

JLOHMANN PERFORMANCE ART

BEING AUDIENCE BEING PERFORMER



Creation Dossier 2023/24

An interdisciplinary 1hour indoor performance for young adults combining circus dance and theater.

„How can we challenge the established expectations and performance formats within art to create work that goes beyond consumption and forces the spectator to take action as part of the development of the performance?“



THE PIECE

Being Audience|Being Performer is an Interdisciplinary Theater Performance including elements of Acting, Dance and Circus. With this piece the triangular relationship between actor, spectator and the space they co-inhabit is being interrogated. The performance re-establishes the Theater as a rehearsal space for Democracy and hands the responsibility back to the public. It is challenging the traditional roles of audience and performer within the Theater, and creates analogues to society itself.

With this work we encourage democratic participation and activist discourse using Art and the Theater to combat populist simplifications and radicalization by focusing on the role and responsibilities of the individual. Contrary to giving the stage to a select few that control the masses in their thought, Being Audience|Being Performer asks each individual to take the stage themselves.

Diversity and Discourse over Conformity and Submission

"This piece is just a rehearsal..."

Using Circus, Dance and Theater, themes of Responsibility, Expectations, Acting and the necessity for Action, as well as consequences of In-Action are being explored. While physically on stage, the performers create an environment where the public turns protagonist and confront the audience with a situation of having to take a decision. To be Audience, or to be Performer. A performance that extends beyond the theater and which main act begins only ones the curtains are closed again. A piece on theater, society, as well as the individual and how to become performer of ones own life by taking responsibility over ones own expectations.

More than just a piece:

Next to the performance on-stage, the work extends beyond the boundaries of the architectural theater and literally moves into the public space creating a direct connection between what is 'staged', and what is reality.

Work in Progress Trailer:

www.vimeo.com/jlohmann/nrw



BEING AUDIENCE

You might have expected us to just dance.
You might have expected some circus or acrobatics.
You know, expectations are a strange animal.
You gave us the responsibility to fulfill them.
Today, we will hand this responsibility back to you!



BEING PERFORMER

The performer is constantly being judged by its audience.
But remember, we can see you too.
We are watching you!
We are your audience.

THE WORK

The Performer is expected to 'perform'. The performer is surrounded by expectations created by his audience, whom he is performing for. An audience may create a performer against his or her will or consent. The audience uses the performer to distance themselves from their responsibilities. They are placing them in the Performer. The performer is expected to fulfill all expectations placed upon him. By becoming Performer, he took on the responsibility. The Performer is expected to 'perform'.

We are investigating what it means to be performer, what it means to be audience. We do this both in the direct meaning of the words within the theater, but also draw connections to outside of the theater and look at performers and audiences in our society. How do those roles effect our being and living together in a global context? This moves from family and friendship structures into politics on local and international levels.

Starting the research we posed the question: "What happens when an audience is being asked to 'perform' their role as audience?"

The dramaturgy of the show will be written around the public as the protagonist of the show. The performers merely facilitate their journey. The journey itself starts with the realization of ones expectations and moves further into the question of responsibility, finally ending in a confrontation, having to decide to remain audience, or to stand up and to become a performer. In life by taking responsibility, in the theater by joining the stage.

On stage we are working with solo and partner acrobatics, contemporary and para para dance, object manipulation (chairs and sledgehammer) and video projections as well as spoken word. Visually the show will be kept rather minimalistic with a clearly defined color pallet comprised of black, white and red.

The research initially started in 2020 with a 2 week creation which resulted in an half hour short piece under the same title. That piece was performed first in Bologna Italy, followed by first the Stockholm Fringe Festival in Sweden (2021) and then the Delft Fringe Festival in The Netherlands (2022). In Stockholm the performance received a nomination for the Fringe Award in the category of 'Spoken Word and Theater'.

Late 2022/early 2023 the decision was taken to take back the work and turn it into a 1 hour performance targeted at young adults with the aim to be performed across Europe. Based on the experiences of having performed the material in front of different audiences, this current phase of the creation is a restructuring and deepening of the previous work.

