

# LET'S DANCE

The Reykjavík Dance Festival 2013 is almost here!

Words by Rebecca Louder – Photos curtesy of Reykjavík Dance Festival



Various locations

<http://reykjavikdancefestival.tumblr.com>

ISK 14,900, 9,900 or 2,200



Katrin Deufert & Thomas Plischke let the audience get playful in ANARCHIV#2: second hand.

At the end of the month, our fair city will be inundated by performance. Since 2002, the Reykjavík Dance Festival has been the single most important time of year for Iceland's independent professional dancers and has contributed to the vast growth and expansion of their work.

Operating on a purely local level for its first few years, the festival had a couple of re-toolings until they landed on a model that truly fit. Since last year, the event

is curated by different artistic directors, and this year it is spearheaded by multi-platform performers Erna Ómarsdóttir and Valdimar Jóhannsson. It is also partnered with the Lókal International Theatre Festival for the second time and shares the same social space.

This year's edition stands out for having the highest number of international performers involved in the festival. Although the festival is primarily made by and for the local freelance dance community,

the growing number of foreign guests allows them to make better outside connections, build collaborations and fit into the context of the European dance community.

Among the international performers are Deufert&Plischke from Germany, bringing a piece entitled 'ANARCHIV#2: second hand' which Thomas Plischke says allows the audience to play along with them, but never forces them into participation. The Brussels-based Dane Mette Ingvarsten will perform



Diederik Peeters confuses and misdirects with his paranoia-inspired piece, Red Herring.

'Evaporated Landscapes', a piece comprised of ephemeral elements subject to factors like temperature, lights, body bass and mechanics. Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki, the Swedish-Japanese couple who go by the name Fieldworks, will deal with uncertainty, immediacy and humour in their piece 'Borrowed Landscapes', performed in the Bónus grocery store.

Back with our locals, there will be several much anticipated premieres, including 'Scape Of Grace' by Saga Sigurðarsdóttir, 'Soft Target Installed' by Margrét Sara Guðjónsdóttir and 'To The Bone' by Erna and Valdimar's company Shalala. The latter will also act as an introductory performance for the 'Black Yoga Screaming Chamber', an ongoing installation by Erna and Valdi found at various locations until September 1, which will bear some loud and intense fruit.

This festival is the local dance community's answer to Iceland Airwaves: it's just as cool and jam-packed full of amazing talent, and you don't have to wait in long queues! So take the week off work, drop the kids off with the grandparents, devote one week of your life to performance art and enjoy!



The Surprised Body Project by Franscesco Scavetta & Wee creates complex metaphors using human bodies.

## Dance Festival Social Club

While the festival's artistic director's hands are spilling over with curatorial work, next year's pre-selected directors, Alexander Roberts and Ásgerður G. Gunnarsdóttir, a.k.a. Choreography Reykjavík, are in charge of setting up the SUPER SOCIAL SPACE, a type of pop-up outreach space where the dance community and the non-dance related public can converge.

Taking place in Dansverkstæðið, a dance and choreography space attached to KEX Hostel, the space will be open for the

festival's ten days with a slew of free events – workshops, lectures, performances, dancing, and nightly parties. "It's kind of like a magic trick or a con where we're using DJs, free publications and free food to get people into the space," Alexander says, "then we try to confront them with contemporary dance and choreography."

He says this approach is a targeted response to the feeling that the Reykjavík dance community is an opaque, exclusive

world where non-dancers see no room for themselves. His and Ásgerður's company have been making a push over the past year to include different types of people into their works and he says this is an attempt to bring people in on another level.

So head over for breakfast and the Morning Clashes series, an evening meal and a Choreography For Dinner, or a late night drink and some rowdy dancing. They welcome everyone with open arms and jazz hands.



# The Guy In The Fur Coat Shitting His Pants

Diederik Peeters returns to Iceland

by Rebecca Louder

Diederik Peeters rejects the notion of being a minor cult celebrity in Iceland. Despite the fact that the claim was made by none other than Erna Ómarsdóttir, one of the artistic directors of this year's Reykjavík Dance Festival and Diederik's former collaborator, he laughs it off as a "loving exaggeration." Nonetheless, even the festival's managing director, Tinna Lind Gunnarsdóttir, says, "Icelanders remember him as the guy in the fur coat."

