



Electric Shadows

Theatre with objects and live music without words
For children aged 4+

At first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything else. But when the two performers begin to tighten invisible screws and calibrate the room through the sound of their tools, this room transforms into some kind of machinery. In the middle of it, a metal axle starts to turn slowly and creakingly: it rolls on and off, forwards, backwards, it shakes, it hums, it murmurs, it squeaks. The two machinists feed the machine with things, as we know them from our daily life, like a barrier tape, a coat, a chair, feathers or a bucket suddenly develop a life of their own in front of our eyes. Everything turns and transforms. Even the shadows detach themselves from the objects and go for a walk.

Welcome to a fantastic workshop that sharpens the senses!
40 minutes of rotations with light and shadows, sounds and music.

Recommended for children between 4-8 years old
in pre-school and primary school classes 1-4
Duration: 40 minutes
Premiere 15 September 2018

This production is about:
Fantasy machine
Exploring and experimenting
Sensitization of all the senses
Associative thinking
Materiality and immateriality
The show is without words and can be enjoyed beyond
the barriers of spoken language.

Idea: Michael Döhnert, Joachim Fleischer, Melanie Florschütz. Artistic collaboration and light: Joachim Fleischer. Scenography, objects, play: Michael Döhnert und Melanie Florschütz. Live music and composition: Michael Döhnert. Scene painter: Wolf Dieckmann. Costume designer: Adelheid Wieser.
Production: florschütz & döhnert.
Coproduction: FESTIVAL MOMIX du CRÉA - Scène conventionnée jeune public d'Alsace, ROTONDES Luxembourg, Schlachthaus Theater Bern, TAK Theater Liechtenstein.
Funded by: Fonds Darstellende Künste e.V., Berlin State Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Pankow District Office of Berlin. Support: SCHAUBUDE BERLIN.



Description of the play:

The show begins in an empty room. Lights are flashing at a control desk. Two tri-pods carry a 5-meter-long horizontal axle at a height of 2.50 meters. At first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything else. Only when the two performers begin to tighten invisible screws and calibrate the room through the sound of their tools, this room transforms into some kind of machinery. In the middle of it, a metal axle starts to turn slowly and creakingly. It reminds you of the gears of a train getting into motion and taking the audience on a trip: full speed ahead into a decelerated world!

The rotating axle is the engine and the sound maker at the same time: it winds up, it unwinds, forwards, backwards, it stands still, runs silently, grinds to a halt, hums, murmurs, cracks and crackles, it fills the room with sound. Its rhythm rules the play.

The two machinists feed the machine that constantly eats things and spits them out again. Things, as we know them from our daily life, like a barrier tape, a coat, a chair, feathers or a bucket suddenly develop a life of their own in front of our eyes. At one point for example a huge canvas swings to and fro forcing the two performers into turbulent slapstick-like sidestepping - trying to avoid that enormous thing with a will of its own. The objects take on a life of their own in this turning machine of movement, sound and light. They seem to transform into something else and to lose their usual substance. Absurdly, also ephemeral phenomena start to objectify, like the shadow of a chair that can be held with your hands all of a sudden.

In this fantastic workshop things get their space. They tell delicate, quiet stories that play with our perception and surprise us. Peripheral objects develop some unexpected poetry outside their defined functions.





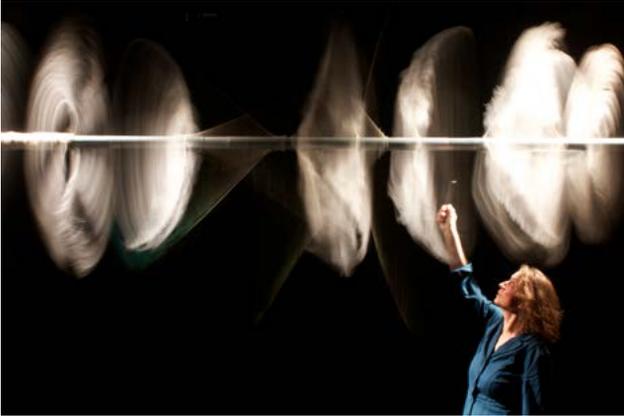
On the development of the piece

At the beginning, there was the idea to build a machine that is able to wind up and roll up everything in the room and that would also be able to create new rooms. When the motorised rotation axle was finished, we kept ourselves busy finding out what could be wound up and unwound and what material and objects would turn into something else in the process. The winding action itself is already a process that transforms material and objects, makes them swing or bounce around or flattens them according to their consistency.

