

Stichting Show Machine presents

The Great Warmachine

Joachim Robbrecht



The Great Warmachine is a performance by author-director Joachim Robbrecht and performed by Tashi Iwaoka, Louis van der Waal and Aitana Cordero. Three performers are giving an absurd one-hour crash course envisioning the future of warfare, while engaging the audience physically and slowly turning the theatre into a theatre of war. *The Great Warmachine* is challenging the ways we conceive of war and violence in relation to technology and economy.

The Great Warmachine has toured extensively in The Netherlands and Belgium since it premiered on March 4, 2015 in Theater Frascati, Amsterdam. The performance has been received positively by critics and online media (one of the ten best performances of last season, best text of last season) and has been selected by the jury of the Theaterfestival (Belgium). The Theaterfestival forms the kick-off of the new season and presents the best performances of the previous one.





ABOUT THE GREAT WARMACHINE

AITANA I mean the next few wars – and really probably we are right in the middle of one – ...

LOUIS ...yea...

AITANA ...the next wars are really not going to be fought with armies and soldiers.

TASHI Oh no.

AITANA I mean, that is really a nostalgic idea... the concept that we have nowadays of the soldier.

LOUIS Oh that's quite hopeless.

AITANA What we need now is an expanded notion of what a combatant can be... like, already if you look at urban warfare today... I mean, civilians become combatants and combatants can become civilians in no time. Identity can be changed as quickly as gender can be feigned, to the extent that it doesn't make much sense to hold on to these kinds of distinctions between soldier and civilian. It's like asking: What kind of colour does a chameleon have? Which doesn't make much sense, right?

TASHI Wow, that's really well formulated. That's really some insightful poetry going on right here...

AITANA Well, I really love poetry.

(Fragment from scene 1: "Out of the box")

The theatre of *The Great Warmachine* seems to function as futuristic think tank; a playful, fashionable, sportive, relaxing and nourishing environment, created to optimize the thinking that needs to be done. The audience is invited to sit down on beanbags on stage or in the audience seats, where they can watch the stream of video's on the five screens and share a 'green' coke, whilst listening to the three friendly smiling, yet ambiguous figures that engage each other and their listeners in a future vision of war. Surfing on the current international discourse on technology, economy, society and culture, the performers bombard their audience on a trustworthy (conference-talk inspired) tone with (ethically) debatable beliefs that they easily exchange for improved ideas; a theatre of progress rhetoric, completely saturated with war-motives. Both attractive and repulsive.

As the performance continues, the temperature raises, the ideas start to spin and the audience gets more physically involved, petted, caressed, pulled across the stage. Steadily, the performers colonize the space and the minds of the spectators. The music is directed and mixed live from one of the beanbags on a tablet. Inviting and familiar in the beginning and tripping trance-like techno towards the end, it offers a constantly compelling, now and then shifting rhythm and sound, that sometimes aggressively disrupts the talking. The lighting enhances this cool and sensational atmosphere, sometimes shutting down, or becoming just too bright. The theatre; its words, sounds, lightning, set, physicality, becomes a discomfoting theatre of war that the audience is inescapably drawn into. In this way, *The Great Warmachine* demonstrates our reality as a vivid battleground.

The Great Warmachine can be integrally watched on Vimeo, following this link:

<https://vimeo.com/125351334>





PRESS AND JURY REACTIONS

Vincent Kouters, de Volkskrant, 6. March 2015

“After a little while, the performers stand up from their chairs and intermingle with the audience. Jacks and bags are being relocated, iPhones taken away, people are being touched or pulled across the stage on their beanbags. (...)

Then, something strange happens. The temperature raises in the brightly lit hall. The music increases its intensity. Electronic soundscapes transform into hard electro-beats. And while Cordero and Iwaoka fight a brutal choreography, you hope that one of the performers touches you, takes you and pulls you across the stage. Robbrecht's ritualistic performance produces a rare contagious effect (...) It is about whether you have let it struck you. Are you outside the theatre, and has your mood been updated? That's what counts. I felt alive and kicking.”

Theaterkrant.nl, Joke Beeckmans, 5. March 2015

“Also, Robbrecht's texts are comical, smart and fast. They seduce the listener sometimes uncannily deep into its rhetorics of war.

Fransien van der Putt, Cultuurpers, 12. March 2015

*[In a comparison between Phillippe Quesne's *Swamp Club* and *The Great Warmachine*] “Both performances make you aware of the mechanisms, rather than pinpointing the enemy. Either voluntarily resigning or being locked out, the neoliberal order does not seem to offer much more of a choice. There's no point in resisting.*

*(...) The title of the performance forebodes a lot of action, but besides a triumphing tone of voice, *The Great Warmachine* has very little in common with what one expects from a fighting machine or a drama of war. The Great war appears to be a rhetorically exhausting battle. The performance could rather be considered an installation, a very big film-still, that talks excitingly. [Like in Quesne's performance] Also here, psychologically motivated acting or meaningful action is lacking. An endless stream of neoliberal, futuristic 'bullshit' is being connected by the three performers in a magnificent way.*

(..) In very different ways, the performers in both plays are beyond disappointment. The funny and virtuously compiled propaganda of Robbrecht and the silenced suffering of Quesne lack heroic roles or actions. The performers are only side-characters, wandering in their own pulp.”

