

THEATER FESTIVAL IMPULSE

IN BOCHUM DÜSSELDORF KÖLN MÜLHEIM VOM 21. NOVEMBER BIS 02. DEZEMBER 2007

Press Release

(December 3, 2007)

More than 8,000 visitors to the Impulse Theatre Festival

> Best off-theatre production is Ivana Müller's "While we were holding it together"

The 14th edition of the Impulse Theatre Festival in Cologne, Bochum, Düsseldorf and Mülheim ended with the prize presentation yesterday, December 2, 2007. The first Impulse under the auspices of the new Artistic Directors Matthias von Hartz and Tom Stromberg received – with just under 8,400 visitors from NRW and far beyond – rave responses with visitors and was able to almost double the attendance of the previous festival.

Tom Stromberg and Matthias von Hartz were thrilled by this new record: "We are very pleased that all these new ideas were so well received: the intensification of the program, the internationalisation, the marathons and – last but not least – the program at the two new festival centres at the FFT and at the Kölner Kunstverein. We succeeded in building a bridge to the music and art scenes and to interest new audiences in theatre. The visitors were thrilled and many of the performances were sold out – a fantastic launch."

> **Prize winner: Ivana Müller, Showcase Beat Le Mot and "Leon, der Profi" (Das Helmi)**

The prize for the best off-theatre production went to Director Ivana Müller's "While we were holding it together", an Association LISA production with the Berliner Sophiensælen. The group will be taking this work to the major theatre festivals in Berlin (Berliner Theatertreffen), Vienna (Wiener Festwochen) and Zurich. The Goethe Institute Prize went to two groups: Ivana Müller and Showcase Beat Le Mot for its "Der Räuber Hotzenplotz" production. Next year, these two productions will be going on an international tour with the support of the Goethe Institute. The first, € 2,500 Dietmar N. Schmidt Prize for outstanding artistic performance went to Leon, the grumpy lead character in the puppet theatre version of "Leon der Profi" performed by the Berlin-based "Das Helmi" group.

Yesterday, the Jury – comprising Eva Behrendt ("Theater heute"), Martin Berg (Goethe Institute), Christophe Slagmuylder (Director of Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels) and Dr. Christian Esch (NRW KULTURsekretariat) – presented the awards within the context of a Düsseldorf Festivalzentrum wrap-up party at the Düsseldorf Festival Centre at the FFT Kammerspiele.

> **International independent theatre scene network**

And the international opening of the festivals also provided new impetus: in addition to the sold-out Jérôme Bel and Cuqui Jerez performances, more than 30 international curators, festival organisers and theatre directors from Canada to Mexico met in cooperation with the Goethe Institute during the festival's first weekend to get an overview of the future of German-speaking theatre. This international networking also immediately generated initial success, with the very first international guest performances being negotiated between the groups during the festival itself.

> **Successful end to the race with hemp sausages and bananas: the Impulse Marathons**

Not only curators, journalists and international theatre makers were thrilled by a novelty that enabled them to watch several competition performances on a single day: the Impulse Marathons.

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Within the context of the six sold-out marathon tours, numerous visitors from the region and, above all, further non-local guests from venue to venue also took advantage of this opportunity of travelling by bus and dealt with the strain of this targeted artistic epic over hemp sausages and bananas.

Dr. Christian Esch, Director of the hosting NRW KULTURsekretariat, looks back on a more than positive festival and looks forward to the next Impulse: "Without the active support of the four hosting cities and the Federal Cultural Foundation, the Imhoff Foundation, the NRW Art Foundation and the Goethe Institute, the complete Impulse relaunch would not have been such a success – and a top-notch mammoth program would have been impossible within twelve festival days without them."

The Impulse 2007 theatre festival was hosted by the NRW KULTURsekretariat in collaboration with the cities of Bochum, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Mülheim an der Ruhr. The festival was supported by the North Rhine-Westphalian Minister President, the Federal Cultural Foundation and the Cologne-based Imhoff Foundation. Further sponsors included the NRW Art Foundation and the Goethe Institute. Media partners were the WAZ Media Group, www.nachtkritik.de and the Kölner StadtRevue magazine.

For further information and picture materials, please log onto www.festivalimpulse.de.

Excerpts from the Jury's reasons for decision:

Best off-theatre production: Ivana Müller "While we were holding it together"

Ivana Müller's "While we were holding it together" appears to be a consummate performance, able to reveal the highest level of complexity within a very clear and simple structure. An equally intelligent and moving "tableau vivant", which mesmerises its audience with the subtlety of its construction and with the quality of the performers. The jury regards "While we were holding it together" as an important production in her artistic development and a unique and inspiring performance.

Goethe Institute Impulse Prize: Showcase Beat Le Mot "Der Räuber Hotzenplotz"

Showcase Beat Le Mot has succeeded in telling the well-known children's classic in a completely different manner. With great charm and drawing on all conventional and non-conventional theatre tools including illusion, disillusion, magic, irony, dance and song, they jointly reconstruct the story of the coffee grinder-stealing Hotzenplotz in collaboration with their young "accomplices" within the audience. They take the children seriously without overly currying favour with them – all the while dispersing all the clichés acquired by children from cassettes and films.

Dietmar. N. Schmidt Prize for outstanding artistic solo achievement: Leon, der Profi (Das Helmi)

Created using the most strange residual materials, this is a creation of a touching richness of the most intense expression: Leon's odd grace seems to transform the darkness and weakness of the world into the very program itself. This is where the strength of a character such as Leon lies: plentiful is created from nothing, remnants become something complete. This creates brittle life forms, whose exposure to the puppets with hands is quite tangible.