

Contemporary Theater Says 'Da' to NET

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"The Land" directed by Belgian Gabriela Carrizo has almost no plot, but viscerally conveys the searing power of human fear.

NET, which stands for New European Theatre, has launched its 17th season in Moscow. This time the long-standing festival changed its concept and brought only European directors whose performances have never been shown in Russia before. And this year some Russian directors are taking part in the program as well. After all, Russia is part of Europe.

NET is known for its experimental performances. "The Land," a joint effort by Belgian director Gabriela Carrizo and a company from Munich, has so few words that they all fit on one page of paper distributed before the performance. It has also no plot that can be coherently described. "The Land" focuses on the human condition of fear and its various incarnations. There is fear of domestic abuse, fear of rape, fear of murder and, as a result, fear of bereavement. All of these fears get entangled and personified through very physical, visceral performances by the German actors.

Another performance, this time from Croatia, deals with more classical material — Hamlet.

But this version of Hamlet, directed by Oliver Frlić from the Zagreb Youth Theater, centers around a dinner party at a long table laid with food. All the actors sit at the table, eating and smoking cigarettes, occasionally rising to perform their bits. At several points actors switch characters, which lends an otherworldly feeling to the play.

"Hamlet" is not the only Shakespearian tale this season. Spanish director David Espinosa presents his adaptation of "Much Ado About Nothing." David Espinosa's performance in reality has little to do with the original play. It is basically all of Shakespeare's plays merged into one. And it takes less than one hour since they are all played simultaneously by Espinosa himself, using video projections and shadow theater, among other techniques. Espinosa's inspiration was a book from a souvenir shop at the Globe theater in London entitled something like "All of Shakespeare in One Sitting."

Experimental theatre also means new venues, like the performance "Interiorization III" by Vera Martynov and Aleksei Kokhanov at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art. In this case, "interiorization" applies to the Garage museum itself — it's a study of the museum's history, architecture and environment through vocal and music compositions.

Another unlikely venue, Artplay, is hosting "Manger" by French choreographer Boris Charmatz and his Musée de la Danse. This contemporary dance performance will explore the juxtaposition between dancing and food consumption, hence the name: manger means "to eat" in French.

Another performance of note is the joint Swiss–Russian production "Splendor of Colors." It's a multimedia music project by the Contemporary Music Center and three well-known Swiss composers: Oscar Bianchi, Nadir Vassena, and Mathias Steinauer. In this project the music, voice, the stage itself become "characters" of sorts and the process of their interaction becomes the plot.

For more information and schedule, see netfest.ru.

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