

ZÜRCHER THEATER SPEKTAKEL

17.8. — 3.9.23
Final Report

SURE

THAT WAS THE ZÜRCHER THEATER SPEKTAKEL 2023!



Caused a storm of enthusiasm on the Seebühne at the festival opening: «One Song» | Photo: Kira Kynd

GRAND EMOTIONS AT THE START

«What a start!» was the headline of Tages-Anzeiger on the opening weekend of the Zürcher Theater Spektakel 2023. All of those those who experienced the energetic opening show «One Song» by Belgian artist **Miet Warlop** showed their agreement with a standing ovation on a sold-out Seebühne in beautiful summer weather. The touching dance piece «Ôss» by **Marlene Monteiro Freitas & Dançando com a Diferença** as well as the French-Catalan circus company **Baro d'èvel**, which enchanted the audience with breathtaking artistry and poetic imagery in «Falaise», equally caused a stir. The Mexican-Chilean-Austrian choreographer **Amanda Piña's** «The School of Mountains and Water - Mountains in Resistance», was created specifically for the Theater Spektakel and pleaded for a caring approach to nature and all its life forms. The joint walk, which led from the Landiwiese to the Zurich Allmend, was similarly concerned about the sensitive ecosystem in the Alpine region.

As different as the opening productions of 2023 were, they all told in their own way about the unmistakable, increasing fragility of our world, in which people confront the existing crises and impending catastrophes through art and by virtue of their community and their resilience.

As if to emphasise the point, the effects of climate change were dramatically felt on the Landiwiese this year: from over 36° in the shade to storm warnings, thunderstorms and torrential downpours, to a sudden cold snap – a whole range of weather extremes could be experienced during the Theater Spektakel. The well-coordinated festival team had to pull out all the stops behind the scenes to make it possible for the audience to attend the performances despite all adversities.

The festival was also marked by a sincere emotion and a unique juxtaposition of curated international programme and diverse street art. A huge range of artistic formats was on display, from theatre and dance to performance, installations, circus and concerts to discourse and exchange formats – as well as much that defies all the normal categories.



The «Liveboat» stranded on the Landiwiese after a long odyssey | Photo: Zürcher Theater Spektakel

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRISES OF OUR TIME

Many of the international guest performances brought to life the inequalities and injustices of our time. Upon entering the Landiwiese, festival visitors encountered two highly visible installation works, both dedicated to the pressing issue of migration at Europe's external borders: The semi-transparent, walk-through «Liveboat» by **Plastique Fantastique** confronted visitors with excerpts from Homer's *Odyssey* in various languages and invited them to listen and exchange. The video research by **Border Forensics**, staged in two shipping containers, documented, among other things, the journeys of migrants across the Mediterranean Sea, which repeatedly end in death.

A critical view of the exclusion and oppression mechanisms of ruling political systems were equally present in the performative programme. In her entertaining «Symphony of Progress», the Moldovan director and artist **Nicoleta Esinencu** vociferously criticised the exploitation of Eastern European migrant workers in an impressive language concert. In his solo performance «Vendo Humo», co-developed with **Elisa Carricajo**, the Argentinian performance artist and activist **Juan Onofri Barbato**, gave the audience insights into the existence of freelance artists in a financial and socio-political reality marked by hyperinflation and insecurity. From the perspective of women who grew up in Egypt in the nineties, the choreographers Noura Seif Hassanein and Salma Abdel Salam, known as **nasa4nasa**, portrayed our oversaturated present in their short piece «NO MERCY» in a merciless and fast-paced way.