We were looking for a fantasy machine, a machine that creates something new and unexpected and causes a transformation. The winding up and unwinding of things showed us their structure, texture, consistency and character. We could observe the different qualities of things: stretchable, firm, solid, fluffy, chunky, delicate, smooth, metallic, made of plastic, of cloth, of natural material... It is exciting to see how differently things react to each turn, the way they unfold and defoliate, get bulky, get entangled, dance around or roll off smoothly. It's as if each object is showing a new, formerly unknown personality. A suitcase or a coat has of course been made for a certain purpose. Things do have a function, most of the times. Even things that aren't man-made but have been created by nature, like a feather, have a certain function. We only know the things in their usual contexts. What happens to them if we strip them of their function and put them into new relationships towards each other? It's as if things could only just unfold their actual stories in a space devoid of function. A space that loses its familiar coordinates with every turn (of the axle), that makes you forget about time and that stretches while we watch the phenomena that come to being in it.

„Electric shadows“ is the literal translation of the Chinese character for „film“ or „movie“ - you also say „moving pictures“. In this play, we produce moving pictures of things through theatrical means. Or rather, we get things into motion with our fantasy machine in order to have the audience see their own „movie“ in their heads: 40 minutes of rotations, with light and shadows, sounds and music.





Press comment

„Electric Shadows“ at TAK: Poetry and Music for Children and Adults

Good children's theatre proves again and again how easy it can be to captivate an audience - without words, just through facial expressions, gestures and simple stories. Michael Döhnert and Melanie Florschütz are real masters in this field. The audience was delighted.

It was a fantastic world that unfolded before the eyes of children and adults. At first, everything looked very simple. On stage, there was a frame with a pole and a big white screen in the background. A woman came in, wearing a coat and carrying a folding ladder that she somehow tried to put up. Of course she couldn't do that, because she didn't open the ladder. Some of the children wanted to come up and help her, but then a man came along and set up the ladder so that the pole could be reached with it. The woman knocked on the metal and with every touch there was a beautiful „clack“. Suddenly, however, the pole turned, a red and white striped barrier tape unrolled, getting longer and longer, the woman pulled it over the floor and up again, wanted to attach it to the pole, but then, the tape pulled the sleeve of her coat onto the pole, and then the whole coat rolled around it and kept turning all evening long like a chicken on a spit.

When shadows are wandering around

Later, a chair made of cloth unfolded from the pole, a wooden chair stood in front of the canvas, casting shadows, the man dipped a brush into a bucket and painted the shadow, and suddenly the shadow was also a cloth chair. More and more magical things happened in front of the spectators' eyes - until the chair was hung on the pole next to the coat, along with a suitcase, ostrich feathers, brooms and other things. They all cast their shadows on the big screen in the background. To everyone's amazement, the shadows suddenly wandered upwards. The children couldn't believe what was happening in front of their eyes. What was that? How did it work? While the sounds that the man had played on the guitar were already fading, the light was slowly getting darker and the performance was over.

Amazement and wonder

We would have loved to keep on watching and feeling the amazement for a long time. Because with Michael Döhnert and Melanie Florschütz what's happening is always the unexpected, things reveal sounds, develop a life of their own, have a soul. Thus, stories merge into other stories, become poetic. And all of this takes place in the here and now, amidst the cooperation of stage and auditorium. Between the two communication is oscillating in its purest form - music and poetry. All of it seems light as a feather, and amazingly beautiful. The literal translation of the Chinese characters for „film“ is „Electric Shadows“, by the way. On all accounts, this performance was electrifying.

January, 27th, 2019 | Anita Grüneis, KULTUR Zeitschrift für Kultur und Gesellschaft (magazine for culture and society)

The 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, the company florschütz & döhnert was formed in 2004: Melanie studied the art of puppetry in Stuttgart, Germany; while Michael 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 music, the various means of expression of puppet and object theatre and human acting. florschütz & döhnert is an award-winning, internationally acclaimed children's theatre company.

„Electric Shadows“ is the third artistic collaboration with the director and light artist Joachim Fleischer.
www.joachimfleischer.de

„Florschütz & döhnert favour the quiet, poetic play with things: with figures and sounds they open bizarre dream worlds in which through the power of imagination the allegedly unthinkable becomes real.“

SCHAUBUDE BERLIN

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

Sunday Herald

Further play for children of 4 years and up:

A hole in the air and everywhere (2015)

Plays for children of two years and up:

Ssst! (2012)

Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel (2010)

Rawums (:) (2007)

Hare Hare Moon Hare Night (2004)



Photos: Joachim Fleischer (p. 1, 4, 5) and Thomas Ernst (p. 2 + 3)