

# ZÜRCHER THEATER SPEKTAKEL

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## Zürcher Theater Spektakel 2016: Interim Final Report Audience rewards courageous programme

The Theater Spektakel 2016, which closed last Sunday, was full of highlights and – not only because of the extraordinary good weather – is likely to go down as one of the most successful ones in the festival's 37-year history. This is not at all self-evident: Hardly ever before has the programme been so content-focused with the emphasis on resistance and migration. And with 15 out of 44 shows, the programme presented an unparalleled number of spoken theatre productions. The courage of the programme directors has paid off: The festival audience accepted the formal and contextual challenges in a highly positive way and engaged even in demanding artistic perspectives and foreign-language theatre with great openness. Around 26'500 tickets sold, an average capacity of 86% and the fact that more than 70% of the performances exceeded the budgeted margin are clear indications of a successful programming that does not shy away from artistic risk. The freely accessible installations in the new Pavillon, an attractive programme of street art and the varied gastronomic offers attracted around 120'000 visitors to the Landiwiese this year.

### **The programme**

Two highly topical theatre productions marked the start and the end of the festival: «While I Was Waiting» by the Syrian artists Omar Abusaada and Mohammad Al Attar and the premiere of «Empire», the third part of the Europe Trilogy by Milo Rau. Both productions are the result of the preoccupation with pressing issues such as resistance and exile and captured the interest of the audience as well as the media. The Syrian play was awarded the ZKB Patronage Prize 2016 and was praised by the jury as «a work of art rendered historically urgent by the ongoing Syrian crisis, while embedding aesthetic qualities that outlive the considerations of time and geography».

Praise and standing ovations also went to the five cleaning ladies of «Clean City» by the Greek directors Anestis Azas & Prodromos Tsinikoris, the overwhelming monologue «Acceso» by the Chilean actor Roberto Farías (directed by Pablo Larraín) and to «Antigonón», the furious dismantling of hero worship and nationalism by the Teatro El Publico – all of them highly demanding spoken theatre productions.

Four directors presented provocative works bearing a distinct artistic handwriting: Laila Soliman from Egypt («Zig Zig»), Sanja Mitrović («I'm Not Ashamed of My Communist Past»), Ofira Henig from Israel («manmaRo Project») and Nicoleta Esinencu from the Republic of Moldova («Life») – all of them staging political realities with great courage and explicitness. The Swiss theatre artists Tim Zulauf and Ueli Bichsel approached the topic of migration from diverse perspectives. While Tim Zulauf's theatre-video-installation scrutinized the Swiss migration agreement with Tunisia, the clown duo Bichsel & Gargiulo showed a tragicomical piece on borders and freedom.

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Recalcitrant, content-driven dance productions equally caught the audience's attention: Serge Aimé Coulibaly delivered an accomplished choreographic rendition of the days before the coup in Burkina Faso, the Danish choreographer Mette Ingvarsten investigated the standardized conventions of nudity and sexuality, while Tabea Martin questioned common gender clichés in her humorous dance piece for children.

Commitment, courage and and esthetic variety were again the trademarks of the solos and duets by up-and-coming performers from Hong Kong, Congo-Kinshasa, Palestine, Brazil, Iran, South Africa and Switzerland, who presented their works on the occasion of Short Pieces. The fifth edition of this platform for the young international performance scene continues to be attractive and perfectly complements the festival programme. The Iranian performance artist Sorour Darabi won the ZKB Acknowledgement Prize 2016 for her solo «Farci.e», in which she questions sexual identity and gender politics. The jury was impressed by her determination and provocative power as well as by her adept use of composition and dramaturgy.

For the first time, the spectators could chose their favorite from the productions nominated for either the ZKB Patronage Prize or the ZKB Acknowledgement Prize and award the newly created ZKB Audience Prize of 10'000 Swiss Francs: By a large majority, they chose «A Simple Space» by the Australian acrobatic troupe Gravity & Other Myths. The show stands for the innovative circus productions the festival has presented since its beginnings and which continue to be highly popular. Absolute crowd pleasers this year were the reckless trio Cirque Inextremiste and the Belgium company FC Bergman.

