

## WIJKJURYRAPPORT BRUSSELS 2024

### **Planet Womb — Ellen Verbeek**

*Planet Womb* offers a hypnotic journey through the exploration of a planet that unfolds like an enclosed womb. Inside this cosmic symphony, the dancer strives to navigate the planet's muscular contractions, embodying the essence of life and struggle through a dance within the womb.

Although the feeling is that of a work 'still in progress', *Planet Womb* captivates with its intriguing music and electro-acoustic sounds, its immersive sets and scenography, and creates a truly captivating atmosphere. The dancer navigates a liminal space in which she symbolically embodies the essence of life and struggle through a dance within a womb, thus creating another space on stage, totally detached from reality. Overall, the dramaturgy could be further developed and the general feeling is that of a talented performer still searching for her own voice.

### **Language: no broblem — Marah Haj Hussein**

*Language: no broblem* offers a painful, yet brilliant (at times also very funny) exploration of the complexities that surface when it comes to colonial occupation, including the imposition and disruption of language, identity and traditions. Drawing on recordings made in Palestine, the production deftly weaves together conversations in colloquial Palestinian Arabic, Hebrew, Dutch and English, creating a rich tapestry of voices and experiences. What sets this performance apart is its ability to engage the audience on multiple sensory levels. Through a combination of words, sounds, olfactory elements and dance, spectators are enveloped in a 360-degree experience that transcends traditional theatrical boundaries. The skilful dramaturgy ensures a seamless integration of these elements, allowing the narrative to unfold organically.

Central to the performance is the presence of Marah Haj Hussein, whose talent as an actress and dancer shines through. Her performance serves as a powerful medium, navigating the complexities of language and translation with grace and nuance. Haj Hussein's ability to convey a range of emotions, from quiet introspection to seething rage, is truly remarkable and adds depth to the production.

At its core, *Language: no broblem* addresses profound questions about the nature of language and its role in shaping our understanding and entitlement. Against the backdrop of the ongoing occupation, the production delivers its message with clarity and sensitivity, inviting the audience to reflect on their own relationship with language and power dynamics.

While still evolving, the production demonstrates immense multidisciplinary talent and technical skill. It is clear that considerable thought and care has gone into this immersive experience, and the result is nothing short of extraordinary. *Language: no problem* is not just a performance, but a journey that invites introspection, provokes emotions and sparks a much-needed dialogue.

### **La Fiesta de Delfina — Désirée 0100 & Luis Miguel Ramirez Muñoz**

Through the themes of celebration and the absence of loved ones, the duo questions the role of artists and the entertainment, both in a European context and in a Latin American birthday party. Désirée Cerocien and Luis Miguel Ramirez Muñoz are dancers and actors who have both emigrated from Latin America to Europe and with this performance would like to initiate a dialogue on their dual culture/identity and reflect on the evolution and connections between urban culture, dance and institutional art.

What characterizes *La Fiesta de Delfina* is a lively and colourful atmosphere that evokes a sense of playfulness. Although it speaks of their latin roots, it has a universal quality that resonates well within the Brussels community, to which we all belong while maintaining our strong traditions and where a mixture of cultures is thus created on a daily basis.

The show is funny and thought-provoking, offering a unique blend of lightness and melancholy. The question-and-answer session after the performance is particularly engaging and shows how much the performers have integrated and been welcomed by the local audience, who are invited to play and interact directly with them from the hall also during the show. In summary, this show seamlessly combines childlike lightness and fun with tender nostalgia to offer a truly fresh and innovative experience.

### **Vulcanize Me — AUDREY APERS**

*Vulcanize Me* presents an absurd quest undertaken by two women trying to break free from what seems to be a stagnant situation. They seek a space where they can explode, where bodies rebel and where mother goddesses and biker girls reign. Their words may seem disjointed and meaningless at times, but in a second hearing they arrive powerful and open up new possibilities for interpretation.

In this exploration, the show places two female performers in the heart of a volcanic landscape of which they are at the same time a metaphor: what is the relationship between the female body, its exploitation, its power, its tiredness, its role as a bearer of change and the volcano body?

