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Diary
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Dance international
director Yoni Avital

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ast month's editorial ended with a question looming over our heads. We went to press the day before the UK's referendum on our membership in the EU with no idea of what lay in store for us. Then...lo and behold! Brexit means Brexit! says our new Prime Minister Theresa May. So, we are off. We shed quite a lot of tears here at IAM, and then we cheered ourselves up by finding some fun festivals to write about. What a palaver.

The power of narrative runs through this edition. I love the tale of Backstreet Festival written by artistic manager Amina Abodoma. She explains how spreading joy through the performing arts is just the tonic after the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Joy is a wonderful but simple concept. Not everything in the arts is about education, sometimes it is about pleasure. This light touch is a theme expanded by Daniele Finzi Pasca in our Swiss country focus.

You'll also find an overview of festivals that fall outside of IAM's usual remit. Like BoomTown Fair, a gathering for hardened ravers. BTF is programmed like a book, each edition is a chapter, and revellers all become part of a theatrical storyline. Over at new sonic festival Bluedot, science meets music to create a blast. We think there's a lot to be learned from this convergence of forms, especially when it comes to thinking outside of the box.

One of Australia's brightest events, OzAsia Festival, agrees. I caught up with its director Joseph Mitchell for an early morning chat to talk bondage, *Bunny*, and getting tied up in knots. Eye opening? Yes. Awkward? Not in the slightest, he reassured me.

Maria Roberts

Cover



Supported by Compagnia Finzi Pasca La Vertà © Viviana Cangialosi

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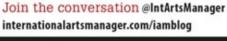
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FRINGE BENEFITS: Hot on the heels of Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Adelaide Fringe has filed record sales of AUD14.8m (€10.5m) for 2016 (12 Feb — 14 March) selling a whopping 604,000 tickets in the South Australian capital. Total public expenditure related to the event was AUD77.6 million, up from AUD68.8 million in 2015. Said Adelaide Fringe chair David Minear: 'The number of people visiting South Australia specifically to attend the Adelaide Fringe increased 11 per cent this year compared to 2015, which shows that interstate and international audiences are increasingly hungry to experience what the Adelaide Fringe has to offer.' The 2016 event featured more than 4,400 artists and 1,124 events across 430 venues. A 66,000-strong crowd watched the outdoor opening night Fringe Parade. PHOTO © Kevin Godfrey

music

Major artists band together to celebrate Teatro Real 200

Universal Music Festival (UMF) is the latest star-filled event to take to the stage for Teatro Real's glitzy bicentenary celebrations. Under the leadership of artistic director Joan Matabosch, who replaced the late Gerard Mortier, the commemorative programme runs until 2018 and will stretch the boundaries of repertoire on offer, including, it seems, concerts by global rock legends.

Setting out his agenda in December 2015, Matabosch said: Teatro Real is going to collaborate in a series of extraordinary coproductions, part of the repertoire for the next few seasons is going to stress the new: new styles, new looks, new composers and works never before performed in Madrid.

'This follows from the conviction that a repertoire as a concept is not something static, but rather something that changes and evolves. And contributing to this evolution is one of the duties that the programme of an opera house like the Teatro Real cannot shirk.'

UMF certainly fits this agenda. Organised by Universal Music Spain (UMS), it is the first non-opera festival to bring major music figures into the gilded intimate surroundings of the iconic Madrid theatre venue – unsurprisingly tickets for the festival at the 1,750-seat opera house quickly sold out.

The first edition of UMF, which took place in 2015, was sponsored by Elton John and featured Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil; Spanish superstar, Raphael; flamenco singer, Miguel Poveda; Colombian artist, Juanes; and the 70-strong music troupe, El Barrio.

UMF 2016 opened with a special concert by rock icon Rod Steward (5 July), with King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia of Spain in attendance.

The July concerts starred José Luis Perales (8 July); Rufus Wainwright (16 July); Bunbury (26 July); Diana Krall (27 July); Manuel Carrasco (28 July); and Arcangel (30 July); performing to a total capacity of 10.500. Said Narcis Rebollo president Universal Music Group Iberian Peninsular. 'Our relationship allows us to consider the magnificent Teatro Real not only as the venue but also as part of the festival itself. The Teatro Real, now partner of UMS in this amazing adventure, has also given us the opportunity to be part of the special celebration of its bicentennial anniversary, both at programming and communication level.

He added: 'Universal Music Festival has become the new event of reference in the capital. This unique setting, together with the best local and international artists, made this second edition one of the most anticipated events of the year.'

Plans for future UMF editions include a fuller line-up with big name musicians and scope for outdoor performances.

teatro-real.com

interlude

 Violinist Frank Peter Zimmermann has been reunited with his Lady Inchiquin Stradiyarius violin, made in 1711, after an 18 month separation. Zimmermann has played the violin for 13 years, but had to relinquish it after owners WestLB AG were bought by Portigon Financial Services AG, whose rental price proved unaffordable for the violinist. Zimmermann has said the instrument 'feels like part of my body... it has altered my musical ideas and how I play. However, the North Rhine-Westphalia government stepped in to save the day and bought the instrument, which they will now loan back to Zimmermann on a long-term deal. The violinist played the 1727 General Dupont Grumiaux Stradivarius in the interim



- Over 1,000 musicians and bands including Coldplay, Abba and Helene Fischer have written to the European Commission to complain that services such as YouTube and DailyMotion are making unfair use of their music. The letter asks for commission president Jean-Claude Juncker to 'act now' to prevent the misuse of their music. At present, websites do not have to remove music unless the license holder makes a specific complaint. As a result, YouTube and other sites have benefitted from users uploading songs they do not own the license to, which then receive numerous plays and generate advertising revenue for the company. A similar letter has been delivered to the US Congress, signed by artists including Taylor Swift and U2.
- Nine composers have each been awarded grants of up to GBP10,000 (€11,800) thanks to PRS Foundation's new project The Composers' Fund. The idea behind the fund is to help composers 'take more control of their careers' and 'develop their work in the UK and overseas.' The nine selected composers are Gabriel Jackson, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Gavin Higgins, Joanna Lee, Joe Cutler, Ken Hesketh, Laura Bowler, Luke Bedford, and Luke Styles. Some are using the grants for studio time, others for promotional work, while some plan to spend the money on research efforts. Supported composer Frances-Hoad said: 'It will make a huge difference to my composing life.'
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has reopened after a USD305m (€276.2m) expansion. The project includes a refit and revamp for the Phyllis Wattis Theater, overseen by architects Auerbach Pollock Friedlander (APF). Theatrespecialists APF who recently worked on the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House renovation provided consultancy when the theatre was originally designed in 1995. It includes a larger green room, a state-of-the-art sound system and new projection capabilities. One of the key features is an acoustically transparent wall, which allows much of the audio and visual equipment to be hidden from sight.

arts

First 'arts' hotel opens in London – for creative and local community

Currently in its soft launch phase after opening in May, Green Rooms is the first 'arts' hotel to open in London with the sole purpose of serving the needs of artists, creative practitioners and the local community.

Located a stone's throw from Wood Green station, the hotel is a short tube ride from the gateway to Europe, St Pancras International station.

Based in a 1935 art deco building, formerly The North Metropolitan Power and Electricity Company, Green Rooms has a simple but classy feel to it: scrubbed wooden floors, white-grey walls, and slate grey blinds give it a calming classroom feel. (IAM went to try out the rooms and came back fully rested and inspired.)

The full restoration of the hotel came in at just under GBP700,000 (€820,737) with a wad of financial support from Mayor of London's £9m High Street Fund and a handful of investors. The building is leased from Haringey Council, and local residents are employed across its services.

The brainchild of 'artspreneur' Nick Hartwright, founder of the Mill Co, Green Rooms has a unique social agenda and



comes armed with a pledge to give artists the chance to benefit from the opportunities the city has to offer – all on a budget. (You'll never consider an Ibis again. Though be warned: toiletries, alarm clocks, phones, hairdryers or televisions are not provided!)

Whilst the hotel is open to the general public (and wants to avoid being 'hipster'), artists benefit from generous discounts: a bed in a dorm costs from GBP18 per night (€21); a standard single GBP66; a standard double GBP84; a corner single GBP72; a corner double GBP90 (all with shared facilities); with ensuites and split-level apartments on offer for those wanting a little more comfort and space. Breakfast costs just GBP5, with affordable food served in 'pop-up' restaurants.

Managed on a not-for-profit basis, Green Rooms has partnered with cultural institutions such as the Royal Court and Barbican Centre to provide accommodation to guest performers.

Artists and musicians staying at the hotel are encouraged to present their work in the large upstairs performance space, or display their art works on the walls. There are also plans for a range of cultural events supported by Arts Council England (ACE) funding.

Hartwright hopes to roll out the concept abroad and further arts hotels are in the offing for Amsterdam and Berlin.

greenrooms.london

music

Mark Stephen Buhl elected as European Association of Artist Agents' president

Mark Stephen Buhl has been elected president of the European Association of Artist Agents at its annual general assembly in Rotterdam. Buhl takes over with immediate effect, and his tenure will coincide with AEAA's 70th anniversary celebrations next year.

The group comprises more than 70 members from 18 countries across Europe, representing more than 4,000 artists between them. It is only open to individual agents rather than larger agencies, providing an industry voice and support for sole traders operating in the sector.

The AEAA strives to emphasise the benefits of a collective spirit, and the human and collegial aspect of our increasingly challenging profession is what distinguishes us,' said Buhl. 'We are dedicated to serving and supporting the members, drawing upon their strengths, talents and resources in

order to further develop high professional standards in the world of artist management.

The other board members are Eleanor Hope (Austria); Andreas Kirchner (Germany); Zdenka Kachlová (Czech Republic); Paweł Orski (Poland; Réda Sidi-Boumedine (France); and Susanne Ziese (Germany).

Formed in 1947, AEAA serves the interests of agents working at all levels.

aeaa.info



Dedicated young dancer among 292 dead in ISIS bomb attack in Iraq

A 23-year-old Iraqi dancer who launched his career on YouTube, and then trained professionally via Skype, was one of 292 people killed in Baghdad on 3 July in the biggest ISIS attack to hit the country to date.

Adil Faraj (aka 'Adel Euro') uploaded his first video Annoying to YouTube in 2014 where he caught the attention of Jonathan Hollander, director of the New Yorkbased Battery Dance Company, who then provided him with training sessions via Skype.

After six months of online lessons with Hollander, the young dancer and law student (Faraj graduated just a week before the tragic terrorist attack) met with the dance company in Amman where he practised with dancers before being invited to perform professionally.

In a video interview with fusion. net on YouTube, Faraj described his predicament: 'Just a few people dance, because of the problems we face in Iraq. There are people in religious groups who attack this kind of art.

'The arts – dance, acting, music, sports and all other types – are weak, very weak. There is never any support. No support from the government or the community.'

With the guidance of Battery Dance Company, Faraj's dream came true when he performed a solo dance to the Gary Jules song, Mad World, supported by his American mentors Sean Scantlebury and Mira Cook, at the Amman Contemporary Dance Festival held in Jordan in June.

Speaking in the short film Hollander added: 'Adil was some-body who despite every possible pressure from society not to dance, living in a war zone, not having a dance studio to work in, not having teachers to train him, not having a community around him that was supportive, still persisted.'

Faraj had planned to move to the US with his fiancée to begin his dance career.

He was buying clothes in Karada for the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr when the attack happened.

batterydance.org



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The European Union was created in 1992.

The European Association of Artist Agents

has been in existence much longer - we're celebrating

70 years in 2017 with our General Assembly in **Paris**, where we were founded.

The AEAA - as it's known – began as a club of colleagues and has continued for seven decades in the same spirit of friendship and mutual respect. We're in the business of serving music and musicians at the best possible level. And we're proud to be European. Membership is for individual agents only, not companies, and there are various categories.

