

## ARTS TALK Colour Supplement

Number 26

December 2024

A bumper edition this month with nine articles spread over fifty-two pages - and a mixed bag it is too. There is dance from Conny Janssen and Club Guy & Roni plus opera from Opera Zuid. We preview a circus spactacular from Africa and report on QETC's La Cage aux Folles. Leiden celebrates 450 years of its unique parade and we see the restoration of Rembrandt's The Night Watch at the Rijksmuseum. Design Museum Den Bosch is showing Supreme and there is a review from Utrecht of Impakt.

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Afrique en Cirque at Amare in The Hague



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Restoring *The Night Watch* at the Rijkmuseum



Conny Janssen Danst's Danslokaal #12



Faith by Club Guy & Roni



IMPAKT Deal With It in Utrecht





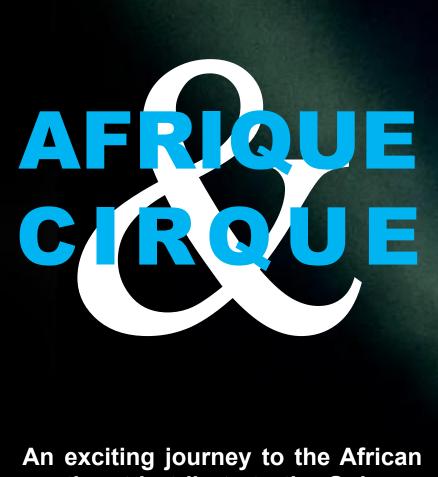
Leiden on parade at Museum de Lakenhal



QETC's La Cage aux Folles in Amsterdam



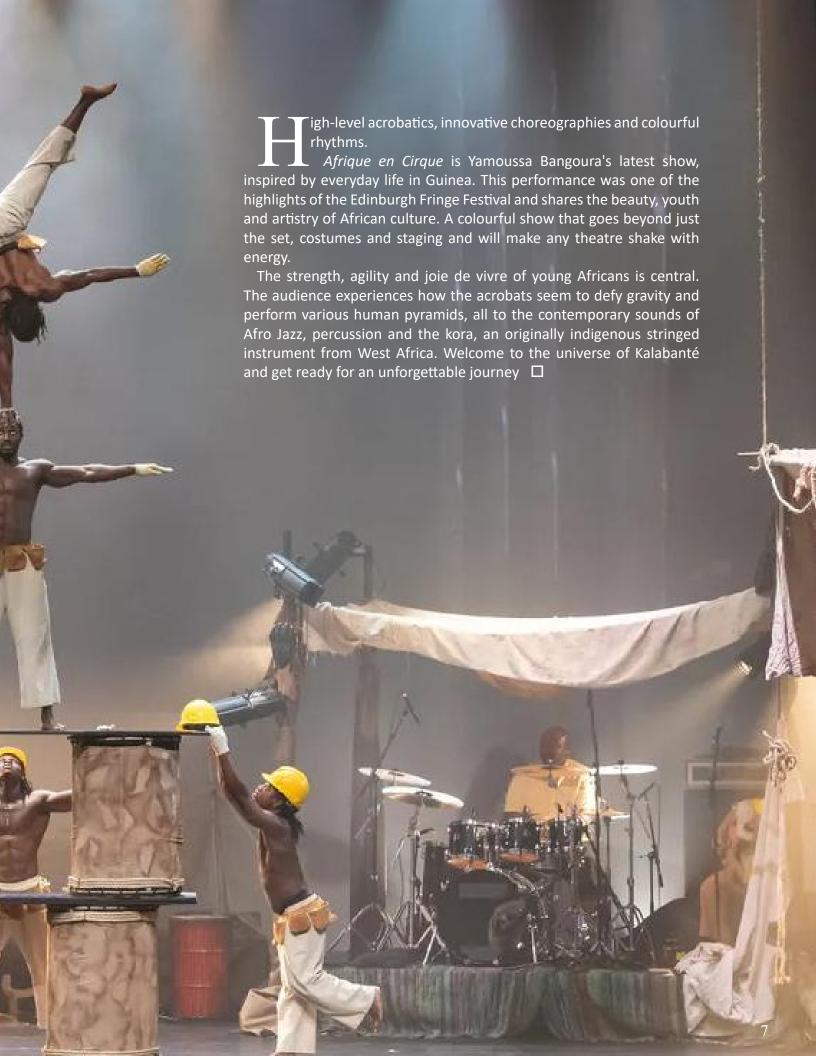
Opera Zuid's Bluebeard's Castle on tour



An exciting journey to the African continent in tribute to the Guinean diaspora was at Amare in The Hague









Cicek ISIKSEL SONMEZ went along to see Conny Janssen Danst's latest work





sense of admiration - admiration for creativity, for choreography and for the art of dance. This was the feeling that stayed with me after experiencing three unique performances as part of *Danslokaal #12*. Each piece was distinct, yet all shared the power to provoke my senses and expand my imagination.

