fashioned, fleshy physical theatre, with dramaturgy and direction, hours of research and devising over many weeks of rehearsal. Where cultural policy no longer permits endless creative research, even in former Communist cultural agendas, long gestation was afforded by cyberspace and some useful functions we drew from it. This was a conscious decision on my part.

20 By the end of our luxuriously long immersion, singly and together, online and off, in our topic, we had co-written 500 pages to press into dramaturgical shape. We eventually began rehearsals in a unique way, holding in our hands a text we had voiced together. But it was a text without shape, character, scenes or narrative thread. I was jumping into the dark. For all I had was 13 weeks, 7 fabulous performers, a scenography I had already invented that included a red carpeted bare stage and 1000 feather pillows and a premiere date.

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21 I began rehearsals with a Working Manifesto. You will note no mention of the virtual past we had shared. We were now a theatre company, creating a new work from scratch, but full of our research:

- Theatre is poetry
- Physical theatre is a state of mind
- The terms "dance" and "theatre" become meaningless distinctions when the performer is embodied, expressive and scenographic
- We will thus call our work "theatre" though to some it will seem more like dance or dance-theatre and we will not care for the definitions

- The actor is a creative artist
- Language is visceral
- Characters are formed on stage in front of the audience
- We have to manifest our differences
- We have to manifest our similarities
- The Chorus is a perfect strategy for ensemble ethics
- The Chorus of individuals struggling for consensus is a model of democracy
- We are always representing and showing that we are playing at pretending
- No theatrical illusion that isn't at the same time prepared to reveal its mechanisms
- No décor, only scenography
- From the functional and the essential the poetry of the theatre is forged
- Resist the literal. Look instead for how our minds are really working
- Be prepared to sweat, jump, run, fall, cry, be naked
- Love irony
- Strategy: Seduce the audience letting them know all the while that you know and they know what's going on
- Let the body reveal the subtext • Let the imagination run riot • Find the passion
- Enjoy the joke
- Play the game
- Learn the cha-cha (ibid.)

22 If we began with an idea for a work that would be about (Balkan) Men, what did we come to? Something else of course. Our performance was certainly more generic, more messy, intimate and personal. A piece made of pieces of all of us, of the self-conscious exploration of our experiences and fantasies of Don Juanisms. We asked: What is the mechanism of the Don Juan narratives? What's He made of? What's He jumping away from? What is Freedom? How do Women feel about Men today and vice versa? We wrestled with this from all sides, culturally, imaginatively, confessionally, psychoanalytically. "How can I have an authentic feeling in this culture?" one of us complained. If we are made of so many received and mediated ideas, are we also, maybe, making Love?

23 In the performance the Chorus might be a team of seven-authors-in-search-of-a-character. We return several times to what we call The Scene: a silver screen cliché of seduction and abandonment. Around this coil other emotions and conflicts within ourselves and with the opposite (sex). For our Don Juan actually doesn't exist and nor does She. As He says in the end, He's a construct, but a construct nonetheless that, despite any sexual-political changes in the last decades, manages to survive in millions of website-fantasies and, as we've discovered, lurking somewhere perhaps in all our minds.

24 I will end here with some of the company's own words on the project, firstly Zeljko again:

The process of co-mingling in virtual space as we wrote together has, in a very special way, connected all the participants. The virtual space was a global reference space, the beginning of a dynamic

dramatic process, the search for a word that might articulate your thoughts, the possibility of becoming someone else, to use masks and mimicry: the basic tools of acting used through the microcosm of the word. This collective experience has continued via different means in the search for a theatrical form in 'real' space, where physical action substitutes psychology as a foundation from which the word can spring. (ibid.)

Tanya Myers:

The Don Juan in my mind revealed herself/himself ripe in contradictions, challenging my "politically correct" self-held notions of sexual relations; desire versus reason, control versus surrender, freedom versus responsibility. Don Juan: a demonic threat to status quo, an enemy to the possessed and the possessor, an irritant to people like myself seeking security in the known. As a woman, mother, wife, sister, friend how do I make this story of Don Juan my own? (26)

And finally Mare Mlacnik:

As Anna observes, opens, guides, builds, corrects, resonates, reflects on why, how, and what is happening between seven differently dressed/undressed subjects during their interaction with each other, the space, sound, music, and light, we are thankfully far from the established paradigm of twenty-first century theatre where it is assumed that "good text/good actors" are enough and where direction and experimentation are doomed. We continue to persist instead, as Nietzsche would say, "To have the courage to be unfit for one's own time." (25)