For further information go to our website www.aeaa.info or drop us a line at info@aeaa.info

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- New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NSJO) has named St Martin in the Fields chief executive Gabriel van Aalst as its new president and CEO. Van Aalst will work alongside newlyappointed music director Xian Zhang, who begins her tenure in September of this year. The institutional command and ideas that Gabriel brings to the president & CEO position pair well with the artistic vision and gifts Xian Zhang brings as our next music director,' said NJSO co-chair David Huber. Van Aalst has led a number of successful initiatives at St Martin in the Fields, including a new website that includes Spotify integration.
- UK Theatre the UK's largest theatre membership organisation has appointed Fiona Allan as its new president, succeeding Rachel Tackley. Allan is also artistic director and chief executive at Birmingham Hippodrome, and formerly worked at Leicester's Curve Theatre. ''Arts leadership needs to be more flexible, resilient and entrepreneurial than ever before,' said Allan. 'These are challenging times for theatre and performing arts organisations in the UK.' Since its foundation in 1894 UK Theatre has worked to support theatre companies and performing artists at all levels. More information on its work can be found at uktheatre.org.
- Thibaut Garcia described as 'the new face of classical guitar' by Guitar Classique Magazine has signed an exclusive recording contract with Erato, an imprint of Warner Classics. Garcia won the Seville International Guitar Competition in 2013 and the Guitar Foundation of America Competition in 2015, and recently made his Carnegie Hall debut. His first album on Erato Leyendas will be released in September of this year, and includes Astor Piazzolla's Four Seasons of Buenos Aires, Albéniz's Asturias and Manjón's Aire Vasco. Cellist Edgar Moreau features as a guest musician on the album.



music

IAMA Toronto finds itself at cultural crossroads

IAMA is heading north to Toronto for its second conference of 2016. Whereas its April meeting focussed on how artist managers could 'shake it off', this event (the second time IAMA has visited Canada in its history) puts 'cultural crossroads' on the agenda.

Conductor Peter Oundjian and artist Kinan Azmeh will deliver the keynote speech, with IAMA collaborator Ontario Presents providing the entertainment. This includes IAMA affiliate the Toronto Symphony, who will be conducted by Oundjian. The conference will be hosted by Koerner Hall, Roy Thomson Hall and Aga Khan Museum.

At a time when Brexit is at the centre of the news agenda, the cultural crossroads theme seems particularly pertinent.

'Toronto has one of the most culturally diverse population groups in the world,' said IAMA chief executive Atholl Swainston-Harrison. 'Connecting with the audience and how classical music might become significant to a community's life is on every organisation's agenda. This is not just the case in Toronto: it applies to



many major centres around the world where mobile human capital is evident.'

'For our members, Brexit will create winners and losers as with any big decision but we simply don't know at this stage what it will mean,' he added – and, of course, the conference will happen just days after the controversial US presidential election.

Speakers in the programme include Paola Prestini (creative and executive director at National Sawdust); Dr Peter Simon (president and CEO at The Royal Conservatory of Music); Jenny Bilfield (president and CEO at Washington Performing Arts); Krishna Thiagarajan (chief executive at Royal Scottish National Orchestra); Josephine Ridge (artistic director at Luminato Festival); and Emmanuel Hondré (artistic director at Philharmonie de Paris).



Other performers include violist Teng Li as well as throat singers Inukshuk Aksalnik and Pauline Pemik. Featured composers include Patrick T Carrabré, Sibelius, Walton and Ravel. The conference runs from 10-12 November 2016.

Delegates can also get a discount for CINARS, which takes place the following week in Montréal.

iamaworld.com



SONG CYCLE: Some of Opera's biggest singing stars were busting their lungs on bikes rather than belting out songs on stages in July, as part of a charity bike ride. SongCycle 2016 saw nine singers cycle from Glasgow to London, covering over 500 miles and raising more than GBP25,000 (€29,000) for the charity Help Musicians UK. The ride took eight days in total, and ran from 24-31 July. Singers taking part included Ailish Tynan, Nicky Spence, Mary Bevan, Louise Alder, Timothy Connor, Emma Kerr, Peter Aisher, Nick Pritchard as well as accompanist Simon Lepper. The trip climaxed with a final performance at the London Coliseum on 31 July. PHOTO:

Help Musicians UK

arts

Check, check! Microphone Test wins Taishin Arts Awards

Hsu Che-Yu has won the Taishin Arts Award and TWD1.5m (€42,000) for his



piece Microphone Test, which premiered at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in autumn 2015. Che-Yu is the 14th winner of the competition, which is dedicated to recognising outstanding works of dance, theatre, music and visual arts that have premiered in Taiwan in the previous calendar year.

Microphone Test is a mixed-media piece that combines video work with music and animation. According to Taishin Arts Award, the piece deals with the connections 'between reality, representation and construction of media, memory, history and death.' Pioneering 31-year old Che-Yu has previously been honoured with first prize at the Kaohsiung Awards, and also with the

Gold Medal in New Media Art from the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts.

In addition to the first-place prize, four other artists were awarded NTD500,000: Lee Mingwei for his work Lee Mingwei and His Relations: The Art of Participation; Chu-Yin Culture and Arts Troupe for its piece Mailulay: Traces on the Wall; Body Phase Studio for Wall of Fog, 2015 TIFA; and National Center for Traditional Arts Guoguang Opera Company were recognised for The Painting of 18 Lohans.

The five winning artworks were joined by other selected pieces on display at the Museum of National Taipei University of Education.

taishinart.org.tw

funding news

The US Embassy in Havana, Cuba, is looking for projects that 'enhance understanding through arts and culture,' between the two countries Tensions have thawed between the US and Cuba during during Obama's Presidency, and now the US government is offering funds for work that can build bridges between the communist island and the international superpower that have been cut off from one another for decades. Small grants between USD1,000 (€900) and USD15,000 are available to successful applicants, with projects to be completed by 1 January 2017. In particular, the embassy is seeking work that promotes 'cultural exchange and [enhances] understanding of our shared history, traditions, and values through innovative means.' More information can be found at havana.usembassv.gov.



- The latest stage in the British Council's Recimagine scheme a project aimed at redefining the relationship between India and the UK has just been launched. India Wales Fund is a Joint initiative between between Wales Arts International and the British Council, and offers the opportunity for collaboration and exchange between artists living in the two countries. Interested artists can apply for grants ranging from GBP5,001 (€5,850) and GBP75,000, although the grant must make up no more than 75 per cent of the project's overall cost. The deadline for applications is 17 October. Find the full brief online at wai.org.
- The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) is offering a travel grant programme to encourage emerging artists and cultural workers to explore, exchange skills and share inspiration across the European Union. STEP Beyond grants are available to any EU citizen under the age of 35 who is in the first 10 years of their artistic or cultural career. The programme grew out of similar schemes run under the banner of Erasmus and APEXchanges. A full outline is available online at culturalfoundation.eu/step-beyond.
- Dance Base is now accepting applications for its 2017 residency programme. It offers opportunities to choreographers, companies and individual artists to develop their work through placement with Dance Base. The programme has two strands: exploring and arriving. Exploring encourages research, development and experimentation; while arriving is aimed at taking a developed idea to the next level. Spring Term residencies run from January until April, with a deadline for applications of 19 September at 5pm. A full information pack, including details on how to apply, is available at dancebase.co.uk.

theatre

Coasters Touring Network shines sun on Britain's seaside towns

A new touring network aims to bring circus and street arts back to Britain's seaside towns. Coasters Touring Network (CTN) is a partnership between 10 organisations and Arts Council England, armed with the goal of rejuvenating the country's traditional holiday destinations by encouraging more people to take part in performing arts.

The project benefits from an initial three-year grant and is led by Great Yarmouth's SeaChange Arts. Other partners include Activate (Bournemouth); Worthing Theatres; Hastings Borough Council; LeftCoast (Blackpool and Wyre), SO Festival (Skegness); Theatre Orchard (North Somerset); Mouth of the Tyne Festival (North Tyneside); Dreamland (Margate); and Freedom Festival (Hull).

Part of the problem for companies looking to tour to seaside towns is that while they are demographically and economically similar, they are geographically isolated from one another. The network will overcome this by allowing companies to collaborate, share resources, and exchange knowledge.

Each partner already runs successful events, and to these will be added indoor and outdoor touring shows that are tailored to coastal locations and audiences. Part of CTN's remit is to engage local communities in the curation, creation and delivery of the performances. CTN hopes this will create buy-in from local people and lead to an increase in civic pride.

'Circus and street performance are part of the heritage of English seaside holidaymaking,' said SeaChange Arts chief executive Joe Mackintosh. 'We're seeking to increase traditional tourist and day-tripper families, but also to attract young urban audiences fired up by the resurgence in circus and street arts.'

CTN was launched at the inaugural Great British Coastal Conference in Brighton on 30 June.

coastersnetwork.org.uk





CAPTURING A MOMENT: For the first time in its 80-year history Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) will project an actor onto its stage using motion capture technology. In its new production of *The Tempest*, Ariel will appear as an avatar controlled by actor Mark Quartley from the side of the stage. It's all about transporting an audience,' said Andy Serkis, who used the technology to great acclaim in his role as Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. 'The technology and the delivery have to support that ambition.' Directed by Gregory Doran, *The Tempest* opens at Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon on 8 November 2016 and runs until 21 January 2017. PHOTO: © Royal Shakespeare Company

venues

Huge donation gives green light to WTC performing arts space

A performing arts centre that was part of the original plans for the World Trade Centre site in New York City now looks like it will be built, thanks to a huge donation from billionaire Ronald Perelman. His USD75m (€67.7m) gift, combined with USD100m from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, means the Performing Arts Center at the World Trade Center (PACWTC) project is closing in on its USD240m budget.

The facility will have three theatres of 499, 299 and 100 seats that can be combined into a single 1,200 capacity hall. Once completed it will become home to Tribeca Film Festival.

'With the public money and this money and some other gifts in the

pipeline, we are well on our way to having a superb workhorse of a building,' said the centre's president and director Maggie Boepple.

Perelman has a long history in New York City's performing arts scene, having served as a trustee at Carnegie Hall



for 30 years. However, his relationship with Carnegie Hall ended acrimoniously when he quit as chairman in 2015 after only six months in charge.

Proponents hope this cash injection will be enough to finally see the project completed, after years of problems. Daniel Libeskind left space for a performing arts centre in his 2003 design, with celebrated architect Frank Gehry creating the concept. However, this was scrapped and the budget slashed from USD700m to its present level.

The new facility will be named after Perelman, with PACWTC due to approve design plans in July.

pacwtc.net



Power to the People



orking in digital, there is a lot of emphasis on technology and its advances. Yet, at times, we forget that behind every machine, algorithm and screen is a real person. Why is it that when we talk about digital strategies and transformation there is an exponential focus on technological infrastructures and considerably less consideration of the living and breathing workforce?

Traditionally, businesses have always focussed on 'the system' rather than 'the people'. For years investors have looked at financial statements and tangible assets as a measure of success, but research from Deloitte shows that organisations that actively embrace emerging technologies to increase their global reach and connectivity are valued higher.

All this is great news for arts organisations as they have the opportunity to react and adapt, investing hours (which you have control over) rather than cash (which is limited).

Adopting a business model that embraces digital not only drives productivity and allows you to create more value from your existing resources, but also adds measurable worth to your organisation. This new worth is derived mostly from people: that is to say your staff, your customers and audiences.

As the saying goes, you are only as strong as your weakest link. And so there is a clear and immediate need to invest in creating a more digitally-savvy team and working environment.

This may involve a retraining schedule that provides staff with the opportunity to upskill. For this you can look at e-Learning approaches and collaborative online spaces that encourage knowledge share. Be sure to also evaluate the tools that are at your team's disposal, assessing if, as a company, you are empowering or limiting their potential.

Digitally-enabled teams thrive in the workplace, with research proving they drive more revenue per head and deliver improved outputs. In order to achieve success in transforming your workforce, you need strong digital leadership from the top-down and advocacy throughout. All business models are shaped by the attitudes and actions of its leaders – and this should be no different in the arts.

