

ARTS TALK

Colour Supplement

Number 9

July 2023



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Another bumper edition for July. We review two large exhibitions - the open-air show of sculpture at the Lange Voorhout in The Hague and the 2003 Textile Biennale in Rijswijk. We have reviews of a couple of books - Albert Camus' *The Fall* which is set in Amsterdam but *The Brussels of Horta's* has no connection to Holland at all, it's just a really nice book. A rare opportunity to see some English language drama with Emma Rice's *Wuthering Heights* which played a few days at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam plus Samuel Beckett's *Happy Day* at the Branouk in The Hague. A couple of similar compilation dance events linked to Scapino Ballet. There was the *Rotterdam International Duet Choreography Competition* and *Made in Rotterdam* which was performed in nearby Schiedam. Opera2Day's *Die Zauberflöte* opened at the Amare in The Hague plus lots more . . .

Michael HASTED
Publisher & Editor

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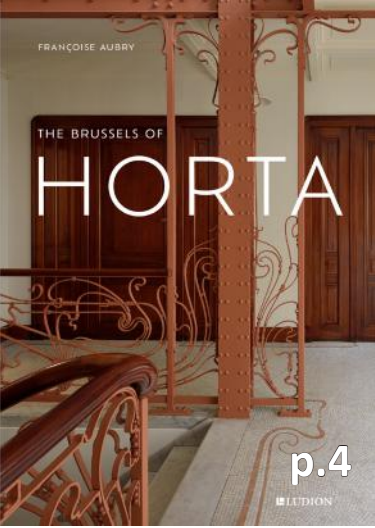
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Cover is of
Emma Rice's *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*
at the Holland Festival
Photo by Jimmy O'Shea





The Brussels of Horta



Voorhout Monumental 2023

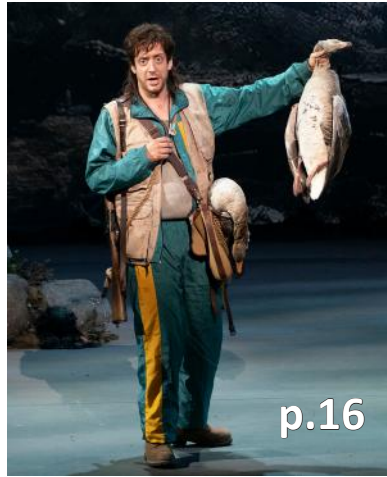
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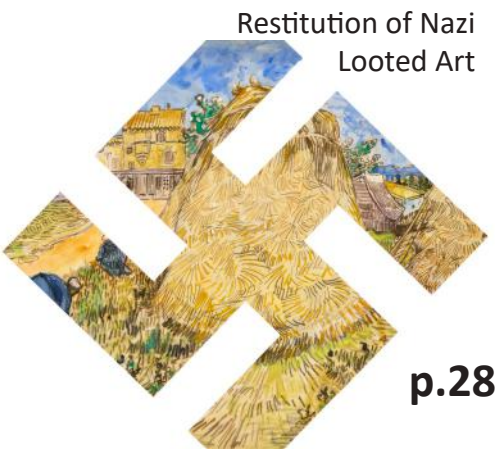
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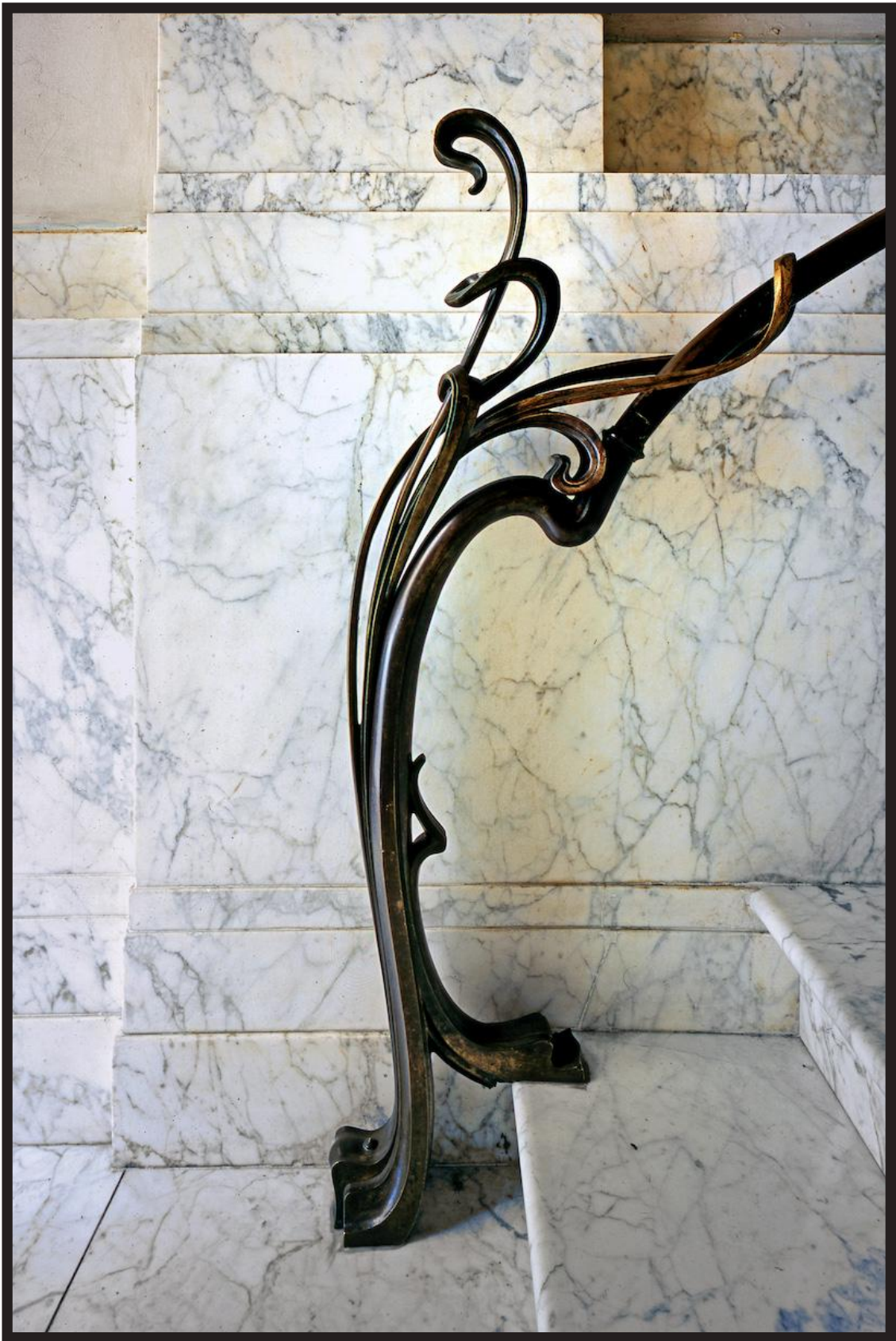


