

steirischer herbst 02/10 – 26/10/2008

Overview theatre / performance / dance / opera

Information and tickets:

p +43 316 816070, info@steirischerherbst.at, www.steirischerherbst.at

Steinbrener / Dempf (A)

Waagner-Biro-Straße public baths

(Volksbad Waagner-Biro-Straße)

Installation and herbst opening

Commissioned by steirischer herbst

Thu 02/10, Helmut-List-Halle, 7.30 pm

Social events obey certain rituals, procedures, conventions – and the opening of steirischer herbst is without doubt a social event. But instead of making the usual clear distinction between artistic work and opening festivities, the “Waagner-Biro-Straße public baths” are both in one. As in the past two years, the Helmut-List-Halle is at the centre of attention: as a large, walk-in sculpture in which individual initiative and co-operation are required, or at least helpful, and that is appropriated by the audience and adapted to its needs. Subversive strategies spotlight predetermined breaking points in the system, which everyone can easily use for him or herself. No-one is forced to act – but everyone is an actor, observer and part of the installation; an installation which is equally a celebration.

SIGNA (DK/A)

The Complex North Method

A non-stop performance installation

Première

Fri 03/10 – Mon 12/10, Festival centre

There is no outside in the living installations of artist duo SIGNA. Only temporary immersion into a world that seems to be outside of time. In the true-to-detail, frighteningly old-fashioned hospital rooms in the backmost recesses of the Joanneum, visitors register, become part of the hospital as patients, and the object of the “Complex Nord Method” for amnesia sufferers. Fragments of a fictitious identity gradually emerge until they finally gel into a figure. In SIGNA everyone experiences his or her own performance, plays his or her own role in an ambitious and unique theatrical interaction that can be continued and added to during multiple visits. The constructed reality gradually unmasks taboos regarding disease, vulnerability, dependency and power structures. And becomes a theatre that is so comprehensive that the question of fiction and reality loses all relevance.

Michel Schweizer (F)

Bleib opus #3

German-language première

Fri 03/10, 9.30 pm, Sat 04/10 & Sun 05/10, 7.30 pm, Helmut-List-Halle

Five Alsatians and a dog handler, a psychoanalyst, a philosopher, a former legionnaire. The strange personnel that French theatre artist Michel Schweizer brings together on stage gather against the backdrop of the Davos World Economic Forum in 2001. In the finest French tradition of dispute and discourse, the philosopher and psychoanalyst discuss how we can co-exist in peace, where our society stands between the state and the market, and: What is education? Deformation, training, conditioning? Or is it the opportunity to find oneself? The dogs stand motionless until a little movement of the finger sets them in motion. And stops them. Perfectly trained, under control and yet a latent threat, we can never decide who is controlling whom and who is observing whom. After all, not only dogs are manipulated, so are we as citizens.

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endlich Katzensatz – Wurstenden 14,90 (ekw 14,90) (A/CH)

Substitute herbst camp (Ersatzherbstlager)

A bureaucratic enactment

Commissioned by steirischer herbst

03/10 - 26/10, Festival centre,

When steirischer herbst begins, the group ekw 14,90, which was founded in Graz, is prepared for all unforeseen occurrences, cancellations, losses, damage, defects or hitches that might jeopardise the smooth running of the festival. For every artistic contribution on the programme there is a substitute event: associative transformations of the works originally scheduled.

Because it will only be used if a disaster was already unavoidable, the EHL will provide a regular insight into a repertoire that will hopefully not be needed, managing, cataloguing, updating and archiving its exhibits at the Joanneum throughout the festival period.