Robbert van Heuven, Trouw, 6. March 2015

“In an attractive intuitive way, the performance combines a few important themes about today. A time in which technology seems to be able to solve our problems. In which reality and fiction seem to resemble each other increasingly.”

Jury report Theaterfestival

“Rarely speaks a performance this fresh and tongue-in-cheek about the worst and most serious topics in the world news. Precisely its incomprehensible drive is most disappointing, yet at the same time, you are getting more and more physically involved. Finished with all the clever considerations about violence! The audience should take up its arms, right in its own theatre of war.

*(...) *The Great Warmachine* is an uncomfortably interesting and contagiously performed show, that challenges every member of the audience to relate in a different way to the (world) wars.”*



ARTISTIC TEAM



Joachim Robbrecht (author and director) is a Rotterdam based Belgian author – director who has created a series of performances that were produced by Theater Frascati (Amsterdam), Productiehuis Rotterdam, and Toneelgroep Amsterdam, since he graduated in 2006. *The Great Warmachine* is the first performance by his own foundation *Show Machine*. In Joachim's performances the sensuality of the body and the wit in language are brought together in surprising compositions. The themes are prompted by questions that concern our national or European identity. In *The Great Warmachine* Joachim challenges the idea that Europe is a continent of peace.

In the past years, Joachim 's performances have not only been staged in the Netherlands, but he also performed in Vienna (Brut Wien), Istanbul (Garaj Istanbul) and Brussels (Kunstenfestivaldesarts) with Andcompany&co, with whom he collaborated as a co-author and performer in *Der kommende Aufstand* and *Black Bismarck*. Joachim also collaborated with the Dutch collectives De Warme Winkel (as author and director) and Dood Paard (as performer and author), amongst others.



Aitana Cordero (performer) is trained as a dancer, choreographer and performance maker, based in Madrid and Amsterdam. She finished her Master in Choreography and New Media at Dance Unlimited in 2008. In the same year, she was awarded a DANCEWEB Scholarship to take part in the ImpulsTanz Festival in Vienna, where she presented her work accordingly. Aitana's work is characterized by a strong focus on the body, where she deals with themes like intimacy, power and sexuality. Also, destruction, martial arts, and alternative ways of waging war are topics she addresses. She makes live work as well as installations and video dance projects that have been shown around the world. In addition, Aitana frequently works as a teacher and mentor for young artists in both The Netherlands and other countries.



Tashi Iwaoka (performer) is an unconventional performer and maker. Tashi's background and education is extensive. He is a lover and fervent practitioner of martial arts (Budo), practised Butoh, studied performance and live art in Nottingham (NTU), dance and choreography (SNDO) and performance research (Dasarts) in Amsterdam. A heightened sensibility and receptivity of the body is key to his work, that he presents in different countries in Europe and Japan. Iwaoka is a founding member of Ehkä-production, an international collective of independent performance and dance makers, based in Turku, Finland.



Louis van der Waal (performer) is an actor with an excellent physical quality, who speaks his texts with a lot of wit. He does not so much draw on psychology, but rather focuses on concrete actions on stage. Louis has worked extensively in both Belgium as well as in The Netherlands, with (a.o.) Noord Nederlands Toneel, Theater Antigone, Toneelschuur producties, Veenfabriek, Theater Zuidpool, het Paleis. He has frequently collaborated with Joachim.

Stefan Martin Schneider (sound design): builds his colourful compositions out of divergent contemporary musical sources and in frequent interaction with the performers. His music often functions as a fundamental and steering building stone in the performance. Stefan collaborated with several internationally operating performance and dance makers, like Florentina Holzinger, Fernando Belfiore, Noha Ramadan, Lea Martini, Sarah Moeremans and Rodrigo Sobarzo. He works as a vegan cook and is also busy with the political satire gameshow performance *Who Wants To Be An Anarchist?*, his musical comedy solo project S.M. Snider and the multimedia post-electropunk band Knötaröt.

Jan Brokof (set design): is a German visual artist and set designer. His style can be called 'punk' and his ability to produce impressive objects out of very 'poor' materials have been very inspirational. Jan exhibits his artwork (wood, plastic and collage) in Europe and Brazil and has received the Otto Dix Preis for his work. As a set designer he has been collaborating with Andompany&co and the Leipzig Theater collective Friendly Fire.





FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are interested in booking *The Great Warmachine*, financial and technical details can be provided by Joachim Robbrecht:

Stichting Show Machine

joachimrobbrecht@gmail.com

0031625411396

Malvastraat 7c

3051NH Rotterdam

The Netherlands

or visit his website: <http://www.joachimrobbrecht.com/EN/the-great-warmachine>

The Great Warmachine has been produced by Stichting Show Machine and made possible with the support of Gemeente Rotterdam, Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst, Fonds 21, Stichting Ammodo, Fonds Podiumkunsten, Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the Van Lange fonds.