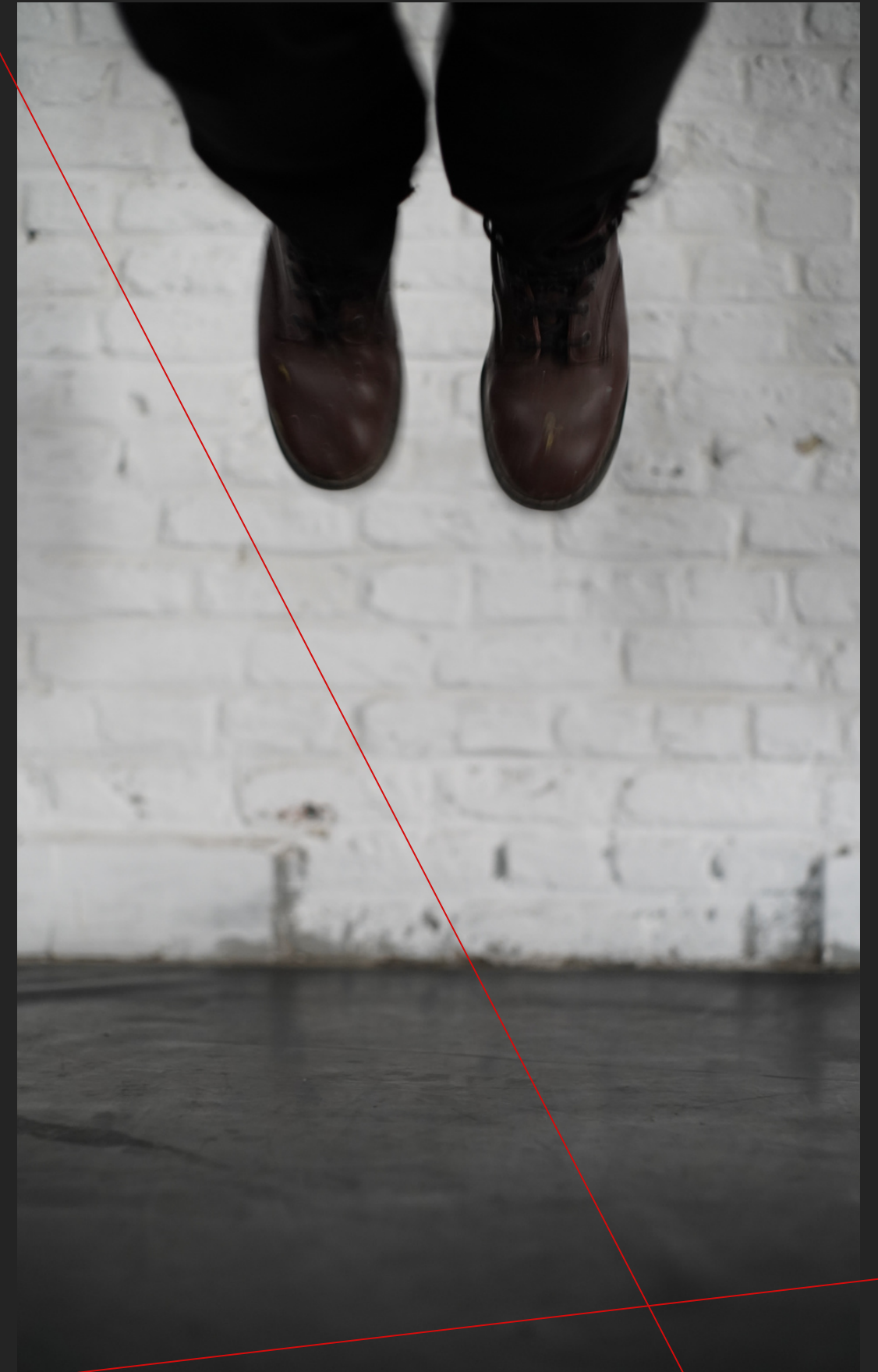
Throughout the turning of the year a 5 act structure was created which gives us a clear direction. We used this structure to define our goal with the show, as well as how to achieve it with the dramaturgy overall and in each individual act and the scenes it is comprised of.

We are currently in the process of elaborating on the physical research with the two main props of sledgehammer and chairs and their interplay with the performers while prototyping our envisioned set design and conducting technical research. Next to the physical research we are rewriting the text and playbook of the performance. In the past we worked starting from the text, yet took the conscious decision to reverse this process this time to focus on physicality to create more space for dance and circus inside the performance.

Next to developing scenes, we consciously work to develop tools that can help in our reserach on the interplay between circus, dance and theater.