Many of the productions questioned traditional gender roles from different perspectives. **Renata Carvalho**'s piece «Manifesto Transpofágico», which began as a lecture performance and then developed into an intensive, but intimate, exchange with the audience, dealt with discriminatory binary social structures. Dancer **Catol Teixeira** also broke with classical notions of binary identity and physical ideals of beauty in her short solo piece «Clashes Licking». In the impressively precise, gender-critical «Petróleo», the feminist group **Piel de Lava** lampooned Argentinian society, characterised by machismo, only to dare a new perspective at the end. In **Nadia Beugré**'s thrilling dance piece «L'Homme rare», the five performers radically broke with traditional notions of masculinity on stage and earned great applause from the audience. In her touching solo performance «Do You Know This Song?», the New Delhi-based artist **Mallika Taneja** commemorated the women close to her who sacrificed their careers for the family, due to the systemic oppression of patriarchy. Last but not least, South African dancer **Asanda Ruda** performed a powerful act of female emancipation and overcoming conformity in her short piece «Kemet (Black Lands)».



Powerful and angry: The community project «Offering for a Monster» directed by Tamara Cubas | Photo: Kira Kynd

How much and why racist structures unfortunately still shape and determine our society today was made clear by **Wangari Grace & Sven Kacirek** in their musical narrative for children «Colonialism – A Musical Oral History Performance». The transdisciplinary short piece solo «I release you» by the South African artist **Kieron Jina** also dealt with questions of postcolonial historiography. «we wear our wheels with pride and slap your streets with colour ... we said «bonjour» to satan in 1820 ...» by **Robyn Orlin & Moving Into Dance Mophatong** from South Africa was a visually powerful artistic homage to resistance to, and confrontation with, apartheid.

In the community project «Offering for a Monster», led by **Tamara Cubas**, the anger of the more than twenty participating young adults from Zurich in the face of climate emergency, wars, flight and displacement and other global crises was vented in an energetic ritual that got the numerous spectators jump off their seats. **Dimitri Chamblas** equally worked with people from Zurich for his «Slow Show»: On the last day of the festival, fifty amateur performers set a pleasant counterpoint to the fast pace and constant acceleration of our times and drew a big crowd on the Saffainsel one last time.

The encounters and confrontations with such diverse international perspectives on the crises of our present are and remain inscribed in the DNA of the Theater Spektakel; or as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* described it: «The greatest spectacle at the Theatre Spektakel is thinking. Sensual thinking, of course».



The audience celebrated Sudan Archives's fantastic show on the Seebühne | Photo: Kira Kynd

VIRTUOSO BODYWORK, MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS AND STREET ART AT ITS BEST

As always, the Theater Spektakel was also a celebration for all the senses: with visually powerful works such as the virtuoso acrobatic show «Humans 2.0» by **Circa**, the trance-like dance evening «Hmadcha» by **Taoufiq Izeddiou** or the family-friendly yet explosive piece «After all Springville» by **Miet Warlop**, the festival attracted countless people of all ages to the various venues.

Music fans also got their money's worth at the Theater Spektakel. Los Angeles-based musician Betty Brittney Parks, better known as **Sudan Archives**, celebrated love, lust and self-confidence on the sold-out Seebühne. Canadian singer-songwriter **Feist** enchanted the audience with her particularly intimate concert project «Multitudes», co-produced by the Theater Spektakel. The evening, which actually began in the audience with an hour of solo concert, ended in a big pop gesture with a band and video show on wide screen and on stage, without losing an extraordinary closeness and proximity to the audience. During «Orchestra Karaoke», enthusiastic members of the audience were finally allowed to take to the microphone themselves and perform karaoke classics from Züri West to Lady Gaga to the accompaniment of the **Zurich Symphony Orchestra TiFiCo** in front of the full ranks of the Seebühne.

The musical highlights of the festival also included the finely composed work «All Right. Good Night», in which **Helgard Haug** of Rimini Protokoll wove the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines plane MH370 and the progressive dementia of her own father into a touching piece about disappearance and loss, set to a score by electro-pop artist Barbara Morgenstern. «Aphasia» by **Jelena Jureša** evoked images of war violence and brutalisation in an unusual, immersive club setting with live electro music. Just after the halfway point of the festival, the Berlin and Leipzig-based duo **Waqwaq Kingdom** brought their amalgam of dancehall, dub, Nintendo sounds, contemporary electronic music and traditional Japanese minyo to the Clubraum of the Rote Fabrik. And the Catalan musician **Marina Herlop** fascinated her listeners with the extraordinary use of her voice as material that she fragments, breaks, overlays and distorts..



