



## Rawums (:)

Theatre with objects  
for children from 2 +

### **A trip to the wonderland of gravity**

Falling is easy.  
Flying is hard.  
Dreaming is fragile...  
like an egg.

An egg wants to fly, but it should not fall down because it would break. While the egg is dreaming of flying, a man and a woman are acting out all kinds of possibilities of falling and flying in a charmingly clownish and funny way.

Using pictures and words they both tell of the difference between lightness / weightlessness and weight / gravity. There are certain rules: a feather hovers, a bag slumps down. But does a house, a chair or a human being fly? Every rule has its exception. There is a lot between up and down, between heaven and earth; and poetically everything is possible, even flying.

Winner of the IKARUS Award 2008 for an extraordinary play for young audiences in Berlin and invited to the festival 10. AugenblickMal! as one of ten best shows of the year 2009 in whole Germany



„Companies such as florschütz & döhnert have much to teach about the imaginative possibilities of theatre.“

*Sunday Herald, 16 May 2010*

Theatre company **florschütz & döhnert** is based in Berlin, Germany, and tours around the world. Artists Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert have been working together since 1996: Melanie studied the art of puppetry in Stuttgart, Germany; while Michael Döhnert is a composer, guitarist and singer.

At the centre of florschütz & döhnert's productions is the idea of the actor as author. In their numerous productions for children they always seek a synthesis of the music, the various means of expression of puppet theatre, and human acting. The subject of the play determines the theatrical form it will take, always aiming for poetry and diversity.

Shows for children aged 2+

**Ssst !** (2012)

**Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel** (2010)

**Rawums (:)** (2007),

**Hare Moon Hare Night** (2004)

New show for children aged 4+

**A hole in the air and everywhere** 2015)

## Art for the next generation Award Ikarus 2008 in Berlin,

The world is being presented in its complexity by simple means. That's what we experience in the production of "Rawums (:)" We experience poetic consolidations, the world expressed in the visual language of theater: Art!

### Humour

A man and a woman on stage. They are two clowns without red noses: The man who again and again keels over with his chair. The woman who again and again catches an egg in the air, an egg the man drops. She is faster than him. The children sitting next to me are beside themselves with joy. They seem captured by each movement, by every action that is being repeated over and over again. The sense of humour of Rawums goes deep. And it is the aim of Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert to discover the children's sense of humour. Even that of two-year-olds. At the same time they explore their own.

### Poetry

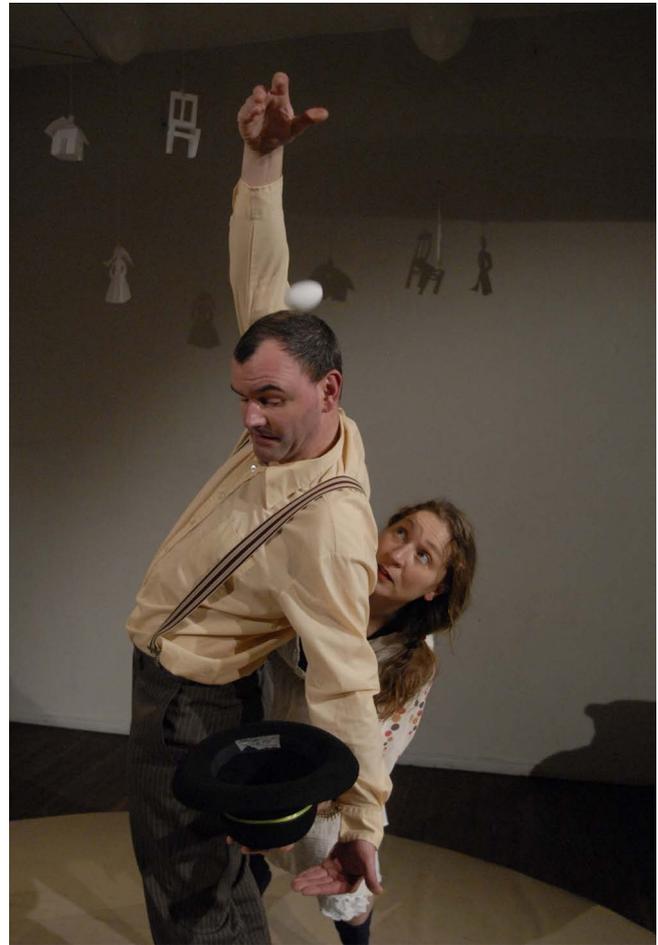
On Florschütz' and Döhnert's stage a house flies, a man, a woman, a bird, a chair, they all fly – to be precise: a house made of paper, a woman made of paper, a man made of paper, a bird made of paper, a chair made of paper – all connected by a long string, moved by a stick the player is holding. She is giving her language to the things. Man, house, woman, bird and chair talk during their flight.