If this was not intriguing enough, Diederik is coming back to Iceland at the end of the month with a performance that will span two partnered festivals — the aforementioned Reykjavík Dance Festival and the Lókal International Theatre Festival. His piece, 'Red Herring,' thoroughly blurs the lines between the two mediums of performance for a production that is as confusing as the title proverbially implies.

## Man in a black box

Diederik started his career on an entirely different track from the hybridization of dance and theatre, studying visual arts and harbouring musical aspirations. "It's all a terrible mix-up," he says, "but since I'm no good at any instrument, and much better in pulling faces, I somehow ended up doing what I'm doing now." This meant a gradual shift from mainly doing video work and installations to doing strange performances in galleries, outside of the usual staged context.

Eventually, he decided to set some boundaries for himself and took his works into the "black box" we call theatres. "When I was making these weird, difficult to categorise performances, it was very cool but also very tiring," he says. "That's when I said, okay I'll get acquainted with all the elements of the stage world—sound, lighting, etc. I'm still figuring it out myself, but have high hopes to find out someday soon now."

Ten years ago, he met Erna Ómarsdóttir while the two were working with theatre director Jan Fabre in Belgium. This led to her asking him to perform in her piece 'We Are All Marlene Dietrich FOR,' a work commissioned by the Iceland Dance Company, which earned him his local reputation. "My role in it involved me doing a kind of parody of John Lennon's 'Imagine' while wearing that ridiculously big fur coat," Diederik laughs. "We were hanging out at Sirkus a lot and I guess my dancing style caught some eyes."

## Man against the music

His involvement in that work also led

to Erna extending a personal invitation to him to come back for the festivals this year. "She hasn't even seen my new piece but she knows I don't do crap," he says. What he is bringing to the stage is a creation that can simply be described as a duet between a man and a soundtrack. "Since I don't actually know how to make performances, I decided to take the liberty to fool around with the typical tools of the stage in order to find out how to use and to misuse them," he says. "For me set, sound and light are equally important tools as text or performers."

As his previous piece focused on the dramatic possibilities of a set, in 'Red Herring' he focuses on the aspect of sound. "The sound imposes itself as a character, almost physically, to the point where it tries to take over the show," he continues. "Quite annoying actually..." Diederik's dance partner—the sound—will be controlled by sound-designer Lieven Dousselaere who was also part of the production of Erna's 'We Are All Marlene Dietrich FOR' and a regular collaborator with her and her partner, Valdimar Jóhannsson.

Lieven stays at the back of the theatre space trying to keep control an entire cockpit of buttons, LED-lights and faders. "Although we've performed the show over 20 times now, it's still a physical battle for him to make it to the end of the performance alive, so to speak," Diederik says. "It's equally hard for me to keep my head above water. I really enjoy making things so tremendously complicated that it becomes almost impossible to avoid mistakes. It's a form of self-sabotage that I'm quite fond of."

## Man is paranoid and confused

Aesthetically, the show is highly influenced by cinema, which Diederik says is a much stronger reference point for him than dance or other forms of performance. "The general atmosphere of the stuff I do is often considered quite cinematic," he says. He openly admits stealing the term "red herring" from the well-known plot device that acts as a false clue, diverting attention away from the true culprit

or solution. Citing names like Tati, Hitchcock and Bunuel, he says the show takes cinematic cues in terms of the sound and lighting as well.

Conceptually speaking, he delved into aspects of humanity that suffer greatly from false clues. "Over the last couple of years, I somehow developed a perverse interest with intense mental states or psychological conditions where reality presents itself differently," Diederik says. "In that sense, paranoia was kind of a starting point. If one suffers from it, it's probably very annoying, but if you take it out of its clinical context it's very funny to watch someone just shitting themselves for nothing."

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Using the idea of a person vulnerable to becoming distressed over figments of the imagination, he folded the use of sound as a trigger to increase paranoia. "To quote good old Luis Bunuel," he says, "sound triggers the imagination more than image."

He also seems comfortable making his audience a little paranoid before they arrive at the theatre. "I quite like to get confused myself; I find it an exciting and inspiring state of mind. And so I can't help myself to start confusing the audience as soon as possible," he says. "Let's keep it at this: knowing that the term Red Herring refers to a false clue, maybe the title doesn't have anything to do with the show at all, and is only there to put you on the wrong track." Audiences may be misdirected, but are unlikely to be disappointed.

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