

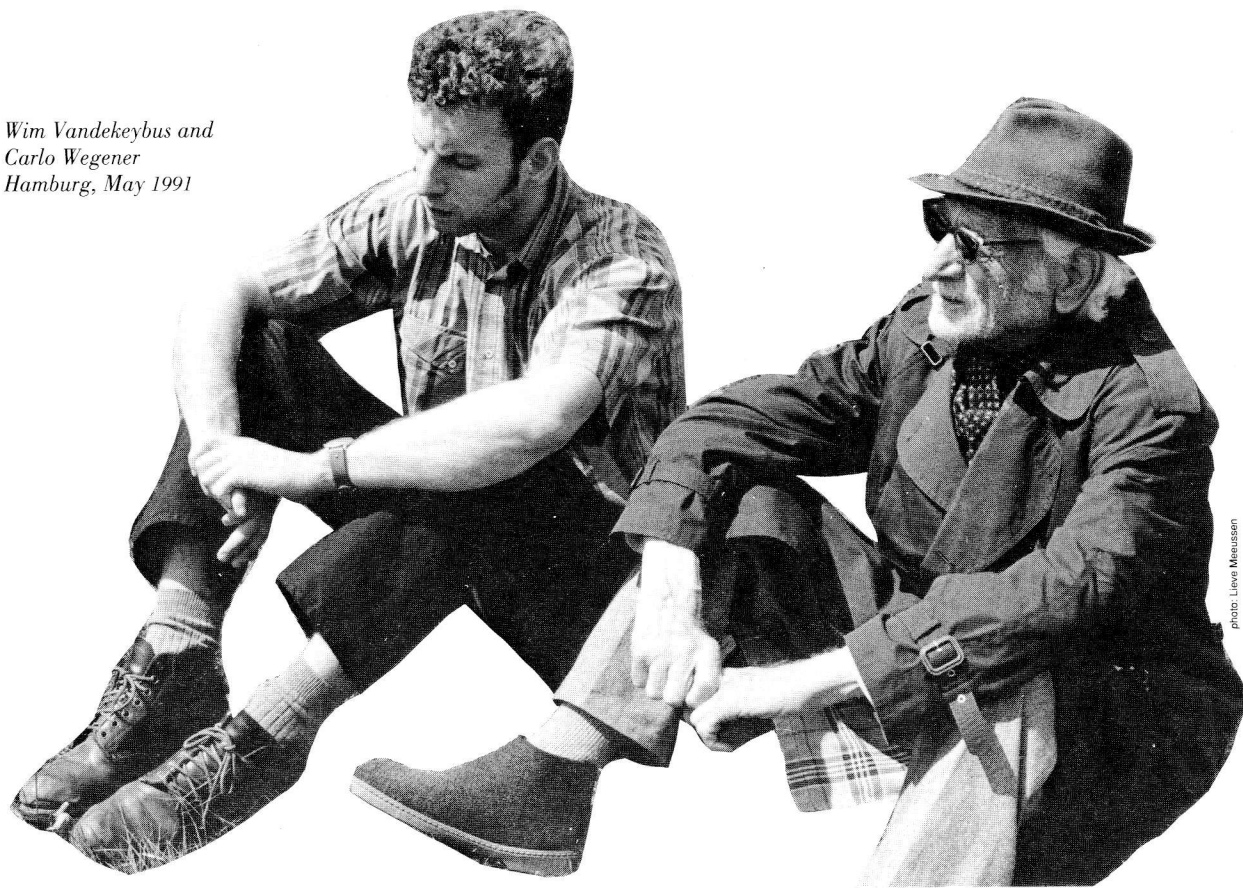
Excerpts from an interview with Wim Vandekeybus

conducted in English by
Marie Cieri
July 19, 1991

I bought a very small Super 8 camera, like a box of cigarettes almost, and then I was just filming with it, and at a certain moment I see a man in Hamburg on the port who was sitting on the float.... I look to the water, but I'm filming him, and he says, "Ah, you want to film," and then he starts to dance and so on, and it was really a meeting very of the moment. I speak to him and so on and we get to be friends. I visited him, Carlo [Wegener], many times.

He did *everything* in his life, he lived everywhere, he was traveling, he was a dancer, a singer. He's full of life, but he's 88, he's completely alone, he has no money....We talk, but it was more like how to eat, how to make the fire, how to make the coffee. Little by little, he saw some of the company, and I have so much material, I have 30 hours of film, I will still work five years with this, I'm sure....

*Wim Vandekeybus and
Carlo Wegener
Hamburg, May 1991*



You work with people, you have a motivation, all the stories that he tells, that you have to transform. Of course, there are many other wires, it is not only he that leads the performance. A lot of things get possible in any form. You cross the thing of the difficulty of how you make a choreography. I make still some mistakes, but I know this....There is another thing here which gives a depth, and I'm very happy I could turn to this thing to continue making shows because for me it's completely different. For me, it has some tenderness, and I like very much how I could work through a kind of time with the tenderness.... Many things come together, like it's a very strange mixture of culture, you have this German, Hamburg atmosphere which is very hard, you have this very exotic influence with the hammocks and so on, with the eggs, also with the music, I mean we have the rock music, we have the German songs, we have the breathings of Charo [Calvo, one of the composers]....

At the end, it's not important if you're 88 or 28, I think, you're on the same condition, it's just a time difference. So it's not that he's closer to death, in time, but it's an illusion because maybe I die before. Yeah, it could be. I never see that he's the old man and we are the young people. I mean, Lieve [Meeussen, one of the performers] is saying, "How old am I now? 85?" Of course, it's strange, she's 23, but it's more strong, because we can forget things too....On the other hand, he has a force, really, like nobody else of us has. If we have to live in these conditions we die directly. He has no heating, he has nothing, he lives alone, he has no money. Really, I tell you, he is so strong, so he is not so close to death. Physically, yes, but the images I get from Carlo are full of life, it's not pitiful, it's really very ironical, all the things he says. And I want to give *this* image, that he can turn with us in these moments because this life is much more strong than us nine together, and in the performance, you feel this at the end. So it's about the certainty that everything has to disappear. That's also why the title, because even if you catch the truth you still have to die, it's the same. "To die we have to do all," he says....

I know which people I need for which play. I knew for this play I didn't need perfect dancers who are like this, square, and that you can't come to with a crazy proposition. I know I need people who have something very wild, very strange....The people have something in common, the thing that Carlo has, I think. They refuse to accept the things as they are. They always turn it into their personal thing. This play, of course, is very personally made, but I really need people who are very open, who are very good people, and I think they are, they are very good transformers. It doesn't depend on if you are the best dancer because the people who are the more strange, they are the people you look to, yeah? And you see, also, look to us at the end — we are the dancers, we have nothing in common physically, but at the end, you feel why we are there. ■