„You need an above and a below to be able to show what is in between“, says actress Melanie Florschütz. What is in between? The world. That flies, that falls, that dreams.

### Exploration

A bag of sand falls down, a man falls down, a chair – a woman? „A man can't fly. A woman can't fly. A house can't fly...“, he says, he realises.

Then she comes and somehow starts a physical experiment in front of the audience's eyes. She does it in an impossible way: The man made of paper, the woman made of paper, the house made of paper are being connected to balloons with ribbons and they rise up in the air. She plays with these things. Out of her experimenting the stories of the paper- protagonists develop. So what we see is how the two characters on stage make the world their own and how they experience the world. Remarkably everything has its right to exist, the falling just as much as the flying, the possible and the impossible, the reality and the imagination. If you want to talk of making the world your own, it is an imaginary and



therefore inclusive way of doing it.

Both characters and the audience start out on a journey together – into an in-between, a space between the things, between above and below.

This positioning is in accordance with the reception of the world very young children have, in which the boundaries between the real world and the possible, imaginary one are blurred. The child and the artists work on the same ground, they are similar in their ways of asking and questioning the world.

This questioning is a way of presenting the world that also moves adults or, differently put, that is able to touch them when they agree to being touched, open mindedly and with natural curiosity. Then, what happens is what basically may happen to adults in contact with very small children: they are amazed, they start to marvel at things – they are curious

... And so the artist says about children: "Children have a gift of attention towards the incidents, miles away from our later learned, target-oriented, linear ways of thinking. Without any difficulty, they seem to be able to grasp connections associatively and they possess an intuitive, emotional logic."

### Seriousness

"I have never experienced such a serious audience," says Melanie Florschütz, "as in theater for children starting at

the age of two.”

What Prof. Dr. Kristin Wardetzky claimed as paradigmatic for children’s theater in general is even more valid in theater for the very youngest: Children will drop out of concentrated reception as soon as they feel that they are not meant, not the ones concerned, but they will follow the story forgetting everything around them as soon as they are connected to “the umbilical cord of story-telling”.

In “Rawums (:)” the player surprisingly doesn’t look for direct contact with the children. She rather ties a cord to the audience in quite a subtle way and delicately starts a non-verbal communication. She always has an eye on the audience. It is a cord of sensitivity and creative curiosity based on the children’s trust. Döhnert and Florschütz manage to do what seems so hard: to take children seriously, to listen to them so they can understand such a theater. They manage to meet the audience at eye-level. Rarely have I met actors facing their audience with such respect.

### **Humour, Poetry, exploration and seriousness**

The work of Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert shows itself to me as a philosophically motivated world-view marked by a sense of humour I love to get infected with and a poetry I love to get caught and driven by. It is a philosophical exploration of the world, with a playful lust for discovery that definitely amazes me and whose seriousness I happily share.

*Extracts from the laudation by Gabi dan Droste*



### **Vote Rawums (:)**

#### **for the 10. Augenblick Mal! Festival in Berlin 2009**

The man fishes, no, not a fish, but a feather out of a pond (?), and the feather’s little heart is beating – the feather is alive. An egg is pulled out of the hat, the hat stands up the way it wants to – no, the way the man wants it to, although the woman is wearing it on her head, and then the earth becomes the sky...

Nothing is what I think it is – and everything turns the way I don’t expect it to do. A man and woman discover the world of gravity. They dream of flying. While he is trying, unsuccessfully: “

A chair can’t fly. A house can’t fly. A man can’t fly”, a little while later she simply makes it happen.

At first the woman says “Flying isn’t easy at all.” At the end, the house, the chair, the man, the woman and the canary go on a sightseeing flight around the whole world ...Even the little members of the audience are aware of the laws of nature and how they basically function: if a feather “flies” down to the ground, nothing happens to the feather.