Danslokaal is the talent development project programme of Rotterdam-based Conny Janssen Danst. It provides a platform for talented young choreographers to innovate, grow and create with the company's dancers. So in a sense it serves as a bridge, connecting audiences with young choreographers and offering these artists the invaluable opportunity to be seen, heard, and appreciated.

Let's dive into the three pieces which together make up Danslokaal #12

#### **EDIFY US by Sarada Sarita (Korzo)**

The performance began in darkness, with a single figure moving on stage, soon revealed as three distinct bodies. They seemed as if from another part of the world, exploring life with the wonder of new borns. They danced together, moving in perfect harmony with each other and the music. The music felt like an extension of them, as if they were inseparable from it. Their movements complemented one another seamlessly - until a shift occurred, turning harmony into conflict. Tension grew, and their bodies drifted apart, becoming adversaries. The escalating hostility reminded me of humanity's destructive tendencies: how we harm nature, damage relationships, and jeopardize our future. Through their expressions and movements, I saw the darkness within these characters. This might be the first time I saw dancers use their bodies with a raw, almost reckless and unrestrained intensity on stage. The small lights attached to their bodies added a creative touch, reflecting, in my view, a sense of positivity. Overall, I loved this choreography for its energetic flow and the glimmer of hope it offered for the future.

#### I JUST DON'T SEE IT by Bas van der Kruk (Dansateliers)

Every time I watch a dance performance, I look inward, exploring the emotions it brings out in me. I Just Don't See left me with a strong, unsettling feeling. The choreography unfolds in three parts, each marked by different vibes/costumes. The first two parts were particularly captivating, as the three dancers moved robotically, with sharp, broken movements, reminding me that this was a performance. It felt as if we were all part of a Truman Show world, under



surveillance, blending a futuristic vibe with present-day relevance. With sunglasses obscuring their vision, the dancers seemed cut off from their surroundings. And when they added cone-shaped hats, it was as if they became even more isolated, focused solely on themselves. This choreography was perhaps the hardest for me to interpret, leaving me with lingering questions. I enjoyed the performance's interactivity and appreciated how the dancers' eye-blocking - even without glasses in the third part - conveyed a sense of obscurity, as if we were the ones wearing the sunglasses, unable to fully see their faces.

#### MEISJE by Charlie Skuy (Conny Janssen Danst)

The final piece of the night was truly mesmerizing, one that evoked a creepy atmosphere from start to finish. As choreographer Charlie Skuy described, "It is a witch dance" - and it certainly felt that way. Yet, there was a compelling intensity in the performance that kept me utterly absorbed, unable to look away.

Five dancers took the stage in matching blue jeans, white shirts and blonde wigs, each a mirror image of the other. They moved together perfectly, dancing nonstop as if under a spell. They ran, circled one another, and met face-to-face in an unbroken flow of movement that felt almost hypnotic. At one point, I found myself entirely absorbed, as if drawn in by the choreography's vibrant energy. The dancers filled the stage, shifting from fast to slow, from joyful to trance-like. They felt both real and unreal, blurring the line between the two in a captivating manner. I watched the performance, entranced by these conflicting impressions, and realized afterward just how deeply *Meisje's* choreography had impacted me, leaving me with an unforgettable sense of wonder and intrigue.

At the end of the performance, I was once again reminded, thanks to *Danslokaal*, of the boundless creativity and impact dance holds. It's incredible how dance can challenge perspectives and reshape our understanding, proving that anything can become its subject, and any movement can transform into an innovative, powerful experience  $\square$ 





## Supreme

### Resampling the World at Design Museum Den Bosch

Photos by Sander Vermeer







Tor many young people it is a well-known and sought-after logo: the white letters on a bright red surface of the Supreme brand. For people of older generations, the Supreme universe of drops, camps, resellers, hypebeasts, logomania and collaborations is a completely unknown world. Design Museum Den Bosch now presents the first museum exhibition of the Supreme brand. The museum consciously chooses to make the *Supreme - Resampling the World* exhibition without the cooperation of the Supreme brand.

