

A Quarter to Night





florschütz & döhnert proudly presents

A Quarter to Night

During “A Quarter to Night”, we enter the area between day and night, that special space in-between where reality and dreams intermingle. We hear and see differently in the evening than we do during the day: “We dream with our eyes open,” say Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert. Shadows on the walls, curtains fluttering in the wind, or even carpets suddenly turn into fantastic creatures. Can we still trust our senses? Or should we not try to find a logical explanation and simply be brave enough to immerse ourselves in this unknown world? “A Quarter to Night” gently encourages its audience to dare. The stage becomes a playground for fantastic apparitions – who are not as scary as feared. With fabulous visual and acoustic ideas, the duo play with the imagination of their audience in a unique and funny way so that you can hardly wait for bedtime.

Theater with objects, figures and music • for children from 3 years up • without spoken language • 35 minutes

Recommended age for groups: 3-6

World Premiere 13th April 2024 at SCHAUBUDE Berlin (DE)

Here you can see a video trailer: <https://vimeo.com/936156137>

About the artists

florschütz & döhnert is an independent group from Berlin that tours internationally with its children's plays. Melanie Florschütz studied puppet theater at the HMDK in Stuttgart; Michael Döhnert is a musician and composer. florschütz & döhnert are pioneers of theater for small children in Germany. Since 2004, the duo has been researching their visual and action-oriented language of images without the need for the spoken word. This gives the children space to think aloud and opens up a communal space for the audience to use their imagination. Associative telling of stories is a main theme for them. They create shows that work by setting and decoding signs and that live on rhythm and choreography – the result of interlocking music, sound, and play. The duo develops its shows over long periods of preparation and process-oriented creation.

Since 2012, the duo has been conceiving and developing theater productions with light artist and director Joachim Fleischer. Joachim Fleischer works with the medium of light. He studied at the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart (1982–89) and has since developed works about light, light installations, art in architecture projects, light in space, works about light and robotics, as well as works for theater and performance. He has been awarded several prizes and scholarships.

Please visit our website: www.florschuetz-doehnert.de

A Quarter to Night



Note of intention

With our new theater show, we are voyaging between day and night. We are searching for a space where reality mixes with dreams. Between day and night, our perception changes. What we hear and see by day differs from what we hear and see by night. I remember well lying in bed as a child and not being able to fall asleep straight away. I looked at the curtains in my room. The folds and shadows cast by the curtain moved in a gentle breeze, and suddenly I thought I saw fantastic creatures. It's no secret that the imagination needs almost nothing to get going! The fabric that the drape is made from turns into the "material" of phantasies. Perception finds itself between a waking and dreaming state, where reality and unreality, logic and nonsense mingle altogether. Between day and night, we dream with our eyes open.

On stage, our two performers play at making fantastic creatures appear and disappear from simple fabrics. Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert surprise each other, play pranks on each other, practice improvised slapstick routines, encourage each other, and discover each other through their imaginary creatures, to whom they often lend traits of their own character and become accomplices. Their relationship, built up with humor and tenderness, is made up of a multitude of small gestures, attentions, and admirations for each other. Together, they create a light, dancing, sonorous, musical, and sparkling space where anything is possible!

Michael Döhnert composes and sings live music that borrows elements from jazz, classical music, pop, 60s soul, and clubbing he sings the music he loves, a vocal music based on loops, drawing imaginary spaces in which the show can unfold. With the warmth of his voice, he builds grooves that drive the action forward. The dreamlike atmosphere of the show is created by a soundscape of noises and musical scores. The appearance of each new imaginary being becomes a musical act in itself. At the end of the performance, the music culminates in an exuberant "celebration" between day and night. Beings of all kinds come on stage and begin to dance in the falling light of dusk.

Melanie Florschütz



For this show, we worked on:

The transition from day to night and from reality to dreams

The power of imagination (How does our imagination work? How does it make fantastic creatures appear and disappear? What does it need to get going?)