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THE BRUSSELS

HORTA

by Françoise AUBRY

with photos by Jacques EVRARD
& Christine BASTIN

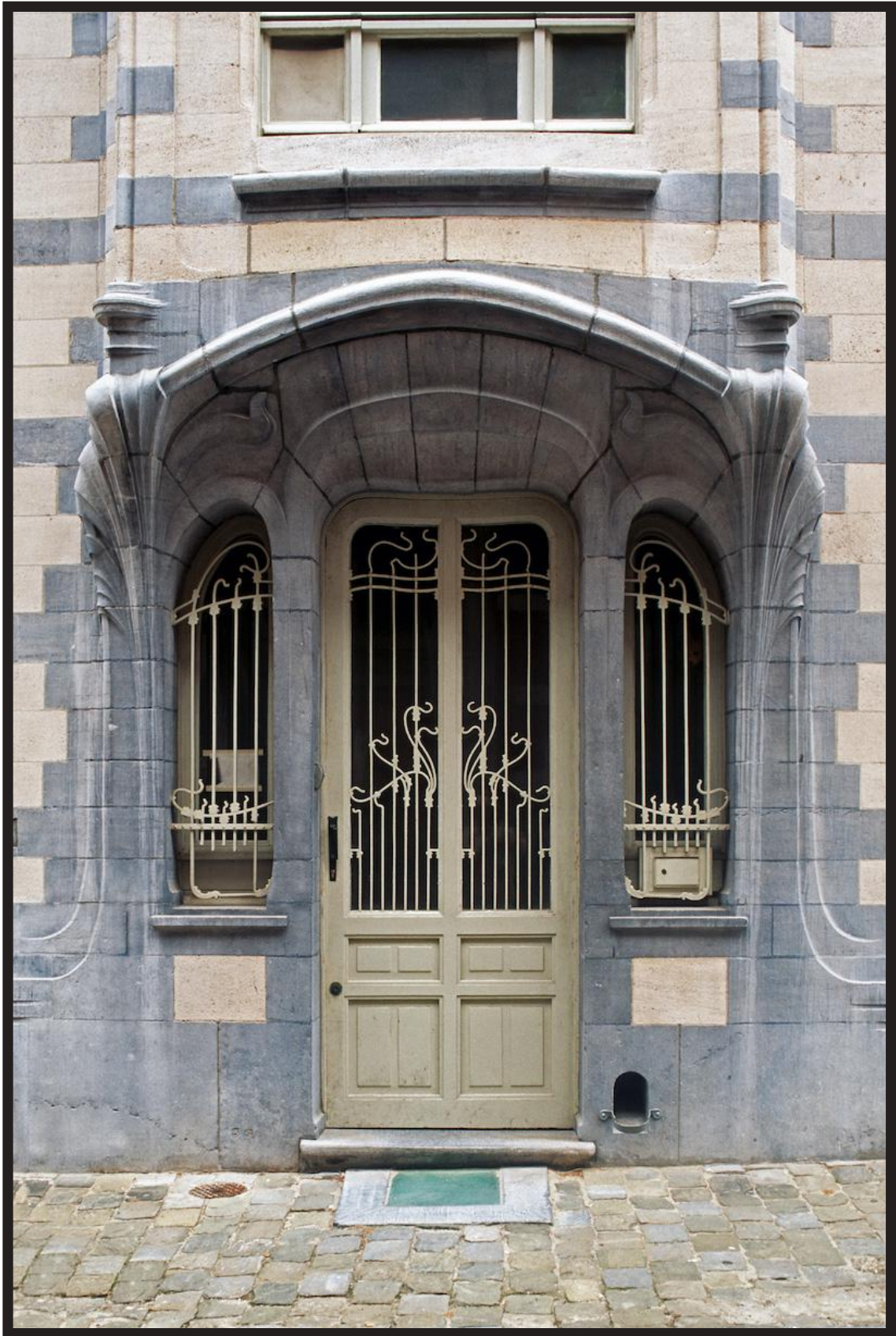
Michael HASTED

Great architecture influences our daily lives, often without us paying much attention to it. The work of architects dominates what we see every day, each time we leave our house and walk down the street. Some architects change the way we live by rethinking how cities are planned and constructed like Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. Others have their names inexorably linked to cities, like Antonio Gaudi to Barcelona and, although not an architect, Baron Hausmann to Paris.

Now, Brussels may not be top of everyone's list of cities to visit but if you are interested in architecture there are many reasons why you should go there. La

Grande Place is maybe the finest town square in the world and the city's preponderance of Art Nouveau is second to none - and the one man who is largely responsible for that is Victor Horta. His name is maybe not as widely known as the architects listed above but his work was as influential and important as any of them.

Victor Pierre Horta (later Victor, Baron Horta) was born in Ghent in 1861, son of a master shoemaker. When he was seventeen he moved to Paris and worked with the architect and designer Jules Debuysson. After the death of his father in 1880 Horta returned to Belgium, marrying, setting up home in Brussels and



studying architecture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

Horta is credited with designing the first Art Nouveau houses, the Hôtel Tassel in Rue Paul-Émile Janson and the Autrique House in the Schaerbeek district, both

completed in 1893. The Tassel house, as with much of Horta's work, was very much inspired by the work of French architect Viollet-le-Duc, responsible for the controversial restoration/recreation of Carcassonne in South West France.

In 2023 Belgium, and Brussels in particular, is celebrating The Year of Art Nouveau and to mark the event Brussels' publisher Ludion has brought out a splendid book by Françoise Aubry entitled *The Brussels of Horta*.

This beautiful, lavishly illustrated book, with photographs by Jacques Evrard and Christine Bastin, takes us step-by-step through the architect's work, starting with the 1890 Matyn House, a fairly conventional looking building but with an exquisite attention to detail and clever use of different stone. His next project, the Pavilion of Human Passions in the Cinquantenaire Park, a pseudo classical building



a couple of years later, gave no hint of what was to come only a few months later.

It was with the private house commissioned by fellow Freemason Eugène Autrique that Horta finally revealed his genius. Both the inside and exterior of

the house reveal the elements of the new style that would change all aspects of design for ever. Over the next ten years Horta was responsible for dozens of buildings, both private and public in and around Brussels, making the city a showcase of Art Nouveau architecture. Victor, Baron Horta died in Brussels on 8th September 1947 aged 86, but his legacy, for all to see, will live for ever.