If an egg – especially an uncooked one – falls to the ground, then you need to be careful.

Rawums (:), for two-year-olds and up, plays with what we know, and keeps surprising us with things that we didn’t expect. A man drops a feather, and then a sandbag – and sings in each case.

And I realise: gravity is inseparably linked to time. The laws of gravity can be experienced by the use of just a few props, and, by using gas-filled balloons and objects made of paper, so can levitation.

Rawums (:) is an association, a series of scenes, in which causal connections are developed and worked out in a logical way. A poetic form of theatre, with amazing clarity and compactness, not a word, not a gesture too many, a story which has created its own, unusual dramaturgy. Thesis and antithesis are not irreconcilable – they complement each other to create poetry and belief, no, to create proof of things that are impossible.

Yes, a house, a chair and a man can fly.

*Vote of the Curator Andrea Kramer*



**In Rawums (:)** German double-act Florschütz & Döhnert focus on an audience that has not long got to grips with gravity. They know hats are supposed to stay on heads, that birds can fly even though eggs cannot and that houses are resolutely earthbound. When Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert put these assumptions to the test, however, they upturn the laws of nature to hilarious and beguiling effect.

We have good laugh when Florschütz's hat keeps floating upwards and when Döhnert can't figure out why a feather takes longer to hit the ground than a heavy bag. But things takes lon a magical dimension when the balloons come out and, with small pegs for ballast, they give floating, dancing, drifting life to the paper man, woman, bird and house they support. The young audience claps repeatedly, as if applauding the wonder of gravity itself.

Like much of the best children's theatre – and, indeed, much of the best adult theatre – Rawums (:)

*The Scotsman, Thursday 13 may 2010*

### **Fabulous flights of fancy**

Rawums (:), a show for children aged between two and five by german theatre artists Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert, is equally impressive. Delicate, charming

and ingenious, this little half-hour gem of a show is, in effect, a comedy about the laws of physics.

Using a hat, an egg, a fishing rod, some balloons, some helium, some small clips and a few paper models (a bird, a house, a chair, a woman and a man). the performers delight their pre-school audience as they first reaffirm, then subvert the children's expectations. In one particularly neat moment, Döhnert looks at the model house (which, despite being attached to a helium-filled balloon, has floated to the floor) and the model bird (which has been raised into the air by it's balloon). „Bird's fly," he says, „houses don't fly". However, Florschütz then attaces the house to another balloon, which immediately raises the little model into the aiur, to the obvious pleasure of the children.

Subtle, intelligent, creative work like this makes one wish that more makers of theatre for adults would come to the Imagine festival. Companies such as Florschütz & Döhnert have much to teach about the imaginative possibilites of theatre.

*Sunday Herald, 16 May 2010*

This is the Bank of Scotland Imagine Festival's 21 anniversary, and it still manages to find and stage some of the best national and international work for under -21's. Rawums (:)

– devised and performed by Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert – welcomes wee ones aged 2-5. In fact theit whimsical clowning will beguile anyone whose heart lifts at the sight of a buoyant balloon or who can't help laughing when a big fella keeps trying, and failing, to fly like the feather wafting past his nose. It`s a merry and gentle half-hour of visual ups and downs.

But as the performers introduce various objects – some paper-light, others heavy like the little bag of sand – images of falling and floating come together in a playfull, yet revelatory way. Gaps of concern come from front-row tinies when he sets out to see if an egg will fly if he drops it.

This caringly crafted production (from Germany) has sent everyone's spirits and imagination soaring. Cue a cluster of bouncing youngsters on-stage afterwards, gleeful with a curiosity that the company encourages.

*The Herald, 12.05.2010*

**With a quiet and poetic story on gravity** for children of 2 years and older, the Berlin based florschütz & döhnert opened the Hessian Children's and Youth Theatre Week at Schwanhof.

In „Rawums", Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert tell us about the difference between lightness and hea-

ness, about flying and falling using images and words totally adequate to their audience's age. Why do feathers gently float to the ground while a little bag of sand falls down quickly? Why do balloons fly but why don't eggs?

Florschütz and Döhnert combine images and language to a seemingly effortless and highly aesthetic performance that gives the children time to watch, listen, think and understand.

