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Press Release

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2011 Impulse Award for Institutet (Sweden) and Nya Rampen (Finland)

>> Goethe Institute Award for She She Pop and their Fathers and Andros Zins-Browne / Dietmar N. Schmidt Award for Anna Mendelssohn

With the award presentation in the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, on Sunday, 10 July 2011 the anniversary edition of the Impulse Theater Festival by the NRW KULTURsekretariat has reached its conclusion. The festival took place for the first time in its 20-year history in the summer. Over the course of 12 days a total of 10,000 spectators enjoyed some 70 events at the most important event for German autonomous theatre in the cities of Bochum, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Mülheim an der Ruhr. This includes the 1,100 guests who came to ExtraSchicht on 9 July 2011 at the Ringlokschuppen in Mülheim.

The attendance numbers from the previous two festivals were exceeded once again in this third festival under the artistic direction of Matthias von Hartz and Tom Stromberg. Stromberg and von Hartz, who were responsible for the programme for the last time this year, were quite satisfied: "This year it was especially difficult for the jury to select the award winners, which speaks once again for the quality and range of the productions. Yet we are sure that with *Conte d'Amour* we have chosen the most outstanding autonomous production of the year. We have enjoyed 12 days with exciting, even controversial performances, many of which were sold out. Throughout the festival the atmosphere was more relaxed thanks to the weather, but there was great curiosity and attentiveness as well. By staging the event in the summer we were able to show such highlights as Pollesch's *Der perfekte Tag* and to take part in ExtraSchicht. This helped us reach completely new audiences. What an amazing finish!"

Dr. Christian Esch, director of the presenting organization, the NRW KULTURsekretariat, added: "With the successful Stromberg/von Hartz era the Impulse festival gained significant momentum that will benefit future editions as well. The decision to schedule Impulse during the summer has proved to be the right change in course for the inspiring, exciting Impulse festivals of the future."

>> 2011 award winners: Institutet & Nya Rampen, Andros Zins-Browne and She She Pop, as well as Anna Mendelssohn

Conte d'Amour by the two groups Institutet and Nya Rampen and Berlin-based director Markus Öhrn was selected as the best off-theatre production. As a result *Conte d'Amour* will be shown at next year's Berliner Theatertreffen and at the Wiener Festwochen. For the first time the production will also be performed during the Polish Krakowskie Reminiscencje Teatralne festival in collaboration with Tam'Tam, the 2011-2012 Polish-NRW cultural season. This year's Goethe Institute award went to two groups: She She Pop and their Fathers for *Testament* and Andros Zins-Browne for *The Host*. With the support of the Goethe Institute both productions will set out on an international tour next year. Named after the former Impulse director, the 1,500 Euro Dietmar N. Schmidt award for an outstanding solo artistic performance goes this year to Anna Mendelssohn for *Cry Me a River*.

This year the jury included the theatre and film actor Caroline Peters; the director of the Kaaitheater in Brussels, Guy Gypens; as well as Matthew Fenton, director of Live at LICA, an interdisciplinary institution for art at the University of Lancaster. Also serving on the jury were the director of the NRW KULTURsekretariat, Dr. Christian Esch; Martin Berg from the Goethe Institute; as well as the festival's artistic directors Matthias von Hartz and Tom Stromberg.

>> International character

In addition to the increased attendance, the number of international guests and industry visitors who came to NRW to see the latest developments in German-language theatre also increased. Thanks to the collaboration with the Goethe Institute, on the first festival weekend over 50 international curators, festival organizers and journalists visited NRW. The initial fruits of this international networking have already been harvested: even during the festival numerous productions received invitations to international festivals and theatre events.

After 2007 and 2009, this was the third festival under the artistic direction of Matthias von Hartz and Tom Stromberg. They took over the festival in 2006, and in their first year they were already able to double attendance. With such new features as the Impulse Marathons (at which guests can enjoy several performances on a single day and are taken from venue to venue with the shuttle service) and the invitation of special guests outside of the competition, new audiences were attracted to the festival and the importance of the festival outside the region became evident.

