

CONNECTIONS - an international theatre and mentors initiative

CONNECTIONS is an international and cross-generation theatre initiative that has the goal of intensifying the communication process between the different generations of artists and theater genres, and to give this communication process a transparency. *CONNECTIONS* examines – by artistic means and through discussions – the changes and continuities in the world of theater, and at the same time it provides impulses for the younger theater generation. *CONNECTIONS* was conceived as a transcultural and interdisciplinary mentor program: six well-known and experienced theatermakers each recommend a young colleague for a new theater work, performance or theatrical installation. All of these new productions will then be realized as part of the network of co-producers and organizations (theaters and festivals) and presented to the general public.

This will create two things for interested individuals: an encounter with a new work by a talented artist, *and* simultaneously a reflection on the work of the well-known mentor, as revealed by the criteria for his or her choice. The artists participating in the program will be faced with a productive challenge: dealing systematically with the artistic world of the other artist, and with the structural similarities and dynamic differences, the exchange process, and the transformation and rediscovery of concepts and practices. At the same time, in this cross-generation setting the audience is given the opportunity to see the differences and continuities, developments and breaks that were influenced by social and political trends in the participating artists' works.

CONNECTIONS is also the attempt to facilitate a new orientation in the relationship between program organizers and artists. In the rapidly developing scene of independent artists/producers and organizers, the pressure to be innovative has intensified (what is currently "in," what is currently "out") for both sides – for the artists and the program organizers. More and more, there is a growing impression that even such a fleeting and unique appearance such as a theater performance is becoming a marketable object in the festival and media industries. (In the visual art field, this tendency toward the ideal – and here, also the *real* – capitalization is even more clearly visible). Integrating artists as partners in an alliance – for example, as curators – in setting up the program provides the opportunity to reconsider priorities and focus the general public's attention more distinctly on artistic and intellectual perspectives. It not only has to do with just constantly *producing* art works and theater productions in a new way, but also with *seeing them in a different light or experiencing them differently*.

CONNECTIONS is the further development of a model experiment initiated by the SPIELART theater festival, which started under the title of *What's next?* in 2007 with the mentors Romeo Castellucci; Tim Etchells; Jan Lauwers; and Johan Simons. Four new productions by Simone Aughterlony; Neco Celik, Gruppe Orthographe; and Maarten Seghers were produced and staged as co-production projects together with Rotterdamse Schouwburg; Tanzquartier Wien; Theaterhaus Gessnerallee, Zürich; Forum Freies Theater (FFT) Düsseldorf; Theater im Pumpenhaus Münster; and Münchner Kammerspiele. These projects were sponsored by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Allianz Cultural Foundation. The different perspectives of two theater generations were examined and discussed during a one-day symposium and in dialogues between artists. The *CONNECTIONS* initiative will renew this discussion and examine the encouraging experiences of the artists and organizers, and also expand the foundation of the project in reference to the issues, the differences in the cultural backgrounds and artistic origins of the participating mentors as well as of the co-producing theaters and festivals.

The mentors:

Kirsten Delholm (Hotel Pro Forma, Kopenhagen)
Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment, Sheffield)
Dirk Pauwels (CAMPO, Gent)
Natasa Rajkovic (Student Center, University of Zagreb)
Meg Stuart (Damaged Goods, Brüssel)
Anna Viebrock (Berlin)

The selected artists:

Toni Dove, New York (Mentor: Kirsten Delholm)
Hermann Heisig, Berlin (Mentor: Meg Stuart)
Maria Jerez - Jean Baptiste Verret Logeriez - Phil Hayes - Hanneke De Jong - Min Kyoung Lee
(Mentor: Dirk Pauwels)
Kate McIntosh, Brüssel (Mentor: Tim Etchells)
Ludivine Petit, Frankfurt (Mentor: Anna Viebrock)
Rona Žulj - Miran Kurspahić, Zagreb (Mentor: Natasa Rajkovic)

The co-producers

CAMPO (Victoria), Gent, BE – Dirk Pauwels, Kristof Blom

Huis en Festival a/d Werf, Utrecht, NL – Yvonne Franquinet

brut, Vienna, AT - Thomas Frank, Heiko Pfof

Theatre CAMP X, Copenhagen DK – Ib Tunby Gulbrandsen

Kanuti Gilde Saal, Tallinn, EE – Priit Raud

Theaterhaus Gessnerallee, CH – Niels Ewerbeck

FFT Düsseldorf, DE – Kathrin Tiedemann

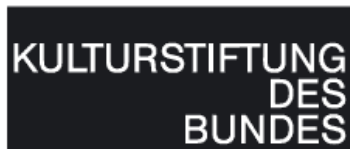
PACT Zollverein, Essen DE – Stefan Hilterhaus

SPIELART Munich, DE – Tilmann Broszat, Gottfried Hattinger

The Student Center (University of Zagreb) - Natasa Rajkovic

Theater am Pumpenhaus Münster – Ludger Schnieder (tbc)

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