Four key trends we've witnessed at We Are Ad that are gathering pace in the arts:

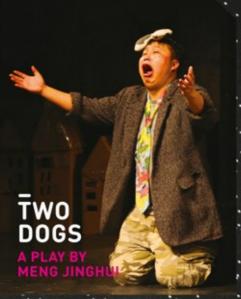
- Self-service: evident in the increasing move towards online ticketing and eTickets
- Personalisation: allowing for your audiences to have more tailored experiences with your organisation, whether that be interest-based emails and personalised messaging or customisable web experiences (ie filtering, cookie-based results)
- Social merchandising: crowdsourcing, reviews and so on, that shape the way in which you'sell' your organisation and tickets
- Collaborative consumption and co-creation: tapping into peerto-peer platforms to create new communities and marketplaces for your organisation

Success in digital really is all about individuals and not machines. So ask yourself: how digitally able are my people?

we-are-ad.com

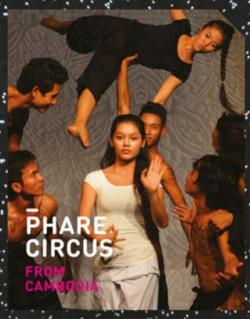


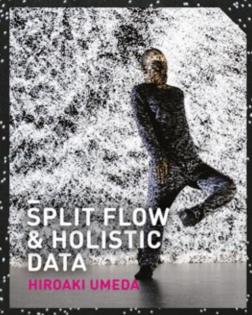






Celebrating 10 years

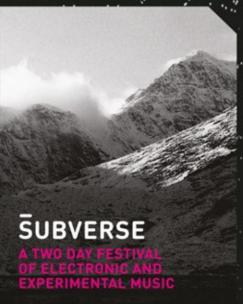


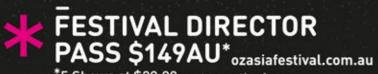






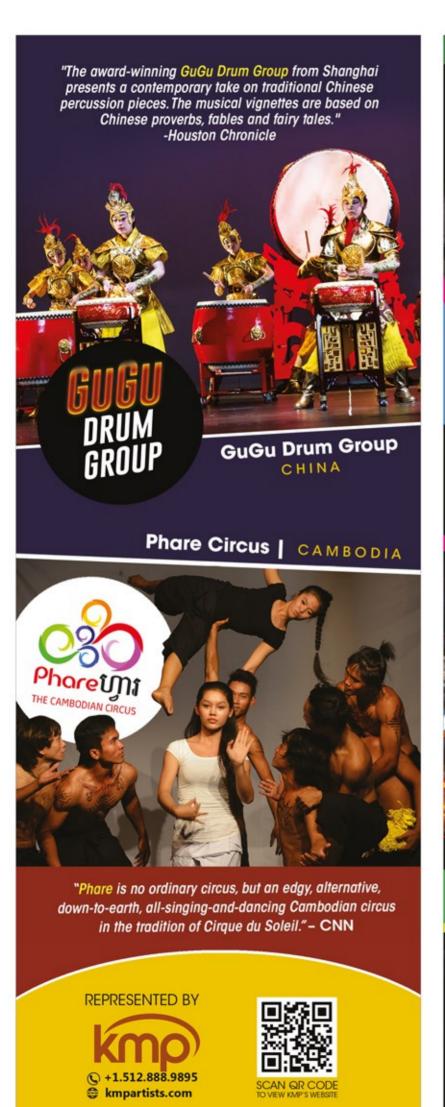






*5 Shows at \$29.80ea + transaction fees









GA Many cultures: Och one festival

OzAsia Festival artistic director Joseph Mitchell has a tough task on his hands: to bring together diverse cultures from across the Asian continent and turn them into a cohesive whole. He tells *IAM* how he does this, while still keeping the festival affordable. Interview by **Maria Roberts**



t is easy from the outside to think of Asia as a single entity, with a single culture. But of course this could not be further from the truth – it is a continent of huge diversity, that encompasses everything from the rich thronging classical music of India to the J-Pop of Japan, the traditional Khmer dance of Cambodia to the contemporary companies of Australia and much more besides. This year's OzAsia Festival, which marks its 10th anniversary, brings together artists from Hong Kong, Cambodia, Japan, India, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and more. Increasing in popularity, more than 230,000 attended in 2015, the last edition set an attendance record for the most people ever at a single event in Adelaide's iconic Elder Park. Now artistic director Joseph Mitchell has plans to make it even bigger and more inclusive than ever before.

This is your second OzAsia Festival. What did you learn from last year and what changes have you made for 2016?

Last year was my first festival and the programme then was very much about shifting the focus to OzAsia Festival's position as one of the only arts festivals in Australia dedicated to showcasing work about contemporary Asia. For 2016, we're not changing course in any drastic way but really introducing more inspiring contemporary work coming out of Asia.

Often what I find in Australia and in many other countries is that a lot of people look back to the traditional icons that make up Asia, like dragons and so on, but Asia is actually at the cutting edge of visual arts and performing arts.

The performing and visual arts have to draw from somewhere: if you look at inspiring architecture in cities, fashion-driven culture in places like Jakarta, or underground subculture scenes in Tokyo or Seoul you see this reflected in the work produced.

There's some really inspiring stuff coming out of Asia. Young people are in a phase where, especially in the case of China, they kind of need to reinvent how to socially engage with what is now a capitalist society, make their own rules, and manage the influence of social media.

All of this comes together when we look at putting together a contemporary festival from Asia.

How do you combine such a vast array of Asian cultures into a single festival?

Obviously every country has a different cultural background and a different aesthetic no matter where in the world you look. As I pulled together this programme, which is very much focussed on Asia, I looked for the links within those countries that are about the younger generation of artists making work in this contemporary society and



what that means in terms of relevance to their country.

If you look at Cambodia, there is not a huge contemporary arts scene. There isn't the same degree of government support for the arts as there is in Australia, and the country is recovering from the genocide that only ended some 20 years ago.

Phare Circus is really shining light on a collective that got together only 20 years ago and had a very strong vision to establish artists in a meaningful way. It has ambitions to educate people, portray relationships and find a way to tell the recent story of Cambodia.

In this way the arts are bringing people together. The work from Cambodia is fundamentally very interesting. It links into the broader contemporary arts and culture theme seen across the entire programme and fits into the genres of both physical theatre and circus.

I've seen a lot of circus and physical theatre around the world and this is of a world-class standard: some of the stuff they do is phenomenal and I haven't seen anything quite like this before.

The programme also includes Cosmic Cambodia, which celebrates Khmer Dance, Kmer pop and mixes East with West. So there is room for two very different things, and that is just from one country.

How do you go about curating a festival that covers such a huge geographical area and includes so many cultures?

The programme essentially comes from my interest in contemporary performance art: I travel and research different regions to see who is creating exciting work and put feelers out across the networks of people that I know.

With Cambodia, however, I was proactive about seeking out work. Often when you are talking about contemporary performance culture, it's really easy to look to Korea, China, Japan or even Indonesia. I didn't want to take those large developed countries for granted and instead wanted to incorporate places like Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines into the programme.

That said, there is still a lot of work from Japan: theatre shows like *God Bless Baseball*, dance from Hiroaki Umeda, Kenta Hayashi's incredible one-man-band, as well as other nations well known for their performing arts scenes.

Are there collaborations between different countries too?

Bunny is a good example of this – it's a partnership between Australia's Luke George and Singapore's Daniel Kok. What is really exciting about this production is how these two artists have worked together: they're both highly regarded in their own right in the performance and contemporary dance scenes of their own countries and this collaborative work has been supported by numerous producers.

I saw the *Bunny* premiere in Japan at the start of the year and I thought, 'This has to be in the festival.' The bondage in *Bunny* draws on a combination of Macramé and Chinese knot-tying styles as well as ideas around contemporary bondage and partnership as different ways for people to explore their relationships together.

Everyone will have a different idea of what this show is about. Before they see it for themselves they may have some nervousness around the world of bondage as something that is masochistic.

What this show does for me personally is demonstrate how two people can engage in techniques, such as rope tying or bondage, in a beautiful and inventive way that brings people together.

It doesn't just bring the two performers together. You can see, as an audience member, that the performers already have a close relationship. What it does is actually bring the audience into the experience of bondage and disarms any kind of prejudice and any fear we have about it.

By the time you get to the end of this experience, which lasts two hours, the people are very much kind of 'tied up' together, sometimes literally and sometimes emotionally.

What's great for our festival is that there's a kind of literal and metaphorical tying together of Asian, Australian and Singaporean cultures. There are so many layers to OzAsia Festival. Bondage can sometimes make people anxious and *Bunny* breaks these preconceptions down – you leave the show with a very warm feeling.

Your programming last year put community cohesion at its centre, has this produced results?

As artistic director my view is that there should be something for everybody and that the festival is about community. On another level, it's very much about introducing contemporary arts and facilitating community participation at our multicultural events.

Below: Moon Lantern Festival at OzAsia Festival 2015





16 Festivals





Company	Genre	Country	Production
Meng Jinghui	Theatre	China	Two Dogs
Vertigo Dance Company	Dance	Israel	Vertigo 20
City Contemporary Dance Company	Dance	Hong Kong	As If To Nothing
Phare Circus	Circus/Theatre	Cambodia	Phare Circus
Soumik Datta & Adelaide Symphony Orchestra	Music	India	King of Ghosts
Hiroaki Umeda	Dance	Japan	Split Flow & Holistic Strata
Margaret Leng Tan	Music	Singapore	Cabinet of Curiosities
Daniel Kok & Luke George	Theatre	Singapore & Australia	Bunny
Croquicky Brothers	Comedy	Korea	Croquicky Brothers

Some of our most attended events are the free and outdoor events: one such event is the Moon Lantern Festival, the largest lantern parade in Australia. Around 1,200 people carry lanterns through this giant parade that stands at around a kilometre long. Last year, 50,000 spectators turned up, which broke records for attendance here in South Australia for an event in Elder Park.

We've taken our community strand a little bit further this year because we are celebrating our 10th anniversary. We wanted to do something to bring the community programming alongside our contemporary arts programming, so more people cross that bridge [of attending an arts events].

With support from the federal and state governments we programmed 10 nights of free music for the general public in Elder Park, the most popular outdoor location in Adelaide. Here we've got 23 international acts coming on stage, we are presenting world premieres, work from Indonesia, contemporary performances from places like Taiwan and Korea, and some East and West fusion music with traditional Chinese instruments, pop stars, and jazz from Hong Kong – it's a really big mix of genres.

Everyone is welcome to come and watch major concerts for free with community performances being presented on stage before the main acts. You can participate and hang out at the Good Fortune Markets every night during the 10-day festival period.

Does that mean free and affordable events are crucial to the success of the festival? Are there some events where it is necessary that you charge more?

Affordability is so important at OzAsia Festival because outside of the free events, which obviously speak for themselves, a lot of our contemporary arts programming has never been to Australia before. So if you are rolling out Robert Wilson for the 20th time, yes you can charge AUD100-AUD200 (€70-€140) because of the track record of that particular artist.

But when you are talking about directors such as Meng Jinghui, who is arguably the most prolific contemporary theatre director in China, you have to price accordingly for an Australian audience less familiar with his profile.

If you have a coffee with him in Beijing there will almost always be people beside you asking for his autograph – he is absolutely huge there, and his shows sell out theatres across China. Few people in Australia know who is, but in China fans are paying upwards of AUD200 a ticket to see his work.

So we have to be careful that artists with very high profiles in their own country are priced correctly. When we are introducing existing artists for the first time to our existing Australian audiences we keep the price low, and then grow the market for them so that ten years from now, when they've been back year on year, their profile has stature. Then from the economies of scale within the existing arts market, you can reflect ticket prices accurately.

During my tenure at OzAsia Festival my interest is in introducing this talent to the Australian market so that in future years and generations they become as established as Robert Lepage or Robert Wilson or any of those regular European or North American artists or arts companies that do the circuits around festivals.

Is Australia particularly suited to large-scale free outdoor events?