The red and white logo of the trendy skate brand Supreme can be found on T-shirts and skateboards, but also on baseball bats, ping-pong tables, BIC pens, Rietveld chairs, water pistols, axes, Pyrex measuring cups or a porcelain angel from Meissen. At first glance, it seems completely random where Supreme places its logo. But no matter what object the brand appropriates: thousands of fans from all over the world are ready every Thursday for the drop of new products, and everything is guaranteed to sell out. And whether it is an ashtray, an inflatable bed or a beer mug from Porceleyne Fles, if the Supreme brand is on it, the thing can be (re)sold to fanatical collectors at enormous prices. This makes the Supreme brand a cultural phenomenon that makes you reflect on our consumer society, the power of brands, youth culture and commerce.

In the Supreme – Resampling the World exhibition, curated by Bao Yao Feiyou, you step into the world of Supreme. You will see more than 250 iconic Supreme objects, and you will discover the history of the creation of this famous and infamous skate brand. You will also delve deeper into the Supreme phenomenon and see how it achieved worldwide fame and artistic and commercial success. How do objects acquire a new meaning through the addition of the Supreme logo and how can they subsequently appeal to a broad, diverse and especially young audience? Never before has a museum focused on Supreme, and never before have so many objects from the brand been on display in one exhibition. In this way, the museum investigates how Supreme manages to make existing products attractive, and examines what lessons we, both designers and critical consumers, can learn from this 21st century way of 'upcycling'

This exhibition was made possible with the support of Fonds 21. The activities of Design Museum Den Bosch are made possible in part by the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, the Friends, Members and Patrons of the museum, and Club Design and continues until 23rd March 2025







he Merriam-Webster dictionary has several definitions of the word faith including "something that is believed, especially with strong conviction", "complete trust", "belief and trust in and loyalty to God", as well as "a firm belief in something for which there is no proof". It is totally irrational to base one's life on something which cannot be established as a fact; it is illogical to establish a raison d'être on something which is all things to all men. Yet for many people in all parts of the world faith is an intrinsic part of their very being. Europe was controlled for centuries by a faith imposed by the Catholic church. But do people really believe or do they just follow, or be forced to follow the local doctrine? Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher established the idea of "a leap of faith" which described the need for people to have some sort of external belief, no matter how irrational or unproven it was. But faith is not limited to or confined by religion – there are those who clearly believe Donald Trump will make a good president.

Faith, Club Guy & Roni's latest offering in their Human Odyssey series, places all these ideas and principles in a multi-national melting pot and gives them a rigorous stir. The result is a remarkable piece of theatre, conceived and choreographed by Guy Weizman, Roni Haver and Khalid Benghrib which is invigorating, stimulating and not least, provocative.

Although Faith explores all beliefs in all contexts there is very much a North African bias to which the music of Gnawa is central. Rooted in sub-Saharan African spiritual traditions its percussive rhythms are influenced by the legacy of black enslavement over the centuries. But Faith is much more than that. It is whirling kaleidoscope of musical and cultural influences from around the world which the nine dancers and four musicians explore in this remarkable, unrelenting work.

Visually the piece is stunning, based around five huge slabs which appear to be concrete. Often bathed in swirling smoke the slabs are raised and lowered on wires. This setting, along with beautiful lighting and incessant, mainly percussive music provides a sensory feast.

All the performers are dressed the same with hooded, flimsy beige chiffony costumes. Central to the piece is a woman who carries in her arms a non-descript, very hairy "baby". She also provides some incredible and very powerful vocal input. This woman and her "baby" at times are presented, as Mary with the infant Jesus while the dancers knelt at her feet. The culmination of the piece involves the "baby" finally being passed around and adored by the company who, by this time are all wearing what appeared to be a noose around the necks. Powerful stuff and highly recommended