The actors include the reactions and questions of their little viewers immediately and make them part of their story. Doing that, they avoid any kind of instruction – they just show without giving any verbal answers. A chair, a man, a woman and a house cannot fly, shows Döhnert. But then they do fly: as paper models, together with a paper bird they float over the stage, dance in the air and only sink down very slowly when Melanie Florschütz weighs them down with wooden clips.

„Rawums“ shows once more that plays for children under 3 do make sense in the wide range of children's theatre, and that they are accepted by the target audience (and the accompanying adults) with big pleasure and interest.

*Oberhessische Presse 10.03.2008*

**„Theatre for two-year-olds“** – how does that work? Actually it is quite easy, if you make do with few words and short sentences, if you develop images instead of building up a story in the usual way. The distance between fantasy and reality remains because of the special acting material: no „living“ dolls but animated objects.

„Rawums“, that sounds like something falling to the ground: a chair, perhaps a bag. This is indeed about a journey to the wonderland of gravity: from light as a feather to heavy as a thud. The children sit on a big soft carpet and watch what is happening on the stage that is open to all sides. The man on the stage, sitting on a ladder and fishing the cap of a woman's head is exactly the kind of clown's show that children love.

The egg is also good for surprises. It wants to fly. Can an egg fly? „Perhaps later,“ says the woman on the stage and probably means the white paper bird that she will later take out of a box in order to let it float high up in the air with the help of a balloon. The chair made of paper, the paper house, the paper woman and the paper man can fly. “ The real chair and the real man can't.

*Wiesbadener Tagblatt 2007*



### ...and then the little child laughs

Gabi dan Droste: In your production "Rawums (:)" you can see how the audience can't stop laughing. How do you as actors experience the sense of humor of very young children? How does the humor develop in your play?

Michael Döhnert: Maybe there is something like a technique for "making the little child laugh". I am not interested in that. Our humor arises from certain situations, from the playing itself. But you cannot predict this kind of humor; whether something is really funny for the children or not, will only be clear on our meeting with them.

Melanie Florschütz: The work at the production of "Rawums (:)" stretched over a couple of versions of the play and a process of reflection that lasted almost two years. At the beginning there was the subject of "falling" of bodies and things. Then, the "flying" was added, as a sort of anti-movement to the falling. And during the last stage we were mainly concerned with the question of how to make poetry out of scientific contemplations. The falling of a bag or the flying of a feather isn't really a theatrical act by itself. We tried all kinds of things to make this action more interesting.

Michael Döhnert: For example: I let a feather float in the air and accompanied its flight with music. We only got amazement in the sense of "what is this supposed to mean" by the kids. Also the bag that just falls by itself wasn't funny at all. Neither when I supported it musically or with sound effects. But both elements next to each other – the feather, dancing to the circus music while floating through the air, and shortly afterwards the bag that doesn't give me enough time to sing because it doesn't float pleasantly but quickly falls, as a bag happens to do – that does make the children laugh. And we are all not able to say for sure whether the bag is just being stubborn or whether it is really not able to float in the air. The feather, in contrast, is a promise to the ability to fly. That is a conflict that creates a certain tension.

Melanie Florschütz: Yes, and you don't know exactly what the kids are laughing about - about the man who doesn't want to believe that the bag cannot float as easily as the feather; or about the bag, that happens to be unable to do so; or about the easiness with which the feather simply does it?

Michael Döhnert: Sometimes we have no idea why the children are laughing.

Melanie Florschütz: Do they laugh because they take pleasure in the difference? Or because they, philosophically speaking, recognize the being in the limits of its possibilities? The whole theater for little children has a lot to do with our preconceptions: how we as artists, as adults and as people see children and assess them. These viewers don't come towards us afterwards to verbalize their reception. And even neuroscientists recognize that their knowledge about development theories is also only a construction.

An important factor in theater for very small children is marking the difference between "real" and "acted" incidents. How is a child supposed to know that it doesn't stay dark forever when I switch off the light in the theater? Or when I fall down in the theater, whether I really hurt myself or not? Making theater we deal with transforming reality, abstracting it and hyperbolizing it. That is an essential gesture of art.