The Zentral remains a crowd-puller | Photo: Kira Kynd

The more than 70 freely accessible performances of international and Swiss street art, music, dance and late-night formats at the **Zentral** attracted hundreds of people of all ages in all weathers. Highlights included the quirky and energetic show by the Finnish band **Muovipussi** and the innovative «Brace for Impact» by the Belgian company **Knot on Hands**, in which three acrobats explored the limits of balance and had to find completely new ways to move. And equal buzz was created by «Jumpcore», in which **Pawel Sakowicz** jumped through the history dance in the recent past, or the incredible acrobatic number «No Magic» by **Philine Dahlmann and Elise Reine**, in which the events kept coming thick and fast. Even late at night, the Zentral still attracted a large audience interested in the various **late-night events**. From panel discussions to readings to quizzes, one could explore «Helvetic discomfort zones», get «into bed with club literature», learn interesting things about poetics and Afrofeminism or deal with the topic of «self-optimisation in the art business». On five days, street artists were once again on the road in inner suburbs and community centres in Zurich City.

Several small interventions could be discovered throughout the festival grounds this year: **Larissa Mettler's** «What's in your name?», **Maria Awander's** «Public Dancefloor», **Friederike Haug's** «Candy for the Mind» and «GetMatched» by **Laura Ritzenfeld and Melanie Durrer** invited people to other perceptions and encounters – and to dance!



Fascinating exchange during «The School of Mountains and Water – Mountain Talks» with Amanda Piña | Photo: Kira Kynd

PLENTY OF ROOM FOR DISCOURSE AND EXCHANGE

The well-attended discourse programme on the Seebühne offered plenty of space for reflection. **Vanessa E. Thompson** gave a stirring lecture on a world without state violence and borders and **Silvia Federici**, an acclaimed icon of feminism, celebrated the resistant and creative potential of bodies and explained to 600 visitors how they can become the starting point for political action. During the evening meetings at the **Stammtisch**, interested visitors could discuss current social issues with artists from the festival programme, activists, academics, or representatives of NGOs. In the queer, inclusive performance café **KAFi Q**, people with and without disabilities met on the upper floor of the Zentral, held workshops and explored art forms together. On the Saffainsel, in the context of the cooperative self-construction project **FINTA+** bauen, a pavilion was built throughout the festival as a meeting space for women, inter-gender, non-binary, trans and agender people. In numerous workshops, discussions and other exchange formats, people were able to unite, network, and contemplate on improving accessibility to craft professions. The Indian artist and curator **Pankaj Tiwari** opened his «TENT» on the Landiwiese for people to meet, listen, learn and cook together. Visitors were invited to share ideas, artistic research, food and drink. With the **Public Warm-Up**, we wanted to get our visitors moving every evening, while being guided by various artists – and get them in the mood for the performances. Given the record temperatures, not too many people felt the need to warm up.

More popular, however, was the **Kids in Dance** initiative, which was held for the third time this year and introduced young people between the ages of 14 and 18 to contemporary dance in playful ways – with workshops, performance visits, debriefings and more. Many enthusiastic participants and listeners also took part in «**Radio Landiwiese**», led by the klipp+klang radio school. Intercultural editorial teams and experienced broadcasters together with young radio enthusiasts and editors put the festival on air every weekend. And the **Filmpodium Zürich** expanded the stage with contributions for the screen, with Jelena Jureša and Renata Carvalho, two artists featuring at the festival with performances displaying their cinematic skills.