Ms Aubry's handy guide examines and explains Horta's buildings in chronological order, showing how his work developed. The text describes, in detail, all aspects of each building, giving us an insight into Art Nouveau's revolutionary way of seeing. The book is also a practical guide with a map and details of the buildings which are open to the public.

A must-have for all those interested in architecture or design, Françoise Aubry's fine *The Brussels of Horta* is available in French, Dutch and, luckily, English ◻



VOORHOUT MONUMENTAL 2023

Artists' society Pulchri Studio has organized this open-air exhibition on the Lange Voorhout for the second time. Until the 20th August it will be in the middle of the bustling Museum Quarter of The Hague. More than twenty monumental sculptures and installations by Pulchri artist members and other sculptors.

Under the title *Voorhout Monumental 2023*, these large sculptures are displayed outside on the shell path and other sculptures can be seen for the first time in a parallel exhibition in the nearby Kloosterkerk. In addition, paintings, sculptures and video works of a monumental character can be viewed in exhibitions in the Pulchri building and in its inner garden. The curators of the exhibitions on the Lange Voorhout and in the Kloosterkerk are sculptor Piet Warffemius and art collector Jan van Huizen, both members of Pulchri Studio. "It will be an exhibition that the city of The Hague can be proud of."

In 2021 the theme of the sculpture exhibition was freedom. In the midst of all kinds of restrictive measures due to the pandemic, the need for freedom could not be greater. For this edition during the summer months of 2023, the artists' association is reflecting on the Louis Couperus and MC Escher year.

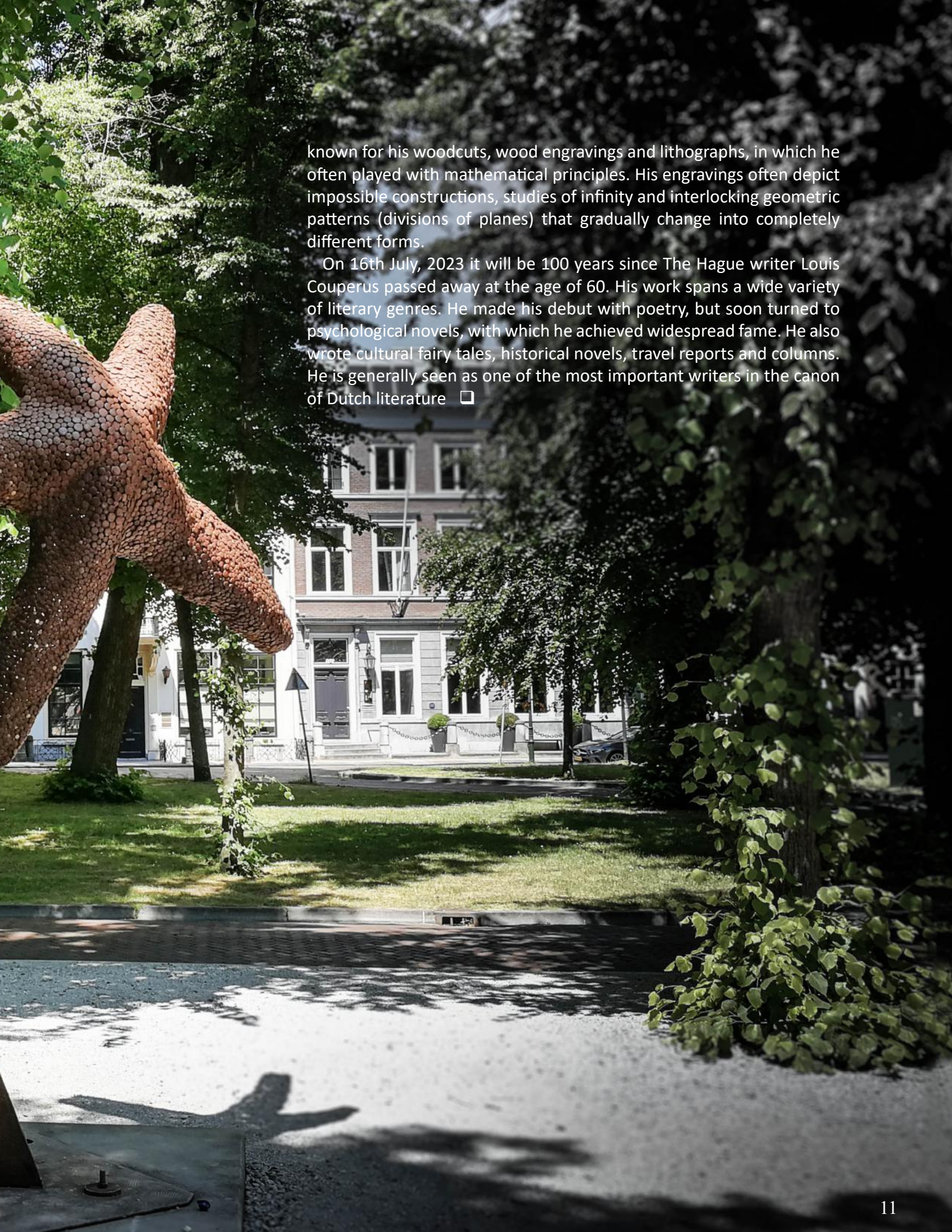
17th June 2023 was the 125th birthday of MC Escher. The artist from Leeuwarden is

Photos by Michael HASTED

Andre Kruysen
The Arrival of the Queen



Marisja Smit & Tijs Trompert
(ATMosphere)
Stil even Haai & Krab



known for his woodcuts, wood engravings and lithographs, in which he often played with mathematical principles. His engravings often depict impossible constructions, studies of infinity and interlocking geometric patterns (divisions of planes) that gradually change into completely different forms.

On 16th July, 2023 it will be 100 years since The Hague writer Louis Couperus passed away at the age of 60. His work spans a wide variety of literary genres. He made his debut with poetry, but soon turned to psychological novels, with which he achieved widespread fame. He also wrote cultural fairy tales, historical novels, travel reports and columns. He is generally seen as one of the most important writers in the canon of Dutch literature □



NDT1's

THE HOLE

**in the Black Box at
Amare in The Hague**

Michael HASTED

Well, this was something very special. Ohad Naharin's masterwork for Batsheva Dance Company in Tel Aviv was never expected to see the light of day again after its original production in 2013. It was thought logistically too demanding and technically too difficult to mount elsewhere. Not for the Nederlands Dans Theater.

Within the Amare's Black Box alternative/rehearsal space a new theatre had been built for this performance.