Australia is a large country with big open spaces – outdoor events are very much part of the Australian identity. The arts should be for everybody and you can address that need that by looking at existing arts crowds with ticketed theatres and performances and servicing that, but also growing arts audiences for the future.

I think that there's a collective belief in Australia that making the arts accessible to all through free or outdoor events and programming is an entry point for growing audiences for the future. That includes making sure we programme work to suit changing demographics.

Over the last 20 to 30 years we have experienced increases in migration and so the arts should reflect that: now second and third generation migrants, like my own family, are settled here (I grew up in Newcastle, New South Wales). For migrant communities there is a personal need to focus on education and work as a priority – the arts in this context are considered to be something of a luxury in any country.

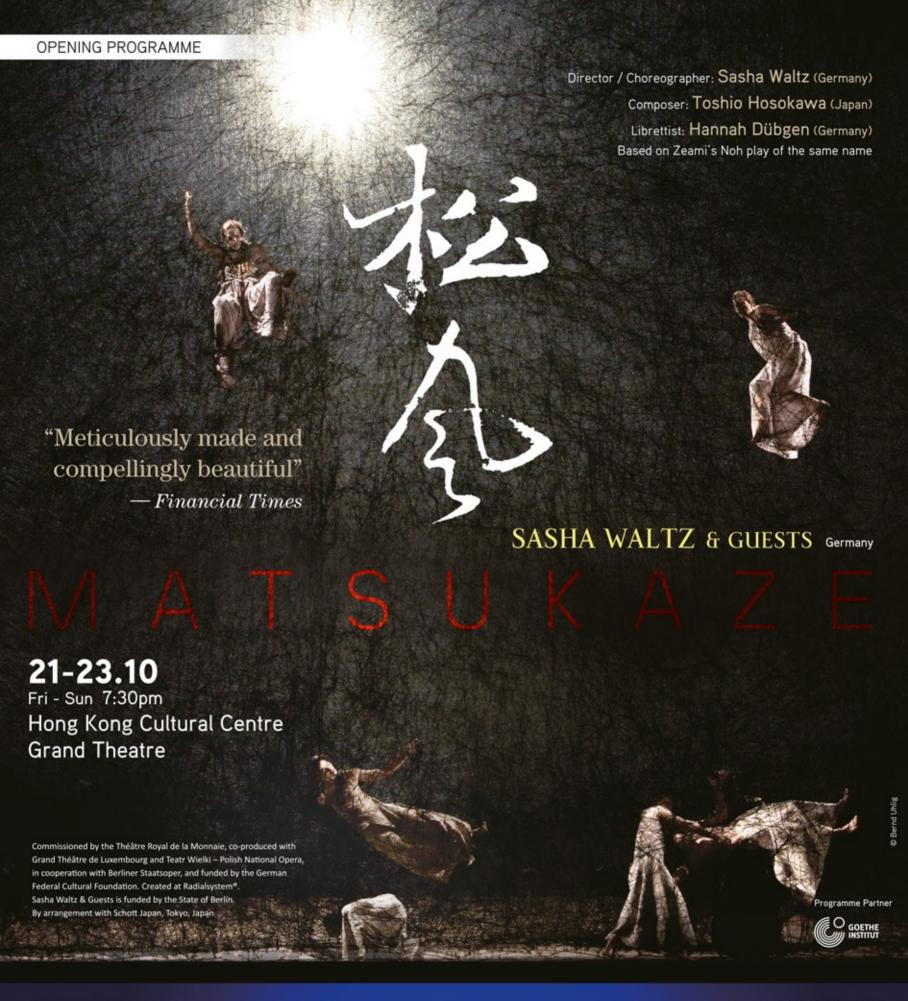
Therefore, ensuring we have accessible and free events sets the tone for the future of arts. As generations move on, I think Australian festivals in particular, will have that at the forefront of their minds.

What about audiences: who attends OzAsia Festival?

We can look at the data to monitor the demographic but I think it is more important to stand at the front of house and look around you. By being physically present you can see who is sitting in the audience in the park and at the venues.

Whilst OzAsia Festival has a very strong arts programme, we want to be very sure that it's not just the established arts crowd attending OzAsia Festival events. I'm proud to say that we have a very broad audience.

ozasia.com.au





CLOSING PROGRAMME

Until the Lions
Akram Khan Company (UK)

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

Ensemble intercontemporain (France)

Prometheus Bound

Li Liuyi Theatre Studio (China)

superposition

Ryoji Ikeda (Japan)

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HONG KONG 21.10-20.11.2016

Tickets available at URBTIX from 26 August onwards Internet Booking: www.urbtix.hk www.newvisionfestival.gov.hk





The glee club

Amina Abodoma,

programme manager at International Association for Creation and Training (I-act) and Teatro Eskendria, writes for IAM on how the Backstreet Festival hopes to bring joy to the streets of the Egyptian city of Alexandria

oy is a metaphoric term for human happiness and success in creating a real bond to reality. It is also a contagious state, which means that it can be transferred and exchanged between people. Joy differs from happiness in the fact that it is a deep-seated emotion that surpasses superficial feelings in order to be planted in one's conscience.

The need for joy increases in societies where there is instability or depression, especially at times of political and social change with all the cruel variables that threaten the sense of stability that citizens expect.

This is, unfortunately, currently the case in Egypt. The protests at the January 25 Revolution in 2011 demonstrated societal rage and excessive anger, channeled through protests and aggressive political debates. Feelings of physical and moral aggression dominated the country, and in everyday life there was no place left for joy. In fact, in my opinion, joy has become a luxury that does not exist right now in Egypt.

At the International Association for Creation and Training (I-act), we have come to realise that the only way to bring joy back to daily life is via attempts to cultivate it in the lived environment. And so in 2012 we created the atmosphere for the people to practise joy through the arts – and this is when the Backstreet Festival (BSF) with its slogan 'The Joy Project' came into being. Since then I-act has organised three editions and in 2016 we will celebrate our fourth.

BSF is the brainchild of the Egyptian theatre director and playwright Dr Mahmoud Aboudoma. It exists as I-act's endeavour to restore joy to society by addressing people's emotions through entertaining, artistic and culturally valuable activities.

Unlike the previous festivals organised by I-act, including seven editions of the Creative forum for International Theatre Groups and two editions of Reveil, An Arab Awakening, BSF was established after the revolution in 2011 with the idea of taking art to the people. It

strived to enhance the concept of art in public and non-traditional spaces including alleys, parking

areas, cafés and even private gardens.

Among the troupes who participated were

Among the troupes who participated were Gandini Juggling from the UK, Fukuro Kouji from Japan, BandArt from Hungary and Acrobatic Conundrum from the US.

'The need for joy
increases in societies
where there is instability
or depression, especially
at times of political and
social change'

What is Backstreet Festival | The Joy Project?

BSF stands as an artistic and exchange platform involving theatre, multimedia, puppetry, clowning and contemporary circus performances, training opportunities for young artists as well as a debates and discussions on the state of the arts and theatre related issues.

The training programmes are primarily focussed on two main axes: techniques that relate to physical



theatre and contemporary theatre, and long-term guidance on creative and cultural entrepreneurship in cooperation with Goldsmiths College, University of London and the British Council.

BSF is organised every October in Alexandria and is an opportunity for local audiences to experience different forms of art, with a special focus on presenting theatre in public spaces.

It unites local and international artists with participants with the purpose of creating networks that could form the basis of future collaboration and exchange.

An embodiment of this type of exchange is a theatre project between the German troupe Grotest Maru from Berlin and the Alternative Theatre Group (ATG) from Alexandria, Egypt. The project is in the process of being developed and is currently supported by The Robert Bosch Stiftung foundation in Germany.

So far, I-act has managed to organise three successful editions of the festival, which was originally planned to be a biannual event, yet its success coupled with the passion of its organisers has led to the development of an annual event.

I-act is supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and is a member of TAMASI Collective, an initiative composed of 11 Arab performing arts organisations from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. TAMASI members are diverse and experienced organisations, supporting artistic excellence, embodying a firm commitment and strong artistic vision for arts and culture as a pivotal contributor to the achievement of social and political justice.

Though I-act receives some funding, it is not as easy as it seems to keep going as the existence of BSF is constantly under threat.

Money matters

In countries where the social and political circumstances are averagely stable, one of the major risks that could threaten the existence of an artistic happening is the lack of financial resources to sustain it.

In the case of BSF, which takes around one full year of preparation, the social and political challenges surpass the financial constraints, as every year the festival has to juggle around two main issues: finding the space and securing the permission for that space.

In terms of our financial situation, the festival does not receive state funding, as it is not common in Egypt that independent artists or cultural managers get support for their activities. (It is a complex situation: further explanation of which would require another article. In a nutshell, this goes back to a deep-rooted cold feud between the different ideologies of the government on the one side and independent artists on the other.)

Independent artists present a different way of thinking, they have a more leftist perspective and they tackle social problems. Thus the work done by those artists serves as an eye-opener to the public about their problems, whereas the government wants to turn a blind eye over those problems. This is why artists have little access to funding.



Backstreet Festival 2015

Left: Dancing Grafitti, Banart (Hungary)

Below: Secret Circus, Clownish Circus Theatre (Austria)

Opposite page: Parada Narrnia Grotest Maru (Germany)





It is worth mentioning that the festival starts every year with only 25 to 30 per cent of its budget secured (€25,000). Therefore, the artistic planning is handled in parallel with constant fundraising.

This situation is very tough as performances, as well training sessions, are always at a risk of being cancelled at the last minute because of a lack of funds.

In addition, the festival is quite young and it is hard to explain to professional international artists why such low fees are offered, not to mention how we then convince them to travel to Egypt to participate in BSF in the first place.

As an example, the full cost of bringing a troupe to Egypt might be \in 2,000 to \in 3,000. Yet, we can only offer them \in 1,000 and sometimes we cannot even cover the cost of flights. When you take into account that \in 1 is equivalent to EGP10, you can see our predicament.

Another challenge for us is how to justify to artists and audiences the very late publication of the programme – we release it just three weeks before the festival begins.

This is because we get confirmation of support and funding at different times, sometimes as late as just two months before the festival opens, which makes it hard for us to finalise the deal with artists. It can also be the case that we are awaiting permission to use a certain venue.

Likewise each member of staff handles numerous tasks and roles, as there are not enough funds to hire a bigger team. The management ranks only include the festival director, artistic manager (me) and one coordinator, so we reply heavily upon the help of a team of volunteers at the implementation phase.

The artistic director curates and fundraises for the festival and the programme coordinator coordinates all the aspects of the festival

(including venues, marketing, promotion and more).

Could we sell more tickets? Relying upon ticket sales alone would not bridge the financial gap: Alexandria is not a wealthy state and so if we were to introduce average-priced tickets (by European or American standards), attendance would shrink.

Culture in Egypt has not received a subsidy since the 1960s. A ticket in Alexandria costs around EGP10 pounds. People may pay a little more to attend a music concert, but it is not common to pay more than this for theatre.

Therefore, it is seldom that people will pay to attend a show unless the festival caters specifically for the upper middle classes. The festival relies on small funds from different foreign cultural bodies that support activities and performances from their countries to participate in the festival for cultural exchange purposes.

Our partners to date have included the French Cultural Centre and The Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Japan Foundation, and the British Council among others.

I-act is able to channel other income made via its newly-established cultural enterprise Teatro Eskendria (an arts space and restaurant), this contributes in some part to the overall budget.

Securing public spaces

BSF's purpose is to be an intentional happening that provides opportunities and space for local artists to present their works. And yet, it is very hard to find proper venues for these shows because getting permission from the government to present work in public spaces is a struggle. It is important to highlight that even before the 2011 revolution, many artists did not benefit from easy access to indoor spaces managed by the government.





Across the country there are over 100 theatre spaces that have purposefully been shut down, discouraging artists to present their work. This can be attributed to differing ideologies between the government and artists in Egypt.

The festival management always states that it intends to show art in public spaces, yet in parallel it states clearly to everyone involved that the venues could change at any point.