Illusion and wonder, playing with sensory perception

The development of our show

It begins with an empty room. There is only a single black curtain, 5 m wide and 3 m high. This stage curtain opens up the possibility of entering and exiting the space, defining a "front" and a "back". The stage goes dusky blue, and we hear a snore – but from where? Is the whole room snoring? Light, sound, and music create imaginative spaces that can appear and vanish all of a sudden. Light shifts our perception, creates atmospheres, and, magician-like, changes the colors of things. The musician's red jacket becomes black in the twilight blue. He takes off the jacket and fumbles with it, kneading it between his hands to bring back flashes of its red color. But once back on his shoulders, it's again black.

We look for the moment when and how something inconspicuous triggers fantasies and comes to life. We work with the ability of various fabrics to transform. Gossamer tulle, furry shag carpet, semi-transparent painter's fleece, opaque black curtain: each fabric moves differently and triggers other associations for transformations.

A carpet lies on the floor. Suddenly, it straightens up and begins to sniff around the stage. How is that possible? Is there someone behind the carpet? That doesn't matter! We want to meet the carpet, shake its hand, and help it find an ideal place to spread its fur! The body language of the carpet is what speaks to us. The audience creates a psychology for it and lends it its feelings! A simple piece of fabric is able to trigger emotions in us as soon as it begins to move and act of its own accord! The ease of its transformation is reminiscent of children's play. It is as simple as it is magical! This transformation, this "magic" trick, is only possible through the imagination of the audience. This is a wonderful form of "participation". Triggering the imagination is a balancing act. On the one hand, the viewer needs enough concrete triggers for a fantasy and, on the other, a certain openness to give space to associations.



We also worked on the process of creating illusions. How does illusion work, and how does it give us pleasure?

A professional magician once told us that when he developed a new magic trick, he always introduced little mistakes, because otherwise people would spend their time trying to figure out how he did it. They wouldn't be able to indulge in the pleasure of magic. Perfection prevents pleasure!

In our show, we spent a lot of time thinking about how sensory illusions can trigger the imagination. Showing the processes involved in creating an illusion does not prevent the imagination from working.

A person is flying. We see them flying, and at the same time, we see how another person makes them fly. So it's not a "real flight" but an illusion: it looks like the person is flying. And yet, the wonder is there. We see a person fly because we want to see them fly. Does the fact that we see how they fly change anything, or is it precisely because of this that we see them really fly? The spectators make a playful agreement with us: they accept that everything that happens on stage is the result of the two performers. This allows them to marvel while understanding that our "fantasies" are the fruit of our imagination and that we are the ones who create them.

This agreement is all the more important for us because this show is aimed primarily at young children, and the transition from day to night and the arrival of darkness can arouse various forms of negative fantasies in them. The transition from day to night is an indeterminate space that allows for many things. Its opening confronts us with our own desires and uncertainties linked to the night. The curiosity and pleasure we derive from the mystery of the night go hand in hand with the desire to experiment and test our own fears and uncertainties. By inviting the audience to see the making of illusions, we give them the chance to playfully immerse themselves in worlds populated by imaginary creatures while at the same time distancing themselves and, in the best-case scenario, overcoming their fears.

Melanie Florschütz

A Quarter to Night



Theater with objects, figures and music • for children from 3 years up • without spoken language • 35 minutes

Recommended age for groups: 3-6

Accessibility of our shows:

All shows by florschütz & döhnert invite the audience to experience theater with their individual prior experience and abilities. The productions work without words and are visually comprehensible. The associative visual language is open to people of all ages! Beyond language skills, the productions offer a “reading” between the lines and complex sensory impressions on several levels, which can be experienced according to ability.

The resonance from deaf and hard-hearing people, people with limited mobility, cognitive and mental impairments, and other disabilities reflects good barrier-free access.

Production team

Collective creation: Michael Döhnert, Joachim Fleischer, Melanie Florschütz

Artistic collaboration and light: Joachim Fleischer

Scenography, objects, play: Michael Döhnert, Melanie Florschütz

Live music and composition: Michael Döhnert

Costume designer: Adelheid Wieser

Production: florschütz & döhnert

Coproduction: Escher Theater, internationales figuren.theater.festival Erlangen, TAK Theater Liechtenstein, Nordland Visual Theatre. Financially funded by: Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion, Fonds Darstellende Künste with funds from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

With the support of the company ACTA as part of the Pépité residency scheme, this work was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union.

Contact distribution: Melanie Florschütz, post@melaniefloerschuetz.de