>> From the jury statements:

> 2011 Impulse Award for Institutet and Nya Rampen – *Conte d'Amour*

Together with the director Markus Öhrn, the two groups Institutet (Sweden) and Nya Rampen (Finland) present the life situation of a family, their daily dependencies, but also the physical and psychological horrors, including even torture. The audience is taken as far away as Africa through the various stories, yet by looking through the camera spectators are able to distance themselves from the action on the stage so that they are not completely overcome with terror. Four outstanding actors are on stage, and though they are hidden behind a screen they nevertheless have an incredible presence. To add to the beauty and wonder of the performance they are not only animals, victims and beasts, but also impressive musicians and singers. With his first work as a director, the visual artist Markus Öhrn, who works as a video artist, has created a moving, intense epic. (...)

> Goethe Award for Andros Zins-Browne and She She Pop and their Fathers

Andros Zins-Browne – *The Host*: When the three cowboys set foot on stage in *The Host* they do what cowboys have always done. They set to work, clean up and rip the floor out from under ornery nature in order to use that floor for the western dance of civilization. That is, until nature – in the form of gigantic inflatable air cushions created by the artist Stefan Demming – turns everything upside down again. This isn't just an amusing pot-shot at masculine self-images. With *The Host* the choreographer Andros Zins-Browne has created a stage installation full of slapstick humour and stoically born effort, in which a cowboy becomes Sisyphus and in all seriousness poses questions to what extent the world can be conquered. Andros Zins-Browne has found a clear aesthetic approach that negates any single, one-dimensional interpretation. It is rare that elements of dance and visual art come together in such an essential manner and develop their very own language of images. (...)

She She Pop and their Fathers – *Testament*: With a determination almost unmatched in the German theatre scene the collective She She Pop has been developing its own style for 13 years. In the process the boundaries between performers and audience and between reality and fiction are often explored in surprising and humorous manners. (...) With *Testament* they have created a wonderful performance that goes even further in many aspects. For the first time a dramatic text serves as a point of reference for the piece. And for the first time other performers are on stage with them. As consistently as the group thinks and works, these other performers could only be part of their own biographies. The work with their own reality as both theatre producers and as daughters of their fathers is transformed into a piece of documentary and autobiographical drama. (...) *Testament* is one of the most touching theatre performances of the last several years. Since its premier it has inspired many a telephone call between father and daughter.

> **Dietmar N. Schmidt Award for Anna Mendelssohn – *Cry Me A River*:** How do I save the self-destroying world while at the same time finding the right father for my future children? What to do when every certain truth seems banal, hope seems entirely naïve and engagement seems like nothing but a way of soothing one's conscience? And how can we go on when even emotions seem ambivalent in this tension between true and false, between the political and the personal, between dreams of the North Pole and the desire to have a family? Tears may only be a reference to feelings, a self-made salty fluid in the globally warmed ocean. In her virtuosic monologue Anna Mendelssohn always finds the right tone, playing emphatically and yet lightly on the keyboard of her own and borrowed sensibilities. With precision and agility she performs a score for multiple voices. Pitch, speaking posture, languages are interwoven in ever new and original manners. Added to that are sound recordings and dance experiments that become detectors of white lies as well as the messengers of honed emotions. In this way a multifarious fabric of meanings is created, reflected and touching at the same time thanks to Anna Mendelssohn's rich theatrical talents.

>> Organizers, sponsors and partners:

The 2011 Impulse Theater Festival was organized by the NRW KULTURsekretariat in collaboration with the cities of Bochum, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Mülheim an der Ruhr. The festival was sponsored by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the NRW Kunststiftung (Arts Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia) and by the Goethe Institute. Impulse 2011 was supported by the Sparkasse Bochum Foundation for the Promotion of Culture and Science, the Sparkasse KölnBonn Foundation, the National Performance Network (NPN), the Swiss Pro Helvetia Foundation and Vipex. Media partners were Stadtzauber, K.WEST and coolibri.

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