The nine-sided room had a nine-sided raised platform in the middle on which most of the action was performed by nine male dancers of NDT1. Against each wall, behind the nine blocks of audience, stood nine girl dancers who augmented and complemented what was happening on the stage. They were like statues, Greek caryatids even. Above the stage hung a metal grid which also became part of the action. For the most part the nine male dancers moved in unison around the stage going through various sequences like a well-oiled machine, the precision synchronisation never failing. This was up close and personal and being only two meters from the stage you could hear the breathing and smell the sweat. With the strictly regimented, often symmetrical repetitive choreography there were moments when I was put in mind of the sequential photographic studies by Eadweard Muybridge or even the work of M C Escher.

The ever-changing soundscape included music ranging from Ennio Morricone to François Couperin. There was one sequence when the counting one to four on the soundtrack was taken up by the dancers, alternating between the boys and the girls becoming like a dual, each group trying to outshout the other.

In the later stages the girls left their stations around the room slowly appearing, slithering like snakes, on the metal grill above the stage. They occasionally dropped, hanging down for a moment, before pulling themselves up again. This was very much an ensemble piece but there was one beautiful sequence towards the end when one of the girls actually landed on stage and performing a splendid duet with one of the boys.

The climax of *The Hole* was truly spectacular but to describe it would be to spoil it for those who are yet to see the show – however I will tease you by saying it involves hundreds of tiny explosions from miniscule bombs that fall like hail stones onto the stage. This was an extraordinary piece of theatre and a huge artistic, and no doubt financial, commitment for NDT, but well worth every Euro and every second □

Photo by Rahi Rezvani



Samuel Beckett's HAPPY DAYS

at the Branoul Theatre in The Hague

An English-speaking production of *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett comes to the Hague in July. Described as one of the '40 best plays of all time' by The Independent, *Happy Days*, is a visual and literary masterpiece. The Classical Theatre Company's first production is a rare opportunity to see an English-speaking version of Samuel Beckett's 20th Century classic in The Netherlands.

The play discovers Winnie, inexplicably buried and trapped in a mound of earth, struggling to pace her day and to ration her precious (and depleting) resources. Taking on the monumental role of Winnie is British actress, Claire Worland, who moved to the Netherlands in 2016. Claire is no stranger to the play, having played the part in the UK, winning Best Actress in the process

and is excited to reprise the role and introduce this incredible play to new audiences. Playing Winnie's taciturn husband, Willie, is the talented Rudi Araujo, fresh from performing Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* in Amsterdam. With original music by Martin Janssen, *Happy Days* is a powerful production not to be missed.

The Classical Theatre Company plans to bring the world's best-loved plays and stories to The Netherlands, breathing new life into the classics to produce exhilarating theatre experiences for new audiences and life-long admirers of these important works □

Happy Days is at Theater Branoul in The Hague is on the 7th & 8th July.





Theateralliantie and Opera2Day's

ZAUBERFLÖTE

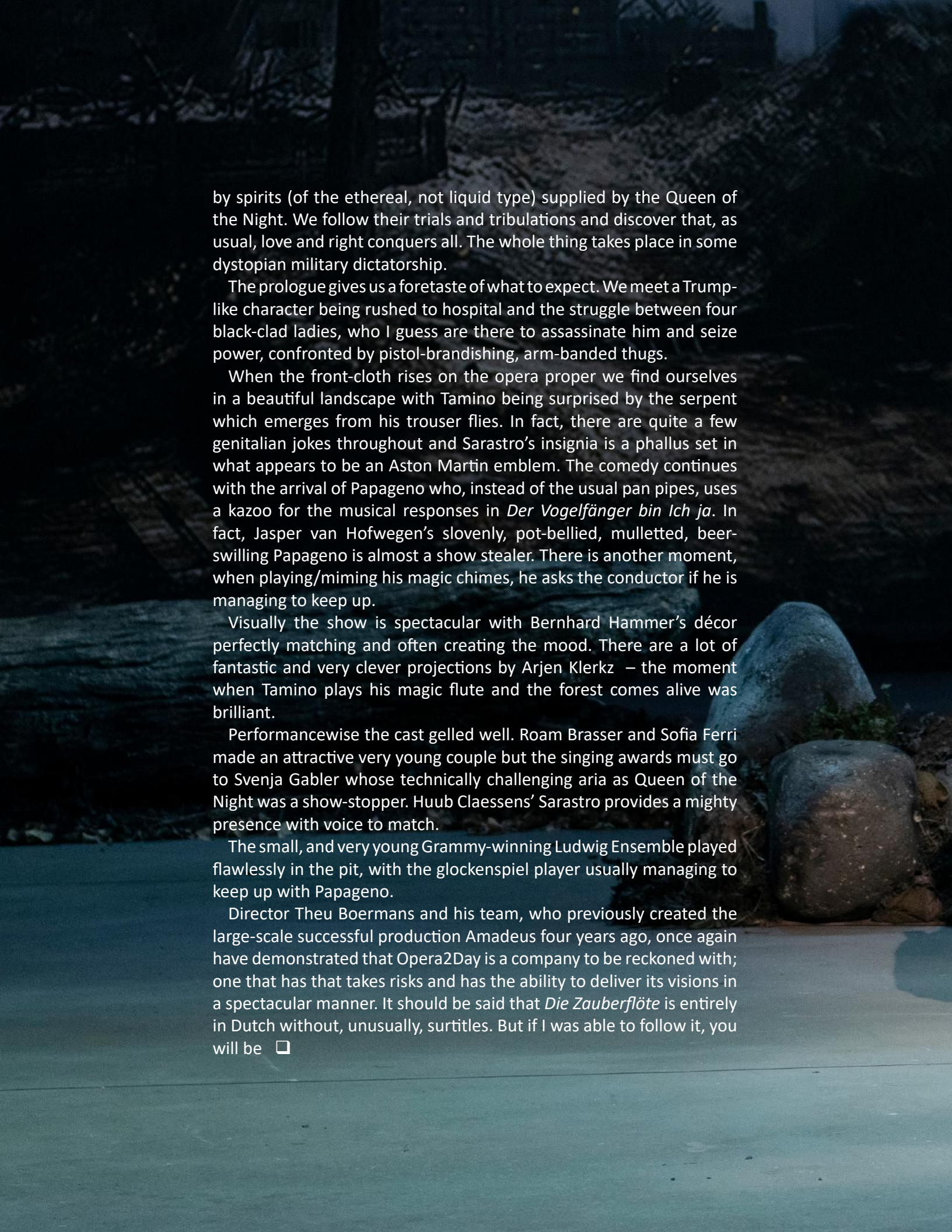
The Next Generation

Michael HASTED
Photos by Joris van Bennekom

There is an expression in English, and no doubt a matching one in Dutch, which says, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, or *The Magic Flute* if you prefer, could hardly be described as broken or needing maintenance but Opera2Day and Theateralliantie, while not claiming to fix it, presents a version by, and I guess for, *The Next Generation*.