The music programme proved very popular as well. All concerts on the lakeside stage sold out. Unfortunately, the concert relay Züri hornt (vis-à-vis), organised by the festival in collaboration with the department Rock, Pop, Jazz of Stadt Zürich Kultur, took place on one of the rare rainy days. Nevertheless, the six all-female acts throughout the festival site were attended by a crowd of weather-resistant listeners.

The newly designed Pavillon set an attractive architectural landmark on the festival site. During the installations by Phil Hayes and Barbara Weber & Heiko Pfof it proved an inviting, low-threshold venue, which perfectly complements the existing venues. The new Saal, a small, intimate venue, turned out to be perfect for concerts, performances and special events such as the award ceremony of the ZKB Prizes. Equally well used was the new info desk in the revamped entrance area.

## **Facts & Figures 2016**

**Programme:** The programme included 44 productions of companies and solo artists from over 32 countries in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and Latin America.

**Performances:** 148 performances were subject to charge. Two performances had to be cancelled due to health issues of the performers.

**Ticket sales:** A total of 26 500 spectators attended one of the shows subject to charge (2015: 27 650). The lower number is the result of the lower capacity of some productions (i.e. FC Bergman, Tim Zulauf) as well as a missing additional venue (circus tent).

**Average of capacity utilisation:** With an average of capacity utilisation of 86 %, the budgeted margin of 75 % was again clearly exceeded (2015: 86 %). 70 % of the performances exceeded the budgeted margin.

**Advance booking:** Around two thirds of the tickets were sold before the start of the festival with around 60% of the tickets being purchased online.

**Box office:** The sale of spare tickets was again well used: Around 5200 tickets were purchased at Landiwiese box office.

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## **Theater Spektakel – an inclusive event**

With two audio-described performances, thirteen productions with German surtitles, three venues equipped with an induction loop, a radio workshop for children with and without impairment as well as numerous infrastructural and communicative measures, again great efforts were undertaken to make the festival accessible for guests with a handicap. Thanks to the support of the foundation Denk an mich and in collaboration with Procap and the radio school klipp+klang, those offers could be implemented and met with a high demand: The reservations of wheelchair seats, for example, has increased significantly this year.

## **Gastronomic services**

The gastronomic innovations were very well received by the festival visitors: The new location of the Cantina resulted in a higher number of patrons. Additionally, the stable weather and summerlike temperatures made the festival on the Landiwiese also attractive for visitors without a ticket. Accordingly, the turnover of the gastronomic services is positive and their contribution to the festival will be within budget.

## **Partners**

Das Theater Spektakel is an event organized by City of Zurich Kultur and is generously funded by its main Partners Zürcher Kantonalbank, Swiss Re and the Canton of Zurich as well as by the media partner Tages-Anzeiger. The directorate of the SDC, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Migros-Kulturprozent, the Ernst Göhner Stiftung as well as the Patrons of the Festival engaged themselves as further partners with a substantial contribution. The construction of the new Pavillion was made possible by a substantial contribution of the Lotteriefonds of the Canton of Zurich and Swiss Re. Thanks to further funding by the Zürcher Kantonalbank and the Lotteriefonds, the signage on the festival site could be renewed. Sponsors of both projects were the Patrons of the Festival, who celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

In addition, the following institutions funded the festival (budget 4,5 million Swiss Francs): Ars Rhenia, AVINA Stiftung, Ambassade de France en Suisse and the Italian Cultural Institute Zurich. Contributors of substantial in-kind sponsoring are KIBAG AG, Zürichsee Schifffahrtsgesellschaft and Verkehrsbetriebe Zürich. The festival direction would like to thank all of them.

## **Zürcher Theater Spektakel 2017**

The 38<sup>th</sup> Zürcher Theater Spektakel will take place from Thursday 17 August to Sunday 3 September 2017. The advance booking begins on Wednesday 12 July 2017.

This will be the last festival for the co-director Sandro Lunin. Following ten successful years he will pass on the artistic direction of the festival. The vacant position will be published this autumn on [www.theaterspektakel.ch](http://www.theaterspektakel.ch). The succession will be announced in due course.