Eszter Salamon (D/HU)

Dance #1 / Driftworks

German-language première

Sat 04/10, Sun 05/10 & Mon 06/10, 7.30 pm, Dom im Berg

All the works of Hungarian choreographer Eszter Salamon are critical studies of representations of the body and its movements. Together with Belgian choreographer Christine De Smedt, in "Dance #1 / Driftworks", for which Terre Thaemlitz composed the sound, she develops a sophisticated duo based on the Body Mind Centering's technique of improvisation, in which expression is created through movement and not the other way round. By going through several phases of observation, experience and memory of different body systems, both dancers construct a choreography of ephemeral, constantly changing bodies: "Dance #1 / Driftworks" is a constant game with our perceptions and a serious search for the meaning and necessity of movement.

Berlin (B)

Bonanza

Austrian première

Fri 03/10, 5.30 pm, Sat 04/10, 9.30 pm & Sun 05/10, 5.30 pm & 9.30 pm, Theater am Lend

It is the smallest registered town in Colorado, America, perhaps the smallest town in the world. The "Bonanza" of Belgian artist group Berlin is a unique film portrait of a largely abandoned former silver mining town. Long gone the days when six thousand people lived there - seven inhabitants remain: a married couple who are constantly arguing with the neighbours, a widow suspected of being a witch, a self-sufficient, deeply religious nature boy, and a priest who constantly reads. And 'the strangers': a lesbian couple newly arrived, who see elves and cultivate esoteric rituals. Berlin paints a portrait of this miniature world and seven loners damned to community, with their different strategies of finding happiness but still without being able to avoid calamity.

Nature Theater of Oklahoma (USA)

Poetics: A Ballet Brut

Austrian première

Fri 10/10, Sat 11/10 & Sun 12/10, 7.30 pm, Schauspielhaus Graz

There they are hanging around in front of the stage curtain, sipping their coffee, casting knowing glances at each other, studying the audience, crossing their arms. Snide looks, bad moods, flirtatious, close to tears... the performers from the Nature Theater of Oklahoma give us enough time to get to know them. At least it would seem so. For anyone who saw this New York off-off-off Broadway ensemble in their first show "No Dice" in a German-

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speaking country at the last steirischer herbst knows that this presumption is wrong. Directors Kelly Copper and Pavol Liska play with simplicity; – but simple they are not. And so suddenly, all the supposedly banal gestures and facial expressions piece together to create first a brilliant solo, then a group choreography. In the space of a moment, "Poetics" turns into a fast-paced dance. A tour de force, that builds up and up. And up.

Meg Stuart / Damaged Goods (USA/B)

All Together Now (Project.08)

Commissioned work

Thu 16/10, 7.30 pm, Fri 17/10, Sat 18/10 & Sun 19/10, 4.30 pm & 7.30 pm, Helmut-List-Halle

For the first time since her legendary site-specific "Highway 101" project, Stuart is developing a new piece for a non-theatre space together with her company for steirischer herbst. She takes the big empty Helmut-List-Halle as a challenge for a performance installation with a limited number of spectators: What was developed under the working title of "Project.08" is now called "All Together Now" and promises to be an evening of dance set between celebration and crisis, full of fleeting links, unrequested gifts, and little miracles.

Gisèle Vienne (F)

Jerk

German-language première

Thu 16/10, Fri 17/10 & Sat 18/10, 9.30 pm, Festival centre

Director Gisèle Vienne and controversial US writer Dennis Cooper put us in a room together with David Brooks, a convict on a life sentence who tells – or rather has his puppets tell – his unbelievable story of harrowing, sexually charged murders in which he was involved as a teenager: "Jerk" is an imaginary – disconcerting, poetic, humorous and at the same time dark – reconstruction of the actual crimes committed by serial killer Dean Corll, who murdered more than twenty boys in Texas in the seventies with the aid of two teenagers. A story based on facts that still seem untrue; a reduced, above all verbal splatter film in a simple stage set.

BADco.(HR)

1 poor and one 0

Première

Fri 17/10, Sat 18/10 & Sun 19/10, 7.30 pm, Dom im Berg

The theatre ensemble BADco. from Zagreb returns to the scene of the first film ever shot – "Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory": the factory gates. In „1 poor and one 0“ sets about exploring a host of possibilities of leaving the work behind. What happens when you get tired? When is the work we devote ourselves to exhausted? What comes after work? More work? What happens when there is no more work? What is the complicity between the history of contemporary dance and the history of post-industrialisation?