By Juli/August we will have created a rough version of the show to enter into a confrontation with our audiences to perform first work in progress showings. [For a more detailed planning see 'Production']

We plan to premiere the finished piece by September 2024.



THE TEAM AND WORK METHODOLOGY

Jakob Lohmann is the main Author of the piece and functions as Director and Dramaturg next to being on stage himself.
[for more see 'About the Author']

Maria Susca is a dancer and performer based in Bologna, Italy.
Since 2012, besides teaching in various dance schools, she is involved in different performance projects such as 'Sefirot' by Antonella Boccadamo, 'Washing Out' by Compagnia Baladam B-Side and 'Far(0)' by Antonio Marotta.
She met Jakob in 2019 during an intensive trainings formation for interdisciplinary performers and creators under the direction of Carlo Massari (C&C Company). There they started working together on Being Audience|Being Performer. In this show Maria takes the role of being performer and assistant director. Furthermore she takes care of the Italian production aspects and communication with local partners in Italy.

Matthis Lorenz is a German circus artist with a background in sports acrobatics. He graduated from Codarts Circus Arts in 2022 as Acro-dancer. Him and Jakob have been working closely together for various previous projects already, such as 'Shoot a Refugee' in 2022. Recently Matthis has been project leader for a youth project in Germany, bringing together German children and Ukrainian refugees of similar age to do circus together. The final part of this project took the shape of a collective creation under the title 'Bewegungen' which he directed.
For Being Audience|Being Performer Matthis takes the role of Technician and Rehearsal Director. Additionally, he helps with plannings of logistics and takes care of Scenography.

The team is further assisted through the help our outside eyes:

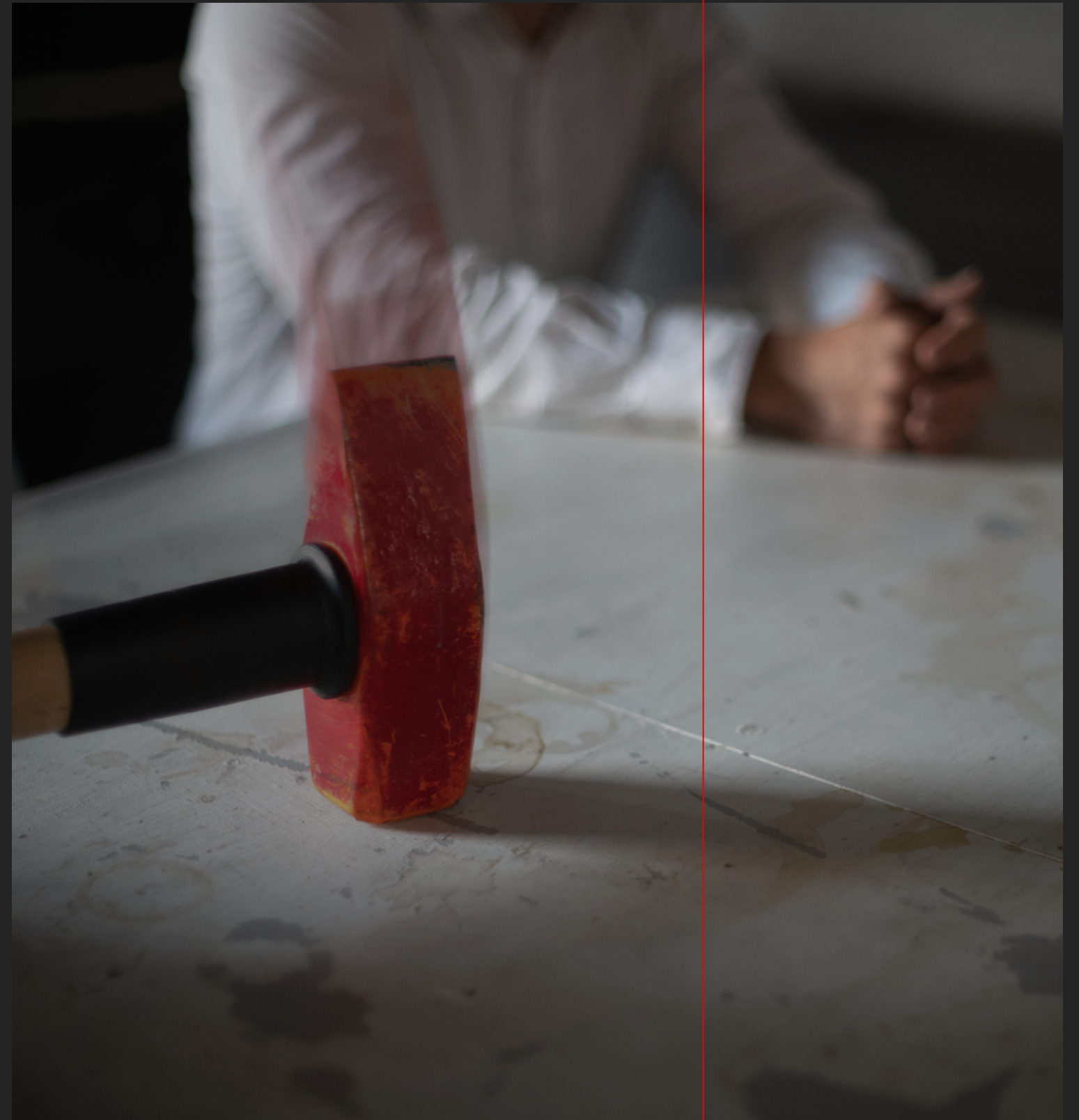
- Hanne Vandersteene, who is well versed in the interplay of Theater and Circus with her own Company Cie Grensgeval
- Carlo Massari, dramaturg and dancer who helped already during the short version of the performance and director of C&C Company

