

FRATZ Reflections

Theater o.N. |

Bonds that last



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Publications

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- **Große Sprünge. Künstlerische Begegnungen im Theater mit den Jüngsten** (2014; in German)
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- **FRATZ Reflections. Music theater for the very young** (2017; in German and English)
- **FRATZ Reflections. Another World** (2019; in German and English)
- **FRATZ Reflections. Intersectional perspectives on dance for young audiences** (2020; in German and English)
- **Die Grenzen verwischen. Auf der Suche nach intergenerationellen Formen im Tanz** (2023; in German)





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Introduction

Dagmar Domrös

Dear readers,

In this issue, we've collected some thoughts and observations about the past FRATZ Festival 2022. We are happy to share them with all interested readers. It is both a post-festival reflection for those who attended the festival and symposium, and an insight into the program and discourses for those who did not.

In retrospect, much of FRATZ 2022 was about relationships, and so this collection of essays, production descriptions, and conversations can also be read as a confluence of the various levels of relational work that constitute theater.

Topics included the process of structuring fair working relationships and the special connection between performers and the very young audience at the moment of performance, as well as post- and decolonial relationships.¹

Sustainable relationships

To our great delight, as a special feature of this FRATZ edition we were able to invite the artists from the two FRATZ 2020 international research labs to the festival in 2022 with the productions that had subsequently emerged from their labs. The company KiNiNso Concepts from Nigeria presented **"KOLOFU"** and the team from MusicDance Cape Town, **"TAH DAM!"** The intensity and openness of the research process, which began in December 2019 and reached a first climax in the digital FRATZ Symposium in November 2020, finally culminated in May 2022 in the personal contact that had been sorely missed, with mutual viewings and joint discussions of the works. For us as festival organizers and for the artists involved, this long period of cooperation was beneficial and productive. Trust had time to grow and a sheltered space for exchange was created. Both productions found further presentation venues in their home countries, but also in Germany and Europe.²

The collaboration with Nasheeka Nedsreal, who presented her dance performance **"Flip-Flop"** commissioned by Theater o.N. at the FRATZ Festival, also developed over a longer period of time. Initially engaged as a dancer in Theater o.N.'s baby performance "Future Beats," she contributed to the Symposium 2020 and wrote an article on theater as a utopian space for the FRATZ Reflections 2020.

As part of her series of conversations, **"Did you think of the children?"** author and playwright Marie Yan spoke with the artists of "Flip-Flop," "KOLOFU" and "TAH DAM!" about the importance of long-term working relationships with integrity, the various stages of the creation process, and the emotional work carried out by Black artists in theater. Her summary of this conversation appears under the title **"Bonds that last."** Author and performer Djibril Sall attended a production of "Flip-Flop" He describes his visit to the performance under the title **"The energy of transformation."**

Decolonial encounters

One question that increasingly concerns us in postcolonially oriented theater work is how to deal with the material of a particular culture and tradition in an appreciative and enriching way. At what point can the choice of an artistic medium become so-called cultural appropriation, a practice that makes illegitimate use of the cultural heritage of colonized cultures and derives success or profit from it? Coila-Leah Enderstein and Sumalgy Nuro reflect on this issue in their contribution **"Finding the ground between us."** Since "TAH DAM!" draws on both Western and traditional Mozambican music and dances, such as the Xigubo or the Mapiko mask dance from the north of the country, the two artists share thoughts and questions related to their artistic practice that arose in the staging process of "TAH DAM!" and during the performance tour to Amsterdam and Berlin.

How can we succeed in breaking down rigid aesthetic canons in the performing arts, music and contemporary dance, in broadening Eurocentric views of art – without the presumption of appropriation?

In this year's **research lab "Shadow – Light – Body,"** Florian Bilbao, Wibke Storkan and Chihoco Yanagi also investigated these questions and explored the possibilities of transferring the media of Japanese Kamishibai, Kabuki and shadow theater to dance and body work. The result was, among other things, an exciting discussion on these simmering questions.

Our talks at FRATZ were only a beginning in the necessary work of addressing these issues. In any case, it seems that the key is to look closely at how power positions and resources are distributed, to correct imbalances where possible, and, beyond that, to approach each other with interest and respect.

Creating connection through movement and breath

Isabelle Schäd's work is about the connection between the individual and the group as well as the relationship between the performer and the material. In her dance piece **"HARVEST,"** created in 2021 as part of the Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum, she explores the relationship between humans and nature. The boundaries between the bodies of the three dancers and the willow branches of various sizes on stage dissolve, as they create movement sculptures in ever-changing formations with each other and the material. The performers build a relationship with their audience not so much by direct contact, as through the unconditional concentration on each other and the material. This creates a shared breath with the audience. In her essay **"Material for sensory play,"** Isabelle Schäd describes the process of creating "HARVEST." Andrej Mirčev reflects on the production in his review **"Choreographic cosmic cartography."**

Relationship Triangle: Child – Artist – Parent/Educator

FRATZ Encounters is about the relationships in the triangle between artists, children and accompanying adults. The workshop program with daycare children in four Berlin districts creates first contacts with the performing arts for children and their parents. In cooperation with the involved daycare centers and teachers, our theater educators create encounters with the festival's international artists, accompany the children to a guest performance at the theater, and invite the parents to an afternoon of theater together. Theater work with very young children consists to a large extent of relationship work. Only in a safe, trusting atmosphere can free expression unfold. In conversation with Cindy Ehrlichmann, Julia Gotzmann and Kathleen Rappolt, we discussed what it takes to enter into an artistic exchange with children. One of the productions visited by a FRATZ Encounter daycare center was "Bubbles" at Theater o.N. The musician and performer Daniella Strasfogel was present and describes her impressions in her performance report **"'Bubbles:' Slurping, crunching, splashing, burbling."** The children from INA.KINDER.GARTEN Preußstraße share their experiences of "Bubbles" in pictures that they created after the theater visit and discussed with their teachers at the daycare center. We have compiled a selection in the article **"I saw a pig there"**

We would like to thank all the children, artists, symposium participants and authors for their contributions, for listening to each other and for daring to address difficult topics in productions, conversations and the texts printed here. This courage and openness contribute to FRATZ's ability to understand and perhaps even advance important processes of social change in the performing arts.

- 1 Our festival and curatorial team is a majority white-positioned and multi-privileged group. We are aware that it is an important step to address decolonization processes and to design the program in such a way that hitherto marginalized perspectives become visible on the festival stages. We have embarked on this path over the course of the last three editions of FRATZ. At the same time, we plan to make the team itself and the curatorial advisers more diverse in the future and to delegate the design of parts of the program and symposium. We became aware of the need to further close the difference between organizers and program, for example, when we were asked to speak in press interviews about the festival's focus on decoloniality and it became clear that our white-positioned perspective was limited.
- 2 The processes of the three 2020 research labs on "Race – class – gender: intersectional perspectives in dance and theater for the youngest" are described in detail in FRATZ Reflections 2020. The third research lab 2020 with the artists Caroline Alves, Mareike Jung and Lury S. Trojaborg was also represented in 2022: FRATZ premiered the short film series "Backyard Stories," inspired by the lab's work on "The Superpowers of the Previously Uncelebrated Superheroines" and the question of how queer bodies can be represented in theater for the very young.





Did you think of the children?

Bonds that last

Marie Yan

The first panel of “Did you think of the children?” in 2019, which I was privileged to co-curate and moderate, was where we brought to light the importance of taking into account the inequalities prevalent between children when making work and to not shy away from showing and naming them. From then on, “Did you think of the children?” became an educational space among grown-ups¹ where we learn about adultism and try to tie it to the other structural oppressions that traverse us, for our own sake, but also for that of our audiences.

The 2022 edition of “Did you think of the children?” featured again artists from the productions invited to the festival: choreographers and dancers Cíntia Rangel and Nasheeka Nedsreal (“Flip-Flop”), director Joshua Alabi (“KOLOFU”), urban musician and dancer Sumalgy Nuro and dance artist Thalia Laric (“TAH DAM!”). The theme this time was: Bonds that last.

I wished in this panel to make some of the invisible work visible and to articulate what it means to think of decolonising working relations in performing arts. Particularly, what does it take to commit to a Deep Time² of decolonial practices. That is, after Frantz Fanon and as he is presented by Achille Mbembe:³ recalling that decolonisation, for the colonised, is relational, is about self-ownership. How do we acknowledge, in the details of our relations in the performing arts, this “[b]ecoming human [that] does not only happen ‘in’ time, but through, by means of, almost by virtue of time.” To structure our exchange, I suggested there are more or less four phases that institutions and artists go through when working with one another: **approaching, collaborating, presenting** and **nurturing**. From that, the point of the conversation was to go into the concrete details of our relations, particularly when it comes to BIPOC artists working within mainly white institutions. From the panel on that day and the subsequent small-group discussions, some recommendations emerged that are all a testimony to experience. I transcribe them here as best as I can from memory and the recording made on the day.⁴

1. Approaching

When an institution wishes to work with an artist or a group

Clarity and honesty of purpose

In the small group discussions, artists mentioned how frustrating auditions can be that do not clearly acknowledge that they are after certain demographics. One artist recalled having to organise to attend an audition and arriving on the spot, to realise the agent was clearly after white dancers although they had not mentioned it in their ad.

Organising for an audition or a meeting means, as we know, a range of effort, expenses and mental charges that, if they are part of the performing artist’s life, have to take into account that taking time off will often be harder and financially more detrimental to BIPOC people as they will be more likely to already depend on fewer resources. This clarity is not only a question of logistics. In the case of attempts at decolonising practices and in the context of mainly white institutions, it is also about not reproducing a white supremacist culture of assuming BIPOC’ time and labour to be an expansive, readily available resource.

Visibility of curatorial interests and conditions of first contact

Artists often want to approach institutions, but do not know how. A page dedicated to briefly explaining how an institution picks projects and whether they have particular interests at a given moment helps reduce the inequality caused by co-opting systems. This can be done while taking into account, as Vera Strobel, co-artistic director from Theater o.N. remarked, the scale of one’s own institution. Not all institutions have readily available funds for creating new work based on open calls, but even acknowledging it openly or giving a timeframe for groups to send in material to be considered for programming can support a culture of approachability and transparency.

