

Information for the media
Riga, October 24, 2022

The Series of Interactive Performances for Young People <<Līdzinieki>> / <<Demo-creators>> has Concluded

The four-week marathon of a participation art event for young people <<Demo-creators>> in the Trade Union House has come to an end. Rehearsals began on September 27, and from October 12 to 18, ten interactive performances took place in this venue, attended by more than 500 young people. The production was created by the collaborative team of I-DEJAS MĀJAS, the Norwegian theatre company K:13 and the Initium Foundation.

<<Demo-creators>> was the first production in Latvia where the audience could not only participate, but also influence the course of the performance with their choices. The intention of the creative team was to design an interactive and site-specific theatre piece. The Trade Union House was used as a giant scenography and performance environment. The drama is on the night of May 15, 1934, when the building, then called the House of the People, was besieged by the home guard during the coup by Ulmanis.

"In this production, the audience experienced two times concurrently - the historically based story in the former People's House and the work of the trade union organizations currently taking place here," says Sanita Duka, curator of the project. "The main characters are three poets who are historically associated with this house. The intrigue of the show – will the young people agree to cooperate with the secret police and submit to censorship? It was a pleasure to watch how enthusiastically they participated and unravelled the sequence of the game."

The script, the breakout game within and the visitor experience were jointly created by the entire creative team. The interactive game consultants were the project partners Jorunn Sofie Lullau, Steinar Thorsen and Charlotte Faaberg-Johansen from Norway. From the Latvian side, the director Edgars Niklasons, scenographer Toms Jansons, choreographer Jānis Putniņš, playwright Luke Welch, composer Platons Buravickis, artists Ance Eikena and Anita Rozentāle and costume designer Anda Ščerbak worked under the direction of the producer, Ieva Niedre.

Sixty creatives from various fields and fifteen technical support staff were involved in the preparation of the production. Commenting on the huge organizational effort that was required, the producer Ieva Niedre says: „It was an impressive and exciting collaborative process". Both professional actors and dancers, members of amateur and improvisation theatre, and dancers from the SPACE dance studio, all took part in the performance.

One member of the team was Mārgers Majors, an improviser and the host for

the LTV program *Kultūrdeva*. For him, it was his first experience with this kind of project. As Marģers admits: "Several years ago, when I worked on the 'horror route', I had experienced something similar in terms of tension, but the scope of <<*Demo-creators*>> surpasses my previous experience." Marģer's task was to welcome the audience-participants of the performance and guide them into the story. After that, he was with the group throughout the performance, discreetly watching to ensure that everything went according to plan and that the young people were involved in the development of the plot. "In the finale of the show, my character leads the vote on the future of Latvia and gives an impromptu comment on this choice. When voting, they had the opportunity to choose whether they wanted to live in a Utopia ruled by poets, or a Dystopia ruled by secret police, or - which, by the way, only happened once - if there was a tie, they would end up with the current democratic situation."

The visual side of the production was created by the set designer Tom Jansons, artists Ance Eikena and Anita Roztāle, and costumes designer Anda Shcherbaka. In order to create the appropriate atmosphere, as well as to outline the motives of the play's main characters, the Latvian poets Ziemeļnieks, Rainis and Čaks, the composer Platons Buravickis created special compositions for the production. Choreography played a particularly important role during the performance, as there were pieces performed by professional dancers with acrobatic elements under the leadership of Jānis Putniņš, compositions staged and performed by the youth of the dance studio SPACE, as well as the movement of visitors through the Trade Union House from the basement to the attic.

Young people were not only the main target audience of the performance, but they were also advisors to the creative team of the project. While developing the idea, the project team held several youth focus group meetings and used the obtained feedback to adjust the course of the show to the interests of the target audience. The design of the project and the interactive theatre methods, were introduced to teachers of creative subjects in general education schools. Educators participated in the creative workshops and the evaluation of the first draft of the play. They also visited the venue of the play in a tour format and learned about the principles of participatory art and site-specific theatre.

"With this show, we wanted to remind you how important democracy is and that it shouldn't be taken for granted. This is flagged up by current events that are happening right next door - both the war started by Russia in Ukraine and the growing influence of far-right parties in several European countries. Democracy - it also means thinking, thinking critically and of course, it's not easy. It is much more difficult than when someone from above tells you what to do!" emphasizes Edgars Niklasons, director of the <<*Demo-creators*>> production.

Photo: Egīls Arājs

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hvfqntt5iw6iyho/AAAPAZgLnuneE8jplj4h63sa?dl=0>

The project has been realised with support provided by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to the value of 107 thousand euros from the EEA grants "Local development, poverty alleviation and cultural cooperation" 2014-2021 period program, allocated via an open competition process under the auspices of "Support for the creation of professional art and cultural products for children and a youth audience" within the framework of *Working together for a green, competitive and inclusive Europe!*

Sanita Duka, Project Curator

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