### LEIDEN CELEBRATES

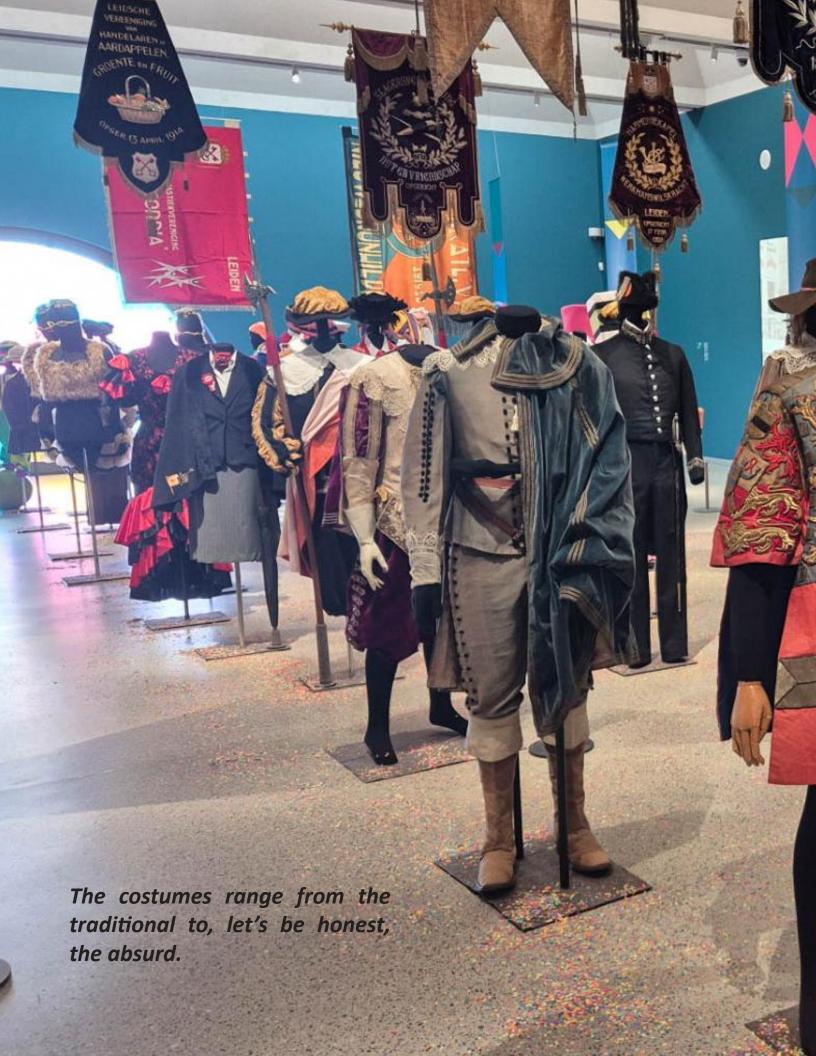
An exhibition at Museum De Lakenhal to mark 450 years of parades

elebrating together is universal and parades are the perfect manifestation of it. They create togetherness and a shared identity. When society changes, parades change with it – for example, from elitist to democratic, from divided to united or vice versa. This makes parades a mirror of society. With the exhibition *Leiden Celebrates - 450 years of Parades*, Museum De Lakenhal, together with the city and the university, each 3rd October, celebrate Leiden's rich tradition in this field - a tradition that is still alive and kicking.

Nowhere else in this country has the genesis of the Netherlands been celebrated as exuberantly as in Leiden. Ever since Leiden's Relief from the Spanish siege on 3rd October 1574 and the founding of the university on 8th February the following year, parades have been organized in the city. The exhibition Leiden Celebrates - 450 Years of Parades looks back on this rich and unique history.













In the exhibition one discovers how Leiden's parades have developed over centuries - from military and theatrical parades by archers and rhetoricians in the early modern period to the student masquerades in the nineteenth century and the tattoo today. There is speculation as to how the parades may look in years to come.

The parades fell into decline between 1794 and 1814 due to the French occupation of the Netherlands. They were revived for the third centenary in 1874 when a procession of historical figures, music corps and trade union delegates once again marched through the city. From 1886 the parade broadened its remit so that ordinary citizens could take part, and there was even a costume competition for the town's many students.

The two rooms of the Museum De Lakenhal exhibition are very different. The first one displays old paintings and engravings which take the viewer back to the very origins of this unique annual event. A second larger room shows actual costumes used in the parade over the past century or so along with some splendid flags, posters and other graphics. Everything is well documented to guide the visitors.