It has always been difficult to get permission from the government to use a public space for a theatre performance, and now it is almost impossible. To be fair, permission is sometimes denied for security reasons and in most cases there is a lack of transparency and issues around bureaucracy.

Over the past three years we have found that moving a show from outdoors to an indoor or semi-outdoor space can be a good solution – though it is one that is constantly criticised by the local community. For us, moving a show, rather than cancelling a show, is the lesser of two evils.

What does the future hold for BSF?

The fourth edition of the festival will take place from the 12-17 October 2016 in Alexandria and there is some potential for some shows to be presented in Cairo.

The Joy Project continues as our theme this year with a cultural entrepreneurship strand to its training programme. This covers the presentation of a research project on the mapping of cultural spots and potential venues across the city of Alexandria in cooperation with the Swedish Institute.

The festival is also looking into presenting different coproductions where international troupes come with a show and then Egyptian artists work with them over the course of a week. A version that brings together foreign as well as Egyptian artists will then be presented at the festival

One such example is a show we are producing with a French troupe called Generik Vapeur. They will work on *Bivouac* during the week-long residency with Egyptian artists, and then the show will be presented as *Alexandrian-Bivouac*.

Similar projects will be realised with Germany and potentially the UK. We are curating the festival at the moment and open to hearing from artists working within the fields of multimedia, puppetry, clowning, mime and contemporary circus.

Interested participants should contact Amina Abodoma (amina@iact-eg.org) before15 August.

iact-eg.org / facebook.com/Backstreet-Festival



'We created the atmosphere for the people to practise joy through the arts'

Backstreet Festival 2015

Above left: Street performers

Above right: The Fireshow

Left: Bizzare

An evening of J.S. Bach with violin legend



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Five festivals breaking boundaries

Curated by Nickolas Boom, BoomTown Fair takes an innovative approach to the UK's festival scene by mixing up culture and musical craziness. **Patrick Roberts** on how the programming team is using theatrical experiences to stand out from the crowd

n the public eye BoomTown Fair carries a reputation for craziness: embracing huge acts across an expansive list of genres, ranging from bass music to ska, reggae to folk, and electro swing to drum and bass. This musical diversity leads to a misguided concept of BoomTown Fair as being something of a bonkers music festival, but this is only a façade: BoomTownFair lives and breathes creativity across the spectrum.

Launched in 2009, and hosting around 50,000 visitors, BoomTown Fair's aim is to bring escapism and diversity to the masses: international acts join the home-grown UK scene, and this year there is an especially good selection of groups from the Balkans. Some 24 main stages lead the action, with names like The Old Mines, Bang Hai Palace and Robotika, through individually themed districts with names like Mayfair Avenue, Wild West, Sector 6 and Trenchtown, which you navigate via uniquely designed streets.

Once you peel back the outer layers of BoomTown's programming, there's a massive choice of arts and culture on offer within the fictional city's walls. In fact, the entire festival takes place within an immersive theatrical context spanning all nine city districts and four BoomTown Fair zones.

Says Martin Booth, director of immersive theatre: 'The unique way we are use arts at BoomTown Fair is by organising it to push one message or story. Music festivals are a perfect place to play in immersive settings, as the world within a real world is set up for you. To this end, the arts and festivals work hand in hand.

'BoomTown offers a journey into the immersive imagined world, giving audience members the chance to be something different. Art and culture have always been present in our old school festivals from the days of previous festivals such as Stonehenge and Elephant Fair etc, but now it is what differentiates us from other festivals.

'This kind of festival narrative is not present in some of the more commercial offerings, and in some ways it would be unfortunate if this did becomes the case. Art is powerful, but when is it just eye candy and when is it inspirational?'

Boomtown's libertarian attitude spreads throughout the fields. Festivalgoers are free to camp in pretty much any spot they choose (In 2015, I went for around 30 metres away from the main reggae stage where I caught Stephen Marley (Bob Marley's son), Protoje and David Rodigan). Throughout the festival experience you're constantly aware of the in depth storyline running through the city: you become a resident and your experiences within the festival will vary depending on your choice of district.

Adds Booth: 'Each of our theatrical districts have strong detailed identities and storylines which a range of artists with various skill sets are in charge of. However, a big part of the BoomTown experience comes from the fact that we let performers loose in their assigned areas. The beautiful thing about this process is that art is made in the moment. Of course, we have structure and a strong narrative to guide us but ultimately nothing happens until the audience member starts the game. How his or her experience then develops is just as important as anything that we have pre-planned.'

Actors, performers and staff embody this attitude to such an extent that festivalgoers soon begin to feel like fictional citizens roaming fictional streets – with their explorations rewarded with musical or artistic surprises. For those wanting to really make the most of the immersive experience, they can swot up on the storyline





on the website beforehand and make the most of literature lying around the districts to guide them through the experience.

For example you can take a trip to Madame Wrong's Chinese Take-Away in ChinaTown with 'several health and safety violations, manic wenches cackling on the floor outside, sickly mayhem and food fights.' Or you might take a trip to Barrio Loco District community where the fictional Job Centre will put you to work all day followed by a sneaky underground party at night.

So how do they go about recruiting so many performers to place in every corner of 'BoomTown' from food vendors, to bands, to natives? 'Every performer and artist involved serves the larger picture,' says Booth. 'At the heart of what we are doing is creating a fictional society in which everybody, including the festivalgoer, has a part to play, feed and ultimately change.

'We work hard to help develop the existing crews that are with us. Many of our collectives begin as small-scale ventures and as we move forward each year they evolve with us: everyone that comes on board is creating something bespoke for the city. You will be hard pushed to find our one-off experiences played out elsewhere.'

Chapter 8 takes place 11-14 August in Hampshire, UK boomtownfair.co.uk

The Science Festival

Bluedot – NEW! 22 – 24 July Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, UK discoverthebluedot.com

Music goes well with so many things: drink, food and dance to name a few. But how about music and science? Bluedot, a new festival of science and music set in the grounds of the Jodrell Bank observatory, certainly thinks they are a match. The new annual festival, which ran at the end of last month, promised visitors'a weekend of music, science, arts and culture under the stars.'

In some ways music and science are polar opposites: one driven by facts, the other by feelings. But both share a common goal: to reach for something beyond ourselves.

Moreover, take a look at the line up and you'll soon see what a big impact science

and technology has had on contemporary musicians. Would Jean Michel Jarre's music even exist without the rapid advances in digital technology? Where would Brian Eno be without science and synthesisers? What would British Sea Power's lyrics even be about?

The music programme, which included folktronica star Beth Orton and electronic -indie-rock band Everything Everything, took care of the sonic angle, but it was the science side that made this festival unique. As well as booking musicians inspired by scientific concepts Bluedot also included a series of talks and lectures from top science speakers. TV science super star Brian Cox appeared alongside Robin Ince, as part of a live edition of BBC Radio 4's Infinite Monkey Cage.

Elsewhere professor Danielle George spoke about the ALMA array of telescopes in the Attacama desert; professor Mark McCaughrean answered questions like 'what is the universe made of?'; and professor Matthew Cobb explored the future of genetic technology and its impact on human life. (AA)





The World Music Festival

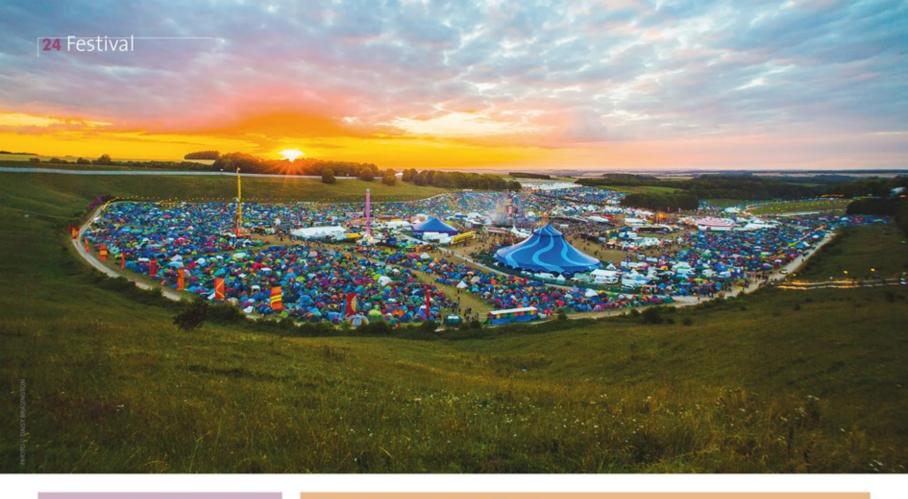
Méra World Music Festival – NEW! 29 – 31 July Kalotaszeg, Romania meraworldmusic.com

This brand-new festival, which took place in Méra, a village in the picturesque and diverse region of Kalotaszeg, Romania, showcased a wide variety of genres and eras of world music. The festival focussed mainly on the neighbouring Romanian, Hungarian and Gypsy cultures, kicking off with a warm-up concert by Budapest's Góbé orchestra in the nearby village of Gyerőmonostor on 15 July.

The main festival took place in late July and featured a wide range of world music (klezmer, jazz and reggae to name but a few) in its afternoon concerts, while dedicating its evenings to accomplished performers from across Central Europe, including Tárkány Müvek, a Hungarian folk group mixing traditional folk songs with modern avant-garde jazz, and Nadara, a Gypsy folk band that shot to fame after composing the soundtrack to acclaimed French drama, Transylvania.

Also on the bill were some world-music heavyweights: Ágnes Herczku, Nikola Parov Quartet, Tcha Limberger, Esszencia, and Buda Folk Band. As well as established acts, the festival boasted the first-ever meeting of folk musicians from across Kalotaszeg, leading to a night of improvised music and dance.

Finally, the festival hosted musicians from Hungarian TV talent show Fölszállott a Páva, in an exciting concert that showcased some of the most exciting new performers from across the Carpathian mountains. (EL)



The Jewish Festival

International Yiddish Theatre Festival – NEW! 20 – 27 November State Jewish Theatre, Bucharest, Romania teatrul-evreiesc.com.ro



Romania's capital Bucharest will see Yiddish artists from all over the world converge this November, as Jewish State Theatre (SJT) hosts the first ever International Yiddish Theatre Festival. The event marks 140 years since the world's first professional

Jewish theatre was established in Romania, by writer and artist Avram Goldfaden.

'[Our] main goal is to preserve and to promote Yiddish theatre and language, to propagate and promote Jewish traditions, and the knowledge of language and literature,' SJT tells IAM.

In addition to theatre, the festival will include performances from Klezmer music bands, film screenings and literary events. Adds SJT: '[We] aim to increase intercultural communication, by exchanging experiences with communities that promote Yiddish culture, preserving the Jewish cultural tradition in Romania and passing on the Jewish cultural heritage by artistic ways all around the world.'

Founded in 1948, SJT is the world's oldest Yiddish-language theatre. Over the last 25 years it has toured to the US, Canada, Israel, Germany, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, France and Greece. It previously organised the International Festival of Yiddish Language between 1991 and 1996 and co-organised the Festival of Yiddish Culture in Europe in 2003. (AA)

The Unifying Festival

Meet in Galilee
25 – 26 September
Akko, Israel
lesjourneesdegalilee.org

Akko in Israel might not be the most obvious choice for a baroque opera festival, but that is exactly what Muriel Haim – the brainchild behind humanitarian charity Un Coeur pour la Paix – has planned. Meet in Galilee will see a series of operas linked to Levantine history performed in the town in late September, with Christophe Rousset curating.

Meet in Galilee coincides with an economic forum of the same name, and organisers hope it will demonstrate the cultural diversity of the area whilst also dispelling misconceptions that the region suffers from.

'I started Un Coeur pour la Paix because I wanted to build bridges between divided peoples...establish respect and trust between Israelis and Palestinians,' says an impassioned Haim.' I am starting this festival to reinforce unity between different cultures and what better way to enjoy music than with Christophe and his magnificent ensemble.'