Visibility of efforts towards a culture of justice⁵

It came to light in our small-group discussions that BIPOC artists can find daunting not having any sense of the efforts an institution has already put into questioning its own practices; they end up relying on guesses and words of mouth. Although it is impossible to train-away structural racism or to decolonise institutions

whose very existence is deeply entangled with (neo)colonial relations; it can be useful to mention which sensitivity training the staff has undergone or if the institution includes the antiracism, anti-discrimination clause⁶ in its contracts; if such themes are being discussed at all and if fee policies have been homogenised for all freelancers. For example in a simple document downloadable on the institution's website. The visibility of these efforts shouldn't fall into performativity⁷ and remain factual.

Awareness of different political contexts, privileging direct contact

During our small-group discussion, one of the artists highlighted how state-surveillance can affect one's online presence, in this case, in Mozambique. Depending on what an artist makes public about their political views, they might or might not be approached by governmental agencies for work; with the added challenge that social media profiles could also be monitored. Here decolonising is putting time into researching the context of an artist. This does not mean making assumptions, but coming into contact with some knowledge, ready to be used for extending empathy and adaptability on the part of the institution. In that particular case, privileging direct contact with artists to get to know them seems the best response.

2. Collaboration

Between the artists and the institutions

Deep Time

Sumalgy Nuro, dancer and musician in "TAH DAM!": "I do traditional dance from Mozambique. [...] The material I brought in, some of it includes two different traditions of dance. One of them is a mask dance. It's a secret dance where you are not actually supposed to know who is behind the mask. So it has this secrecy and it's also from a matrilineal tribe and only men can do it, it's when men have the chance to show their power, in a way. And the other one is a warrior dance, Xigubo, from the South of Mozambique, but also [present] in South Africa, as well as in Swaziland⁸. So to be able to bring all this together in Mozambique, we had to go through phases. Like with the mask dance for example: fifteen years ago we were even not allowed to do this dance on stage and then, to bring the mask on stage we had to put sand on [it]. And then, we [could] perform without sand and now we can even perform outside of Mozambique. But there was all this process of transformation so that people let it go and allow it to happen." In the frame of decolonising practices, it is important to remember that decolonisation is not a metaphor⁹, but an effort of communities and individuals to restore strength and sovereignty over their lands, their cultures and themselves, to reopen the circulation of lifelines and art where it may have been cut. Institutions

who come into an employment relation with BIPOC artists benefit from this Deep Time of research that happened without them and often despite them. What earnestness does it invite from white-dominated institutions, when looking at a dance piece, to think not from a position of acquisition or curation of living individuals or collectives of artists, but to think instead about *being let into* a historical process that artists and communities themselves carry under the eyes of the Deep Time?



Unconditionality of the space offered

During the small-group discussions, Nasheeka Nedsreal mentioned the importance of institutions letting BIPOC as freely as possible devise their own work, to not impose elements of discourse. She recalled for instance a successful collaboration with the Kampnagel Festival for her film "Memories of Reincarnated Imagings."

It stresses for me how a free exploration is definitely an element of the decolonisation of arts practices. The unconditionality of the space offered is a way to answer to the lived experience of BIPOC artists whose access to and existence in many spaces in the arts is heavily conditioned, even by progressist politics. I have heard artists friends of mine being repeatedly asked to and expected to perform a certain identity to access space. A demand which creates a loop, both acknowledging the need for one's presence, but conditioning that presence on the performance of one's identity to legitimise it.¹⁰

Collaboration between the artists themselves

A generous space

Because of the multicultural background of the team and the South African context of production, I was very curious to know

if the artists of “TAH DAM!” had to discuss any specific precautions when using the choreographic and musical material they had, if there was any of it that demanded specific care to not be appropriated. Which is how Sumalgy Nuro’s answer above came. About the relations between artists themselves, choreographer Thalia Laric stressed during the panel and in a later exchange, that the team “worked collaboratively and practiced agency, that the material came from the individual performers, from their backgrounds” and so “it felt right, it felt good. Just being in a generous space with each other that was quite the way that we had to do [it], and we allowed [the material] to transform as well.” Her answer spoke to me of the irreplaceable role of each artist’s responsibility in carrying their own history when bringing material to the space; it pointed at the too often invisible emotional labour involved in articulating generosity and responsibility.

Deconstructing as decolonising

Cíntia Rangel: “[...] we spoke a lot about how we can also decolonise the way that we are working. For example, I have a son, he is six years old, and then I was ‘Oh Sheeka, sorry but next week I need to take my son with me because you know I have a lot of problems ...’ And then somehow I am like: but why? [...] I’m doing a piece for kids, but my kid is not welcome? But nobody said this, it was my mind. The history that I have in my background made me to be sorry [...] when we have this kind of stability [with the institutions] we can start to think a little bit deeper how everyday we can deconstruct something that is not obvious, but that is there.”



3. Presenting

The moment of presenting the piece, the performance, is a moment of representation. Presence of a body on stage, representation of other bodies through that body. Liberal discourses crystal-

lise around the question of representation and diversity on stage. But these are far from enough, if the artists are not sovereign in their decisions or only fulfil the diversity agenda of institutions. We went through some aspects of the ethical relation that presenting a piece of work involving BIPOC artists implies, how to avoid tokenism and why what is on stage is indissociable to how it came to be on stage. Representation has a double meaning, just as in society as a whole: it is a question of visibility, and it is a question of (self-)governance. BIPOC artists need to have full ownership over what they decide to perform. If not, performing arts cannot pretend to point at the political horizon of liberation.



Pleasure and trust

Nasheeka Nedsreal: “I grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, a very Black place so I never had this felling of what it’s like not to have a very large, strong community. I’ve been thinking recently how to come back to this place, where identity and being a Black person and being a Black woman and being a queer person is not the first thing on my mind. [...] After reading Adrienne Maree Brown’s “Pleasure activism”¹¹ I’ve been thinking: ‘How can I find pleasure in what I do?’ So with “Flip-Flop”, we just looked around: what do we have? What do kids have? What’s something we have at home? And with kids we just kind of started to play. [...] Now that the piece is finished I’m really realising how it’s about trying to find a place where the smile is not something polite – ‘Oh yes, here I am, I’m surviving’ – but something that’s real and joyous, that’s playful. But thinking about our experiences as Black women and trying to figure out: ok, but how can we play with that? What is this desire of transformation and freedom that we were trying to reach in our daily lives?”

Cintia Rangel: “Something I remember is: the first wish that we had was ‘Ok let’s dance and have this pleasure about moving about,’ this pleasure about moving, about dancing, but also with this responsibility. About what are you doing and for who you are doing it for. Even if it was not in focus, but it was always something that we had in mind. Like being a Black woman, a Black person and also our background, our culture, how we grow up in our ‘Heimat’¹²? – our country, yes.”

I see in both Nasheeka Nedsreal’s and Cintia Rangel’s articulation of the politics of pleasure with responsibility further arguments for the importance of unconditionally offering space for creating. Artists will do the work when offered space and no matter the subject, look into their innermost experiences for it.

Space for transformation

Decolonisation is about transformation. Performing arts, particularly when it comes to performing arts for the very young, has to be a place of transformation for all parties involved, but no token of that transformation is owned. It might be secret, intimate, it might not be said or shared. It is often the case that the art world asks from working relations that they be more than that. That emotional labour is implicitly demanded to show how much as an artist you appreciated the space that was given to you, how much you learned in the process. I find it particularly important in the case of BIPOC artists working within white institutions that this is not asked. That it be assumed that presenting the work, a finished piece of work, a fragile piece of work, a piece of work that always asks of us to be vulnerable at least to some degree, *is* the transformation, *is* the process of rebuilding trust. In the later group discussions, Dagmar Domrös, co-artistic director of Theater o.N., reported a similar thought, sharing how, as festival makers, you do not want to force artists to interpret their own work, and as a result it can be difficult to communicate about the themes of a festival or a piece. But that it remains important, again, as festival makers, to leave artists free to keep to themselves the inner mechanisms and origins of a piece.

4. Nurturing, Caring

Earlier in this text is the phrase “Decolonization is not a metaphor” coined ten years ago by scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang ten years ago. It means that as long as land is occupied, as long as people are not free to self-determine, as long as neocolonial exploitation of land and people exist, decolonisation will not end. Therefore engaging in decolonising practices is necessarily engaging in nurturing and caring for relations that are meant to shape the Deep Time among us, between children and us, grown-ups, between children growing up together, between children growing or apart, impacted from one side of the globe to the

other by inherited racial inequalities. Here below are some points we touched on about nurturing and caring for these relations, in very concrete ways.

Making work despite bureaucracy

Joshua Alabi talked about the economic, political and emotional impact of dealing with bureaucracy. He described what happened when the piece *Sandscapes* was invited to FRATZ in 2017: “We have worked a lot in Lagos, trying to establish a presence. We got an invitation, we got full funding for everything, we applied for the visa and we were refused. We were all refused because we were applying for the first time as a group.¹³ [...] Tickets fees had to be returned. The festival must have lost so much money [...] It was a difficult process because for the undergraduates among us it was the moment for them to decide if they continue to study theatre or not. ‘What’s the future?’ Our response was to create more art, more art into their hearts, into their faces. We started to bombard them. We needed to be seen and we needed to be heard. The following year we got invitations, we attended “Starke Stücke” and then FRATZ. And in a later exchange: “My team members were all devastated because our fate was determined due to policies that lacked fairness and balance. It was such a horrible feeling to know that the same office that refuses visas and the offices that granted us funding both work under the same government, for the same country, with money of this same public who have been denied the experience and freshness our work would have brought.”



The panel shared experiences they had with visas and the truth is that only repetition, that is, as Sumalgy Nuro put it, seeing the several stamps and line on one’s passport can speed up the process of being allowed to travel for guest performances.

Similarly for Joshua Alabi and KiNiNso Koncepts. After the visas were declined for the entire team in 2017, the following year he could come as an observer of FRATZ 2019 and finally, in 2022, have an entire guest performance. A commitment over several years to artists without passport privilege, which is the case for the majority of artists from post-colonial national contexts, is vitally important to strengthen their case when facing bureaucratic discrimination¹⁴. Learning to ease the bureaucratic burden weighing on artists is an important area of care. Bureaucracy, a part of neocolonial relations, is a tool of control which reproduces relations where the time and efforts of BIPOC is seen as expandable. Bureaucracy itself cannot be decolonised, but acknowledging and fighting against its discriminatory practices is an essential proof of commitment towards decolonising the production of performing arts.

