

PRESS PACK

MYLLYTEATTERI

SAARI – THE ISLAND



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MYLLYTEATTERI PRESENTATION

Myllyteatteri (Mill Theatre)

Myllyteatteri is a professional artistic theatre from Finland, founded in 2003. Myllyteatteri is lead by writer-director Miira Sippola. The core of the theatre is 4 actors and 3 designers. During the first seven years of its' existents Myllyteatteri has produced nine contemporary theatre plays, eight workshops in physical acting, and the theatre festival TeatteriTelttä where it held a Tragedy competition in 2008.

Idea and artistic philosophy

Myllyteatteri develops stage language, which is based on broadening the physical possibilities of an actor and the stage aesthetics. We do contemporary theatre, which arises, from the bottom of the awareness of the ancient theatre traditions. Myllyteatteri keeps itself open to science and other art disciplines, and often brings scientific and other program around its performances, to show the performances in different lights.

Physical practice

Myllyteatteri rehearses physical acting by learning *Suzuki Acting Method* and *Viewpoints* methods, and creating self developed training. There is the actively rehearsing collective "Mylly collective" which has 4-15 members and rehearses throughout the year to develop their skills and stage language. Members of the theatre can lead workshops in stage work.

TeatteriTelttä/ TheaterTent

TeatteriTelttä is a theatre festival founded by Myllyteatteri. It takes place at The Central Railway Station Square in the center of Helsinki, and provides a new meeting point for both audience and performing art groups. It manifests, that theatre and arts with their traditions and substance deals with issues of the whole society. In the first TeatteriTelttä, which was held in May 2008, the program was 9-days long Tragedy Competition. The next Tragedy Competition is planned to take place in May 2012.

International activity

We see the theatre society and theatre art as fundamentally universal and international. International cooperation clearly marks the present activity of Myllyteatteri. Our latest production Saari – The Island was performed in The Edinburgh Fringe Festival on the Zoo Venues in August 23-28, 2010.

Discussion and dialog

Discussion with the audience and within the theatre scene is very important for Myllyteatteri. Myllyteatteri's plays are taken out from theatre stages to new exciting locations, and the plays are extended with different kinds of program and happenings. Writer-director Miira Sippola writes continuously a blog about theatre, arts and the world: www.myllyteatteri.wordpress.com. Our website is www.myllyteatteri.fi and www.teatteritelta.org

SAARI – THE ISLAND PRESS RELEASE

MYLLYTEATTERI PRESENTS: SAARI – THE ISLAND

On *Saari (The Island)* two strangers, played by a Japanese and a Finnish actor, retreat to a remote and bare island by the ocean. With difficult past, they face the ocean, each other and ultimately one's self, making a brave journey to the innermost solitude of the human mind. Presented by an emerging theatre group Myllyteatteri, whose "*diverse group gathered from different parts of the world brings forward a very unique atmosphere, local yet universal, archaic yet contemporary*", *Saari* is an ascetic and intensive theatre performance which touches the themes of solitude and death. Artistically it especially celebrates the art of the actor.

"Asceticism gives the actors and Johanna Juhola's passionate music a lot of space. In the music there is almost something very heavy which doesn't calm one down to a meditative atmosphere but rather awakens up.

Johanna Storm's sound design is suggestive; there is enough room for one's own thinking and interpretation. Jani-Matti Salo's lightning design emphasizes the focused, concentrated atmosphere. Strong cuts are avoided; the changes in the light situations happen softly, as with natural light.

The characters of the Japanese actress Yuko Takeda and the Finnish dancer Kaisa Niemi are getting close to each other during the course of the performance. At first borderlines are drawn and rules are made, but little by little they, the two strangers, notice to know the same, sorrowful story."

- The quotations from the critic on *skenet.fi* by Maria Säkö.

In the fully composed performance the spoken languages are Finnish, English and Japanese. Running time:

1 hour 20 minutes

The international production team:

Actors on stage: *Kaisa Niemi* and *Yuko Takeda*

Composer: *Johanna Juhola*

Sound: *Johanna Storm*

Light and visual planning: *Jani-Matti Salo*

Director and script: *Miira Sippola*

Costumes and scenography: *Paula Koivunen*

Producer: *Katri Muhonen*

Performances at 2010 Edinburg Festival Fringe

Place: The Zoo

Date and time: 23rd-28th Aug 2010

For more information:

<http://www.myllyteatteri.fi/>

MYLLYTEATTERI is a professional artistic theatre based in Helsinki, Finland, founded in 2003. Myllyteatteri is lead by writer-director Miira Sippola. Myllyteatteri develops stage language, which is based on broadening the physical possibilities of an actor and the stage aesthetics. Myllyteatteri's performs contemporary theatre, which arises from the bottom of the awareness of the ancient theatre traditions. We train regularly. We keep ourselves open to other art disciplines and often bring scientific and other program around our performances, to show the performances in different lights.