Rousset will lead his Paris-based Les Talens Lyrique in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Charpentier's *Actéon* and Handel's *Alcina*. The former two are based on Greek mythology, and deal with conflict between divided groups, be they human and gods (*Actéon*) or Greeks and Trojans (*Dido and Aeneas*). *Alcina* tells the tale of a sorceress who lures lovers to their doom.

'We hope that this selection of baroque masterpieces will win over hearts in Israel on either side of the divide,' says Rousset, adding that he has cast Israeli singer Anat Edri in the role of Alcina.

Haim established Un Coeur pour la Paix (which translates as A Heart for Peace) to give Palestinian children from Gaza and the West Bank access to emergency cardio treatment in Israeli hospitals. So far more than 650 children have received such children, with a 98 per cent survival rate. (AA)





Below: Bianco su Bianco; Daniele Finzi Pasca with

his late wife Julie

The beauty of small things

Maria Roberts speaks to founder Daniele Finzi Pasca about Théâtre de la Caresse, his late wife Julie Hamelin Finzi, and being at home with inspiration

hen I catch up with Daniele Finzi Pasca on the phone he's at his Swiss cottage in the countryside of Lugano. It's early morning and there's a loud trill of birdsong rattling down the line. He's awaiting the arrival of his Brazilian friend, an actress at Compagnia Finzi Pasca (CFP), who will take a walk with him in the mountains once we are done. It's a beautiful place, he tells me, and from my office in overcast Manchester I can almost imagine the glorious Swiss sunshine that awaits him.

Just a few minutes into our conversation I get the sense that Finzi Pasca is one of those rare beings in the arts world. It's the act of making art - and not the end result - that drives him to produce.

For some arts practitioners creativity is something that they fall into, or accidentally stumble upon when they are going about other business; but for others creativity permeates their bones and runs through their veins. You sense that there is an authenticity to their choices. In the case of an artist like Finzi Pasca, being a creator is not a way to make a living, it's how he lives his life.

From the age of 12 Daniele trained with a clown in his home country of Switzerland, first mastering gymnastics before entering the world of experimental theatre. As a young adult he tried a year of formalised training at a theatre school, before heading off to India in 1983 to volunteer as a carer for the terminally ill. Once back in Switzerland he founded the company Teatro Sunil with long-time

artistic partners Maria Bonzanigo and his brother Marco, later



'The dream world can suspend the impossible...then something magical can happen'

forming CFP in 2009 with some of his regular collaborators: Antonio Vergamini, Hugo Gargiulo, his late wife Julie Hamelin Finzi (also co-founder of Cirque Éloize who sadly passed away on 14 May this year) and Maria Bonzanigo, the latter with whom he developed the philosophy and technique Théâtre de la Caresse.

What is most striking about Finzi Pasca is his approach to developing his career. In terms of personal accomplishments, he's a success story. He earned his stripes getting big-hitting shows into arenas: in 2005, he wrote and directed the mega-show, Corteo, for Cirque du Soleil, and his latest show for them, Luzia, is currently playing in Toronto until 16 October. He was the creative lead behind the 2006 closing ceremony for the Winter Olympics in Turin, and then in 2014 he created and directed the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics and the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

His work for Cirque Éloize includes Nomade - La nuit, le ciel est plus grand (2002) and Rain (2004) the latter of which was nominated for three Drama Desk Awards in New York in 2006.

Added to that is a whole raft of companies he has either launched or worked with, there are numerous opera credits to his name too. But it is at CFP that Daniele's true personality shines through. There he has nothing to prove and can create tiny stories with huge hearts that really do have the universal ability to warm even the coldest of souls.

There's a truthfulness to Finzi Pasca's work that rises above the general lip-service we are used to hearing in the performing arts (such as grand and waspish motives to connect heaven with earth to connect us all, and goodness knows what else).

Indeed, there's something of Gabriel García Márquez in Finzi Pasca's writing - he's part humanist, part magic realist. His writing and directing style is poetic and delicate. Small and intimate pieces carry a gentle and caring motive with the power to slice through your comfort zone. One such piece is Bianco su Bianco, a moving modern fairytale and love story about the affection that grows between a childlike young man and his confident amore. Until the fateful day when death comes knocking at their door, it is then that he steps into his wife's shoes to carry the load.

Metaphorically, visually and literally, CFP's lightness of touch, coupled with breaking sadness, pierces your heart.

How does he do it?'Like a cook cooks, I tell stories. I am a storyteller,' the director says matter-of-factly. 'And I am surrounded by people who want to tell specific kinds of stories.'

Is he trying to create modern fairytales? Is he a magic realist? 'Magic realism is something that we talk about at the company because the aesthetic of magic realism is something that is part of Latin American culture, but also touches in some part on the Italian culture of where I live.

'I am from the Swiss-Italian part of Switzerland and here we have a way of telling stories that is exactly like magical realism and is similar in form to the retelling of dreams.

'The dream world can suspend the impossible,' he explains. 'But in the concrete world of real life when you alter actuality, in even the smallest way, then something magical can happen."

And then in true story-telling fashion he furnishes me with an example: 'If you have one mosquito in your house it is something, but if you have a billion mosquitos in your house then that it is something else and changes the perspective. But what if the mosquitos are then organised to dance and create an image? Then this is something else entirely. It is possible to change the form of the stories, simply by changing the size of the reality.'

This is especially true when it comes to embracing Théâtre de la Caresse, a way of working that runs throughout the company. 'In many ways we are the opposite to Jerzy Grotowski, who got to the







point at the end of his research of believing that you can work without the public. We are the absolute contrast of this idea. We try to be close to the public, dance with them, massage the soul for the spectators, and move something inside of them.'

One such show that demonstrates this interplay is *Icaro*, a monologue performed by Daniele to an audience of just one person. Created before he launched CFP (with his first company Teatro Sunil), it is one of his most important, enduring and favoured works (not, interestingly, the mega-shows he created for Cirque du Soleil). *Icaro* has toured in its original language and in translation for 20 years, racking up more 700 performances worldwide.

Now, aged almost 50, have his ambitions changed along the way? How does the once 12-year-old circus performer, who fell into the world of experimental theatre, describe his work today?

Says the director: 'In some forms the term circus is inappropriate in my case – and reductive – as I work in experimental theatre. I am also an opera director and I am a clown. We prefer to describe the company as 'acrobatical theatre', similar in some ways to Japanese theatrical works and the style of *Commedia dell'arte*.

It is not circus-led as very often an actor comes to us with strong foundations in acrobatics.'

'At the moment he is working on the development of a new show – though it is a difficult time for everyone involved with Compagnia Finzi Pasca.

'This is a new phase for us: not just in my own personal story, but for the company as a whole. For many years we were a team of five directors and now after more than a year in the hospital, we lost one of them. My wife Julie passed away seven weeks ago and she was a key person in the company. So we have started to create this new work in the strangest phase imaginable. We are all a little bit changed by the experience of losing Julie.'

This is surely especially true when trying to embrace the technique of Théâtre de la Caresse. How is it possible to bring lightness to a sad story, when indeed you are so very close to the tragedy that you are trying to transcend?

'Everyday we consider how we can continue to dance and bring to the work this lightness, we try to talk about the pain and suffering in life though our work, and giving hope, but personally it is very hard. We are like warriors without a horse. It is strange. Every day is strange. Each day I climb the mountain and go and try to speak with Julie to find the right direction.'





It is good, he adds, that after many years working outside of Switzerland, he and the company are now back home. CFP works from the new LAC theatre space (Lugano Arte e Cultura), a move instigated by Julie, who helped the company to return to its birthplace.

For Daniele, Julie's passing is a triple blow: the company lost a beloved member, but the director lost a fun-loving inspirational wife and his creative soulmate.

'In the world of the creator there are some people who are more like lemons and oranges – these are the artists who need to be cut and squeezed to be able to give juice to others. And then there are other kinds of artists who are much more like flowers. They are like orchids and to achieve this very difficult process, and to grow, and place colours and flowers into the lives of others, they need the right conditions to thrive: humidity, a little bit of water (but not too much) and a little bit of sun (but not too much).

'Our company is floral: we are not like the citrus fruit that needs to be squeezed. My work as a director is to protect that ideology and I know that around me, with Maria, Antonio and Hugo, we will always work this way. At CFP we know each other very well and believe in keeping this floral condition stable so that we can let the ideas flow.

'Sometimes you see artists with conflicting approaches to this world, and they live together with a lot of dissatisfaction because one person needs the big stress and to be squeezed, whilst the other does not.'

With a gentle note he says that his network remains strong, and for this he is grateful: 'We've all had the wonderful chance to work together for more than 30 years; on small shows like *Bianco su Bianco* and big crazy events like the closing ceremony for Sochi. Each time we work together it is a pleasure.'

He pauses for a moment to take a breath: 'Julie was one of the founders of our company and so we will try to do our best to continue what she developed. And in fact it is not easy, it is very difficult, it is like working without a leg, without an arm, without eyes. It's very difficult for us all in this moment.'

For now his fellow directors at CFP are offering a sturdy rod of support. Thanks to the groundwork laid down by Julie, Compagnia Finzi Pasca's creative genius rests collectively in very careful hands.

finzipasca.com

Finding the positives in problems



In just four years Symphony Orchestra
Basel has become independent, switched
chief conductors and is now moving home.
Can it turn this challenge into an
opportunity? **Andrew Anderson** spoke
with PR and marketing assistant Cristina
Steinle to find out

he last few years have been a time of great change for Symphony Orchestra Basel (SOB). In 2012 it became independent from the General Music Society of Basel, which until then had coordinated all its concerts – a huge upheaval for both the artistic and administrative teams. Then this year Dennis Russell Davies, chief conductor since 2009, came to the end of his contract and was replaced by Ivor Bolton; two conductors with very different styles. Now Basel's Stadtcasino, where the team is based, is being refurbished – effectively making the orchestra homeless for the next three years.

But whereas some institutions might have been overwhelmed by all this change, SOB has thrived. It has opted to focus on the potential, rather than the problem. As a result, the ensemble has a number of new and exciting programmes that will push the boundaries of what it can achieve musically over the next few years.

'Symphony Orchestra Basel is a really old orchestra, its history goes back 300 years, but we only took full control of the artistic and commercial affairs ourselves in 2012,' says PR and marketing assistant Cristina Steinle. Has it affected the atmosphere at the orchestra? 'As you can imagine, it was a big change, as is the move from Stadtcasino.'

In fact, Steinle says this transitional period goes back even further – to when Davies first joined the orchestra. 'When Davies joined it was important to him that we became better known internationally and play more contemporary music.'

But now Davies is moving on and Bolton is filling his shoes as successor in 2016. The enormously popular English-born conductor is known for his love for ancient instruments and baroque. Bolton is an acclaimed harpsichordist as well as well as a conductor, quite a switch from his predecessor.

'It will certainly keep things interesting for the musicians and the audience,' says Steinle when I ask about Bolton's appointment. 'We're all very excited to be working with someone who is as well-liked and who has such a huge international reputation.'

But don't expect Bolton's appointment to mean it will be all harpsichord and hunting horns going forward for SOB. Because, as Steinle tells me, the group has big plans to create even more experimental music than ever before. And, for all Bolton's baroque leanings, he is a fan of dragging ancient instruments into the 21st century.

One new thread is its club strand. 'It all started with our Cube Sessions, which are concerts with two musicians of ours who play with one or two DJs and producers,' says Steinle. 'They try to mix not just electronic and classical genres, but to create something new and find a new path.'

The Cube Sessions project proved an enormous success, with musicians and audiences alike enjoying the shows. 'The idea was to bring together different people in the city, people who were not going to classical concerts,' continues Steinle. 'We wanted to bring them in to see what classical music can be, and understand that it can be a relevant and exciting experience.

'Many people in the audience came back to more than one concert – some people came to every single one in the series. They liked the ambience, as the concerts were set in a club where usually you have concerts or disco nights. It was very open. It was also inexpensive, which helped attract a crowd.'