You can find a pdf version of the official programme for this production here:
www.athletesoftheheart.org/images/DonJuanWho.pdf

Websites

<http://www.upstage.org.nz>

<http://www.athletesoftheheart.org>

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DON JUAN LEGEND AND TEXTS

26 In the Don Juan legend, he seduced (or raped) a young noblewoman and killed her father. Later, he invites this man's posthumous stone statue to dine with him. The statue/ghost father agrees, then appearing as the harbinger of Don Juan's death. The statue offers to shake Don Juan's hand, and thereupon drags him to Hell. There Don Juan meets The Devil who tells him that everyone in Hell is cast in a role, and presents him with a Jester's suit, telling him that he would make an excellent fool. Don Juan, insulted, protests that he is unrivalled as a man who has made a thousand sexual conquests. Intrigued by this claim, The Devil tells him that if he can correctly name one conquest, he would not have to wear the suit. Thus begins a parade of women not one of whom Don Juan can name correctly. Finally, one woman stands before him in tears. Struck by her true love, he looks into her eyes, turns to The Devil and takes the suit.

27 The legend has spawned many versions over the centuries, too numerous to include all here. But to give some idea: most authorities agree that the first recorded tale of Don Juan is the play *The Trickster of Seville and The Stone Guest* by Tirso de Molina (publication date uncertain, 1615–1625). Molière's comedy *Dom Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre* was written in 1665, and in 1736 Goldoni wrote *Don Giovanni Tenorio, Ossia Il Dissoluto*. Another famous eighteenth century version is of course Lorenzo da Ponte's libretto for the Mozart opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). In the nineteenth century the Romantic poet Lord Byron's famous epic version of *Don Juan* (1821) is considered his masterpiece, though it remained unfinished at his death. Other significant versions in that century include: Pushkin's play *The Stone Guest* (1830) and Alexandre Dumas's play *Don Juan de Maraña* (1831).

27 In 1861 another poet takes up the theme: Baudelaire in his *Don Juan Aux Enfers*. At the dawn of the twentieth century George Bernard Shaw's play *Man and Superman* (1903) includes a substantial text 'Don Juan in Hell' in Act 3. In the same period we have Guillaume Apollinaire's novel *Les Exploits d'un Jeune Don Juan* (1907) and in 1910 Gaston Leroux's novel *Phantom of the Opera*, which includes an opera called *Don Juan Triumphant*.

28 The Second World War period re-examines the figure in relation to war – Ödön von Horváth's *Don Juan Returns from the War* (1936) – and existentially – Albert Camus representing Don Juan as an archetypical absurd man in the essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Interestingly in this same period two women approached the theme, though lesser known: Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *After the Death of Don Juan* (1938) and Suzanne Lilar's play *Le Burlador* (1946). Ingmar Bergman's play *Don Juan* in 1955 was followed by his 1960 film *The Devil's Eye*. Other cinematic versions of note include: the 1926 silent film *Don Juan* starring John Barrymore, *Adventures of Don Juan* starring Errol Flynn (1949), and in 1934 *The Private Life of Don Juan*, Douglas Fairbanks Senior's last film, which we have quoted in this production. Other films include Jan Svankmajer's animation version *Don Juan* in 1969 and Roger Vadim's gender-reversal *If Don Juan Were a Woman* starring Brigitte Bardot (1973).

29 Contemporary film versions include *Don Juan De Marco* starring Johnny Depp in the title role with Marlon Brando (1995) and Jim Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers* (2005) in which the middle-aged, crumpled, Don Johnson protagonist, mooches on his couch watching the Douglas Fairbanks movie. Finally in this non-exhaustive list, we might cite among others Peter Handke's 2004 novel *Don Juan (As Told by Himself)*, Joni Mitchell's song and album *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1977) and most recently in 2007: Douglas Carlton Abrams's novel *The Lost Diary of Don Juan*. All of which suggest that as an archetype, whether as macho rogue/seducer/careless lover/immoralist/free spirit/existential hero/marriage breaker/sex addict or just the stuff of erotic imagination, Don Juan endures.

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Don Juan. Who?/Don Juan. Kdo? Programme Notes.

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