

# Ask the omniscient potato

By Kristian J. Moi

Title: Identities and collapses thereof

Author: Rasmus S. Bryder

Genre: Drama

In his debut play *Identities and collapses thereof*, the up a-and-coming Rasmus S. Bryder sets out to tackle the problems of death, reality and homotopy theory of Banach algebras. His surrealist roller-coaster ride of (un)dead celebrities, wild animals and a demi-god vegetable accomplishes the task admirably, though, it leaves more questions than it answers. The author, an accomplished keyboard player, is known for his strange and erratic behaviour. He was recently seen giving members of the audience the finger during a concert with his band *Twilight dogs*. In this play we get a glimpse of what goes on behind those thick, dark glasses of his.

The plot, if it can be called that, of *Identities and collapses thereof*, centres around the spirit of Marlon Brando and Paul McCartney discussing a result in homotopy theory of Banach algebras. Eventually, they enlist the help of the omniscient potato and find a kind of solution in the end. At a crucial point early in the play the fact that the mapping  $x \mapsto (t \mapsto t \cdot x)$  is not multiplicative in  $x$  reminds us of the ultimate futility of all struggle for knowledge and understanding. Bryder is here demanding of his audience, if we think about it we can see that the problem is fixed by taking the map  $x \mapsto (t \mapsto x)$  in stead, but the tension introduced by non-multiplicativity will of course be lost.

Although there is an abundance of musical elements the dialog itself is not sung. There are elements of both rhymed and free verse accompanying ordinary prose.

Bryder doesn't let the audience forget that it is watching a play and this renders complete immersion into the story impossible. On the other hand the "feeling of watching a play" is counter balanced by the presence of university lecture elements - the audience will not know whether to laugh, take notes or run headlong for the door. The overall feel is something like that of a mathematician's lucid nightmare.

Alas, I do not think we shall see this play on any stage soon, it is simply too radical and the level of stage technique required is too great. I hope that this does not quell this young playwright's mathematico-dramatic (dramathematic?) inspiration!