Methodology

At the base of our working together stands the following statement and mantra: We have all the tools we need, to accomplish what we have set out to create. This stands true for as long as we learn to use our tools wisely. That means: 'I can't...' does categorically not exist.

As this work is a continuation of work started in 2020, our methodology is shaped by dissecting previously created material to discover its essence and potential to, from its parts, create something new. A lot of aspects had previously been left untouched due to a lack of time, or have only come to our awareness through the various audience encounters we have had since. Other aspects were chosen to be dismissed for the on-stage material of the long version and are going to be moved to show aspects that will take place before and after the actual performance itself.

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THE TEAM AND WORK METHODOLOGY

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In the short version we felt that the dramaturgy of the work did not fully accomplish what we had set out as our goal, that it did not fully move beyond consumption and did not force the spectator to take action as part of the development of the performance. The long version wants to take care of those aspects and is going to accomplish them through a couple of methods: a) doubling the length of the show allowing for a longer journey together with the audience and enables the creation of a deeper relationship, b) placing the audience at the core of the show by looking at them as the protagonist of the show, and c) by structuring the show into 5 acts that each have a specific function inside the dramaturgy and contain a rising degree of audience – performer communication, as well as audience – audience communication. The latter is key to create space for individualism, self-expression, and self-determination.

The 5 act structure is derived and inspired by 'Into The Woods: How Stories Work and Why We Tell Them' by John Yorke and has become a significant tool in our work. In contrast to other creations we did in the past, this structure allows us to work much more focused and goal oriented inside the dramaturgy of the piece and is thus perfectly suited for our work where we try to accomplish a specific objective of wanting the audience to freely decide to become performers themselves.

- The first act focuses on establishing all the scenic and performative languages that will be used on stage. (Spoken Text, Dance, Circus, Video Projection)
- The second act sets the baseline for the relationship of audience and performer by posing the proposal of performing the role of being audience. The traditional relationship of Audience and Performer gets also visually destroyed in the form of the destruction of the table which is part of the scenography.
- During the third act the audience is made physically active and the auditorium is being turned into a disko. The architectural separation between audience and performer has vanished and freedom is given to the public to overcome social behavioral norms usually connected to the theater.
- The 4th act is a return to the theater and a reflection about the journey and experiences of the show so far. This reflection happens both physically, but is also a key text moment as it offers a most direct communication.
- The 5th and final act bridges the theater and metaphors during the piece to the outside reality and creates the necessity for people that take responsibility and turn themselves into performers. The space to do this is offered here in the metaphorical theatrical space and functions as a rehearsal space for reality.

The various acts consist of on average 3 scenes which are further associated with specific goals which reach further into practical material requirements to create the desired experience for the audience.

