



Press release – WESTWIND FESTIVAL 2023

In celebration of its 30th jubilee, Theater Marabu hosted this year's WESTWIND festival, the 39th edition of the North Rhine-Westphalian convention and theatre festival for young audiences. It did so with the support of its cooperation partners Theater Bonn, Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, Junges Theater Bonn, Theater im Ballsaal, Bühne in der Brotfabrik and Kulturzentrum Brotfabrik.

During the festival week, numerous theatre-makers from NRW and artists from the Czech Republic, Israel, Romania, Mozambique, Brazil, Ghana, Poland, Austria, Belgium and Finland visited the festival through the international visitors' programme of NRW KULTURsekretariat and the EU-wide festival network "Exit the Room" as a part of Erasmus plus, of which WESTWIND has been a partner since 2022. There were also international guest performances from Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as the international production "Kaffee mit Zucker?" by KMZ Kollektiv, Berlin.

The Next Generation Forum, which has been part of WESTWIND since 2009, hosted 10 participants from various artistic fields from all over Germany and invited them to network with the national and international scene of theatre for young audiences. The forum was led by performer, theatre outreach specialist and director Saliha Shagasi, who took part in the Next Generation Forum herself in 2018 and now directs the IMPORT EXPORT KOLLEKTIV at Schauspiel Köln, among others. In addition, students from the theatre education department of the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences in Lingen accompanied the festival along with Aachen-based students pursuing an M.A. in social work. The 36 performances at 8 venues were attended by numerous patron classes, schools and kindergarten groups.

In the programme of accompanying events, one thing in particular deserves special mention: the event "macht macht menschen" ("power makes people"), which took place from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on 12 June in cooperation with the Bonn Civic Participation Office in the Bonn Council Chamber. The agenda of this event was prepared by the WESTWIND Experts: a group of young people of various ages who supported the festival and helped shape some of its accompanying events by offering a young perspective on festival issues.

In the Bonn Council Chamber, a place where adults debate future decisions for the city of Bonn on a daily basis, they took the floor to express their ideas and visions of participation and involvement. Among those present were Mayor Gabi Mayer; Daniela Nohr from the Civic Participation Office; Felicitas Müller, project manager of "Kinderfreundliche Kommune Bonn"; and Andrea Koors, the City of Bonn's Children and Youth Representative.

The selection committee – consisting of Michaela Dicu (director of Junge Oper at Deutsche Oper am Rhein and artistic project manager of the mobile venue UFO), Lin Verleger (freelance dancer and choreographer, Cologne) and Claus Overkamp (co-artistic director of Theater Marabu Bonn) – sifted through 43 applications covering a broad range of themes and formats from September 2022 to February 2023. From these applicants, they selected ten remarkable productions that stand out for their relevance, quality and contribution to the current discourse on theatre for young audiences.

At the end of the festival, the children's jury, youth jury and awards jury bestowed their distinctions.

In order to emphasise the importance of equal opportunities for participation and agency at the festival, in the theatre scene and in society at large, the value of the prizes awarded by the children's and youth juries were matched by this year's awards jury. Thus, 2023 marks the first time that three equally endowed prizes have been awarded at Westwind festival.

The **children's jury** – consisting of Freya Fasting, Hannah Klinkertz, Isabella Krause, Rufus Meuskens, Luisa Anne Riester, Marlene Ringsdorf, Amelie Stenglein, Milena Stiebens, Teo Clavo Tegtmeyer and Matteo Wilhelm – bestowed its award to the **Theater Münster** production of **“Der Katze ist es ganz egal”** based on the novel of the same name by Franz Orghandl, adapted and directed by Carina Sophie Eberle.

This award is endowed with 4,000 euros.

Excerpt from the jury's statement: *“We found the exploration of themes around trans identity and gender particularly engaging. Although most of us already knew what “trans” means, this play taught us quite a few new things, such as that there are more genders than just boys and girls. In our opinion, this is something that everyone should know. (...) Everyone should accept everyone else just as they are. It shouldn't matter if a boy wants to wear skirts or whether or not a boy has a penis. Everyone should be allowed to play together as long as they are having fun. (...) Besides our enthusiasm for the story and the topic, we were also convinced by the way it came to life on stage. There were many funny moments (...). In addition, the music supported the story and Jennifer's feelings well.”*

<https://www.westwind-festival.de/inszenierungen/im-wettbewerb/der-katze-ist-es-ganz-egal>

The **youth jury** – Noemi Anspach, Bahar Gel, Gustav Hellmann, Mika Koc, Milan Koslowsky, Lizika Schmitz, Ronja Tabea Simon, Lilith Talloen, Sarah Uwimana – awarded its prize to the production **“Der geheimnisvolle Fremde”** by **Junge Bühne Bochum**, in co-production with Schauspielhaus Bochum, based on the novel by Mark Twain, adapted and directed by Martina van Boxen. This award is also endowed with 4,000 euros.

Excerpt from the jury's statement: *“(...) The production we selected managed to touch each of us individually in terms of its aesthetics, plot, scenery, choreography and performance. (...) The imagery it utilised has remained in our minds till this day and has given rise to further discussions about life, death, the consequences of our actions and moral dilemmas. The sound design and musical accompaniment captured the subject matter well and enabled it to tell its own story. The live collages projected onto the screen both punctuated the narrative and opened up exciting new perspectives. (...) We believe that this production provides young people with a framework for exploring new and difficult issues and offers exciting insight into the possibilities of youth theatre.”*

<https://www.westwind-festival.de/inszenierungen/im-wettbewerb/der-geheimnisvolle-fremde>

The **awards jury** – consisting of Bahar Gökten, dancer and choreographer from Cologne; Iwona Nowaka, author and translator from Szczecin in Poland; and Elena Philipp, editor at nachtkritik.de and freelance cultural journalist from Berlin – awarded its prize money of 4,000 euros sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the production **“dÄmonen”**, directed by Hannah Biedermann, performed by Nora Vonder Mühl and Ives Thuwis from **FFT Düsseldorf** in co-production with Theater Sgaramusch Schaffhausen, Theater Liechtenstein TAK Schaan and ROTONDES Luxemburg.

<https://www.westwind-festival.de/inszenierungen/im-wettbewerb/daemonen-ua>

Excerpt from the jury’s statement: *“With radically nuanced directness, the performers establish contact with the audience and create a connection that lasts until the very end. A connection that gives us courage to open up (to others as well as ourselves) and to recognise: you are not alone with your feelings. (...) With their strong presence, humour, honesty and self-deprecation as well as through their craft, skill, creativity and even their use of stage equipment, the actors deliver an engaging performance. They seize the moment and play with the unexpected. They do not presume to be above this topic, but instead let it permeate their very being. (...) The production manages to render visible and reflect on the issue of depression, which has become quite common and relevant in our society, especially in recent years. Not just for young people, but for everyone.”*

The Theater Marabu team would like to thank all participants, partner theatres and all helping hands as they pass on the WESTWIND festival baton to the team of Maschinenhaus Essen – The Theatre of Generations to Come. The 40th edition of WESTWIND will take place in Essen from 1-8 June 2024 as a cooperation between Maschinenhaus Essen and Schauspiel Essen.

Further information and press photos of the productions can be downloaded from our website www.westwind-festival.de

Photos of the awards ceremony were taken by Tanja Evers.

The partners in Bonn:



JUNGES THEATER BONN



WESTWIND is sponsored by the City of Bonn, Landschaftsverband Rheinland, the international visitors programme of NRW KULTURsekretariat and the Ministry of Culture & Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

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