Die Zauberflöte is in the form of a *Songspiel*, the precursor of the modern musical, whereby the story is told in spoken word with songs to drive the narrative along. Opera2Day and Theateralliantie have chosen to translate, and adapt, the whole caboodle into Dutch. They have brought out the comedy and introduced current political issues. And does it work? Yes it does, and very well.

And not only does the rewriting work, but visually it is also a great success. The story is a bit convoluted and whimsical but the gist is that Tamino and his sidekick Papageno set off on an adventure to rescue Pamina who has been kidnapped by the wicked Sarastro. They are given special powers, enhanced by magical musical instruments, and aided



by spirits (of the ethereal, not liquid type) supplied by the Queen of the Night. We follow their trials and tribulations and discover that, as usual, love and right conquers all. The whole thing takes place in some dystopian military dictatorship.

The prologue gives us a foretaste of what to expect. We meet a Trump-like character being rushed to hospital and the struggle between four black-clad ladies, who I guess are there to assassinate him and seize power, confronted by pistol-brandishing, arm-banded thugs.

When the front-cloth rises on the opera proper we find ourselves in a beautiful landscape with Tamino being surprised by the serpent which emerges from his trouser flies. In fact, there are quite a few genitalian jokes throughout and Sarastro's insignia is a phallus set in what appears to be an Aston Martin emblem. The comedy continues with the arrival of Papageno who, instead of the usual pan pipes, uses a kazoo for the musical responses in *Der Vogelfänger bin Ich ja*. In fact, Jasper van Hofwegen's slovenly, pot-bellied, mulletted, beer-swilling Papageno is almost a show stealer. There is another moment, when playing/miming his magic chimes, he asks the conductor if he is managing to keep up.

Visually the show is spectacular with Bernhard Hammer's décor perfectly matching and often creating the mood. There are a lot of fantastic and very clever projections by Arjen Klerkz – the moment when Tamino plays his magic flute and the forest comes alive was brilliant.

Performacewise the cast gelled well. Roam Brassler and Sofia Ferri made an attractive very young couple but the singing awards must go to Svenja Gabler whose technically challenging aria as Queen of the Night was a show-stopper. Huub Claessens' Sarastro provides a mighty presence with voice to match.

The small, and very young Grammy-winning Ludwig Ensemble played flawlessly in the pit, with the glockenspiel player usually managing to keep up with Papageno.

Director Theu Boermans and his team, who previously created the large-scale successful production *Amadeus* four years ago, once again have demonstrated that Opera2Day is a company to be reckoned with; one that has that takes risks and has the ability to deliver its visions in a spectacular manner. It should be said that *Die Zauberflöte* is entirely in Dutch without, unusually, surtitles. But if I was able to follow it, you will be



