

Diverse Imagi- native Worlds

How do you make dance for a young audience?
Lea Moro is trying it out.

Interview: Irmela Kästner

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The Berlin-based Swiss choreographer Lea Moro is developing her first piece for a young audience of eight years old and over: "All Our Eyes Believe"/"Alle Augen Staunen". Its first performance and its German premiere at Tanz im August have been cancelled because of coronavirus, but rehearsals are continuing after an interruption of two and a half months. By phone, Lea Moro tells the Hamburg author Irmela Kästner about the creative process.

Irmela Kästner: You've just been able to start rehearsing again. How's it going?

Lea Moro: In March we had to interrupt the rehearsals for two and a half months. We had already been working for five weeks. Now we've started again – six people are allowed to work together observing the hygiene and distancing regulations. But during the break I was working continually on the content, concept and organisation. With Hélène Philippot (producer/manager) we devised a plan B to produce the piece despite the limitations. The performances planned for this year at Tanz im August and the Zürcher Theater Spektakel have been cancelled, but we have performances in September and December. This means we have to finish the piece this summer.

IK: It's your first piece for a young audience. How did this come about?

LM: Around three years ago there was the chance to develop a choreographic work at the Fabrik Potsdam as part of the "Explore Dance" network for young audiences. I thought, okay, it isn't exactly my area. But I had always been interested in developing work for a mixed audience, so that different people could watch my pieces, which wouldn't just be meant

for a particular scene. There were always children in the audiences. Through this opportunity I began to think about the target group more intensively. So, independently of "Explore Dance", we're now making my first piece for children, but it should appeal to adults too.

IK: So you're wondering about the audience you can expect?

LM: We did some preparatory workshops with children. And we've found a partner class in Pankow with a fantastically committed teacher. Before COVID-19 the children in her class came to rehearsals and developed pieces with us, giving us feedback. This enabled us to find out more about children's specific ways of watching. How do they perceive things? How do they describe what they see? We also had contact with dance schools in Zurich and with DOCK 11 in Berlin. But because of the school closures and now the summer holidays, our work can't be accompanied by children any more.

IK: The piece is described as 'a fantastical world in red and blue'. Can you explain this in more detail?

LM: We're working with a completely textile set (designed in collaboration

with Martin Bergström and Nina Kraimer) and a whole range of fabrics used by the three performers Jorge De Hoyos, Daniella Eriksson and Michelle Moura. A red world is formed from a topographical stage landscape with associations of volcanos or coral reefs. We move within three 'ecological systems', in the air, on the earth and under water, which are constituted through choreographic-spatial compositions, performative processes, sound and light. The performers continually disappear as human figures, becoming more like animal forms, sometimes even turning into the landscape itself. There is a transformation from a red to a blue world. At the moment we're working dramaturgically on how to make this happen and what kind of character the blue world should have. To sum up I could say that in "All Our Eyes Believe" assemblages of organic and inorganic material come about in the interplay of human bodies and non-human objects. This interconnection generates hybrids; dichotomies of nature and culture are dissolved; diverse imaginative worlds are opened up for the audience.

IK: You're planning outreach and online formats for the piece. What's the idea behind this?



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LM: As a short explanation: among other things, "All Our Eyes Believe" explores what outreach can be as a part of my artistic practice and specifically within a dance piece for a young audience. How can outreach form an integral part of a dance piece and not introduce prospectively nor explain retrospectively? By allowing the performers to be touched and the stage to be entered, for example, I'd like to make the world that comes about on stage accessible to the audience in a haptic, sensory way. Part of our research at the moment is how to do this in the current situation, with the distancing and hygiene regulations. Opening up the stage creation is supposed to carry forward what has been seen and experienced, and to make space for individual narration. The transition to this opening happens via an interactive poster. It comprises questions and writing, painting and moving exercises on the ecosystems in the air, on land and under water.

After looking at and thinking about online formats we decided to set up an Instagram account where the illustrations on the poster are linked to interactive elements (exercises, questions, information) and clips of the creative process. This idea didn't come from some compulsion to do something digital because of the current situation. I just think it's interesting to see what kind of formats other media offer, and what forms of mo-

dification they suggest – how can I make them useful for creation and research?

In contact with the children we noticed that they were very preoccupied with the climate crisis, pollution, the call for a sustainable ecology.

IK: How did the environmental and ecological themes get into the piece? Tying in to Fridays for Future? Because that's what children and young people can relate to at the moment?

LM: : I want to address different perceptual and sensory levels with "All Our Eyes Believe". The piece is an invitation to see the 'world' with new eyes. I generally ask myself what perceptual mechanisms we use in our individual and shared construction of the world/environment? What realities do we assume, and what imaginative possibilities do they result in? I'm interested in the interdependency of living organisms and their surroundings, visible and invisible environmental phenomena and ecology: what form do fine particles take? How do I imagine the ozone hole? And I want to evoke moments of wonder, accompanied by a humorously eye-opening process that's both incredible and carefully gentle – hence the title "All Our Eyes Believe/Alle Augen Staunen".

When we started researching the piece around two years ago, Fridays for Future wasn't yet so prominent. But of course we examined the issues when the movement moved more into the media discourse and people's awareness. And in contact with the children we noticed that they were very preoccupied with the climate crisis, pollution, the call for a sustainable ecology. These aren't explicit in "All Our Eyes Believe", that is, they aren't dealt with narratively but rather through props, lighting, sound collage and a continually transforming scenography. The stage events bring up associations of a dystopian underwater world or weather phenomena like thunder and rain. Moments of destruction reveal blue plastic rubbish and suggest the pollution of the seas and rivers. Current ecological themes are indicated through gestures of taking care, looking after and looking around.

There's something important I'd like to add: apart from two student works, this is the first choreography of mine that I don't perform in.

IK: And how does that feel?

LM: Great. I'm very much enjoying the view from outside while knowing how it feels from within. 🖱️

Translated from German by Michael Turnbull.

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