

Labor

Cirque

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Labor Cirque – “Circus Laboratory – A laboratory for exploring and developing artistic forms of New Circus”, or so it said in the blurb. That could mean anything and everything.

I apply to take part without any specific idea of what it will be like, simply in the hope of

theatre, a synthesis in which the four phases are drawn together, and a concluding symposium. At the end of May, along with 15 other participants from various genres of the performing arts, I arrive at the ZAK in Cologne for the first laboratory phase. What we all have in common is an interest in finding out what New Circus is, or can still become.

to put together a piece. Having to produce results with a group of people you don't know in such a short time is challenging but effective. The pieces we show and discuss are highly diverse, and some of them are remarkably complex.

The Dance Laboratory gives me a clear eye for the spatial arrangement of scenes on the stage, and the courage to make an intuitive artistic “first stab”.

I realise that searching for the perfect idea is like chasing an illusion. It makes much more sense to gather material, generate chaos with it, and then systematically tidy it up.

The next research phase, on circus skills, is led by juggler

my choreographic work? They are just some of the questions that we try to answer. This artistic search is for Guillaume of a larger process of personality development. His working method shows me in a surprising way how important it is not to look for excuses, to waste time but rather to make a clear decision and on it.

I end the first ten days with feeling that a map of the known continent “New Circus” is slowly unfolding before me. This new perspective on physical performance could evolve out of the multi-generational collaboration during the laboratory, allowing a broader

view of circus in its general context of performing arts. Labor Cirque created an awareness of how the principles of stage direction can be applied to circus and it improved practical aptitudes in interdisciplinary work. The Laboratory made it possible for like-minded individuals, who otherwise never met, to get together and share inspiration. The discussion showed how passionately and diversely the New Circus protagonists talk about their art.

One posed the question

whether circus can stand alongside other genres as an equally high-quality art medium. Instead, there were lively debates about the how and why of circus.

This shows the huge discrepancy between the public reluctance to recognise circus as a legitimate art form and the creative power and commitment of the artists themselves. Labor Cirque is a milestone in the development of New Circus and, let us hope, a first



Irene Fas Fita, Johannes Stubenvoll

sharing experiences with other artists and getting some practical ideas for my own work. I often feel that my performances suffer from my lack of knowledge about research methods and about the principles of dramatic composition – and from a lack of qualified feedback.

Labor Cirque consists of four research phases on the subjects dance, circus, music, voice and

The session starts with dance, led by choreographer Tim Plegge. Alongside improvisation exercises, we learn various techniques for creating choreographed sequences of movements. We discuss the effect of space on a performance, the effect of contrasts, of hectic motion followed by stillness. On the first afternoon we are given a group assignment in which each group has one hour

and performer Guillaume Martinet. The main aim here is to take a critical look at our own artistic discipline. Guillaume's approach – rigorously searching for the starting points of our work – is a challenge for many of us. We try to distil the essential elements from our various specialisations. What does a thrown ball mean on a physical level? What can a handstand mean in a metaphoric sense? What is the essence of