The costumes range from traditional to, let's be honest, the absurd. There are figures of authority like councillors and aldermen, postmen and policemen. There are historical and traditional costumes and modern ones which, in addition to the scout, judo clubs and football teams, include some outrageous gaudy circus like costumes.

The exhibition brings together fascinating objects and images from parades from all eras. The paintings, meters-long prints, photographs, films, costumes and attributes illustrate how grand these celebrations were, all allowing the visitors walk to relive four and a half centuries of Leiden's parades history







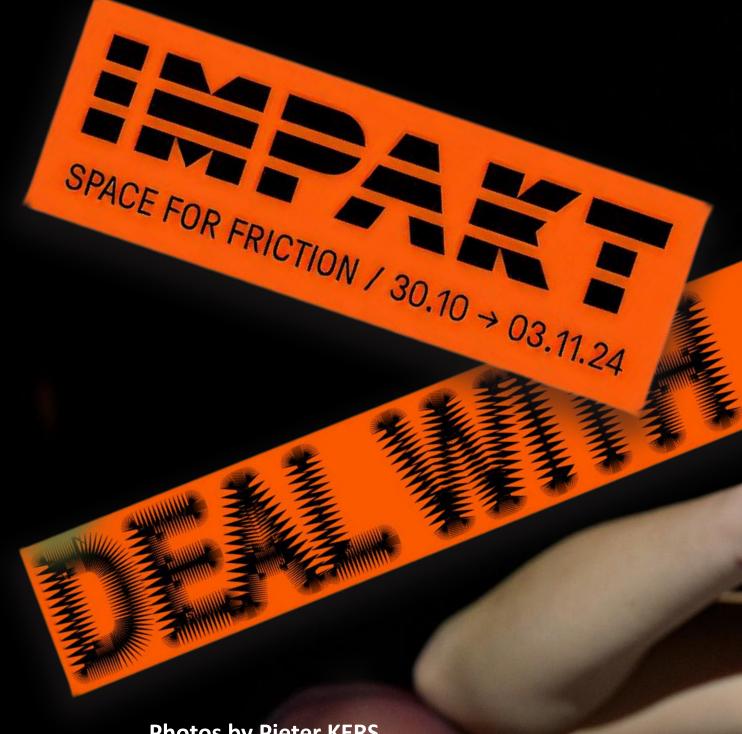
Pollowing five years of intensive research and the restretching of the painting, a team of eight Rijksmuseum conservators started removing the varnish from *The Night Watch*. This marks the beginning of the second phase of Operation Night Watch, the biggest ever research and restoration project devoted to this masterpiece by Rembrandt. Removing the old varnish will enable us to preserve the painting for future generations. Visitors are able to follow the process live in the Night Watch Gallery, where the restoration work is being carried out with microscopic precision in the see-through glass chamber.

The conservators are using a special type of tissue to remove the varnish layers that were applied to the painting as part of its restoration between 1975 and 1976. The conservators place the tissue, prepared with a solvent, against the surface of *The Night Watch* for a short, limited amount of time. The varnish is solubilised and absorbed into the tissue. Then, using a microscope, they carefully remove any remnants of even older varnish with cotton swabs. This moment is the culmination of years of scientific research, applying this technique to other paintings, and conducting tests on *The Night Watch* itself.

Over the last five years a large team of conservators, curators, scientists and other specialists have studied The Night Watch using the most advanced technologies - from digital imaging to scientific and technical studies, and from computer science to artificial intelligence. This work has led to various breakthroughs in our understanding of the painting's condition and the artist's way of working.







#### **Photos by Pieter KERS**

long themes of radical stands and critical practice in the arts, Deal With It explored topics such as racism in the refugee crisis, toxic masculinity, and anti-capitalist gestures. ROSINA LUI reports on a few highlights from the programme which took place in Utrecht between 30th October and 3rd November.



#### Screening & Artist Talk - Julika Rudelius

German-born filmmaker Julika Rudelius presented three short films: It Is True Because I Feel It, Rites of Passage and Your Blood Is as Red as Mine.

Although each short addresses a different topic, they are united by a common intention – to confront and question. *It Is True Because I Feel It* (2021) invites viewers into the intimate world of tantra practice, where pairs express their suppressed emotions and desires to each other through breathwork, touch, and vocalisation. In contrast to the intense, direct, and occasionally intrusive methodology of the first short, *Rites of Passage* (2008) unfolds in an atmosphere of restrained, palpable tension, exploring dynamics of domination and obedience between influential political figures and their interns. This theme of power hierarchy continues in *Your Blood Is as Red as Mine* (2004), which examines racial dynamics, prejudices, and the grey area between white and black.