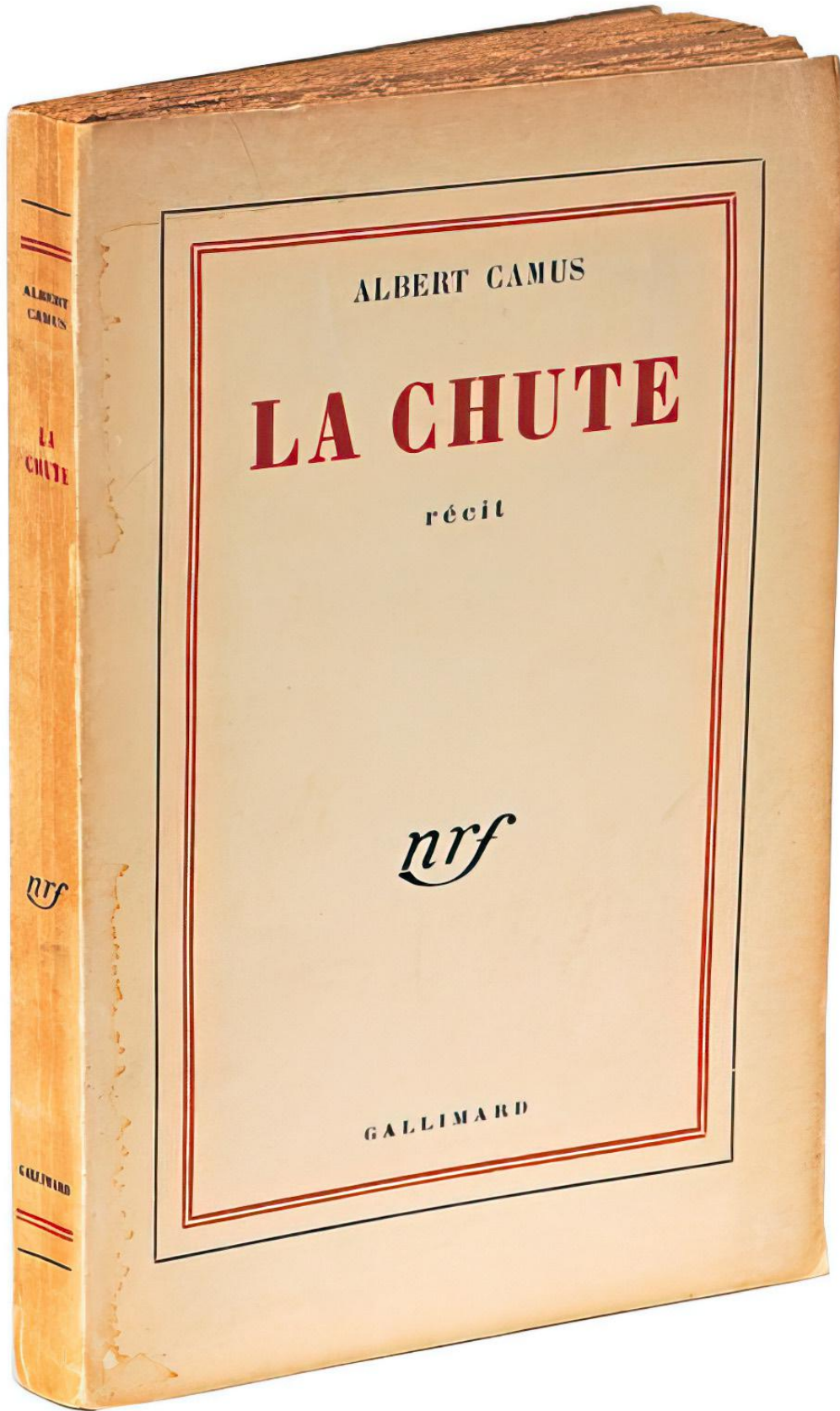


THE FALL

Albert Camus' 1956 novel set in Amsterdam

Jacob John SHALE

It was E.M Cioran who wrote: 'The one sincere confession we make is the one we make indirectly – when we talk about other people.' But what of the confession alive to its own insincerity? Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the protagonist of Albert Camus' last published novel *The Fall* (*La Chute*), is a retired Parisian lawyer who spends his nights haunting a sailor's bar in the centre of Amsterdam. Once a reader, Clamence has since discarded literature. 'I only like confessions nowadays,' he claims, 'and the authors of confessions write chiefly in order not to confess, saying nothing of what they know. When they pretend to be owning-up, that's the moment to beware: they're putting make-up on the corpse.' This is an appropriate metaphor. Years ago, Clamence witnessed a woman commit suicide by drowning herself in the Seine. He could have tried to rescue the woman



but did not; and so will never recover from the sound of her screams. Before this incident, Clamence savoured a reputation as an advocate for the vulnerable and the persecuted Parisian classes, reminiscing of his legal career: 'All I needed was the odour of victimisation on a defendant to leap into action.' The encounter with the drowning woman makes it an impossibility for Clamence to continue donning the mask of the noble humanitarian. 'No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures,' he declares, quoting Samuel Johnson. Clamence's pleasures are alcohol and unserious sex. He emigrates to the right city.

The Fall is written as a monologue addressed to a middle-class French tourist, and at no instance in the novel do we get description of this man's appearance or even learn his name. It soon becomes clear that what Clamence wants is not an interlocutor but an audience. Clamence has given the monologue innumerable times before; he is a descendant of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, who fixes the Wedding Guest with his 'glittering eye'. But unlike the Ancient Mariner, who in telling his story seeks to edify the Wedding Guest, leaving him a 'sadder and wiser man' than at the beginning of the poem, the purpose of Clamence's monologue is to infect the listener with his personal failings. Only by condemning the whole of mankind can Clamence stifle the screams of the drowning woman.

Having reread *The Fall* for *The Irish Times* in 2019, Rob Doyle observed: 'As a novelist, Camus was an ideas man, and the main idea driving *The Fall* – that altruism is covert self-gratification, while charm, social success, and sexual conquest belie a will to absolute

dominion – stops feeling like news around age 20.' True enough, but ours is a depressingly immature era. We can all think of someone who would benefit from having these uncomplicated insights hammered home. Doyle has himself criticised the moralising quality to modern literary fiction, and I would submit that *The Fall* can be viewed as a portrait of the personality-type that helped to popularise precisely this brand of philistinism. It is not hard to picture Clamence's former incarnation exalting a book whose covers he has not opened but whose blurb hails it as courageous, urgent, heart-breaking, a searing indictment of, etc, etc.

'Holland is a revery, sir,' says Clamence, 'a dream of gold and smoke, more smoky by day and golden at night.' *The Fall* might be a novel of ideas, but it is still a novel, and passages such as this keep the reader entranced even if they are not persuaded by its philosophy. The Amsterdam sky is 'full of millions of doves, so high up that they are invisible, which flap their wings, rising and falling as one, filling the celestial dome with thick clouds of greyish feathers that the wind carries away or brings back.' Clamence is drawn to the doves because they embody his own desire for superiority. He too wants to inhabit the empyrean, and speaks of the glory that is to be had in ascending 'to the highest summit, where virtue is no longer sustained by anything but itself.' I don't know what it says that the birds by which I was most captivated upon arriving in Amsterdam were the herons. They do not behave like their patrician English counterparts. Surly and bedraggled-looking, you can see them gathered in groups, perched upon statues, stalking amongst rubbish bins at the back of an Albert Heijn ◻



Photo by Jimmy O'Shea



Emma Rice's
WUTHEREING
HEIGHTS
at the Holland Festival

Michael HASTED

I have been aware, and a fan, of Emma Rice since I saw her productions many years ago for Kneehigh in the UK of *Tristan and Yseult* and *Brief Encounter* and many more since. Her desire, obsession even, to re-interpret well known stories demonstrates an innate talent as theatre-maker. Her desire and ability to take a few paces to the side and view the story from a completely different perspective is her stock in trade. She gets beneath the surface, scraping away the layers until only the fundamentals are left. Her ability to introduce comedy, often throw-away, to highlight the drama can turn an audience's tears from those of uncontrollable laughter to those of sadness in an instant. So, it is a rare privilege to see an Emma Rice production, an even rarer one to see one here, which luckily one can now do, thanks to the Holland Festival.

*"I once dreamt I was in
Heaven, but it didn't feel
like home . . ."*



Wuthering Heights premiered in October 2021 at the Bristol Old Vic and has been doing the rounds ever since. Performed on an open stage with the actors sitting on chairs at the side waiting for their cues and occasionally providing sound and visual effects, the space is dominated by the projected louring clouds, which is what you'd expect up on't Yorkshire moors.

The story line remains basically intact, the major innovation being that the chorus/narrator(s) of the book has become a personification of the omnipresent moors themselves, brilliantly and energetically portrayed by the aptly named Kandaka Moore. This was an all singing, all dancing roll which swept us along, ensuring that the production never flagged.

The opening scene with the arrival, in wellies and a deerstalker, of Mr. Lockwood was, for me, almost the best, encapsulating all that was to follow and the closest to the old Kneehigh productions. All the elements were there – the comedy, the drama, the imaginative and totally convincing creation of a storm. Sam Archer was brilliant as the Boy's Own new tenant but also doubling as the foppish Edgar Linton.

What I found slightly less convincing was the casting of a non Anglo-Saxon actor as Heathcliff, a character I would have considered as quintessentially English as a cup of Yorkshire tea or a glass of flat, warm beer. Brazilian Ricardo Castro made a decent enough fist of it and there is no reason why a Liverpool foundling should not be Brazilian, but it didn't quite ring true, although I could see where the director was coming from.

Lucy McCormack, on the other hand, was well cast as the fiery and troubled Catherine, her big song in the first half being more Janis Joplin than Kate Bush. Her telling line from the piece is "I once dreamt I was in Heaven, but it didn't feel like home". A troubled soul is always a troubled soul and there ain't no redemption from that.

An element which is almost de rigueur these days is the use of puppets. I am not talking here about your conventional hand in a glove, suspended-by-strings puppets. The dog in the opening scene was represented by a canine skull on the end of a stick and all the more menacing because of it. The children were also portrayed by puppets.