Regarding physicality we are researching with two main props: chairs, of which 13 will be used on stage, as well as a big sledgehammer. Next to the props we make use of our expertise in dance and acrobatics, as well as a circus mindset that heavily influences the show and the way we physically approach prop work itself. Our work in the studio is defined by specific objectives for each residency which gets broken apart in the various components it is made up of. For this we separate the body into vocality, mentality and physicality, of which each is further structured into pitch, volume and rhythm. Those classifications allow us to focus the work onto detailed elements in our research to create movement material that fulfill our targets for what each scene needs in accordance to the act and scene structure. For more information please refer to our [Playbook](#).



THE AUTHOR



Jakob Lohmann is an artist from Germany, born in 1995. He discovered circus and theater during his high school time where he joined the local youth circus and was part of his school's theater ensemble. Finishing highschool he continued to pursue his circus activities professionally at Codarts Circus Arts in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. During the 4-year degree he created various performances and started to find and develop his own artistic vision and style as a performer and creator.

Using floor acrobatics and balances, as well as theater and spoken word as his main tools, his work thematises the actor/spectator relationship within the performative space and advocates for activism. He has created various performances and performative experiments both for the stage and in the public space. Most recently his ongoing work "Shoot a Refugee", an interventionist performance creating awareness for Frontex, the European Border Police, and the human rights violations in their practice.

Since 2018 (and ongoing) Jakob is performer of the solo show 'Plock!' by Belgian company Grensgeval. This show is successfully touring internationally through Europe and Asia. Jakob has been active also off the stage working as dramaturg for the Italian Artist Cecilia Rosso for the show Frammenti, which got nominated for the Mirabilia Award in 2022 and has functioned as outside eye and advisor for various other performance projects.

In 2019 he joined the Anfibia Project, an interdisciplinary performers training project in Bologna, Italy which finished in October 2020. He trained there with accomplished teachers from various companies such as Ultima Vez, Tanztheater Wuppertal and Les Ballets C de la B.

Next to his On-Stage-Career, Jakob is working as a semi-professional photographer and video maker as well as light and sound technician + rigger and has organized or co-organised various events in and around Rotterdam such as the Poortgebouw Open Stage, Wereldsdelfshaven Festival and Enlaç[arte] - Interlacing at Podium Grounds.

In 2021 he started to pursue the creation of an interdisciplinary creation and artist hub in Rotterdam called 'The HUB'. While he remained unsuccessful so far to fully accomplish this dream, the goal still remains with the wish for creating a space dedicated to creation and experimentation through resource sharing inside the wider community. The Project was successfully running for half a year in an old warehouse in the outskirts of Rotterdam and has been a great success, up till the forced closure due to a change of leadership in the organisation making the building available.