While the performers develop the manifold forms of dissolution of the working subject before the audience, the audience is slowly drawn into a process of transformation: from the popular medium of cinema to the political theatre of populism. A change of perspective.

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Saving the world (Welt retten)

Three short plays for steirischer herbst

Commissioned by steirischer herbst

Thu 23/10 & Fri 24/10, 7.30 pm & Sat 25/10, 4.30 pm & 7.30 pm, Dom im Berg

The future of the world and the future of every individual is more uncertain than ever before. Things are obviously and terribly complicated. Still a kind of pragmatic optimism is giving rise to a surprisingly large potential. Self-confidently, people are demanding the right to the working hypothesis that it might be possible to save the world. "Saving the world" is an extreme metaphor for the consciously naive belief in the possibilities of action.

Seven international writers have accepted the task posed by steirischer herbst to focus on the question of saving the world in a short play. Three will be put on stage at this year's festival by equally young, international theatre-makers with very different individual styles.

Lukas Bärfuss (CH) / Noël Dernes (CH)

Biffy and Wutz

Wutz loves Biffy, and Biffy loves Wutz. The story goes on untroubled until Biffy gets into politics and starts to champion dogs' rights. Good Wutz warns his girlfriend about people who always find a way to eliminate a cheeky little dog. But Biffy does not listen and carries on fighting – and the inevitable happens.

A film theatre melodrama about resistance and adaptation and the supposed power of love – written by Lukas Bärfuss, one of the most successful German-language dramatists, and produced by the young film-maker Noël Dernes.

Johannes Schrettle (A) / Mariano Pensotti (AR)

no-one's colleague (kollege von niemand)

A monologue about employment conditions, life stories and policemen. A character that seems modelled on the youthful terrorists from Godard's "La Chinoise". And the question of what has become of black-and-white photos, revolutionary ideas, demonstrations and love.

From the other side of the globalised world, Argentinean director Mariano Pensotti interprets the text of Graz-based playwright Johannes Schrettle as the story of a past love, of which only mock job interviews on video remain: a blend of politics, theory and private relationships.

Ivana Sajko (HR) / Wunderbaum (NL/B)

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose

We sense the futility and yet we strive for love. Or at least for the emotional experience called love. That cannot be captured in concepts of economics or logic. That simply happens, for instance on a Wednesday evening. And on Thursday morning we've got to go to work again ...

Ivana Sajko's love story evokes images of anti-globalisation riots as well as of burning Rome or that dance marathon that Mike Ritof and Edith Bourdeaux won with 5152 hours of foxtrot in 1930. A forcefully rhythmic and associative performance score with which, for the first time, the Dutch/Belgian actor's collective Wunderbaum tackle a text that they didn't write themselves.

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Georg Friedrich Haas (A) / Jon Fosse (N)

Melancholia

Opera in three parts

Fri 24/10 & Sat 25/10, 7.30 pm, Grazer Oper

It was the love of his life. When it shatters, everything shatters with it. Lars Hertervig, a promising young painter lapses into melancholy and then madness. With this love he also loses his confidence in himself as an artist; in the asylum his thoughts revolve only around himself – and, with him, Jon Fosse’s acclaimed novel, again and again. In his much-praised novel “Melancholia” set in the nineteenth century, Fosse found in the obsessive depression, the complete lack of interest in the outside world, a pathological equivalent to the literary device of constantly revolving repetition. Graz-based composer Georg Friedrich Haas has condensed the novel which Fosse himself turned into a libretto, into an opera, that will be billed as a co-production of steirischer herbst and Graz Opera House in his home town. He transposes the metaphorical fear and transcendental hope that pervades Fosse’s text into a hypnotic musical form, that Haas’s favoured director, Frenchman Stanislas Nordey, translates into disconcerting images.

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