How to nurture independence

Joshua Alabi raised several points on how neocolonial relations persist through the funding system:¹⁵ “In terms of decolonising even the relationship: [...] we are trying to create a lasting relationship with the EU and the Goethe Institute, that’s what we have created in the last six years. And suddenly it’s cut because there’s a new director who is not interested in anything theatre or dance or performing arts and then we have to find again what impresses that particular person. [Living in a country that has zero funding for the arts, we are locked in this web of having to do other jobs to make money and fund our performances or rather do whatever needs to be done to be at the mercy of these international organisations who have the budget for the arts.] But while we are scouting for all theses organisations [we lose the core essence of our work as we now have to constantly adapt our work. It puts our artistic freedom at high risk.] How do we decolonise ourselves from having to do our work first and foremost about what they want to talk about? [...] How do we as artists begin to break free? Maintaining these relationships, getting the desired resources that we need, and then get to have our own voices, our art, addressing those peculiar issues from our own homes, mind-boggling issues, as well as what the society and the global population needs.”

The transformative power of lasting relations

Sumalgy Nuro: “I started dancing [...] because some people from my township¹⁶ did art to promote safe spaces for the kids. It was from a very young age: vulnerable and orphan kids, kids with HIV, kids with no access to school. So dance was what guided us, but we had so many other benefits through that because we managed to get kids into schools, there were also other NGOs that wanted to support our township [and] the support didn’t come just to the people in my group, but to the whole township. If someone asks me now what changed my township, why now anyone can come to my house at 3 a.m., but ten years ago you

were wrong. Ten years ago you don’t even cross the street, not even me. [...] I remember once at school a teacher asks me [...]: ‘What do you want to become when you’re older?’ ‘I just want to finish this grade and then become a gangster.’ [...] We were the next generation to feed that system of gangsters, but because of music, dance and theatre then we started to see things differently. There were opportunities that came to the area. [...] Everyone that started dancing with me, now they’re not dancers anymore, but at least they do different things, different jobs, different ways of going forward without necessarily being what we could see in our environment only.”



The small-group discussions only reinforced what Sumalgy Nuro shared during the panel. Performing artist Mareike Jung for example talked about how the stretched-out temporalities of the pandemic created the circumstances of a kind of “slow art” that allowed for the work to deepen; the temporality of FRATZ’s performing research labs with open sharings, which can later develop into a performance and then be programmed was very much appreciated as well for the relation it allowed over the course of a few years. Finally, Aniefiok Inyang, performer in “KOLOFU”, asked: “How do we sustain a collaboration beyond just a piece? When the piece is gone, how do we create more sustainability? [...] How do we ensure it runs, it continues, it has an impact on those involved?”

Until the next conversation

I would look at decolonising practices in the performing arts for the very young as one way to link local cultures of art production and system change. These practices are a laboratory for fair relations whose conclusions and expansion are ours to draw and demand from a wider context. They are a place where we dedicate

ourselves to a Deep Time of reinventing relations, with consistency and a commitment to action. I want to thank here again all the panelists of the talk, the audience, the participants to the small-group discussions and FRATZ Festival for this exchange, where we created a space that felt open, generous, but again dedicated to articulate racial, class, geographical, geopolitical inequalities so we could keep building and imagining common grounds on which to create arts for younger generations of humans.

- 1 The question came up during the first event as to why there were no children on the panel. We shouldn't place on children the burden to educate us about adultism. But there might be a time and format where their direct contribution to the event can become the next logical step.
- 2 I experimentally use here this expression coined by the Annales School of historians, which makes the study of periods going from centuries to millennia possible and allows for cycles to emerge.
- 3 In "Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive", Achille Mbembe, Lecture given at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in 2015.
- 4 In the following text, I insert quotes from our conversations. They act as remembrance of the day's exchange, my following thoughts are prolongations indebted to these exchanges and my views do not necessarily reflect the ones of the artists quoted.
- 5 These efforts would elsewhere be called "inclusivity efforts." I knowingly do not use the term "inclusivity" brought about by a conception of state-funded art being tasked to "include the excluded", solidifying the "excluded" as at fault in their own exclusion, instead of society at large being set in motion to question systemic mechanisms of exclusion.
- 6 For reference: <https://www.antirassismusklausel.de/> (in German)
- 7 I was for example in a working relation with a theatre that had signed the declaration by "Die Vielen" and plastered it on their front door. "Die Vielen" ("The Many") is a network of cultural institutions and activists in the fields of arts and culture which started in Germany. They have come together in 2018 to write several declarations which "lay out a clear position against group-focused enmity, right-wing extremism and attacks against artistic freedom." Although the intersection of right-wing extremism and race-based violence is obvious, the theatre had gone through no reflection about decolonising practices. They subsequently rebuked with uninformed excuses, my asking for the anti-discrimination clause.
- 8 Officially called Kingdom of Eswatini since 2018.
- 9 Indebted to: Tuck, E./Yang, K. W.: Decolonization is not a metaphor. In: Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1 (1) 2012, page 1–40
- 10 An example of this can be found in "Queer. An interview with Iury Salustiano Trojaborg", FRATZ Reflections, 2020, page 12 – 15.
- 11 Adrienne Maree Brown: Pleasure activism: the politics of feeling good, AK Press, 2019
- 12 Cintia Rangel was asking for the equivalent in English here.
- 13 Joshua Alabi described that the criteria that played into this refusal were age (they were all young), nationality (Nigerian), resources (they didn't have much savings), matrimonial status (none were married) and employment (none had full-time corporate jobs).
- 14 But there again, it is important to note that easier travel does not mean in any case easy, as an absolute; since border control police can always pursue discriminatory practices, with or without the right visa. As renowned Black South African choreographer Mamela Nyamza publicly reported on social media on the 20th October 2022, entering Europe for an engagement in Zurich: "Travelling chronicles, entering Europe. / These questions, they give us anxiety... / 1. What do you do? / 2. Please show us something that says you are an artist. / 3. Which genre of Art? / 4. Do you have a video of you choreographing or performing/ dancing? / I showed them Wikipedia, and they were showing each other and actually shocked as if I was telling them a lie." source: <https://bit.ly/3uEygdD> (last consulted: 12/12/2022)
- 15 In the following quote, sentences between square brackets were added upon the review of it by the speaker.
- 16 Maxaquene "A" in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, source: <https://sumalgyjafar.wixsite.com/suma/bio>



The Energy of Transformation

Response to “Flip-Flop”

Djibril Sall

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I sat down to watch Nasheeka Nedsreal's "Flip-Flop" at Theater o.N. I hadn't watched a theater show for children since I was a child basically and I had to sit through a particularly serious milieu of experimental Berlin performances beforehand so I was hoping for something more lighthearted – an actual escape from reality. So there I was at 10 in the morning with a huge group of children, giddy and happy to be out of kindergarden and whatever obligations they regularly had. The energy seemed so familiar to me – like all the times that I was on an exciting field trip to experience something besides memorizing math equations, spelling tests, closed and heavily supervised rooms. The novelty of these experiences really opened my heart to the activities we took a trip to see – whether appreciating the beauty of the orchestra, getting “lost” on an adventure at the zoo (and off course the unfortunate innocence to not ask why those animals were imprisoned so far from their homes?), experiencing the camaraderie and hype of competitive sports at a professional hockey game, or completely suspending belief to appreciate the whimsy and spectacle of a stage performance. As a child, these were enriching moments for me that have contributed greatly to my interests and have made me a more critical, empathetic, and sensitive person.

What I loved about “Flip-Flop” was its absurdity and how it used that absurdity to tell a relatively simple story about play and creativity. The performers overact and never let the whimsy drop, they are fully committed to the performance personas they've constructed. These personas carry them from act to act and encourage us to suspend our disbelief; from speaking in gibberish inflexed with some Portuguese, English, and German to performing comedic, grotesque dances, the big message was to let our imaginations take the wheel. The dance work itself is incredibly demanding and exhausting but I could never tell that they were not enjoying their work; their energy and smiles betrayed the stress they were putting their bodies through. And I think for adults especially, the underlying message was to put away the critical gaze and be in the moment. The creativity further extended to the props they used – looking at the props they were relatively regular items but the performers used them in a way that implied (in a kid friendly way) body horror and transformation into different creatures with exaggerated but believable bodily functions. The performers are swallowed by plastic bags and then turn into

disembodied heads, then these heads extend into wormlike tub monsters, they connect and turn into a tunnel – throughout the performance there was this palpable energy of transformation. From the beginning with the long interconnected socks to the incorporation of rhythmic hand games, the idea behind the piece is the rapid pace of change and creativity that comes with a childlike state of play. It really reconfirms to me that we use cartoons and children's games to explain to children things that we might not be so comfortable talking to them about.

I also loved how the children interacted with the show. It wasn't hard to tell that they loved the show and that it stimulated some sort of creative drive within them. They enthusiastically interacted with the performers when asked the questions and seemed fully invested in the performance. It reminded me of the shows I used to watch as a child such as Dora the Explorer, Blues Clues, and Little Bill and just like the magic of those shows, the children felt so involved in the trajectory and energy of the show. In the simplest terms it was a call-and-response, a community building tool for getting attention – it is widely used in parties, the church, and at sports events in many Africanist cultures. As well, I had the chance to catch this show with a group of Afro-Deutsch kids and that also had its own special magic. The nature of discrimination, ethnic segregation, and racism kills the innocence in a child of color at an earlier age. For me, these are precious moments when kids can be kids and we, adults, can also join them where they are.



Finding the Ground Between Us

Conversations and reflections on decolonisation prompted
by “TAH DAM!”

Coila-Leah Enderstein and Sumalgy Nuro

“Listening as critique” is not the artifice of a critique that judges and prescribes a utopia, nor the arrogance of a critique that denies hope; it is a critique that opens, that humbles, a critique that builds understanding in and through listening.”

Rolando Vázquez¹

(a score for decolonial listening)

Come to know where you are,
Re/member where you come from.

Listen back in time, for a long time.
Listen across and through dividing lines.

Become loose with what you know
And be open to contradiction.

Let yourself be influenced.

Meet the spirit of your instrument,
Invite reciprocity.

Play from the ground, into the future.

Bring others with you.

“TAH DAM!,” 2020. Cape Town.

A team of musicians and dancers is creating the “Earth Song,” one section of a work for children called “TAH DAM!”. The atmosphere is tender – we are in the thick of a harsh Covid lockdown and we’ve managed to find a loophole in the regulations in order to continue our work as artists.