Unfortunately, the club that held the concerts has since closed and now SOB is looking for a new avenue for its experimental streak, as Steinle explains: 'We will find a new way, a new forum. It might be that we expand it into something like a mini music festival where a lot of different music experiments can take place – not just a mixture of classical and electronic but maybe classical and jazz, classical and hip-hop – who knows.

'We want to encourage musicians to leave their path and try

something new. Maybe we could work directly with clubs...but right now it is just an idea, and we're not sure what direction we will go in just yet.

This gets to the heart of SOB's attitude to change: whereas some orchestras would simply move the Cube Sessions to a new venue, instead SOB see this as an opportunity to push the model even further.

A contributing factor is the orchestra's musicians, who have also gone through a period of adjustment. Says Steinle: 'For a long time the average age of our orchestra was quite high, but in the last few years it has changed dramatically - a lot of young and motivated musicians have joined who are very open to things like this, and who work on projects like this in their private time. It is beautiful to see how the enthusiasm and passion of the young players has inspired the other members of the orchestra - it is contagious.'

One such musician they will be working with soon is David Garrett, the 35-year-old rock star violinist who has been vaunted and vilified in equal measure by the classical music world.

An artist interested in taking classical music to new places and new audiences, it is little wonder that a forward-thinking institution such as SOB is keen to work with him.

'He first played with us in 2013,' Steinle says energetically. 'Some people loved it - not all people, naturally - but it brought new people into our concerts. We will tour with him next year and he returns to play in the Musical Theatre here in Basel.'

Which brings us to the Stadtcasino renovation. While SOB's home is being redeveloped the orchestra will play in venues across the city - nothing unusual in that. But what is curious is the way the orchestra has tailored its programme to suit each venue, as Steinle explains: 'For example we will play chamber music in museums and libraries, Bruckner in Basel Minister, Stewart Copeland's Ben Hur in an old Roman theatre, and David Garrett at the Musical Theatre,' says Steinle. 'Like with Cube Sessions it brings the possibility of new people hearing us play. It will be a really special season with lots to

I've got one last question for Steinle: is there room for Ivor Bolton, electronic music crossovers, David Garrett and site-specific projects all under one institutional roof?

'We certainly hope so,' she says with a smile in her voice. 'Of course, we don't know for sure if the audience will come along or not but it will certainly be very exciting to find out.'

sinfonieorchesterbasel.ch









WFIMC

he World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC) saw a lot of change in 2015, with Didier Schnorhk joining as president and Benjamin Woodroffe as CEO. One new leadership goal was to expand the organisation, particularly by adding members from Asia.

By that measure its recent general assembly in Armenia must surely be considered a success, with five new competitions approved by the membership, including one from Hong Kong. The new members are the Canadian International Organ Competition (Montréal, Canada); Elena Obraztsova International Competition of Young Opera Singers (St Petersburg, Russia); Giorgos Thymis International Piano Competition (Thessaloniki, Greece); Hong Kong International Piano Competition (Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR); and Leeds International Piano Competition (Leeds, United Kingdom).

'We welcomed new member competitions from Asia, Europe and North America,' says Woodroffe. 'There are certainly more classical music competitions being established in China and South Korea in particular, but the decision to accept applications for membership rests with the WFIMC membership itself.

'We must be guaranteed that each and every member application meets the artistic and operational requirements of the statutes of the WFIMC. The WFIMC is committed to quality over quantity and newly established competitions must meet objectives of sustainability and voting excellence.'

A number of other significant developments came out of the event, which ran from 15-18 June. 'The general assembly brought representatives from over 35 international member competitions together to debate the latest ideas, practices and future considerations for classical music competitions at the highest level,' explains Woodroffe. 'We also endorsed a new partnership with medici.tv to highlight each and every WFIMC member competition, and held a 60th anniversary concert featuring WFIMC Laureates at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall.'

The general assembly in fact coincided with the Aram Khachaturian International Competition, which the CEO says was a fruitful partnership: '[They] provided enormous hospitality and specially tailored cultural opportunities to introduce the international delegates to Armenian heritage.'

What is planned to mark its 60th year? 'An inaugural Young Laureate Concert will take place in 2017 in Geneva,' says the CEO.

'With the support of the City of Geneva, this concert will profile the very high standard of laureates from WFIMC member competitions and recognise the long standing connection that our organisation shares with Geneva. We look forward to expanding this Young Laureate concert concept in other cities in following years.'

wfimc.org



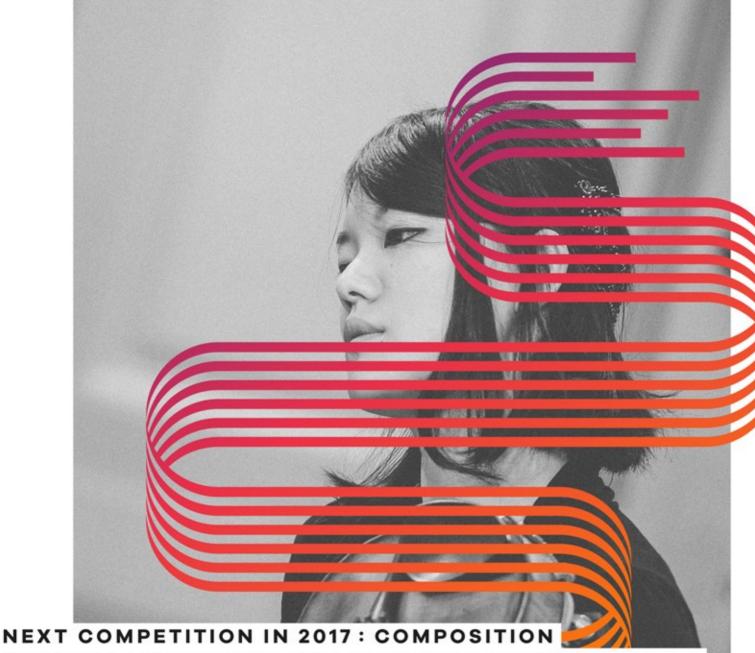




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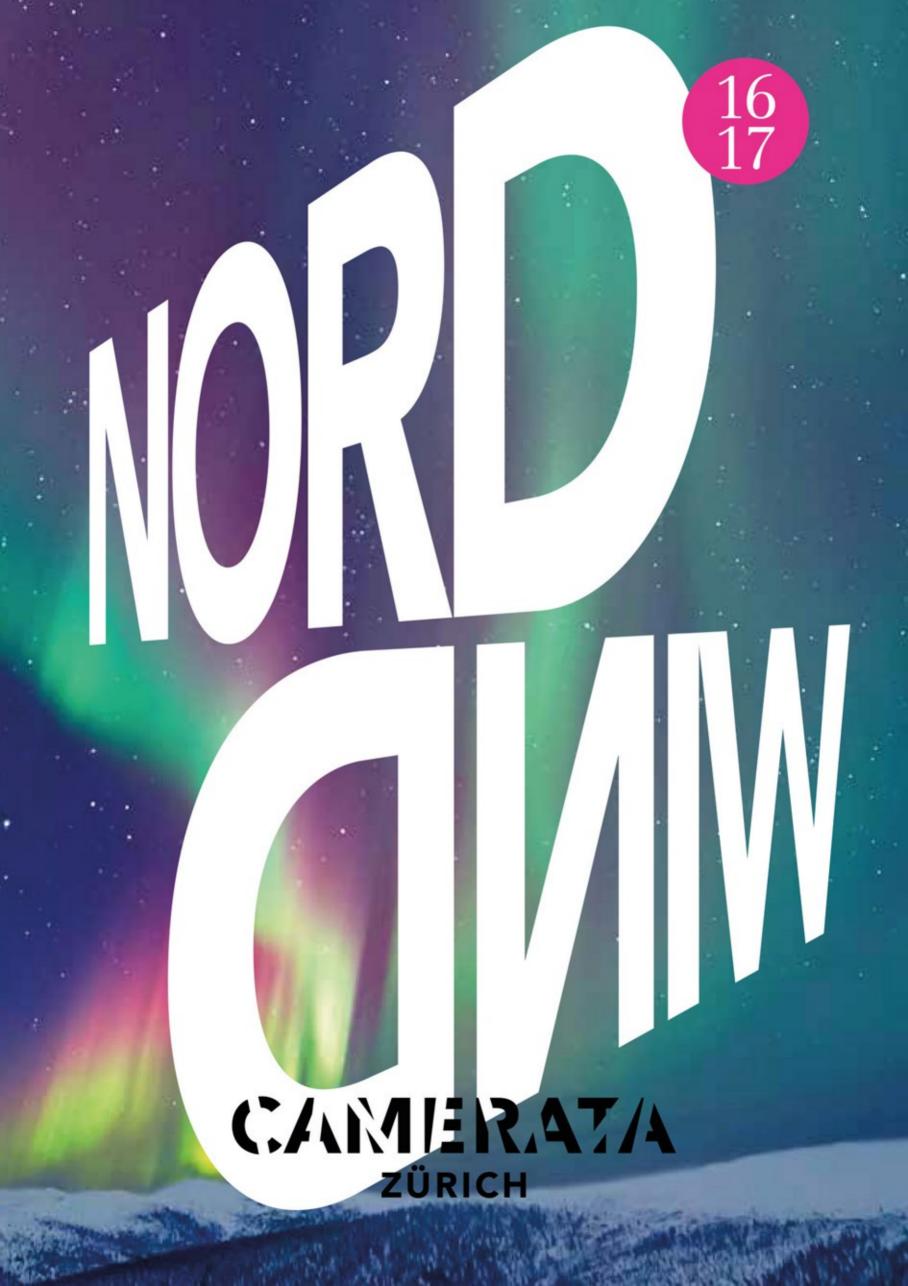
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sometimes get very angry letters from people who do not like our contemporary programming, begins llona Schmiel, director of Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, when I ask about the audience's response to her orchestra's progressive direction.

How does she deal with that? The answer is surprising: she invites them to read the sheet music. 'What I do is I show them the scores of the contemporary piece, and we look at scores from older works,' says the director, whose voice exudes a calming quality. 'My experience is that showing them the scores gets them interested, and that they then understand the approach of the contemporary composer.'

Just how many such letters she receives Schmiel does not disclose, but I imagine it might be quite a few given the focus of its programming. Like almost all orchestras a high percentage of the pieces it plays are not by living composers. But unlike most orchestras it has made it its mission to change that, and has put new work at the centre of its recent seasons.

'We have to create a repertoire for the 21st century,' says a defiant Schmiel. 'We cannot keep living in the past, never hearing the work of living composers. So we are commissioning new pieces every season, and co-commissioning with other orchestras and festivals.'

The reason for the co-commissions, Schmiel explains, is so that the new pieces have a life beyond their world premiere. 'Too many pieces only get played once or twice,' she continues. 'By co-commissioning we can ensure there are 10 or even 20 performances guaranteed beyond the world premiere here in Zurich.'

This is not, however, a 'build it and they will come' approach: Schmiel and her team are extremely selective in which composers they work with, and how they then present any new pieces. Alongside the director and the music director, the orchestra now employs a creative chair. The role is similar to that of a featured composer or artist, except with a far wider portfolio.

'It is not just a composer-in-residence, but a composer who is actively involved in our work,' says the director when I ask her to define the position. 'For example, our first ever creative chair was Esa-Pekka Salonen. He not only composed a new piece for the orchestra [Caravan, a work inspired by the dada poetry of writer Hugo Ball], but also gave lectures, led workshops and conducted the orchestra.

'The creative chair also influences our programming, and we perform other works by the creative chair – like chamber music. Salonen even conducted some of his own pieces with us, such as his *Violin Concerto*. So it is a mix between new compositions and existing pieces.'

Since Salonen, two more people have filled the creative chair role: Jörg Widmann in 2015-16 and now Péter Eötvös for 2016-17. Selecting the right person is very important and, says Schmiel, it is about more than simply picking someone who is a talented composer – they must almost act as spokesperson for contemporary music. 'The creative chair must engage directly with the audience. First through their artistic output, though they must also be a personality who is able to speak to the audience and involve them in our process.'