In the Q&A following the screening, the artist remarked, "safe films don't move anything... I want my art to seduce people into awkwardness and the uncomfortable." The points of confrontation in each short are defined by the time during which it was filmed and the viewer's own position of power – race, gender, class – offering the potential for deeply personal reflection if one allows oneself to sink into the experience.

For an in-depth review of Julika Rudelius's programme, you may follow the link at the end of this article, which leads to Filmmaker Julika Rudelius' *Seduction Into Discomfort* published on Substack.

#### Screening - Birgit Hein: Die unheimlichen Frauen, Germany, 1992, 63 mins

As the title suggests, the one-hour screening depicts the wildness of women through historical, religious, and artistic imagery. *The Uncanny Women* may not be easy to stomach, as it departs from the conventional characterisation of femininity and womanhood as defined by asexuality, elegance, and submissiveness.

By drawing parallels between the figure of Kali, the women of the Nuremberg trials, and herself, Birgit Hein illustrates women's brutal, courageous, and lustful sides. This work is assembled as a collage of self-produced scenes and documentary footage, overlaid with quotes and the filmmaker's own texts.

Examining the suppression of women across continents, from circumcision practices to eating disorders, Hein argues that "the liberation of women must be achieved through the liberation of sexuality." On-screen, she does not shy away from portraying herself as a strong, intoxicated, masturbating woman. The shocking imagery and fragmented sounds reveal a dimension of female identity that remains stifled more than two decades after the film's release.





The performance takes the form of a lecture-style presentation, concluding with an audience survey. The provocative monologue by activist-performer Mounir Samuel is charged with fury, accompanied by explanatory images and videos.

Interweaving his own identity as a transgender migrant in the Netherlands, the artist brings an intensely personal story to the foreground and confronts the audience, urging them to examine their positions of power in relation to the ways in which reactions to the refugee crisis in Europe are heavily influenced by racism.

Following a barrage of the violent realities faced by migrants and refugees of colour at European borders during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Samuel heightens the unease through an interactive component with the audience. Are we truly willing to house others? Are we all complicit? These are the core questions Mounir instigates within the audience.

"We don't value lives the same"; although we are rarely willing to admit it, we are more prejudiced than we care to acknowledge. Extending the conversation to climate change and pointing out that Europe itself is at considerable risk of becoming a source of climate refugees, Mounir concludes that while we show greater compassion for certain groups, in the end, we are all the same and face the same hardships.

# Screening & Artist Talk: Kitten or Refugee? (2023) by Tina Farifteh

Filmed for television, Iranian-Dutch artist Tina Farifteh's work, *Kitten or Refugee*, is an educational and thought-provoking reflection on the motivations behind empathy. Beginning with images at Europe's borders that show the violence inflicted by European border police, the film highlights the suffering and inequality that surrounds us.

Various stakeholders – a biologist, philosopher, animal shelter volunteer, and others – are interviewed for their opinions and asked to choose whom they would save in a crisis. The hierarchies underlying our everyday decisions are exposed, revealing that empathy tends to favour those we consider connected to us in a society where we are interdependent.

But who do we consider as connected? Who is the "us"? By delving into the exclusion of African refugees from trains to flee in Ukraine and at Polish borders, the filmmaker poignantly asserts that "racism never lets up even in times of distress and war." On one hand, we may pay attention in the moment of viewing these images; on the other, our minds may already be numbed by the barrage of what is sometimes termed "empathy porn."

Ultimately, the artist's exertion of constructive rage through the film circles back to the question of whether we are truly willing to see each other – not as "other," but as "us." In the follow-up artist talk, Tina reminds the audience that hope lies in remaining curious and creating dialogue without assuming another's capacity for openness. We are all capable of violence, rage, and empathy. There may be a great deal of despair, but we must try

The exhibition *The Cake is a Lie* remains on view until 12th January 2025.







QETC's latest spectacular show premiered at the CC Amstel Theater in Amsterdam. **Rosina LUI** was there for ArtsTalk . . .