The Earth Song is about the body’s relationship with the earth: the act of going down, which cannot happen without its complement – going up. What emerges from the sequence of movements bringing the body to the earth and away from it is *rhythm*, the basis of our material for this section. While developing the content, Vintani proposes a rhythm on the djembe drum from a traditional Mozambican dance called “Xigubo.” Suma quickly

recognises it and begins to explore the movements traditionally paired with the rhythm. Vintani subsequently proposes another rhythm – that of the Mapiko mask dance from northern Mozambique.²

Coila’s Western-trained ears struggle to find the “downbeat”³ in both sections. Possibly because the impetus of the music and movement moves from bottom to top and not the reverse, as is the case in Western music. What is Coila’s relationship to this material and what can she contribute with the piano that is meaningful? While she gets caught in traps of her own making, Suma and Vintani reserve any criticism and simply allow her the time it takes to internalise the sound.

A critique that opens

Coila: Where did you first come across the term “decolonisation?”

Suma: In school, I guess – primary school. Related to Mozambican independence, so it was about political and structural changes.

Coila: How has your idea of that word changed as you grew up and in different contexts?

Suma: In a way, being a dancer, being a musician in an African context, you have to decolonise your mind. Because there is an idea of how things have to be done, and art, or music and dance, it doesn’t have a certain category. At least in my own home, it wasn’t seen as something you can become. So for me to do that I had to, in a way, break the mindset of the coloniser. Which was that a person has to go to school, and go to university and study a profession or “normal” job like accounting or medicine. So already with my very young age, I stepped out from that box because of my passion for the arts.

When did you first hear about decolonisation?

Coila: I don’t know when I came across the word decolonisation, but when I was in primary school, my school was actually a colonial heritage site and in the anthem they refer to “the old Cape Governor’s garden.”

"In the fields of arum lilies and the hedge of azure blue, with the golden sunshine round us, we learn twice one are two."

I was at that school just a few years after apartheid ended so it was this weird moment of "Rainbow Nation-ism"⁴ – kind of naively celebrating diversity, while also still celebrating colonialism in a way.

It was only with the student protests in South Africa from 2016 – RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall – that I first heard about decolonisation as something other than a process of independence from colonial governance. It was about decolonising the curriculum and all the other social spheres, things that I had kind of taken for granted as a white South African. That was the beginning of a process of reflection on my own "coloniality," my role as someone continuing a legacy of settler colonialism. And this reflection later became an explicit part of my artistic practice and expression.



"Together At Home, Dance And Music" ("TAH DAM!") is a project developed in the frame of the FRATZ Labs in 2020 in collaboration with ASSITEJ South Africa and presented live at the FRATZ Festival in 2022. The project was created by performers Manuela Lucia Tessi, Thalia Laric, Vintani Nafassi, Sumalgy Nuro and Coila-Leah Enderstein, with dramaturgy by Nicola Elliot, research by Faye Kabali-Kagwa and video by Lindsey Appolis. "TAH DAM!" emerges from the performers' shared background in interdisciplinary improvisation: in meeting through a project called "MusicDance," they have been developing collective practices of listening and creating across different backgrounds since 2019.

So I only really began to do something political with art later on. But for you, when you became involved in the arts, did you already start to associate a kind of decolonial approach with being an artist?

Suma: At that time I wouldn't call it decolonisation, I would call it being a rebel. And because of my being a rebel, I got to experience many things and shape my brain in a different way. And because of being an artist, in a more limitless way, especially doing contemporary dance.

I have a background in traditional dance. When colonisation came and named things, it put traditional dance into a box. And because this happened over generations and generations, there was an agreement from even our side, that things could only be done in a particular way, and anything beyond that didn't belong with it. So it was quite conservative.

Then, jumping into contemporary dance was like an opening for me. My perception is that you can acknowledge the shape and form and origins of certain material, but expand and develop from there. The only way I could understand this was by seeing things from the outside, and contemporary dance was actually what gave me that tool. The contemporary dance framework for me was about liberating yourself and exploring, allowing what is out there to influence you.

"TAH DAM!," 2022. Amsterdam.

Bringing the "TAH DAM!" production to Europe brings us deeper into the tensions of colonial structures within and beyond the production context. The Mozambican team members have to jump various hurdles just to be allowed into the confines of Europe. Then, "What is this?" as airport security officers look sceptically at Suma and Vintani's instruments. Power relations and cultural differences provoke various scales of friction in the team.

We are passing on the material of the Earth Song, along with the other "Songs," to a substitute pianist, Kristjan, for a performance in Belgium. Like Coila, Krystian has Western musical training. *Ka – karah – Ka, ka ka ka – Ka – karah – Ka, ka ka ka*. This is how the rhythm of the Mapiko section has been "transcribed" by Suma. Coila counts the "downbeat" in a Western 2/4 time signature, while Suma and Vintani count according to the movements in the dance. The Xigubu's vocalised rhythm, *GadING, gadingy ding, gadingy dingy – GadING, gadingy ding, gadingy dingy* – becomes something of a running joke between us.

Through passing on the score of the piece orally and aurally, we learn more about our respective frames of reference. Once again there is an open invitation for Kristjan to react as he chooses as to adding and transforming the quasi quotation of traditional material.

A critique that builds understanding through listening

Coila: Cultural appropriation is reprehensible or unethical if a person who benefits from global structures in society more than the culture they're adopting from, uses elements of that for their own advancement. For example, white composers using elements of traditional African music have been criticised for a lack of a particular kind of engagement or becoming famous because it's considered novel and interesting in the West. In your case, you are from Mozambique but the Mapiko dance is not from your heritage specifically, and you've mentioned some people might be offended by your use of it. What, for you, is an ethical relationship to the material?



Suma: I believe that the intention when you approach this material and how much you benefit the material in the way you use it, is what matters most. Everywhere I dance Mapiko, people will learn about why Mapiko exists, and what it means for the people who do it. When it comes to instruments, I'm not only making sure that other people get to see and to know them, but I'm also open to letting them influence me as an individual and influence whoever comes across them.

I have no intention of becoming famous. I feel good in what I do because my vision is to mainly benefit the continent, the community, and the future generations. That's why I find comfort in being around all these spirits. The instruments are souls that I have around me, living souls that I carry with me everywhere I go. I also acknowledge that the Mapiko mask is not just static, because when I wear that mask I'm not myself anymore. I give something from my side to the material I explore. I don't take any ownership over the outcome in this connection.

Coila: When it's appropriative, it's not actually an exchange as you describe. There's a kind of extractive quality to engaging with the material. And that is what colonialism is.

Suma: Yes, it's about the principles in what you do, how you do it and for whom you do it.

"TAH DAM!," 2022. Berlin.

At a theatre in Neukölln, the energy and attention of the room focuses as the Earth Song is set up by the performers. A game of stepping and stomping invites a steady pulse from the musicians that eventually transforms: *Ka – karah – Ka, ka ka ka*. Suma feels the energy of the whole room align as he delivers this explosive section with powerful jumps (or landings) synchronised with the rhythmic intensity of the djembe and piano.

What is happening as a room of racially diverse children and adults witness this moment? Does it mean something for them to see a mixed tradition, mixed race production? Or does the diversity come across as superficial? Does the reference to traditional African forms reinforce an idea of African culture as history, static, and deeply exotic, or is it readable that these forms are being adapted and transformed through encounter? How much of this can a child perceive?

After the performance, children approach the instruments with burgeoning curiosity. Teachers and parents rush up to the performers, requesting photographs with Vintani and Suma.

A critique that humbles

Suma: How do you approach decolonisation in your work?

Coila: My aim is to draw attention to how coloniality⁵ persists in or shapes the present. In the past few years I've been working with sites, as well as the piano, trying to de-universalise European culture and epistemology. And focusing on listening and perception. But can I say I am doing decolonisation? I'm not really doing activism, I'm doing internal work, creating awareness, provoking reflection. There are different spheres in which coloniality operates and that's also why decolonisation is not just one thing, and there is also different work to be done for different people. Decolonial scholars emphasise that decolonisation should be grounded in practice, justice and repair. It's something I at least try to inform my own productions with, where I have more agency about the finances.

The word "decolonisation" has become more and more mainstream, and therefore more opaque and sometimes reductive. I think the terms and the critique are context-dependent, and need to be developing all the time. Colonial critique needs to make openings instead of closures. I've found myself becoming

attached to certain rules and ideas, and these ideas can get stuck in a Western or often U.S.-centred context. Class and locality, personality... they all influence relations. I've learned there's a balance between acknowledging the structures that shape our experiences and identities, and being present for what is happening in front of you, not becoming arrogant or indignant in that analysis.

Suma: Being more open to being influenced by the other.

Coila: Exactly.

What does decolonial work mean for you right now?

Suma: Wanting to find other ways, not believing that one plus one can only be two. I'm interested in transforming "traditional" forms. I play instruments of all different places, and play them differently than how they are played where they are from. Some people would find that an insult. The Mapiko dance was almost extinguished at some point because they didn't want it to get out of the villages. The people doing the dance couldn't benefit economically from the dance. So there were many processes of bringing this material to the stage and opening it up. So I also want to bring information about instruments to people, manifest material from the past and inspire people in the present.

I studied music over the past five years not by sitting at school, but by doing deep research, deep listenings, learning how to make instruments and how to repair them, going to search for instruments whose people don't even know about their existence anymore. Now I wish to say, "Anyone can come to my house and play. These instruments are not just here for me."

Bring others with you.

Play from the ground, into the future.

Invite reciprocity,
Meet the spirit of your instrument.

Let yourself be influenced.

Be open to contradiction,
Become loose with what you know.

Listen across and through dividing lines.
Listen back in time, for a long time.

Re/member where you come from.
Come to know where you are.

