

Using interactivity in a new children's theatre project

Bird & Bat is a group of artists that collaborate on performances for young audiences. The group consists of choreographer Tinna Grétarsdóttir, composer Sólrún Sumarliðadóttir and set designer Guðný Hrund Sigurðardóttir. Since 2012 we have created 4 performances, all abstract dance performances with no words aimed at kindergarten children. It has always been important to us to include some interaction or playtime so that the children can have time to explore on their own and interact with the performers. We have also tried to include workshops/arts and crafts before shows or a led session in creative dance after the show.

For the past two years we have been on a quest to find ways of increased inclusion of the audience and to allow for more direct contact and communication. To have possibilities for the audience to have direct effect on the sound, the lights and the movement of the performers so that they will in some ways be creating the show as they are experiencing it. This has led to their next project, SPOR, that will premiere on March 31st.

Spor will be an interactive installation with video, music and two performers where interaction and participation is integrated throughout the whole experience. The theme for the project is energy in nature and the energy within ourselves. We want the audience to experience how they can, and do affect their surroundings, themselves being forces of nature, and how energy, that we give, but maybe more often take, is present all around us. During shows the performers will guide the audience through the room, helping them to find ways to produce energy and to solve situations that occur on the way.

During the process of making SPOR, the company will work with children from Greenland, Faroe Islands and Iceland. They will host workshops with children in 1st and 2nd grade of elementary school around the theme of energy. We will gather material and ideas on how the children experience energy, nature and their own body. We are also interested how to encourage discussions without leading too much and we look forward to get inspired by the way they move and explore.

SPOR will head off to Greenland in the fall and there we will repeat the workshop session with local children and thus keep developing the performance. The children will therefore have a real input in how the performers shape their roles and affect how the installation is set up each time.

SPOR will premiere in the Nordic House in Reykjavík in their Black Box room. The audience will be gathered in a set space with each group consisting of about 30 audience members (children aged 5-8). The children will be given a little bag with tools to help them on their way and together they enter the installation. The performance space will be divided into chapters, and in each chapter the performers will deepen the experience with a live performance on the elements present in each of the different spaces. During show time, the performers will help the audience to discover how they can influence their environment and enhance the experience. Their characters will portray a mix of amoebas, elements of nature and animals. The children will have to move the set around or climb over to find their way on and use their props to add lights and colour to the surroundings. They will also have to assist the performers in creating energy, i.e. dancing as a tornado, to open up ways out of the space. The environment will be reactive to the participants, with sound and lights coming from different directions and moving as the children move around.

Bird & Bat, Iceland