This was very much an ensemble piece with, as you'd expect, a lot of doubling. Katy Owen caught my eye, being brilliant and hilarious as the sulky and spoiled Isabella Linton summing up what I said before about Emma Rice's ability to accentuate drama by the use of comedy. Ms Owen's cameos provided an occasional chink of light in what is basically a very dark and brooding story and had the best line of the evening, "Sometimes I like to slide down the banister because it tickles my tuppence."

This was a very long, and often oppressive, show and one wondered at the interval what there was left to say. After the ninety-five minute first half the second part seemed, not exactly an anti-climax, but it lacked the body-blows, and obviously the surprise, of the first.

Visually the production, designed by Vicki Mortimer, was brilliant. Dominated by the projected ever-changing clouds, the small bits of décor – a door, a window, a pile of chairs, a hand-held tree – were wheeled on and off by cast members with the addition of a couple of yo-yo chandeliers. All this was enhanced and highlighted by the beautiful lighting by Jai Morjaria.

The onstage music, provided by cello, guitar, bass and percussion was directed by Pat Moran, was an integral part of the emotional roller-coaster as it unfolded before us.

As we all know, love conquers all but not in *Wuthering Heights* where it is mainly a destructive force. Emma Rice provides in-your-face, take-no-prisoners, total theatre. Miss it if you dare





NAZI-LOOTED ART


Restitution finally comes in The Netherlands

Souwie BUIS

At a large, unobtrusive storage depot in Amersfoort, called Collectiecentrum Nederland, 30,000 m² are devoted to housing the Dutch national art collections. It is also the country's leading centre for research and contains thousands of paintings stolen by the Nazis mostly from Jewish owners. The problem: some 80 years later, many of these art works remain here in storage.

Alfred Fass, whose German Jewish family owned a huge art collection including works by Rubens, Manet and Courbet, has spent years negotiating with the Dutch government in an effort to reclaim some of the family's stolen art work. "You have to prove again and again that you are the rightful owner" Fass told Aljazeera. "Because at the end of the day, I doubt that they want to give it back."

Part of the problem is how looted art is defined. In Germany, anything sold by Jews since January 1933, when Hitler came to power, is regarded as looted art. However, the Netherlands adopted a much narrower definition; only art sold by Jews between 1940 and 1945 was



considered to be looted. So German-Jewish refugees like the Isay-Adelberger family, who sold art in the Netherlands in 1939, were not eligible for restitution.

The Restitution Committee in the Netherlands, tasked with overseeing the return of looted art work to its owners, is a signatory to the Washington Principals (1998). Countries who signed the Principals agreed that just solutions must be found for the restitution of Jewish-owned art stolen or forcibly sold under the Nazi regime. Over twenty years later, the Netherlands has yet to fully implement the covenant.

Uniquely, specific provisions in the regulations of the Restitution Committee prioritise the idea of balancing the interests of national museums against those of the original owners of looted art work. This surely runs contrary to the idea of just reparation for the thousands of Jewish families who lost everything at the hands of the Nazi regime. Indeed, no other country has taken such an approach, admits Martha Vissa, legal specialist in the field.

But things are changing. New Chairman of the Restitution Committee, Jacob Kohnstamm, agrees that the length of time it has taken to prioritize the rights of Jewish families in the Netherlands is “shameful”*. A recent report by the Dutch Council for Culture

recommends that works of art stolen from Dutch Jews during World War II and returned from Germany by allied troops, be restored to the Jewish community, if the original owners cannot be found.

Currently there are 3700 works of art up for review, 1700 of which are paintings. The Cultural Heritage Agency will have four years in which to review these artworks. They will apply a broader definition of looted art which places the interests of the Jewish heirs at the forefront rather than those of the museums. New technology, digitized historical newspapers and improved archives will help researchers but it is still a difficult process to unpick the hidden mysteries of what are essentially 80-year-old cold cases.

Yet for those who have lost so much already, the return of a treasured family heirloom represents not only the promise of financial reparation but also provides a measure of emotional solace that is far more difficult to quantify □

In 2018, the Dutch Restitutions Commission rejected a claim for a Wassily Kandinsky work, *Painting With Houses*, which is held by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.





**MA
ROTT**

Michael HASTED



MADE IN ROTTERDAM

The young dancers of Scapino Ballet must consider it a great honour to be members of such a prestigious company and have the opportunity to work with and learn from more experienced dancers and a variety of choreographers. However, dancers are artists and it is almost contrary to being a creative person to work in, and in many cases be subservient to, a group. Artists have their own view of the world and want to express it – they want to do their own thing. *Made in Rotterdam* gives them just that opportunity.

The initiative of Filip Wagrodzki and Lorenzo Cimarelli *Made in Rotterdam*, took place at the fine Wenneker Theatre in Schiedam which I hadn't been to before. It was hosted by Daphne van Dooren in the presence of Scapino figurehead Ed Wubbe and former principle dancer with the company, Bonnie Doets.

First up was a solo piece danced and created by Mandela Giudice from Cameroon. Performed in a circle of candles *A Silent Candle in the Dark* explored finding one's identity while confronting solitude, emptiness and boredom. The music was *Darpa* by Wim Mertens.

Limp, choreographed and danced by Bo Jacobs and Claire de Caluwe again explored identity and the different layers of skin that cover its various aspects. The two girls danced beautifully and the dénouement was shocking and exciting. The choice of Peter Gabriel's *My Body is a Cage* was inspired.

Next was *Tell Me Now, How do I Feel* created by Filip Wagrodzki and danced by Sana Sasaki and Lorenzo Cimarelli, who also composed the music. This was the most dramatic piece of the evening with a clear narrative and some interesting props. When the lights went up we discover a male figure with a teddy-bear head sitting cross-legged in a pool of light. On the other side of the stage a girl enters pushing an old-fashioned pram. The piece explores the family's place in modern society and an individual's right to self-determination.

Last up was *A Dry Towel Please*, danced and choreographed by Fanny De Ponti, Olivia Escribano Mendieta and Thomas Tardieu. The towel was necessary to mop up the water that got spilled in the piece which drew our attention to the fact that this fundamental building block of all life is in jeopardy and in many places in the world is hard to find.

Made in Rotterdam is a great initiative and all involved should be congratulated. Let's hope it goes on to achieve the significance of the Rotterdam International Duet Choreography Competition, created by Scapino dancers Maya Roest and Mischa van Leeuwen, which climaxed last week □





2023 TEXTILE BIENNALE

at Museum Rijswijk

Astrid BURCHARDT

Once again it is time for the Textile Biennale at the wonderful Rijswijk Museum. This year the theme of protest (propaganda?) seems to dominate. When, as an art student my friend wept because she could not afford the usual white wedding dress I created one out of old white newsprint. I placed a fan under it so the bags billowed out and won 1st prize at the end of year show. At the wedding it was her mother who wept because my friend had forgotten the fan. At the time it was just a creative adventure for both of us. This could have been seen as a critique of materialism.