Photos by Cheryl Hart



his show was my first taste of a drag-related musical, and it was a lovely introduction of extravagance and cheekiness, brilliantly executed on an intimate podium with audience members. Living up to a well-known production is always difficult, especially when the original ran for more than four years and won six Tony Awards. Another challenge is the changes in socio-cultural landscapes: what was seen as a confrontation of gender construction in the 1983 original could risk portraying more of a reinforcement of restrictive binaries in the current.

The performance by the star-studded cast including special guest Barrie Stevens offers the opportunity to ponder such questions on identity, social norms, and expression, embedded within a tale of family, love, and acceptance. Especially in the "now" of simmering anti-LGBTQ sentiments in Europe and the US, this contemporary revival of the iconic musical is not only funny and sweet, but also poignantly relevant today.

The story follows the chaos that ensues when Jean-Michel, son of George and drag queen Zaza, announces his marriage to the daughter of the right-wing politician Edouard Dindon. On top of the glamorous drag, witty dialogue, and camp personalities, the audience interaction segment in the form of a scored drag competition seals the deal for a fun, engaging show.

The show was disrupted by technical sound difficulties on several occasions, but nothing disastrous to the spectacle. If you're looking for sips of sobriety between laughter, pzazz, and drama, hop along on this three-hour affair until 15th December



Bela Bartók's short two-hander was toured by Opera Zuwith a pair of fine singers. Michael HASTED saw it at Amare in The Hague







t's a difficult one, Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* - where are you going to fit a sixty-minute opera with only two singers? It is often done on radio and there are many versions available on CD but full-blown stage productions are rare, it being more often being performed as a concert.

The story is very Gothic, very Edgar Allan Poe. The action takes place in . . . err . . . Bluebeard's Castle to where the evil duke returns with his new bride, Judith. She is shocked by the gloomy menacing atmosphere, the damp stone walls and the absence of natural light. But most of all she is intrigued and frightened by the seven locked doors which surround the scene. The basic story is how she persuades her husband to let her unlock them, one by one. The first open door reveals a bloody torture chamber and the second, an armoury. Not many laughs there then. Things do get better and subsequent doors reveal a hoard of treasure, a beautiful garden and Bluebeard's vast domain, but all is tarnished with blood. Behind the seventh door . . . but I won't spoil it for you. You'll have to imagine it just as we had to as there were no doors and the sighs that should accompany and emphasise the opening of each one was not evident. And that's not all that was missing.

Firstly, I have to say that the singing from Thomas Oliemans and Deidre Angenent was flawless and that the Orkest PhilZuid, under the baton of Duncan Ward, played beautifully and I have no criticism of them. But I have to say I was disappointed by the production.

The huge orchestra was on stage and the action took place in front of it. The paltry décor consisted of a few bits of 1960s G-Plan type domestic furniture and the singers were dressed as though they had just walked in off the street. Little or no effort was made to create any sort of atmosphere and the whole thing, which should have been quite scary, was as dark and menacing as an early episode of *Friends*. I would have preferred a straightforward concert performance and, while I'm at it, it would have been nice to have a real actor performing the prologue rather than Mt Ward, the conductor.

Had I closed my eyes for an hour or so I would have come away quite content but sadly I didn't and left the building feeling rather disappointed and short-changed  $\Box$ 

# Not Only, But Also

A random selection of events taking place this month in the Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague area and places nearby or in between



1st December - 2nd March

**Badru Temitayo WE ARE GODS** 

at Museum Rijswijk



10th December

**AFRIQUE EN AFRIQUE** 

at Amare in The Hague



12th - 14th December

**Orange Theatre Co. VENUS IN FUR** 

at KIT Live in Amsterdam



12th December - 2nd January

Dutch National Ballet THE NUTCRACKER and THE MOUSE KING

in Amsterdam



7th, 14th & 21st December

The Ebony Ensemble THE SNOWMAN

in Zoetermeer, The Hague and Nootdorp



19th & 20th December

# **STET presents A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

at Theater aan het Spui in The Hague



Until 19th January 2025

## **AMSTERDAM LIGHT FESTIVAL**

on the city's canals



Until 19th January

#### **MAARTEN VAN HEEMSKERCK**

in Haarlem and Alkmaar



Until 5th March 2025

# **JOAN MIRÓ - SCULPTURES**

at Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague/Scheveningen



Until 16th March 2025

#### **ANDY WARHOL**

at Schunck Museum in Heerlen



Until 27th July 2025

## THE WORKER'S PARADISE

Museum Het Schip in Amsterdam

