

Intercultural Monologues

Krater Theatre is one of the oldest art institutions in Amsterdam southeast. The foundation focuses on this diverse community, with a population of nearly 80,000 people from over 130 different countries, and closely cooperates with other cultural organisations both in and outside of Amsterdam southeast. Krater Theatre's mission is to be a stage for professional contemporary arts and international traditions. It is also an institute for cultural education to contribute to the development of talent amongst children and youth. Krater is inspired by cultural diversity, artistic quality and social commitment and focuses on art and culture which surprises, confronts and connects.

Project summary and objectives

Krater selected a group of spoken word poets from Amsterdam Southeast to write personal monologues on the theme of interculturality. The theatre wanted to make a statement on the subject, claiming that multiculturalism is a fact of life, but interculturality is still Utopia. The title was chosen as a critical note: what does interculturality mean, when we only choose to talk through single cultural perspectives?

Krater Theatre used the monologues as a metaphor for the lack of cultural exchange between and within local communities, aiming to start a verbal exchange of ideas, beliefs and misconceptions around the perception of intercultural dialogue.

Process

Krater Theatre already had a wide experience with spoken word performances. In cooperation with Paradiso, a concert hall, club and temple of new culture in the city centre of Amsterdam (www.paradiso.nl/web/English-Agenda.htm), they have produced numerous spoken word evenings such as the *Black Magic Woman Festival*.

In March and April 2009, eight spoken word poets began to meet together weekly. Krater invited theatrical director Neske Beks to work with this group. Beks' approach to the theme and title were remarkable. She pushed the limits of the title and poets and challenged them into interaction by game-playing and associative techniques. In the beginning the poets (some professional or semi-professional and some amateur) felt slightly awkward during these sessions. They expected working sessions on their texts and solo performances; instead, this approach for establishing interaction was both physical and primal. During the process four poets had to leave the project, which left the group with four female poets. This final group, which proceeded with acting sessions, game-play and the fine-tuning of their monologues, had a natural connection and showed great interest into each other's stories and beliefs.

During the staging of the monologues, Beks applied her working methods literally. She cut the monologues into shorter pieces, directing the women to interrupt each other's stories, reacting and interacting with each other. By direction and staging, interaction was forced upon the monologues and mono-visions. Beks looked for common and uncommon experiences in the monologues and built cross-cultural bridges from one performer to the other.

Outcomes and future developments

The finalised performance has been staged three times: during Wereld Boekenstad (World Book Capital), at Krater Theatre and at Paradiso.

Following the second performance, a discussion session was held with the audience. Around 80 people from the local community participated and the session was video-recorded. The audience was overwhelmed by the honesty and pureness of the performers. One question was raised about the diversity of the group, since, although culturally diverse (two Surinamese, one Brazilian / American and one Aruban / Bosnian), all of the spoken word artists were female. Krater Theatre agreed that the lack of men was regrettable, but was convinced that cultural diversity was well established.

During the discussion the MAP for ID project was presented. The audience reacted positively and wanted to know if they could participate in a follow up to this pilot.

Krater Theatre intends to develop new work inspired by this project starting in the winter of 2009. New selections will be made, focusing on diversity in a broader sense. The Intercultural Monologues from the pilot MAP for ID will be brought to stage again during the *Black Magic Woman Festival* at Krater Theatre's new location, the Bijlmer Park Theatre, in November 2009, and at Imagine IC in December 2009 and January 2010. It is planned to add new monologues from the spin-off projects to the programme.

Institution

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Target groups

Spoken word poets from Amsterdam southeast