This year's show had a mix of woven, patchwork and some printed works. Badru Temitayo's vast colourful portraits of powerful people were stunning in their perfection. It made me wonder though how Putin deserved a place amongst those who have suffered abuse or have campaigned against abuse of power.

I especially loved Senzeni Marasela's, simply hand-stitched cartoon-like dainty white handkerchiefs. They depict the tragic story of the 'Hottentot-Venus', a unnamed South African woman, enticed to Europe by her master to be exhibited circus-like because of her large rear, typical of her Khoikoi culture.

Jacobo Alonso's shows his created beautiful designs based on the life-saving, wafer-thin ponchos handed out to immigrants and bombed out Ukrainians. They hang majestically, reminiscent of ancient Egyptian or Japanese Emperors' cloaks. There are more protest works, such as blood-red trilogy about the recent banning of abortions in USA states.

The largest works show a typical smiling American family in their home, assault rifle proudly held. The other is an almost Bruegel-like tapestry by Mercedes Azpilicueta, recounting the story of a woman who fled to South America in the 16th century to live as a man.

The ideas, the messages are there. Due to the technical ease and automation of weaving large tapestries these days, I miss the human hand, the mistakes, the irregularities. So, I especially appreciated Boyce Magandela's images of homeless people standing in line, painted simply on an old plaid. His other work, seen from a distance, was his almost photographic embroidered portrait of Nelson Mandela, his countryman and hero. But getting close to it, it was a mangle of threads – incredible. Not to be missed ☐





Gosia Pechar 2022. Textile and acrylic on stretcher 170 x 200 cms. Collection of International Cultural Centre, Krakow, Poland



A PLAY OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

The photos of Ara Güler at FOAM in Amsterdam

Anja HERRMANN

Ara Güler (1928-2018), dubbed as “The Eye of Istanbul”, never ceases to mesmerize viewers with his contemplative black and white photographs. On 22nd June FOAM Museum in Amsterdam celebrated the exciting works of the Güler in their opening exhibition *A play of Light and Shadow*.

Co-curated by artist Ahmet Polat in collaboration with the Ara Güler Museum, the exhibition is effectively divided into four sections *The Iconic*, *The Historic*, *The Ambassador* and *The Personal*. Visitors can easily walk through a coherent body of Güler’s notably iconic works which showcase Turkey’s resonant history as well as his impact across the world.

Born five years before the Republic of Turkey was founded, Güler observed a dramatic alteration to the landscape and livelihoods of Istanbul during his lifetime. His photographs taken specifically during the 1950s and 1960s serve as a testament to the hardships Turkey’s working class and the urban poor had to endure during the socio-economic changes. The stark contrasts of light and composition in the photographs of Istanbul’s streets, the docks and melancholic expressions of the city inhabitants not only contain an element of absolute artistry but also establish a profoundly tangible raw human emotion.

Although many regard him as a photographer, Güler insisted that he be known instead as a photojournalist; a visual historian and an eye-witness to Turkey’s evolving identity. Thanks to his photographs, we not only have

access to a pensive narrative in each captured image, but also a historic chronicle of the country, particularly that of Istanbul. More than 800,000 photographs were taken in his lifetime and several contain architecture and monumental structures that no longer exist today following the redevelopments and changes to the cityscape.

In *The Personal* section, Foam Museum further offers a glimpse into the prominent photojournalist’s early interest and love for photography where we can observe his experimental work of geometric forms, nature and light. These images, predominantly unbeknownst to the public, not only present his capabilities as a visual historian but also his talent as an artist and the means to which he can portray a subject.

The exhibition is further accompanied by contemporary photographer, Ece Gökalp. In *After Anahit* she explores the issues of cultural heritage, ecological devastation and changing geographies due to historical events. She investigates how photography can shape our perception of places which is complementary to Güler who, as a photojournalist, believes photography to be an instrument utilized to accurately reflect reality.

Güler’s exhibition at FOAM Museum continues throughout the summer and is a highly recommended visit. Whether you may regard his photographs as an art or as a documentation of history, they offer a marvelous and aesthetic insight into a moment in time that would have otherwise been lost and forgotten □



Photo by Ton van Til

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL DUET CHOREOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2023

Michael HASTED

In the five years since it was conceived and created, the Rotterdam International Duet Choreography Competition, despite its mouthful of a name and the cruel interruption by Covid-19, has become an important event on the international dance calendar. And judging by the nationalities of the well over four hundred entries it could be said that Scapino Ballet dancers Maya Roest and Mischa van Leeuwen have established, with RIDCC, a dance event of world significance. We were at the final to see the seven acts that had made it through the demanding initial selection and two evenings of spectacular semi-finals.

Genial former dancer and actor Jan Kooijman, as in previous years, guided us through the grand final at Theater Rotterdam on Saturday, 24th June after the two preceding nights in which the semi-finals took place.

The quality of the programme was such that after the first act one said to oneself, that must be the winner. And then after the second, one thought the same, all the way to then end. But the actual winners of the XL Production Award worth €100,000 went to Sarah Baltzinger and Isaiah Wilson for *Megastructure*. This is the largest dance prize of its type in the world.

The couple were the penultimate act and until then all the pieces had been performed on a black stage with designed lighting. For their *Megastructure* all the black curtains disappeared and we were left on the theatre's vast, empty stage with everything showing. This was back to basics, lit by a simple, unforgiving work light and with no music/soundscape. There were strong elements of comedy in this piece which involved a lot of wobbly leg contortions.

Choreographer Albert Hernández from Spain, with his flamenco inspired *Loca* went home this year with the Audience Award, consisting of the total proceeds donated by the audience. More importantly, the Audience Award can be seen as an award of honour; for the choreographers, the opinion of the audience is incredibly valuable, as they are the spectators of their creation □



LAAT ONS MUZIEK BRENGEN IN JOUW ORGANISATIE.

WIJ NODIGEN JULLIE MET ALLE
COLLEGA'S UIT OP ONS FEESTJE
VAN 24 T/M 27 AUGUSTUS.

WE DOEN JE GRAAG EEN
MOOIE AANBIEDING.
BINNENKORT NEMEN WE
CONTACT MET JE OP VOOR
EEN KENNISMAKING.

**JAZZ
FESTIVAL
DELFT**

INSPIREERT
EN VERBINDT.