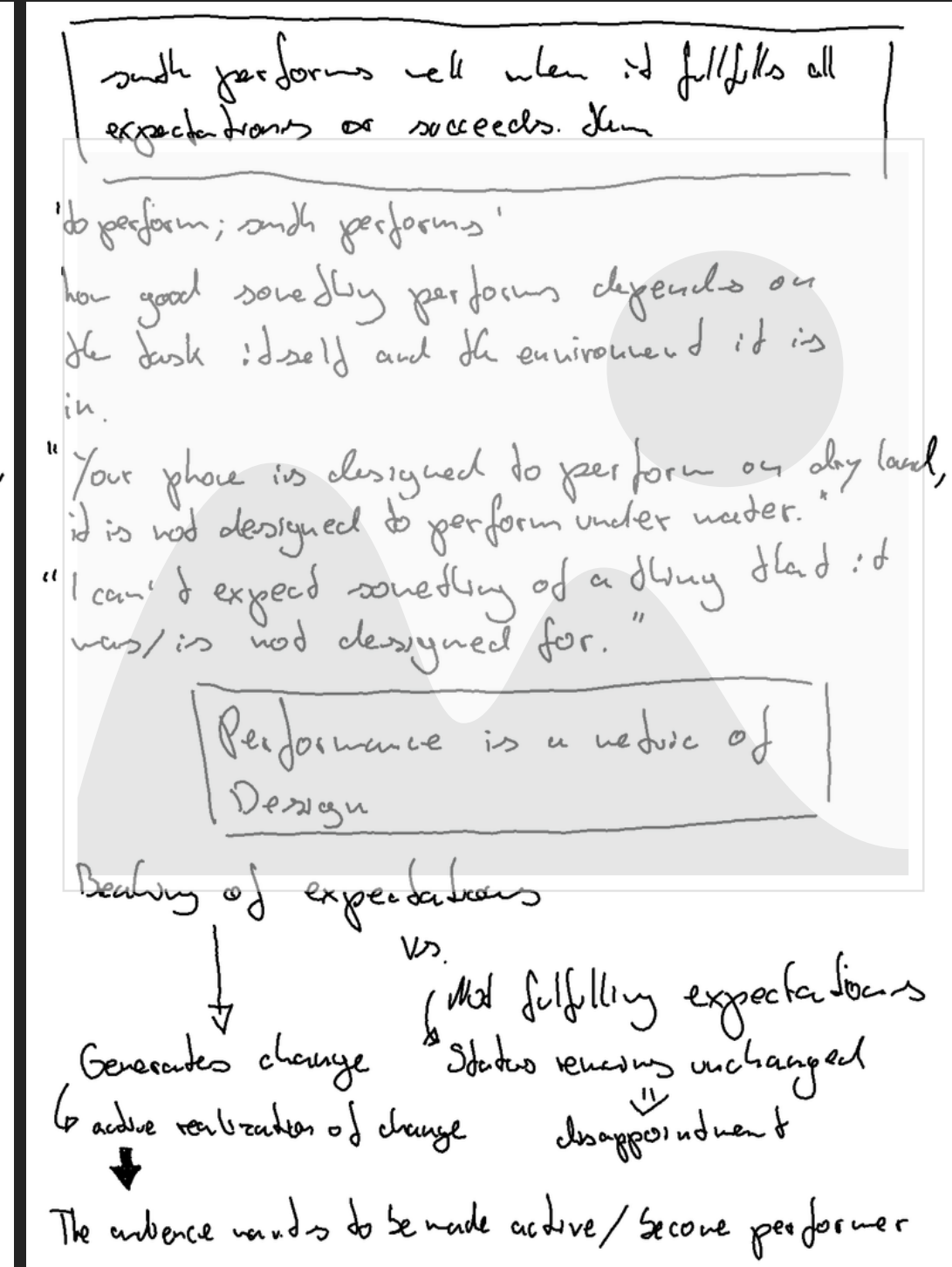
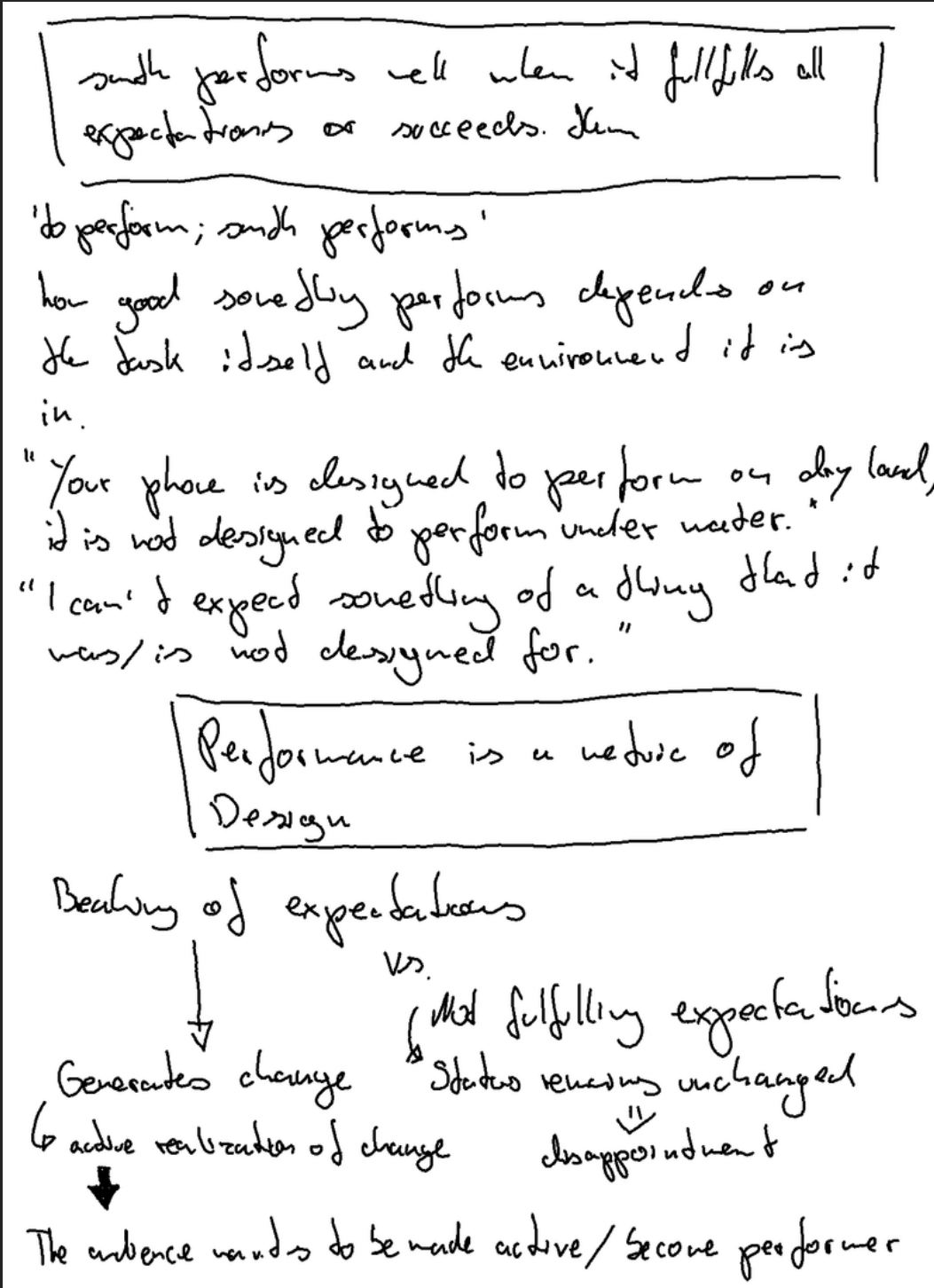
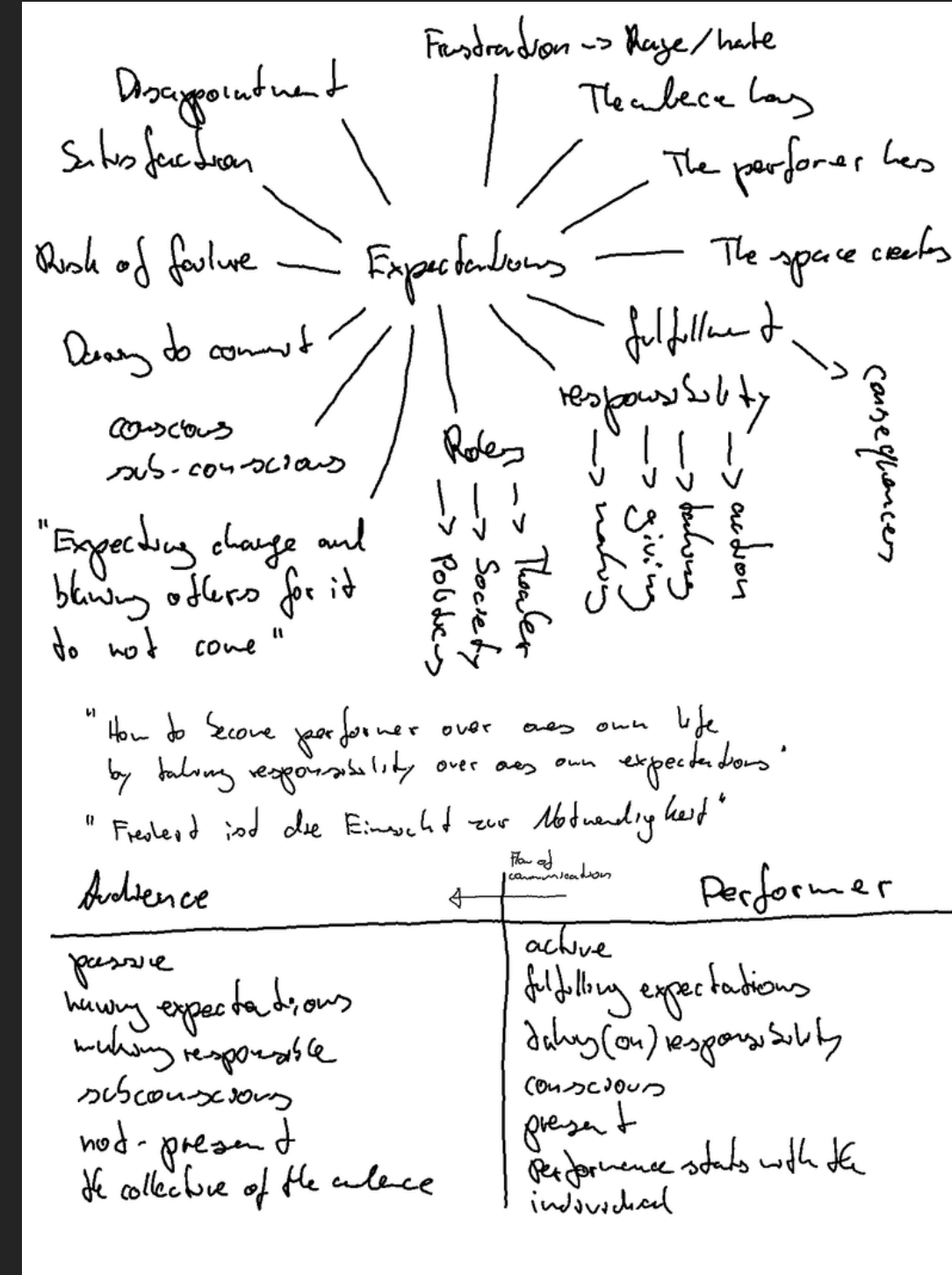
Jakob Lohmann is a recognised member of the International Dance Council CID. CID is an official partner of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