In *Vulcanize Me*, two women struggle to remove their straitjackets and then explode. The show is both hilarious and grotesque, allowing the talented performers Nona Buhrs and Kaat Arnaert to have fun. The show is intense;

the actresses deliver a powerful performance with an explosive crescendo of energy. The interplay between indistinct sounds, Dutch and English adds an extra layer of fun and there are moments of hilarious humor. However, the length of the show may seem a little too long. Overall, 'Vulcanize Me' is an engaging and dynamic show that entertains, makes one think and showcases the immense talent of its performers.

### **YES — BAMBAM FROST**

*YES* is the second work by BAMBAM FROST, a dancer and choreographer from Stockholm who works from an intersectional feminist perspective and her work is in constant transformation and dialogue with current events. In this work, she emphasises fun and fiction to shape constantly changing choreographic proposals.

There are surprising moments in the performance, such as the unexpected inclusion of country dancing, rap lip-sync and the equally unexpected entry of another dancer in the second part of the show. However, the destination of this journey remains unclear and it is difficult to discern whether or not there is a coherent narrative. It is unclear whether the message is deliberately obscured and rendered unintelligible, or whether there is a lack of a narrative to reach the audience. This is a pity because the performers are interesting and the set design and costumes also show great attention to detail.

### **Versterker (dans) — Jinte De Greef**

*Versterker* is a performance mainly focused on dance and theatre where the dancers work with extensions that are also used as something that can block the person, creating a kind of tension.

Initially, it was not easy to let go of the movement without getting too deep into understanding the story. The dance was energetic and explosive. Particularly innovative and interesting were the technical play of light and music choreographed together with the actual choreography, making everything a game of perfect timing that was well thought out and exciting to watch. The dancers were really good and expressive and the presence of such a new space for their performance stood out. Perhaps, on the whole, there were some weaker parts and more prone to things already seen, but this is surely due to the very young age of the performers. We are curious to see how this work will evolve because there are very good premises.

## [Pearls](#) — Joshua Serafin

*Pearls* is the culmination of 'Cosmological Gangbang', Joshua Serafin's extraordinary project with Lukresia Quismundo and Bunny Cadag in the Philippines. In this performance, the goal of creating a space for queer bodies, inspired by the non-normative genders celebrated in the pre-colonial Philippines is perfectly realised: through song, dance and theatre, the three performers imagine a future in which bodies become divine, free from conventional gender norms. This work is filled with pure beauty and revolves around queer identity, transmigration, politics and representation, exploring ways of being and living life.

*Pearls* is an extraordinary show, highly recommended. Complex at times, but the layers of interpretation are diverse and intriguing. The themes of colonialism, cultural identity, local traditions and non-binary issues are all topical, but presented in an innovative and engaging way. The set design and the final playful moment where the three bodies play with the installation and its fruit are nothing short of astounding. The fusion of music, theatre, dance and singing parts makes it truly complete. Moreover, the involvement of the audience in witnessing what happens on stage and in questioning their own shame and feelings adds another beautiful dimension. All three performers are really talented and we hope to see more of their work soon.

## [R.i.s.A \(musical theatre\)](#) — Jr.cE.sA.r / KVS

The show *R.i.s.A* has important and highly complex premises to unpack: In a world where violence is shaken by bomb blasts, what profound resonance does theatre have? Can dialogue, in the midst of rampant cynicism that stifles laughter, offer a beacon of hope? In a city besieged by fear and addiction, where solidarity seems elusive, what role can art play?

The message, which was communicated in a way that allowed for multiple interpretations while always returning to the core meaning is interesting. The visuals and means were thoughtfully done, kind of spectacular. However, for that reason, the general feeling was a bit "too much"—too much of a show with emphasis, becoming unnatural. Of course, a theatre play isn't supposed to be natural, but at times it felt forced, with too much emphasis on being visible and impressive, which detracted somewhat from the message. We are not sure what answers the show gives to the difficult questions it sets out to answer, however, the decision to involve the audience in a collective dance is a nice touch, fostering a sense of shared experience and collective joy.