

P.A.R.T.S.

- Opening PARTS 20 – Speech by Hugo De Greef - President P.A.R.T.S. –

Dear Guests and friends,
Dear formal PARTS students
Dear student of today,
Dear teachers and staff of PARTS,

As the president of the board, together with all my colleagues board members, it's a real pleasure to welcome you at this exceptional opening of this school year 2015-2016 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary. As board we're somewhere far away from the daily work of the school. But we're well aware of that work, by students, teachers and staff. It brought the school through these 20 years at the exceptional level of quality, international image and position in the heart of the performing arts! The board has a mission in all this! An important one, the board provides the condition for making the school possible! And often there's even a need for something more!

While for the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios, given name: PARTS, there is an unique specificity. Of course with the board, we agree on budgets and control them. And we provided clear reports to the government. We take the external evaluations serious and implement the recommendations. We're concerned for keeping the internal goings on track.

But PARTS demands more. We are a school with an exceptional statute within the educational system. We are working with five-year management contracts and a budgetary envelope that we actually spend quite freely within the conditions of this agreement. This requires a permanent consultation and a close relationship of dialogue with the Government. That helps and reinforces the school's stability. It guarantees PARTS independence. Its flexible status helps the success of the school. This model is therefore necessary, the school is grateful for the understanding of the government. It gives the staff of the school the highly needed sharpness, alertness and reflection.

We carried, over the past years, these conversations with the various ministers for education. During these conversations we could fine-tune the mission and the working condition in every new management contract. May I thank all the ministers of education: Luc Van Den Bossche, Marleen Vanderpoorten, Frank Vandebroucke, Pascal Smet. With all we were able to think ahead, all were convinced of this school and the model it stands for, all constructed the beautiful project PARTS is today! And with the new Minister of education, Hilde Crevits, I'm sure it will be no different. We started the conversations for the next management agreement. And everything indicates that we can build further on the 20 years of excellence.

A school educates. Within the arts, and for sure with dance, it's about craftsmanship. But the training doesn't stop there. It is for the young dancers important to, in today's

society to be empowering. This requires in addition to training also reflection and research. For remaining successful in this, for 20 years, a school keeps her agility and the ability to her permanent searching. The board has to assure these working conditions. By staying far away from an institutional system, the management, the staff, the teachers and the students keep their agility, it provides the quality for what PARTS now stands. Recently, this developed into a new dimension. The school works since this year with a three-year training program and a two-year research program. Especially the content of this research program will be for the future the challenge for directors, management and staff. But also for the Government. Its further content development is an essential part of the new management agreement.

PARTS influenced many generations and through this, partly defined dance today! But as remarkable, it gave the city Brussels an image! If Brussels is called the city of contemporary dance, it's for a great deal thanks to PARTS. Not so strongly the school itself but the dancers, the student.

In this frame I have to mention the efforts Parts staff and board did for the foundation of a new dance school in Lausanne. After three years of preparation the school opened one year ago, September 2014.

PARTS is financially healthy. The support from the Flemish government is in this crucial. But there was more in those 20 years. I would like to remind the initial support of the VGC at the start. At specific occasions the minister of culture support projects of the school.

And I really want to underline the collaboration of PARTS with the EC. It gave, and still do, PARTS the possibility to build international networks for presenting the work of the students. The program recognizes the international role of the school! And on top of that thanks to the European Commission, PARTS has been able to build a strong scholarship fund for supporting the students in the cost they have for being in Brussels.

I underline as well the investment the minister of culture recently did to restore and ameliorate the infrastructure of the school!

The board of PARTS is small. We can work intense to keep the school healthy, keep the mission clear and guarantee the future. I profoundly thank my board colleagues of the moment: Annie Declerck, Bernard Focroule, Dirk Renard, Kees Eijrond, Marijke VandeBuerie, Stefaan De Clerck.

But, as the board, we are privileged with the management team. Without discussion, thanks to Theo and his team, their permanent engagement, always attentive for the good of the school, PARTS shines in the international world of dance. Theo, from the beginning you were in and with PARTS. With your full attention for the school and even more, your typical clear, intellectual, respected approach your work becomes to an exceptional level. It guarantees the needed visionary future for the school! Theo, for these 20 years, congratulations and thank you so much ...!

With of course a strong staff, invisible mostly for us but therefore strongly present for the students, it's as well a condition for having this 20 years anniversary of high standing education!

As president of the board, and I'm sure I speak for all my board colleagues, a special thanks for the finance managers. Your precise attention for the finances of PARTS are a tremendous help for the board.

I personally could worked with two of them. For the moment this is Jens Buyschaert, before it was for many years Bob Van Langendonck. Please, thank you very much.

I don't have to tell the long story here and now that I could have, working with an exquisite group of artists. I had that pleasure from the end of the 70ties, beginning of the 80ties. I founded, with and for those artists, Kaaitheater. Kaaitheater, till today remains a reference for the new generations! You have no idea, how I enjoy the importance of this warm nest for the arts!

I remember very well that first meeting with ATDK in 1980. This year, by coincidence, exactly 35 years ago! It's, for me, maybe THAT birthday I honour today!

What you realised in all those years, ATDK, is now already part of dance history. Your many creations witness this historical milestone. PARTS makes this even more valuable! Artists: Not only their art makes them great as well the responsibility they take in the society!

You founded the school together with Bernard Focroule. You gave the school a face, a personality. You inspired and keep inspiring! You watch, the school never loses the critical attitude for itself as you do for your work! And at the same time remain wayward, experimental and keep the trust in your own convictions. For me, it's such an exceptional pleasure to work with an artist and, far more, to support a friend!

To collaborate with you is one of the warmest things in my life!

ATDK, thanks for the school!

Hugo De Greef, Brussels, 8.9.2015.