(a score for decolonial listening)

- 1 Rolando Vazquez: Towards a Decolonial Critique of Modernity Buen Vivir, Relationality and the Task of Listening. In: Raúl Fomet-Betancourt (Ed.): Raúl Fomet-Betancourt (Hrsg.): Kapital, Armut, Entwicklung. Capital, Poverty, Development. Capital, Pobreza, Desarrollo. Dokumentation des XV. Internationalen Seminars des Dialogprogramms Nord-Süd, Denktraditionen im Dialog: Studien zur Befreiung und Interkulturalität, Band 33, Mainz 2012
- 2 Mapiko is associated with the Makonde people and makes use of mask art and theatre to express traditional Makonde values and channel the ancestral spirits of the Makonde people.
- 3 The emphasised beat, usually the first in a series of regular cycles
- 4 "Rainbow Nation-ism" is the set of narratives used by the South African government to promote unity across racial and economic lines after 1994. It has become associated with a superficial celebration of polyculturalism that distracts from a lack of justice for the crimes of apartheid and colonialism.
- 5 "Coloniality," a term attributed to Peruvian scholar Anibal Quijano, is the world-system that was established with European colonialism from the 16th century and includes all the ways in which these histories continue to shape the present. In this vein of thought coloniality is ongoing, and based on the erasure of other worlds and knowledge systems, and fuelled by modernity's discourse of development and progress.

Material for Sensory Play

Thoughts on the creative process of “HARVEST”

Isabelle Schad

On receiving the invitation from the Theater o.N. to make a piece for a very young audience aged three and up, I started looking for some kind of material we could play about and move with. Quite soon I had the idea of looking at the harvest from the Wiesenburg garden, where we built our working space, the Tanzhalle. First try-outs with this “existing” material took place well in advance, about six months before the start of the actual working process. Because to me it’s only worthwhile to make a piece, or several pieces, if the relationship between the material and ourselves, our movements and senses, seems exciting.

Precision and strong energy

From the very first day it’s clear that the harvested willow branches, thick ones and thin ones, large, small or medium, have a wonderfully surprising life of their own.

The large branches are long enough to take up the width of our hall when balanced in one hand and the person shifts their center of gravity behind the hand to initiate a circular movement. So the dancers need extreme precision to avoid touching the walls. At the same time this brings an amazing, giant “machine” to life in the space, and a very strong energy. How little muscle power it takes to set the long sticks in motion, and how much dexterity, perception and understanding of weight displacement, of inner and outer forces, to make them hover and turn, to set them in motion, to shift them into the vertical or horizontal!

The training with stick and sword that I initiated in the Humboldthain park after the second lockdown contributed a lot here. These open training sessions arose in the spirit of dealing with what’s there – that is, having to respond to a situation in which physical proximity and training in enclosed spaces were impossible. In order to train with sticks everyone needs a lot of space around them – so the park was just right. We meet in all weathers, even in the snow. The most important thing when practicing aikido with weapons is not to attempt to move the stick or sword, but first and foremost to move oneself. From this our basic understanding of how to use the material grew immensely – without having to start working towards a “creation.”

Respect for nature

I think that this daily training, which draws on elements of aikido and somatic practices, is a wonderful basis for the development of any piece. Beyond the choreographic work it schools the connection between self and others/world, and an understanding of movement and gravity, of energy and flow. Trying to achieve everything at once often goes wrong or turns out fake. What really matters? When essential questions come to the fore – especially when times are hard – I always think that it can’t just be about turning out new pieces.

But to return to the harvest. I liked the idea that our harvest could be recycled and reused. This focused playfully on some relevant issues of our time: the attention, respect and mindfulness in relation to nature that we need if we’re to avoid destroying our ecosystem and – at the end of the day – our planet.

In the creative process it’s this very mindfulness for the bundles of sticks and fine twigs that bring about a real relationship: just as I experienced it during harvest time as a child, when we were allowed to help the farmers who stabled our horses.

Bundle of twigs with a life of its own

So we spent a lot of time with the dancers sorting the willow harvest according to the size, length and strength of the branches, organizing them and finally getting to know their movements. How pliable are they, and how strong? What can they take? How do the large branches react, and what about the thin switches? When does the space become so chaotic that it’s better to put the twigs together in a bundle with a life of its own and play with that? Or let it become a shamanistic costume, a fire-like entity that appears to move all by itself, crackling as if burning?

At one point I thought how present, lively and fascinating the sounds of the different branches were. If we formed the piece entirely according to the musical aspects of rhythm and resonance, as if we were working on a musical for children, it would be perfect!

In the end, of course, it’s neither one thing nor the other, but many layers gradually forming into a complex whole that in turn is always in motion, always changing...

It's exiting to realize that although this piece is intended for a very young audience, I approach it as I always do: the aspect of strong energetic movements that grow out of daily collective training, the visual and auditory aspects, the relationship between self and world remain my focus. And at the same time I work in the knowledge that the piece also has to work for the very young. That is, the direction of the attention, communication, duration and rhythm all have to be just right. For no audience is more critical in this respect than children, especially when they are very young. Actually, the best gift we can give ourselves and others is to look for the sensory perception beyond intellect and concept that can spark a small miracle in one's own experience.

Duration and attention are dealt with differently for the young audience. But basically a piece is really great if it works for everyone independently of age, background knowledge, experience or origin. It has always been my objective to be able to overcome all boundaries with my work. At the present time, with the pandemic tightening limitations, I see this aspect as more relevant than ever.

Translated from the first publication in *trb Magazin – TanzRaum-Berlin*, May/June 2021





Choreographic Cosmic Cartography

Observations on “HARVEST”

Andrej Mirčev

Isabelle Schäd's “HARVEST” was created as a Theater o.N. production for the Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum (Dance Initiative for Young Audiences) in 2021. In this highly imaginative staging, the choreographer, three dancers and a musician play with the changing landscapes that result from an interaction with sticks and branches.

As a “dance piece by Isabelle Schäd for people of all ages,” according to its subtitle, “HARVEST” is an invitation into a sensory aesthetic space in which you can recollect your astonishment at the world as a child. Three dancers (Aya Toraiwa, Jan Lorys, Manuel Lindner) share the stage with branches of various sizes and lengths that function simultaneously as extensions to their bodies, as scenery and marionettes. Their interactive movement with this material is mindful and concentrated, giving the impression that the plants are a fourth dancer with an autonomous, if fragile, existence. Constellations in which the sticks augment the bodies or become temporary hiding places occur continually. The fact that the twigs, sticks and branches are deliberately given different functions and can evoke a range of meanings is spelled out in the program: “How does a willow branch sound? How does it lie in the hand? How do the large sticks differ from the small ones? The brown from the green? The old from the young? And how do they become a puppet, the belly of a whale or a forest, a monster or a ship?” Because of this playing with different narrative possibilities and interpretations, this piece seems suitable for children of three and older. Everyone is invited to shape their own cosmos of meaning.

The choreographic vocabulary is generated by systematically repeated circular movements that on the one hand activate the branches and twigs and on the other set the bodies in motion and guide them across the stage. In connection with the title, “HARVEST,” the cyclic movement structure can be associated with the periodic temporal rhythm of nature. The dancers' turning on their own axes also evokes the cosmological dance of the dervishes. Situations in which the long sticks are animated like pens give the impression of the movements being a genuine act of writing: a writing of movement and a movement of writing. Apart from the somewhat thicker and longer sticks, there are two other kinds, medium-sized and small. These are in bundles, and also suggest a wealth of meaning: brooms, woods, whips, bushes, tents. And in the end the small twigs are scattered about the whole stage,

indicating the traces left behind by the choreography. The common thread here is the surprisingly sculptural and visual quality of the objects, which is amplified and its sensuality brought out by the lighting design (Emma Juliard). Important elements in the performance structure are the sound design and the live-controlled ambient noise (Damir Šimunović), which contribute to building up the atmosphere and determined the acoustic resonance of the dance.



A subtle aesthetic occurrence, “HARVEST” makes its way through a thicket of possible stories and scenes, all of them affectively and speculatively charged or prompting emotion and thought. I initially concentrated on the dancers' respectful handling of the material, which I perceived as an ecological gesture expressing the currently fraught relationship between human beings and nature. The contrasting sizes of the sticks and smaller branches call my attention to the question of the similarly degenerated interplay and lost balance between individuals and collectivity. These two perspectives led me in the end to an association revealed by the vertical positioning of some larger branches. In his book “The Sacred and the Profane,” the religious historian Mircea Eliade invokes the term “axis mundi” (cosmic axis), which describes the sacred connection between heaven and earth in numerous shamanic



and mythological beliefs. In most cases it refers to a holy tree (or mountain) that enables the shaman to cross into other levels of reality in order to heal the community or protect it from evil spirits. Schad's choreography enables a similar journey. It is the cartography of a spiritual substance that like the ecosystem and forests is increasingly under threat and is vanishing before our very eyes.

Translated from the first publication "Choreografische Himmelsachsen" by Andrej Mirčev on tanzschreiber.de, September 17, 2021