Great joy at the award ceremony of this year's ZKB Prizes | Photo: Kira Kynd

ZKB PRIZES 2023

On the last Saturday of the festival, the ZKB Prizes were awarded, with which the Zürcher Kantonalbank, as the main partner, has been honouring artists performing at the festival for over twenty years. **Nadia Beugré** received the ZKB Patronage Prize of CHF 30,000 for the piece «L'homme rare». The international jury (Antje Schupp, Kristina Savickienė, Miriam Ibrahim, Rosette Nteyafas and Shinu Kim) justified their decision, among other things, that the choreographer «together with a remarkable ensemble, has created a unique performance language that is neither homogenising nor exoticising, but assembles different cultural legacies and languages to coexist side by side and yet contributes to one shared whole.»

The jury awarded the ZKB Acknowledgement Prize of CHF 5000 to **Khun Sreynoch & Ny Lai** for their short piece double bill «Sronoh & Snow White». «With outstanding aesthetic precision and entirely without words, the artists have accomplished a unique artistic expression for the unspeakable. The multifaceted use of simple props – fine chalk powder and red lipstick – links the two performance parts like a leap in time, enveloping the dead and the living in a dance with each other. This is how the work provides a space for sisterhood and solidarity across generations, where contemporaries and spirits of ancestors meet, in Cambodia and beyond», the jury wrote.

The ZKB Audience Award of CHF 10,000 went to the Birmingham-based Palestinian artist **Basel Zaraa** for «Dear Laila», an interactive installation about war, displacement and growing up in a refugee camp in Syria – and about everyday life and resistance.



A unique setting for international art: the Landiwiese on Lake Zurich | Photo: Kira Kynd

LARGE AUDIENCE RESPONSE: FACTS UND FIGURES

We look back with great satisfaction on a wonderful Theater Spektakel 2023: With **92 charged performances**, the international theatre and dance festival recorded **20,200 admissions** and an average of around **86% seats sold** from 17 August to 3 September. The more than **70 free performances at the Zentral** were often attended by several hundred spectators, and the **69 events with discourse, workshops and encounter formats** were also very popular.

All in all, an estimated **120,000 people visited the Landiwiese** during this year's Theater Spektakel and enjoyed the multi-faceted international programme, the unique festival atmosphere and the rich gastronomic offerings.

ON THE WAY TO A FESTIVAL FOR EVERYONE

The team of the Zürcher Theater Spektakel has been working for many years to make the festival an inclusive and discrimination-sensitive space. This includes measures for more accessibility, internal workshops and a «Code of Collaboration» as well as an awareness concept that sensitises people to various forms of discrimination and injustice. This year, for the first time, an awareness team was present on the festival grounds on call for people who had an unpleasant experience despite all efforts.

We still have a long way to go on the road to a festival for everyone – also this year we received feedback from different areas that showed us that there is still a lot to do. But we are constantly learning, and we thank all those who critically support us in this.

THANK YOU!

Countless people have helped and supported us with this festival. A huge thank you goes to all our staff for their enormous commitment. We would also like to thank our main partners and various foundations for their generous and loyal support of the festival and its programme: Zürcher Kantonalbank, Swiss Re, Kanton Zürich Fachstelle Kultur, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Clariant Foundation, Ernst Göhner Stiftung, Gönner*innenverein für das Zürcher Theater Spektakel, Stiftung Denk an mich, Georg und Bertha Schwyzer-Winiker Stiftung, Pro Helvetia as well as the Tages-Anzeiger as media partner and the Rote Fabrik as event partner.



A sworn team: The employees of the Zurich Theatre Spectacle Photo: Christian Altorfer

A very special thank you to our audience, who came in such large numbers and always met us with curiosity, openness and positive criticism.

SAVE THE DATE

The next edition of the Zürcher Theater Spektakel will take place from **Thursday 15 August to Sunday 1 September 2024**. We look forward to seeing you there again!

The festival directors

Matthias von Hartz, Sarah Wendle, Veit Kälin