[Click to find his Performance Portfolio](#)

THOUGHTS, INSPIRATIONS AND IDEAS

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We take inspiration in the works of Augusto Boal, Jaques Ranciere's 'The Emancipated Spectator', as well as Peter Handkes 'Publikumsbeschimpfung' in our work. To us those are all sources of inspiration that move into the same realm we aim to place our work in as well. They all managed to redefine the theater in ways that made it socially relevant and elevated it from a place of entertainment and escape from the daily struggles and turned it into a place to discuss issues and find solutions instead. Works that created awareness for reality instead of constructing dreamworlds to get lost in.



PRODUCTION

2023	
January	Concept developement
February	Pre-Production
March	Solidifying the Act Structure, Defining Research points
April	Physical Research, Sketches Choreographies
May	Prototyping Props + Scenography
June	Working inside the Scenography, Creation of a first sketch of the show in its entirety
Juli	Technical training of show elements + WIP showings
August	Working of WIP feedbacks into the show
September	Work on individual Scenes + Choreographies
October	Continuation of Scene work + Audiovisual Elements
November	Technical rehearsals and repetitions + WIP showings
December	Feedback analysis

2024	
January - March	Finalizing Set + Audiovisual work + Rehearsals
April - June	Scene details + Promo
Juli - September	Scene integration + Light design + Rehearsals + Premiere
October onwards	Touring

So far we have received support through Fienile Fluo (Rete Habitat) in Italy and CirkLabo in Belgium. Both gave us the access to an equipped working space for a period of 1 week each. Further Artfactory International and the Anfibia Project, both based in Italy, support us by making it possible to use their facilities in certain moments and have both played a significant role during the creation of the short piece.

To continue our work we have applied for Circunstruction, a funded residency program in The Netherlands including a WIP showing and are continuing to search for further funding and residency possibilities.

For a higher degree of independence the team is currently living together in Bologna with access to their own small dance studio and workshop to continue developing the show outside of the usual funding and residency structures. This does certainly not replace the need for external funds and partners though, yet is an attempt of less dependence on other facilities in order to keep working and developing the project.

PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

Title: Being Audience|Being Performer
Genre: Interdisciplinary (Dance|Theatre|Circus)
Premiere: September 2024
Duration: approx. 60 Minutes
Stage Requirements: 12 x 10 Meter
Build Up: approx. 3 Hours
Breakdown: approx. 1 Hour

Touring cast:

Jakob Lohmann	Performer
Maria Susca	Performer
Matthis Lorenz	Technician

[Click to find the provisional Technical Rider](#)

[Work in Progress Trailer](#)

Credits:

Direction and Dramaturgy: Jakob Lohmann
Assistant Direction: Maria Susca
Choreographi Assistance: Francesca Pizzagalli
Outside Eyes and advisors: Hanne Vandersteene, Carlo Massari
Sound Design and composition: Rafaelos Christofi
Music: Malek Jandali, New Order, Cafè Saturne

SUPPORTED BY

Art Factory International|Anfibia Project|CirkLabo|Rete Habitat|The HUB Rotterdam|Crexida Fienile Fluo