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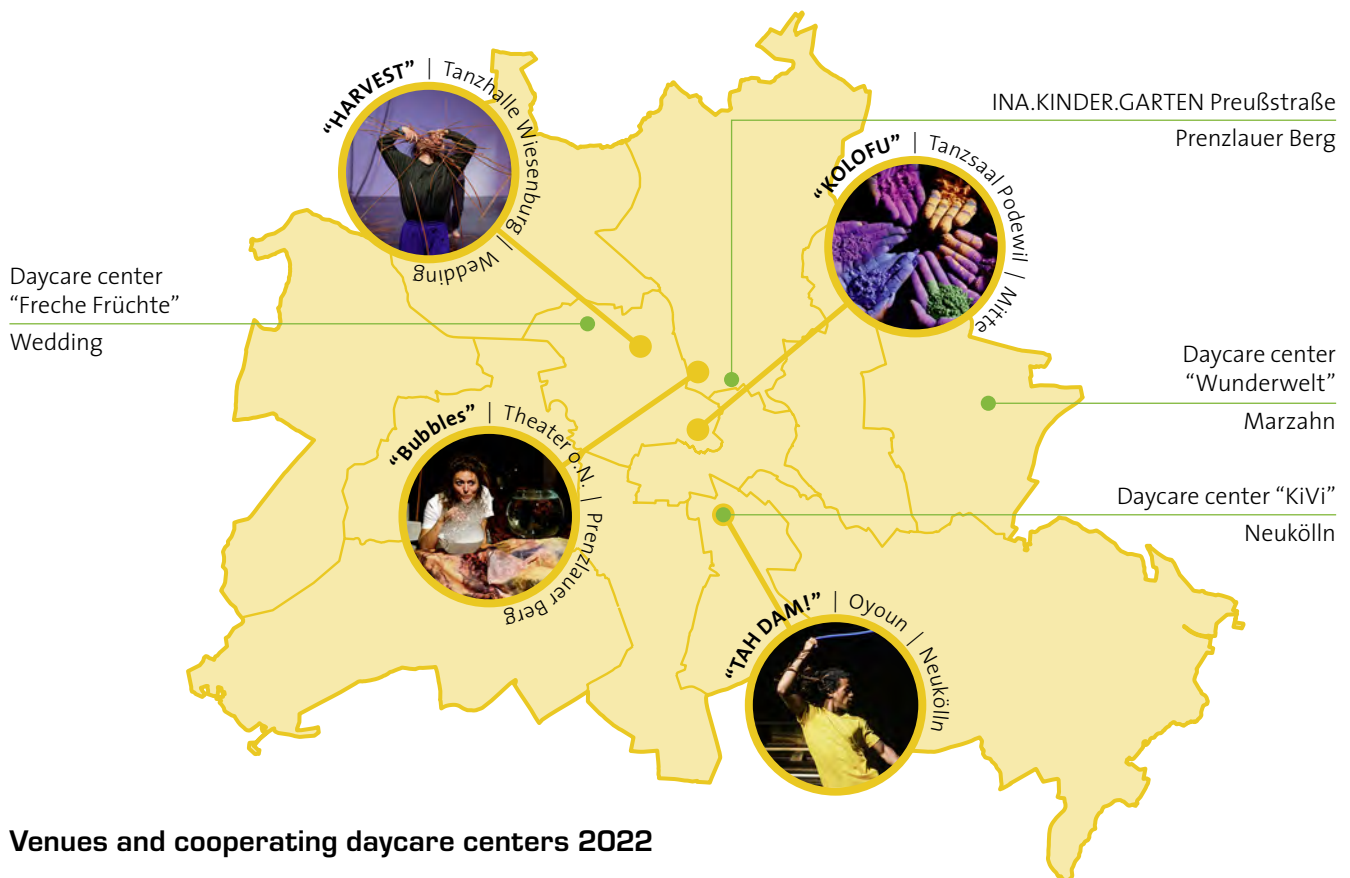


FRATZ Encounters – an artistic exchange with daycare children

A conversation with theater pedagogues Cindy Ehrlichmann,
Julia Gotzmann and Kathleen Rappolt
Dagmar Domrös

Since FRATZ's second year in 2015, "FRATZ Encounters" have taken place before, during and after the festival. In these events, we form partnerships with daycare centers in four to six Berlin districts and organize educational theater workshops and mobile performances at the daycare centers, as well as theater visits to the festival. Over a period of about three months, the children have six different encounters with the performing arts. For many of the parents involved, these are also their first dance and

theater experiences with their children. Parallel to these offers, the theater educators also accompany the participating teachers in training and reflection sessions on the program. The exchange enables both sides to enrich and further develop their practice. The program is rooted in the idea of creating spaces in which all of the involved children and adults can meet on an equal footing.¹ (For the detailed schedule of the program compare information box on page 26.)



Venues and cooperating daycare centers 2022

The pandemic years have made participatory work with children and cooperation with daycare centers much more difficult. While the FRATZ 2020 program had to be cancelled altogether, we were able to forge new bonds in 2022 – albeit still tentative and fraught with many unknowns. The daycare centers struggled even more than usual with staff shortages and with the still-changing guidelines for a return to normal visitations and field trips. Nevertheless, we found four committed daycare centers to partner with us for this year.

Together with theater educators Cindy Ehrlichmann, Julia Gotzmann and Kathleen Rappolt, we talked about performative work with very young children, the importance of involving parents and feedback from the accompanying teachers.

Dagmar: A special feature of the FRATZ encounter program is that “watching theater” and “doing theater” are conceived of together here. That is, on the one hand, children see plays by professional, often even international, artists, and then can try

out artistic and theatrical expression for themselves. Or they first get introduced to forms of expression and materials by you or the artists, and then they watch the play. How does this interaction work?

Cindy: I would like to emphasize two aspects in answering the question. For one thing, when children ‘watch’ theater, they realize what theater can be and how it works. That there is a form, of whatever kind, with a beginning and an end, as well as agreed-upon or defined areas, such as stage and audience spaces. This is an educational aspect, if you will, an explanation, but it also conveys our theater philosophy, which is based on a broad, interdisciplinary concept of theater. In initiating the program, it was important to us to show children from the beginning that theater is multifaceted and does not have to mean reciting a memorized text in a tree costume. Basically, this is an open invitation to the children to go ahead and turn everything in their surroundings into theater with any means of expression that they feel like and can access. The second effect of the interaction between “watch-

The FRATZ Encounters modules

Introductory event for teachers

Attendance at a play for the youngest from the Theater o.N. repertoire. The performance is followed by a meet-and-greet round and a presentation on the FRATZ Festival and Encounter program, including time for questions and clarifying organizational details. | Location: Theater o.N.

Opening space 1 and 2 for children and teachers

The theater educators visit the children at the daycare center. These meetings are to get to know each other and begin to explore what theater can be. Rituals for opening and closing the theater sessions together are introduced. | Location: Daycare center

Artists’ encounter for children and educators

The children get to know (international) artists whose productions they will see during the FRATZ Festival. They visit the children at their daycare center and hold an interactive workshop with materials and artistic media from the upcoming performance. | Location: Daycare center

FRATZ Festival: Guest performance visit for children and educators

Attendance at a production in the context of the FRATZ Festival, followed by a theater encounter with the group.

If possible, playful interaction post-performance gives the spectators an opportunity to deepen and process what they have seen. | Location: A performance venue near the daycare center or, via bus trip at a theater

Parent-child workshop

The parents of the participating children come to the daycare center, where the theater educators host a parent-child theater play afternoon based on the production the children have seen, also involving the teachers. | Location: Daycare center

Mobile performance at the daycare center for children, parents and educators

A mobile production by Theater o.N. for children ages 2 and up is shown at the daycare center (in two performances: one in the afternoon, together with the parents of the participating children; one in the morning for other children of the daycare center), followed by a participatory session with the artists and the theater educator. | Location: Daycare center

Final workshop for teachers

Joint reflection on the program and a half-day workshop for the participating teachers: “Methods in theater with the very young” (Certificate of attendance)

ing theater” and “doing theater” works in a wonderfully self-directed way. We know that children “work through, process and reflect” by imitation. For this reason, they inevitably take what they have seen on stage into their everyday play right afterwards, drawing or re-enacting what they have experienced, provided they are given the appropriate materials to do so. Here they try out what they have seen, refine it, transform it and rehearse it themselves, intrinsically motivated. The latter is so great because it doesn’t take much (pedagogical) intervention to stimulate or motivate this kind of play; it’s virtually a no-brainer if the framework conditions are right (space, time, materials, and adults who are open-minded and willing to experiment).



Julia: One example: In our partnership (Kita “Freche Früchte” in Wedding and “HARVEST” in the Tanzhalle) we visited the international artists with the children two days before the performance at the venue for the joint workshop. The performance would be about mindfulness, the relationship between humans and nature, represented through dance and play with willow branches of very different sizes. In the workshop, the artists carried out material and spatial explorations with the children, which they were able to rediscover two days later in the performance. For example: running slalom through and around the sometimes huge willow branches that were spread throughout the room. Or rhythmic tapping with the willows, and carrying the largest willows together from one place to another, which required great mindfulness and a good sense of space. The children’s laughter and eye contact reflected the recognition effect during the performance two days later. Particularly in the exercises that they themselves had especially enjoyed in the workshop. For the children, who were more used to fast and varied tempos in their reception habits with other media, the performance was challenging. But the children had really enjoyed the material exercises with the artists. And

this created a bridge to the performance, which was so unusually quiet, and also slow for their viewing habits. The simplicity, and also the quiet poetry, of the games with the willows had an empowering effect on some otherwise more withdrawn children. At the workshop, for example, a rather quiet girl very confidently took the space towards the end and was the first to carry a huge willow stick from place to place together with the artists. The teachers were quite surprised and impressed by this.

Dagmar: In the course of the Encounters, we see that the children’s parents are involved at several points in the program. Why is that so important, since the program is actually a daycare center activity?

Cindy: This decision is based on our previous experiences with participatory work. We observed that children take delight in sharing their artistic experiences, in carrying on with them further at home. We can see this in the way that they often want to show their parents what they’ve created or tell what they’ve experienced when they are picked up from the daycare center. At that moment, they seem to be still in their magical world, in a creative mode that we stimulated, to fantasize, to transform, to dare to take on a different perspective. We often experienced that this creative mode was interrupted or cut off by inadequate reactions from the parents, like “What kind of nonsense are you talking about?” or “Water should look blue,” or “There are no talking horses,” etc. We realized that, in fact, the parents should also have an introduction to artistic practice or at least a chance to participate in the children’s process. In the joint workshops, on the one hand, we want to sensitize parents to the artistic processes happening with and among the children. On the other hand, we want to bring them into a shared artistic mode that benefits both, because ideally, they can meet in the arts nearly at eye level, as it is new territory for both and in artistic research, the older adult doesn’t necessarily have an advantage of more knowledge over the child. The participants appreciate this mode very much because, as it is reflected to us repeatedly, the clearly defined roles of adult/child seem to be suspended for a moment in the process of trying, searching and finding together.

Kathleen: I would add that it’s even required by law to involve the parents as the child’s original bonding figures. The daycare centers are obligated to form an educational partnership with the parents (Berlin Education Programme for Daycare Centers and Children’s Daycare), which is also legally anchored in the Berlin Daycare Support Act. That’s why we go to educational institutions, where co-operation between educators and parents is seen as vital for the children’s development. If teachers take photographs of the theater visits, workshops, etc. and also notate the children’s remarks and their own impressions, and then present this documentation



in the entrance area of the daycare center in a visible, aesthetically pleasing way, as they did at the “Wunderwelt” daycare center in Marzahn, where I was able to facilitate during the FRATZ Encounters, then a dialog between children and parents can happen even before the parent-child theater workshop and the theater visit. Children proudly point to the photos in which they appear and retell what took place. Parents can learn something about FRATZ through their children’s eyes. Parents’ curiosity can be awakened, but most importantly, they can understand what their children are recounting. Yet, they still don’t actually know what awaits them in the parent-child workshop.

Dagmar: Can you describe what happens at a FRATZ parent-child workshop?