I communicate with children on a theatrical level, with theatrical signs. I don't tell them of the world exactly as it is. The children are able to read these signs when they are clearly set. This is where I as an artist come in. This search for theatrical means is enriching to me as an artist.

Gabi dan Droste: In theater for adults we often laugh about existing conditions that are taken for granted and then turned upside down. Deconstruction is also seen as a function of art. This certainly works in theater for adults, but does it work in theater for children? How and what do you want to deconstruct when a lot of the experience is totally new for the children?

Melanie Florschütz: In theater for children at the age of two we can only deconstruct what we have established before. In "Rawums (:)" we show for example what works and what doesn't work, or better, what flies and what doesn't fly – that becomes the angle for the playful dialogue between the man and the woman. We make a game out of insisting on natural laws and abolishing them. Doing that, overcoming gravity is always connected to the previously introduced logics. That is, it is right that a man and a woman can't fly but a man and a woman made of paper can do so. And like this, physics suddenly becomes poetry. Both exist at the same time.

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## Rawums (:) at international festivals

2015

Festival El Més Petit de Tots à Catalonia et Euskadi, Spain

2014

25 Jahre Junges Theater Konstanz, Germany  
Figura Baden, Switzerland  
Festival Berlin Showcase Schaubude Berlin, Germany  
Spielplatz Niedersachsen, Germany  
Kulturtage Garbsen, Germany  
Theater Fadenschein Braunschweig, Germany

2013

Festival De Betovering Den Haag, Netherlands  
Festival 1.9.3. Soleil Paris, France  
Festival La Hague France  
Sième festival jeune & public Montargis, France

2012

Le Tout Petit, Communes d`Erdre & Gesvres, France  
4. Kinderkulturtage Puppentheater Magdeburg, Germany  
The Pit Barbican London, United Kingdom  
Festival Petits Bonheurs Montréal (Quebec), Canada  
Festival Momix Kingersheim, France

2011

International Children`s festival Ballymena, Angleterre  
Festival Baboró Galway, Ireland  
Festival Marmaille Rennes, France  
Kaolin et Barbotine Limoges, France  
Festival du Théâtre La montagne magique Bruxelles, Belgium  
International Stilte Festival Breda, Netherlands  
Festival Draiocht Dublin, Ireland  
Semaines petits enfance Quimper, France  
Festival Meli`Môme Reims, France  
Reims Scenes d`europa, France  
Festival greli-grelo Vélo Théâtre Apt, France  
Imaginale Mannheim, Germany  
Bim Bam Festival Toihaus Theater Salzburg, Austria  
Family weeks Bath, United Kingdom

2010

20. Festival des Rêveurs éveillés Sevrans, France  
Graines des spectacles Clermont-Ferrand, France  
Leselust Burghof Lörrach, Germany  
Festimômes Bretagne, France  
Penguin Days Schloßtheater Moers, Germany  
Festival Utrecht, Netherlands  
Theater am Kirchplatz, Liechtenstein

Symposium Liliput Braunschweig, Germany  
Baby Drama Festival Seoul, South Korea  
La Roulotte enchantée Lausanne, Switzerland  
Imaginate Edingburgh, Scotland  
2 Turven Hoog, Netherlands  
Premières Rencontres Villiers-le-Belle, France  
Deutsch-dänisches Kindertheaterfestival Flensburg, Germany and Danmark  
Festival spleen Graz, Austria

2009

Starke Stücke Frankfurt a. Main, Germany  
18. Hildesheimer Kindertheaterwoch, Germany  
10. Deutsches Kinder- und Jugendtheater-Treffen Augenblickmal! Berlin, Germany  
Schäxpir Linz, Austria  
III Festival Internacional de Teatro para Infancia e Juventude: Uma Janala para a Utopia Paideia Sao Paulo, Bresil  
31.PuppenTheatertage Mistelbach, Austria  
Theater 0-4 International Rotterdam, Netherlands  
2 Turven Hoog Almere, Netherlands  
Reims Scenes d`europa, France  
Traffo\_Chreschtdeeg Grand Theatre Luxembourg





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Theatre with objects  
for children from 2+

Perspective: Werner Hennrich  
Conception, play, images, sound:  
Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert

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Der Regierende Bürgermeister  
Senatskanzlei - Kulturelle Angelegenheiten