One way in which they can act as a spokesperson is by giving talks before and after concerts. In fact, such talks are becoming increasingly important for Tonhalle. 'More and more we ask the conductors – or preferably the composers themselves – to give a short introduction before the performance,' says Schmiel, who is clearly passionate about this concept. 'In January Herbert Blomstedt conducted *Poesis*, written in the 60s by Ingvar Lidholm. He conducted the world premiere in 1964, and gave an amazing and enthusiastic explanation of why he wanted to perform it again. I would have expected the audience to have had some reservations about this piece, but everyone was fascinated by it because of Blomstedt's introduction.'

Clearly pre-concert talks can be very effective, but so

too can education efforts that start much earlier. Like many orchestras, it engages young people through a variety of concerts and forums. It plays regularly in local youth centres, where 80

per cent of attendees said they had never been to a concert before we came to them. Its slam poetry events (led by famous slam poet Hazel Brugger) have also helped bring in a younger audience, as have its tonhalleLATE concerts that combine classical music and clubbing for 25.45 year olds

But what makes the orchestra's youth engagement distinctive is the fact that some of its programming is actually designed and overseen by the young people themselves. 'It grew out of our tonhalleLATE series, where the audience was starting to get a bit older,' says Schmiel. 'So we decided to start something for 16-25 year olds, where after 11pm they can programme their own music. 10 people aged 16-18 work with us for eight months in our administration, working alongside a member of staff – so, for example, I have two young co-directors. This means the programming is more engaging, rather than being something we prescribe.'

Schmiel says a big hand must go to music director Lionel Bringuier, who joined in 2014. Known for his strength with French repertoire – Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich just released the complete works of Ravel on CD through Deutsche Grammophon, with Bringuier conducting – he has, says Schmiel, 'managed to combine classical and contemporary repertoire with these ideas in a very skilful way – he has been very good for our development.'

All of this can be summed up in an analogy Schmiel uses towards the end of our conversation. 'Many of the people who say they do not like contemporary music will go to art galleries and love the modern paintings,' she laughs. 'They like the mixture of old and new that you find in an art gallery. What we have to do is show them that what we do at Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich is the same – a balance between old and new.'

tonhalle-orchester.ch

'We cannot keep living in the past, never hearing the work of living composers'















The cofounders of Compagnia Finzi Pasca, Daniele Finzi Pasca, Julie Hamelin Finzi, Maria Bonzanigo, Hugo Gargiulo and Antonio Vergamini, have created more than 30 theatrical and acrobatic shows The corounders of Compagnia Finzi Pasca, Daniele Finzi Pasca, Julie Hamelin Finzi, Maria Bonzanigo, Hugo Gargiulo and Antonio Vergamini, nave created more than 30 things and acrobatic shows such as Corteo and the new show on tour from 2016 Luzia (Cirque du Soleil), the Olympic closing ceremony of Sochi 2014, (FilmMaster), the Paralympic opening ceremony of Sochi 2014, Nebbia (CFP & Cirque Éloize), Rain and Nomade (Cirque Éloize) and staged the openas Love from afar (English National Opena), Aida and Verdi's Requiem (Mariinsky Theatre), Pagliacci and recently Carmen (Teatro San Carlo) to name some. With soon 5 shows on tour worldwide, Compagnia Finzi is driven by the desire to develop artistic projects to continue to broaden the "Theatre of the Caress" spectrum, a theatrical technique based on the invisible gesture and the state of lightness. Over the years, these concepts have put forth a unique aesthetics found in every dimension of the creation in order to retrieve the memory that conveys nostalgia and stirs. The poetic gesture of the clown intended as monologue for a single spectator or an Olympic ceremony, for theatre, dance, opera and cinema: everything is combined within the Compagnia Finzi Pasca.

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Argovia Philharmonic









arau is known for its beautiful buildings – a town packed with painted eaves – as well as its picturesque location among the rolling foothills of the Jura Mountain. If ever a town could be described as postcard-perfect then Aarau would be it.

It is also known for its orchestra, the Argovia Philharmonic. Founded in 1963 as Aargauer Symphonie Orchester, it renamed and rebranded in 2013 to mark its 50th anniversary. Explains intendant Christian Weidmann: 'We were ready to celebrate the first half century, but leave it behind at the same time, without neglecting our history – the time was right to rebrand on every possible level.'

Rebranding can often prove to be a 'Marmite' moment – people either love it or hate it – but fortunately, says Weidmann, the Argovia Phil audience was open to change: 'A few of our audience questioned the necessity of using an English name as a Swiss orchestra. But after that we only got positive feedback. The new name became a proper brand, in a very short time.'

One reason for this successful transition was that Argovia Phil didn't just rebrand, it added a whole host of new elements to its programming, which meant the audience could immediately see the benefits. 'We installed many new activities,' confirms the intendant. 'We tried out new, unexpected venues, started a live CD series with the German label Coviello Classics, and enlarged our activities in the education section.'

These education efforts include family concerts, school concerts, interpreting workshops with the orchestra, behind-the-scenes sessions, a 'music pass' for young people, and an exchange programme that brings musicians together with old and young Argovia Phil fans.

'Last year we reached around 3,000 children all around the Canton of Aargau,' says Weidmann.'In times where the public hand is saving on education, and musical education specifically, our educational programme becomes more and more important. This is our first duty: to bring music closer to people. Of course, we mainly think about children when we use the expression education, but really it includes all adults.'

All of these efforts have been overseen by chief conductor Douglas Bostock. In a world where tenures tend to be short, Bostock is something of an anomaly; he's spent more than 10 years at the orchestra already. That steady relationship, says Weidmann, has been crucial in Argovia Phil's rejuvenation.

'He changed the orchestra into what it is today: a young, highly-motivated and inspiring ensemble that always aims for quality. His impact here has been immense.'

So is consistency more important than keeping things fresh? 'In sports they kick out the manager if something does not go well – like with Real Madrid. But then there are really successful teams such as Manchester United and Arsenal, who have worked with their coaches for 10-20 years. I would not define one or the other as better – it's all about the timing.'

Bostock is certainly not going anywhere just yet, and has a big role to play in Argovia's 2016-17 season. 'The next couple of seasons have a big focus on Beethoven. This might not seem very innovative; but one must not forget that we are playing in a region where the largest city has a population of just 20,000 and that we are playing out in the countryside. Getting this musical ground supply to the people is essential.'

So where does the orchestra play in such small urban areas? That, says Weidmann, has been a serious challenge – there are not many venues with the seating or acoustics to do the orchestra justice. 'Our concert halls are too small and acoustically unsatisfying. But there is a new project in Aarau to develop the Alte Reithalle, which is a former equestrian hall once owned by the Swiss army. It will turn – if everything goes well – into a new concert hall in 2021.

'The new concert hall will open up new options,' he says. 'For example, from 2018 Argovia Phil will take charge of artistic direction at the Oper Schloss Hallwyl festival, which takes place every three years.'

But while small halls are, for now at least, a problem, there is an upside: everyone at Argovia Phil is working in one of the prettiest places in Europe. It's very nice indeed, affirms Weidmann. Some of the most beautiful castles are here, among them the Habsburg. Then there is also the amazing wine, the beautiful landscape. I think Aarau is underestimated by most of the Swiss population.

Opposite: Argovia Philharmonic

argoviaphil.ch

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Monday

We arrive in Barcelona for Festival Grec de Barcelona, one of Spain's most prominent performing arts festivals. We are here for our artistic director Rami Be'er's production *If At All*, which we will perform at the Catalan city's 2,100-person open air Grec Theatre later in the week. The show is a thrilling 65-minute journey of entrancing dance, choreography, light and sound.

Tuesday

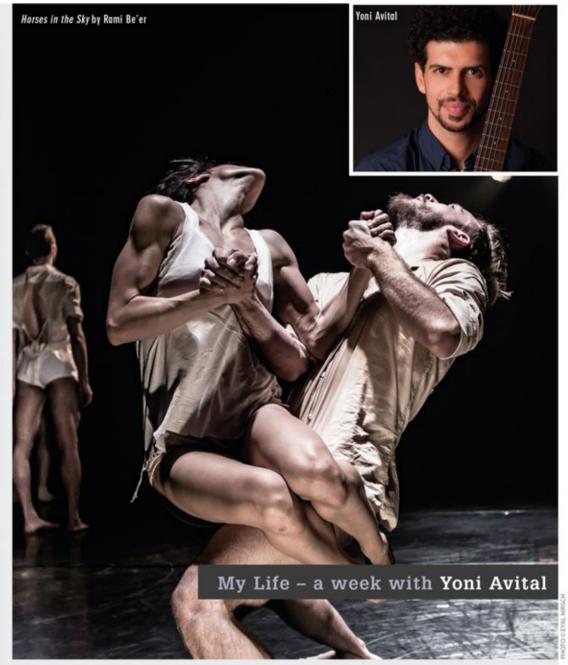
Today we regain our energy: before our arrival in Barcelona we performed in Krakow at Poland's Jewish Culture Festival. Our company has a very special history: Be'er's Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company (KCDC) was founded by Yehudit Arnon. As a young girl she was sent to the notorious Auschwitz concentration camp during WWII. There she was separated from her mother, who upon arrival was sent to the gas chambers. While in the camp, Arnon kept her spirits high by dancing for her fellow inmates in the barracks after a laborious workday. In December of 1944 (the final Christmas before the end of the war), Nazi officers ordered her to provide entertainment at their annual holiday festivities. Arnon refused and the commanding officer of the camp condemned her to freeze to death in the cold winter's night. Arnon made a promise to herself that if she survived, she would dedicate her life to dance. A few months later the camp was liberated and Arnon made her way to Budapest, after which she emigrated to Israel alongside other survivors of the war. Throughout her life she kept to her promise and dedicated herself to dance. Today, her dream has been realised through Be'er and KCDC.

Wednesday

Today I meet with Be'er, who has been KCDC's artistic director and choreographer for the last 20 years, to discuss plans and logistics for the next few days. Be'er's impact on the company has been significant: he has expanded the outreach of KCDC to the public and established a core belief in dance education via a second company, KCDC 2. The mission of KCDC 2 is to introduce contemporary dance to youth in both Israel and across the world, performing Be'er's repertoire such as Peter and the Wolf, Carnival of the Animals, and interactive and audience-involved performances such as 360° in schools and children's festivals worldwide.

Thursday

This week we launch our summer intensive at our International Dance Village back in Israel. We will be joined by nearly 400 young and aspiring high school and university aged dancers hailing from Buenos Aires, Brussels, Paris, Beijing, New York, Los Angeles and London, all ready to take part in the KCDC summer intensive courses that last from a fortnight to six weeks. It's been only a week since we said goodbye to the 38 participants from our international Dance Journey study abroad programme, which provides future dancers from dance academies such as New York City's Ailey School, Tisch School of the Arts and The Netherland's Codarts School of the Arts with a springboard to a



professional career. Dance Journey runs twice a year and offers a cultural immersion experience living on a kibbutz, learning Hebrew, volunteering in the community, and exploring the historic regions of the southern Negev desert, Jerusalem and the Galilee.

Friday

Tonight is the opening night of *If At All* in the Grec Theatre. After a scorching day, with temperatures well over 30 degrees, it is good to perform in the cool of the evening – our curtain time is 10pm.

Saturday

We stage our second performance of If At All in Barcelona. The company's 16-member cast is composed of both Israeli and international dancers but their summer holiday will be shortened by their upcoming tour and performance series at the Sydney Opera House, who have invited the company for the world premiere of Be'er's newest work *Horses in the Sky*, running from 31 August – 3 September.

Sunday

Today we will travel to Portugal for our next stop, Festival de Almada near Lisbon in Portugal, where we will perform If At All tomorrow.

kcdc.co.il

Yoni Avital is international director at Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company. Its production Horses in the Sky will run from 31 August – 3 September at Sydney Opera House, followed by further performances of If At All in Switzerland and Germany in October.



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