Kathleen: At the beginning, the parents sit spread out with their backs against the walls, seeking support in facing the unknown. The children, meanwhile, are sitting alertly on their parents’ laps, or next to them, saying: “This is my mommy!”, “That’s my dad!” And then it starts, with playing, dancing, or drawing together, depending on the theme of the play being seen. The ice breaks; the parents dance for their children, waddle like ducks, paint lines and circles, even if it doesn’t seem to make sense. This is not about presenting skill in a meaningful way, but, as Cindy says, about creating together. I was impressed by the openness of the parents at the “Wunderwelt” daycare center. One kindergarten teacher reflected to us later: “Even parents who are usually more reserved thawed out and joined in.”

But it’s a delicate balance that can go awry; parents can still try to control the process, as I have had to experience every now and again in some past parent-child workshops.

It takes being present every second and setting an atmosphere from the very start where, for this afternoon, there is no right

and wrong. Where, for this encounter, the parents can also let go of control and just be children again, creative and exploring. And especially, where children and adults can meet each other in a different way than in everyday life. If it is possible to create such a space, it’s very gratifying for everyone involved. That is what we aim to create with the FRATZ encounters.

Dagmar: I would like to talk about the understanding of theater we are trying to communicate through FRATZ. As a festival curator, I know that the invited pieces often don’t tell stories, sometimes there is no separation of auditorium and stage, they are very associative and address all senses. That makes them very open to interpretation. What are your experiences with the children and parents when you watch these plays with them?



Kathleen: An example: At the Wunderwelt Daycare Center, about 57 children and adults attended the musical performance “u... sci-fi.” Even though the visitors were told before entering that they would not see a classical piece with text and plot, but a musical journey, confusion seemed to arise. At best, this leads to positive questions, such as “Aha, interesting,” “Never seen something like that before,” “So that can also be theater,” “Exciting” – or by contrast, the opposite, like this father’s statement at the end of the performance: “Now I’ve seen it, I did it for my kid, I don’t have to do this again.” With the theater visits, we bring parents into contact with plays that they probably wouldn’t choose on their own. Maybe this visit will fall on fertile ground and whet their appetite for more. At the same time, even sceptical parents can experience how their children are open to the unfamiliar event. Their idea of theater is not yet set in concrete. One girl, for example, moved through the interactive play after the mobile performance from person to person, wandering curiously and freely through the musical happening. The parents reflected later that they hardly knew their child to be so open.



We can do further research in this area in the future and consider how we can encourage the parents towards even more openness for theater for the very young, because the teachers also observed that many do not know how to behave as a spectator in the theater. Some parents suppressed emotional reactions because they didn't know how they would be received. "They found a lot of things funny and didn't dare to laugh, and their reticence was then transferred to the children," said a teacher from the "Wunderwelt" daycare center.

Dagmar: Most of the activities in the daycare centers involving excursions or workshops are aimed more towards older children of preschool age. How do the teachers react to the offer to work with the very young, with children starting at age two? What are your experiences with this very young age group?

Cindy: Teachers rarely experience offers that are created for such a young target group. For this reason, the offer is gratefully accepted. Sessions with children this young cannot be very long and they also don't function so "frontally," since their attention span, for example sitting in a circle, can be held only briefly. The rhythm of a session is somewhat more mindful, perhaps slower, very playful. We show and initiate more through the body, less through words. Games and rules take a few rounds and runs until they are established and understood. I prefer to work in small islands, such as three to four children each trying something out, rather than demanding constant concentration in the large group. It requires great flexibility, since you have to go along with the respective dynamics of the group and cannot direct so much using rules and speech.

Dagmar: I assume that the teachers in the daycare centers are important partners for you. Can you say something about how you work together? What feedback have teachers given you about their experiences with FRATZ Encounters?

Julia: In our partnership, the teachers acted as observers during the workshops. They were present, supported the workshop with their affirming manner, helped continuously to create a concentrated atmosphere, but did not interfere in the processes. I found this attitude very supportive. This passive/active stance allows the teachers to really observe the children and sometimes get to know them in a completely new way. The teachers in my partnership experienced this as greatly enriching. There was feedback like: "I have never experienced this child like this before" or "I could really just observe the children without having to react to anything,



we teachers have this opportunity much too rarely." For me, the teachers' observations, which they always shared with me afterwards, were also a great gift. Because of the brief span of the project, I can barely perceive the children's transformations; I don't know them well enough for that. The teachers, on the other hand, see immediately when a child behaves in a particularly relaxed or more self-confident manner than usual. Basically, our method of cooperation is that the teachers prepare the space for the artists and for us and then move into an observing role during the workshops, while remaining present in their own way. Afterwards, we talk with the teachers about our respective observations. We also provide the teachers with new input for games and exercises that they can integrate into the everyday life of the daycare center. My opening ritual has since been incorporated by the daycare teachers into their morning circle. So the collaboration is truly valuable.

Kathleen: The FRATZ encounters can only succeed if the participating educators are fully behind the project. If the teachers burn with enthusiasm, this transfers to the children, as well as to me. If they trust me and my work, I can work freely, and this is also felt by the children, who are very sensitive to emotional vibrations. In my partnerships as well, the teachers actively participated, were allowed to act as observers, but were also there when a child needed support.



Ultimately, we learn a lot from and with each other. The observations and feedback from the educators are very important for me personally, but also for us as a theater, with regard to the further development of FRATZ Encounters. What are we doing well? Where can we sharpen our focus and readjust the content, if necessary? In the final reflection with participating educators, we exchange ideas on these questions. Building on the phrase: “I thought it was great...,” the following feedback came from the daycare center “Wunderwelt:”

“I thought it was great to give the younger children the opportunity to get a feel for theater.”

“I thought it was great to hear other languages on site at the Kita, through the international artists.”

“I thought it was great that the kids jumped right in.”

“I loved the play that we saw.”

“I thought it was great to be there in a different role, and to see Kathleen’s creativity and stamina.”

“I thought it was great to give the kids a chance to experience that the actors are just human beings – since they came to the daycare center and interacted with the kids.”

“I thought it was great to see how the young kids reacted, for example: a little bundle of energy who became very calm and focused, or kids who were very empathetic and even cried when they were so moved.”

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- 1 In FRATZ Reflections 2015: The young child as counterpart, contributions by Juliane Steinmann and Dagmar Domrös report in detail on the concept and artistic implementation of the FRATZ Encounters. Prof. Anne Wihstutz’s contribution describes various constructions of childhood on which work with children is often unthinkingly founded.

“Bubbles:” Slurping, crunching, splashing, burbling

A visit to a watery sound world

Daniella Strasfogel

“Do you hear something?”

A daycare group is gathered in the downstairs foyer of Theater o.N. Three teachers help the children to undress since everyone is bundled up against the winter, the wind and the rain. Shoes off, snowsuits off, shoes back on – once the process is done, the kids are allowed to sit and wait for the others. There is much excited talk, some even attempt to play tag in the small space. As often happens, a handful are quite rambunctious, the others watch them or cling to the adults. Overall, restlessness prevails. I wonder how this group will respond to Bubbles, such a meditative and quiet piece?

Once everyone has their outside layers off, they are gathered and greeted by a member of the theater. She asks the children if they’ve ever been to the theater before, hands fly up. At the next question – and who knows how we behave in the theater? – my good mood wanes. Even though I’ve asked audiences the same question in moments of desperation, I’m not proud of it. I don’t like the question - of course, that doesn’t mean the question itself is wrong or bad. Rather, it points to something which I frequently struggle with myself: that fact that we, as adults, try to control how young audiences receive our work. We want them to encounter our work in the way that we deem best. Some might say that posing this question enables children to approach the work better, that with the question in mind they’re less likely to get in the way of their own experience. Either way, whether it’s a control tactic or a call to awareness, the question works immediately: the group knows that answer, too. We are quiet and attentive in the theater.

The next question is a transition into the piece itself, “Do you hear anything?” Yes, when we’re quiet and attentive, we do hear something. Gong-like sounds chime softly, over and over in different formations, a quiet and repetitive pattern, constantly changing. With wide-open ears, the group goes up the stairs to the theater.

“The song is really beautiful”

The audience sits down and sees a landscape of glass bowls on small pedestals. Copper pipes stick out of the floor like reeds, garnished with little glittery pom-poms and twisted strings of lights. The bowls are filled with varying amounts of water. From a hidden source, droppers slowly dispense water droplets into three

of the bowls. Very soon I understand that the dripping creates the sounds: these three bowls are amplified. Each single drop makes such a beautiful sound – the simplicity of the sound production is a great delight. Along with the glass bowls, a small keyboard is integrated into the stage, and even a real clarinet will appear in the middle of the piece.



“When’s something going to happen?”

After just a short wait, the group is already threatening to lose their concentration. The meditative ping-pang-pong can only keep the audience quiet for so long! Fortunately, at just the right moment, three players appear from behind the bowls, their faces distorted and magnified by the curve of the glass. An interplay of water and sound follows: the players hold their hands under the dripping water, the sound stops. When they take their hands away, the tones chime out again. A little game arises between the players. They get into a conflict about which sounds they prefer and resolve it by discovering new sounds.

Everything is clearly through-composed, down to the last detail. The glass bowls are played with mallets, emitting full, round tones. A playful dance around the bowls evolves into a choreography which leads to a harmonized melody from the constant,

repeating notes. References to minimal music and John Cage (especially the String Quartet in Four Parts, in which each part has only a limited set of notes available, but recombines them continually) alternate with klezmer-like tunes and noisy sound experiments. After a while in this quiet, harmonic world, I find myself wishing for more noisiness, more friction, more energy, more metallic or supposedly “disturbing” sounds. But what my ears search for doesn’t necessarily represent what others’ ears want: When a brief moment of noise gives way to melody, a child murmurs dreamily, “That song is really beautiful.”



And it is certainly lovely. Everything in this production is done carefully and delicately. Even when the music grows livelier, when it edges on rollicking, the atmosphere remains tender, listening, gentle. This is partly due to the very quiet, attentive audience, but also to the way the performers interact with them. Two of the performers take on the position of main musicians. They sometimes play along with gestures or facial expressions but are mainly concerned with sound. The third performer actively makes contact with the audience. She looks directly at the children, addresses them with her facial expressions, plays out her feelings and ideas wordlessly. It is she who repeatedly sets the counterpoint in the piece, resisting the harmony of the other two or now and then simply being selfish, like a small child.

“Bubbles!”

