



COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL CROSSROADS FESTIVAL

Czech troupe Krepsko (with Linnea Happonen, above) brings *Fragile* to Belgium.

COMPILED BY NICOLE ESTVANIK TAYLOR

Antwerp, Belgium

INTERNATIONAL CROSSROADS FESTIVAL: After a successful first year, this visual-theatre celebration is enjoying an expanded (from 4 to 7 days) second act in 2012. Among the highlights are Spanish dancer Marta Carrasco, who performs *No Sé Si (I Don't Know If...)* with an unlikely "twin sister," the fleshy and outstandingly hirsute Alberto Velasco. There is something of the grotesque as well in *Head On*, performed solo by Brazilian-born Maria Clara Villa Lobos while wearing a crude, doughy smiley-face as a mask. Blending her background

in classical ballet, modern dance and yoga with her interest in American visual artist Paul McCarthy, she is transformed into a sort of hapless child's drawing come to life.

Villa Lobos isn't the only group on the program to use other artists' work as a jumping-off point. The Czech theatre group Krepsko riffed on Tennessee Williams's *Glass Menagerie* to create *Fragile*, a nonverbal meditation on solitude. Greek company Pleafsis credits Borges as inspiration for the highly choreographed gestures and carefully selected objects of *The Blue Line*, an allegory on the search for life's meaning. And Italy's Zaches Teatro took its visual cues for *Mal Bianco* from Japanese artist Hokusai, who published a book of 4,000 nature-inspired and fantastical sketches in 1814.

On Thursday, March 22, a special program-within-the-program will focus on mime and visual theatre artists from Belgium and the Netherlands. The organizers of this showcase, Sylvie Huysman and Esther Severi (the latter will take over from founder Marc Crouwels next year as artistic director of Crossroads), emphasize that their selections prioritize experiment over tradition and represent the ways in which Dutch and Belgian artists are advancing these genres. **(March 19–25; (32) 3-235-2330; <http://crossroadsfestival.eu>)**

Athens, Greece

AMID THE CLOUDS: Written in 2004 by Iranian writer/director/filmmaker Amir Reza Koohestani during a residency at London's Royal Court Theatre, this play—performed by Mehr Theatre Group—premiered at the Kunstenfestivaldesarts

FROM ARTISTS TO ARCHIVES: A GROTOWSKI UPDATE

After 20 years in its headquarters in the historic center of Wrocław, Poland, the Grotowski Institute—devoted to continuing the practical and theoretical work of the late theatrical innovator Jerzy Grotowski—has expanded into a larger facility a few miles away on the banks of the Odra River, where rehearsals and performances alternate with workshops and programming for scholars.

The new location, Studio Na Grobli—once the headquarters of an elite boat-rowing association—was the scene of the October premiere of Odin Teatret's *The Chronic Life*, but most activities in the space reflect its designation as a "studio," with three rehearsal spaces, offices and artist housing overlooking a tree-filled yard sloping down to the river. The Institute's resident ensembles include Teatr ZAR, whose "Zarchive" is now housed in Na Grobli.

ZAR toured Europe last fall as part of the Polish E.U. presidency's cultural programs, performing *Anhelli: The Calling*, the third part of the *Gospels of Childhood* trilogy, in the ruins of the San Augustin Church in Belchite (bombed in the Spanish Civil War).

ZAR is currently developing *Project Armine*, drawing on traditional Armenian music and addressing the Armenian genocide. The company is preparing to perform *Gospels* in its entirety, lasting 190 minutes with two intermissions, at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art March 29–April 1. ZAR will also hold a workshop, "The Flesh of Sound," open to the public with registration.

The institute is also developing other new programming for scholars, centered around its historic archive in the Rynek. In September 2011, the Open University of Research (OUR) held its first two-week program of Summer Seminars focusing on performance. The lectures (in English) were attended by Ph.D. students, actors, directors, and cultural anthropologists from Spain, England, Hungary, Poland, Australia and South Africa. The next seminar series is scheduled for Sept. 17–28.

Numerous translations and publications are also in the works, including the burgeoning Grotowski.net, which curates archival and contemporary media and articles. The English-language version of the website will

launch on March 27, World Theatre Day. A conference on Meyerhold is planned for spring 2013.

All of the institute's programming aims to develop resources for the artist/scholar, and to bring its famous archive to life. Teatr ZAR's promotional materials quote the Polish director Juliusz Osterwa: "God created theatre for those for whom church does not suffice." Perhaps the Grotowski Institute was created for those for whom theatre wasn't enough, either. For more info: www.grotowski-institute.art.pl. —Dara Weinberg



COURTESY OF THE GROTOWSKI INSTITUTE

Haitian artists who knew Grotowski have created a mural for the Institute's new building.

in Belgium in 2005, played in Tehran later that year and toured Europe extensively until 2008; this month it will be revived for a brief run at Greece's Onassis Cultural Center. The play depicts the growing bond between two Iranian refugees smuggling themselves through the Balkans—one of whom, a preg-

nant woman, is determined to have her child in England. European reviewers praised the disjointed, poetic telling of a story that draws as much from dreams and myths as it does from documentary journalism; echoes of a past tragedy, in which asylum-seekers perished in a water crossing, recur as the actors immerse themselves in cubic tanks of water. Two other plays by Koohestani's company, which currently operates out of Paris, are on its schedule for 2012: a new adaptation of Chekhov's *Ivanov*, which premiered last year in Tehran, will tour Europe; and *Where Were You on January 8th?*, seen in Europe in 2009, is tentatively planned for a run in Tunisia. **(March 15–18; (33) 6-22-37-36-81; www.mehrtheatregroup.com)**

Évry, France

FESTIVAL LES VAGAMONDES: Théâtre de l'Agora hosts this encounter between Western nations and the South Mediterranean. The third edition features four performances. *Les Borgnes* (*The Blind*) is the theatrical headliner: Written by Mustapha Benfodil and directed by Kheireddine Lardjam, it reflects on Algerian independence through the allegory of a

man with an odd disorder—depending whether he uses his right eye or his left, he has an entirely different view of the world. (Benfodil, a visual artist as well as a writer, last year told Artinfo.com, "I'm a victim of censorship in Algeria, but it is an indirect form of censorship. My play *Les Borgnes* and others of my works can't be performed in theatres. I read my texts in public places, sometimes on my own, sometimes with the help of actors.") Audiences who attend *Je danse et je vous en donne à bouffer* (*I Dance and I Feed You*) will be treated to couscous prepared by Tunisian dancer Radhouane El Meddeb during a performance inspired by the unceasing kitchen activities of his female relatives. Another dance piece, *Nya*, choreographed by Abou Lagraa and titled after the Arabic phrase "to trust life," explores French-Algerian connections through two musical pieces, Ravel's *Bolero* and the songs of Houria Aïchi. And *Manoukian, mes rêves d'orient* pairs French jazz musician André Manoukian with artists from Afghanistan, Albania, Iran and elsewhere as he seeks to rediscover his own family's Armenian roots. **(March 17–24; (33) 1-60-91-65-65; www.theatreagora.com)** 



ABAS KOSARI

Hassan Madjouni in the Iranian play *Amid the Clouds*, touring to Greece this month.

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