The piece makes use of almost every possible water sound. The performers splash with their hands in the bowls, use squirters to spray themselves and the miked bowls with water (and threaten the audience, but don’t go through with it), they blow bubbles through the copper pipes. When they find a small bag with miniature ice cubes, a sonic feast of sucking and crunching ensues,

which is passed along into to the audience – everyone is given ice cubes, everyone slurps and chews. Later, real soap bubbles swell up from the bowls and even from a copper pipe – a small visual miracle. The bubbling sound emerges from the keyboard. The bell of the clarinet is repeatedly touched to the surface the water, or is used to amplify slurping sounds. At the end, the players submerge their faces, singing all the while.

Bubbles is a playful, lovingly made work. At times, it requires tremendous concentration from the audience. The lack of text is a boon to the youngest spectators, even if the older ones (age 4 or 5) might appreciate some language, more energy or a complete break from the carefully constructed atmosphere. But as we all know, there are 2-year-olds and 2-year-olds, 4-year-olds and 4-year-olds. It’s more often the personality of the individual spectators that determines whether they’ll be caught up in a piece, not their age.

The show lasts around 35 minutes. Much of the audience clearly would have liked to stay longer. Downstairs in the foyer, bowls of soapy water and straws stand ready for the audience and the kids blubber away with abandon. Others nibble on fresh miniature ice cubes, or start putting on their rain gear: a sweet and caring end for this watery play.





“I saw a pig there ...”

Children's impressions of the performance “Bubbles”

The children from INA.KINDER.GARTEN Preußstraße

On May 17, 2022 the children from the FRATZ Encounter daycare center, INA.KINDER.GARTEN Preußstraße, attended a performance of “Bubbles” at Theater o.N. After three dates in the Kita, it was the children's fourth FRATZ Encounter*. A week before the visit to the theater, two artists from the production, Minouche Petrusch (actress) and Alba Gentili-Tedeschi (musician) came to the kindergarten and experimented with the children using glasses, water and sounds. This way the the children could

playfully prepare for their time at the theater and deepen their aesthetic experience. After the performance, they could make their own bubbles in the theater café by blowing through straws into large glass bowls filled with soapy water. At the daycare center the next day, they drew pictures of what they had seen at in the performance and talked about them with their teachers. Some of the pictures and comments are printed below.

* For information on the detailed schedule of the FRATZ Encounters please compare this brochure on page 26.



merlin

“I liked everything! I painted the ladders, but they were all on the ceiling. And that's Sabine [the teacher]. That was in the theater. You just had to sit there and the big people ... and we laughed. I saw a pig there behind a glass and then I saw a trumpet in the water. They were hiding, the big people [meaning the actors], who were up above before. I hid behind Sabine.

We were only allowed to sit, really. This was the stage, and I drew the stage here, and there was even a hot water kettle. The kettle could change colors. It was all colors, colorful, and in the end it was white.”



Leo

"That's the hot water kettle."

Edda

"In the middle is the hot water kettle. These are the glasses where water was in it. On top are the spotlights, they bring light above the stage. On the side are the little ice cubes. All the way at the bottom are the benches! The silver leaves I saw on stage."





SAGA

"I painted the heart. Because I thought the theater was so great. This is an actress, she is still getting something ready. The hot water kettle is on the table. On the side are the theater lights."

MADS

"That's the glass with the straw. And the orange thing is the curtain. And the black thing is the stage."



PAULA

Paula: "That's the bowl with the bubbles in it."

Eli: "Was there only one bowl?"

Paula: "Nope, lots."

Eli: "Did you try that too?"

Paula: "Yeah, it was great."



KAMILLA

"I painted the lights. Windows and the brown curtain. The little thing is the ice cubes that we ate, that was cold."



Photo: David Beecroft

Marie Yan *Author and dramaturge*

Marie Yan is a multilingual author and a dramaturge focusing on the future, often through speculative fiction. Her latest play “A Tidal Home,” about a city slowly destroyed by a supernatural flood, was performed in Hong Kong in 2021, with support from New Earth Theatre and the HK Arts Development Council. Her play for young audiences “I need to cross” (6+) – an encounter at a border between a soldier and a painter – entered the repertoire of the city theatre of Eskişehir (Turkey) in 2019. It was invited to the Starke Stücke festival (Germany) and nominated for the Kamari Prize (France). She collaborates with FRATZ International since 2017, writing among others the online “Glossary” and co-curating several panels. She currently lives in Paris and her next theatre project, “Minotaurus or the child in the labyrinth,” based on Friedrich Dürrenmatt’s fable, researches the detention of minors in the French judiciary system.



Photo: David Beecroft

Coila-Leah Enderstein *Pianist and artist*

Coila-Leah Enderstein is a South African pianist and artist based in Berlin. She has a background in Western classical piano and her experimental practice spans multiple disciplines. Since 2018, Coila has been investigating notions of listening in relation to history and power. Coila brings this research into her close collaborative practice with Nicola van Straaten, in projects that interrogate coloniality across various scales of time and space. Coila and Nicola have presented performances in public space in Berlin since 2020, notably “Crossing the Pale River” in Tanzfabrik’s Fall Program 2021 and “geistzeit” in 2022. Coila recently completed a Master of Arts in Sound Studies at the Berlin University of the Arts.



Photo: David Beecroft

Sumalgy Nuro *Dancer and musician*

Sumalgy Nuro is a dancer and musician born in Maputo, Mozambique. He is currently studying in the Postgraduate Programme in African Music Instruments and Performance at the University of Cape Town. Since 2005 Sumalgy has been developing his understanding of music and dance by taking part in various apprenticeships, both traditional and contemporary, as well as working as dancer, musician, teacher and choreographer in numerous projects, performances and spectacles in different countries. These opportunities have given him a space both for learning and for sharing with various artists and audiences. Close to Sumalgy’s heart is a personal investment in the upliftment of young people and artists in vulnerable spaces. He believes that music and dance are forms of expression that nurture cultural identity and effect change in the world.



Photo: Dan Caetano

Daniella Strasfogel *Musician, conceptionist and performer*

Daniella Strasfogel is a violinist, mediator and founding member of the Solistenensemble Kaleidoskop in Berlin. As its artistic director from 2010 to 2015, she created new formats for musical performance and collaborated with artistic partners (FC Bergman, Sabrina Hölzer, Ludger Engels, Sasha Waltz, Ladislav Zajac, Milla Koistinen, Mouse on Mars, Martin Eder). She has created staged concert programs for festivals (Sommerliche Musiktage Hitzacker, Thüringer Bachwochen, Sydney Festival) and performance spaces (Radialsystem V Berlin, Villa Elizabeth Berlin, Kampnagel Hamburg, HELLERAU Dresden), led audience discussions and worked with amateur musicians and students. As an educator, Daniella has been involved in the physical, artistic and musical development of young and adult violinists for many years. In 2018, she founded LOUDsoft. It creates formats for children, young people and families that offer access to the world of the independent scene and a new perspective on the intersections between music, art and performance. In 2021, LOUDsoft was awarded the Junge Ohren Preis (Young Ears Prize).



Photo: Djibril Sall

Djibril Sall *Choreographer*

Djibril Sall is a Berlin-based choreographer who received his B.A. in Dance from Wesleyan University. His most recent work, evening.haiku, premiered at SOPHIENSÆLE as a part of the 31st Tanztage Festival and was chosen for inclusion into the [8:tension] Young Choreographers' Series 2022 at ImPulsTanz Vienna International Dance Festival. He has presented works at Ballhaus Ost and Radialsystem in Berlin and performed in various festivals and institutions including Stedelijk in Amsterdam, Dark Mofo in Australia, and Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris. Djibril has been invited to speak at mumok Vienna, SOPHIENSÆLE and Flutgraben in Berlin, and Dansens Hus Stockholm among others for his work on queer and racial trauma. He is currently doing research for his next solo project.



Photo: David Beecroft

Dagmar Domrös *Dramaturge*

Dagmar Domrös studied German Studies, American Studies and Political Science in Hamburg and Massachusetts. She worked as assistant to the artistic director at the American Place Theatre NYC and as a dramaturge at the Stadttheater Heidelberg (2001–2005), where she was responsible for the Heidelberger Stückemarkt for two years. In Berlin she worked as producer and dramaturge for the GTA – German Theater Abroad (2005–2008) and spree-agenten Berlin. In 2010, she was part of the relaunch of Theater o.N. and the implementation of the new fields of focus “Theater for the youngest” and “Participative projects with children and youth in deprived neighborhoods.” Since 2012 she has been part of the theater’s artistic direction and has devised various forums for professional exchange and FRATZ symposia, which reflect current topics and discourses in relation to the production processes in theater for young audiences.

The **FRATZ Reflections 2022** document research, artistic perspectives and productions of the festival and the symposium FRATZ International 2022.

FRATZ International 2022

13th to 19th of May 2022 in Berlin
www.fratz-festival.de

Presented by

Theater o.N.



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Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum

The Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum Berlin develops innovative dance formats for young audiences between the ages of 0 and 18, focusing primarily on production, networking, mediation and artistic research. It's been initiated in 2019 by four locally and internationally operating partner institutions based in Berlin: PURPLE – International Dance Festival for a Young Audience, TANZKOMPLIZEN, Theater STRAHL and Theater o.N.

From **2019 bis 2021**, a total of six productions were developed, several of which have successfully been touring internationally and received different nominations and awards. A central element of the project is the professional networking with relevant institutions, training centers, schools, scenes and festivals. In this context, symposia, each with a different theme, act as a platform for a lively exchange between artists, professionals and a young audience. Various workshops offer teachers and educators the opportunity to further educate themselves.

In the fall of 2021, the “Offensive Kulturbus” was launched. More than 24.000 daycare and school children were shuttled to performances at over 40 Berlin venues free of charge since then. In **2022**, the second phase of the project began experimenting with new formats such as RAUSGEHEN in cooperation with the Berlin Mondiale. Four short mobile works for the public space will be created and shown in places where there are otherwise only few cultural offerings for children and young people. A new project management with a focus on equity has been appointed and is shaping the work internally and externally from a decidedly anti-discriminatory perspective.

The Offensive Tanz für junges Publikum Berlin has set itself the task of breaking down barriers, creating new approaches, giving dance a positive connotation as an art form and thus establishing it as a theatre offering and valuable aesthetic experience for children and young people – beyond language barriers and regardless of educational background.

www.offensive-tanz.de



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