REVIEWS

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010:

***Skinny.co.uk* 30.08.2010**

"The company succeeds in its aim of communicating something that is forgotten and common to everything living on earth" Lorna Fox

Scotsman.co.uk 28.08.2010

"... the most enigmatic production on this year's Fringe..."

"Saari has a surprising amount to say about solitude, companionship and what it means to be human." Roger Cox

Premier in Finland 2009:

A review on [skenet.fi](http://www.skenet.fi) by a theatre critic Maria Säkö, 3.12.2009

Originally in Finnish <http://www.skenet.fi/index.html?menuid=381&aid=2579>

English Translation:

Myllyteatteri has brought a meditative and focused work, "Saari – The Island – a play about the mind" to the unique stage of glass-walled Espa. The creation of the artist-group collected from different parts of the globe helps one to step aside from a hectic life.

The director of the performance Miira Sippola and the diverse group gathered from different parts of the world bring forward a very unique atmosphere, local yet universal, archaic yet contemporary – in the middle of Christmas stress in the city of Helsinki.

Often the word "undefined" in a performance means non-clarity, but with Saari it is not so. In this performance there is not a clear core, dispatch or even a message: the best is to let time and the peace to have the effect. However, there is a story and the surprise at the end in the performance, but it is better not to expose it beforehand.

With Myllyteatteri's performances one can expect not only deeply philosophical performances with the deep understanding of the traditions but also performances which are interestingly in relationship with the space and the world in terms of locating and taking a stand towards them. Saari would not be a disappointment for even a demanding audience: the more one knows the background thinking of the performance, the richer Saari becomes. However, one can also look at it from one's own corner, maybe with the guidance given in the program.

Along with the performances the theatre has arranged a few lectures on mysticism and geology. On the Independence Day the audience can also join a Japanese tea ceremony before the performance.

In the program it says that one of the most important inspirations for the performance is an island in the frontier of the Atlantic Ocean, and also the teachings of Teresa of Avila, a mystic who lived in the 16th century. Teresa of Avila taught that in the human soul there are seven circles of rooms. In the innermost room lives the God and one can reach that through meditation and prayer.

The stage of Espa, which is surrounded from all the sides with glassy walls, is like an island in the middle of the city. The sea is seen nearby but we are not on the very shore. The city is organically present all the time, cars are passing by, people are hurrying their ways. But, at the same time the relationship to the city somehow gets weaker.

I see everything through the glass, the city is like a stage set, the rolling sea, and Saari-performance is like the island in the middle of the sea of the city. Saari – an island – carries strong images. Is a human being an island? Can or is one able to be an island? Will sorrow make a human being an island?

In the small and ascetic space, the actor Yuko Takeda and the dancer Kaisa Niemi meet on this island. The atmosphere of the island is created by a glass well filled with water, on the bottom of which there is one stone. In addition to this there is a small row of stones on the stage as well as the women have some camping equipments.

Asceticism gives the actors and Johanna Juhola's passionate music a lot of space. In the music there is almost something very heavy, which doesn't calm one down to a meditative atmosphere but rather awakens up.

Johanna Storm's sound design is suggestive; there is enough room for one's own thinking and interpretation. Jani-Matti Salo's lightning design emphasizes the focused, concentrated atmosphere. Strong cuts are avoided; the changes in the light situations happen softly, as with natural light.

Takeda and Niemi are getting close to each other during the course of the performance. At first borderlines are drawn and rules are made, but little by little they, the two strangers, notice to know the same, sorrowful story. The languages spoken in the performance are Finnish and English, Takeda also speaks a little bit of Japanese.

The actors have very different kinds of personalities: In Takeda there is undeniable strength and certainty, and she brings emotions forward with brightness. Takeda, rather small in size, varies her shape with agility, and she has admirably deep and strong ability to use her voice. The program says that she has been studying Suzuki-Method as well as the director Sippola. I don't know the method but I would believe that this sharp and clear, 'cutting-all-the-unnecessary' -style has to something to do with it.

Kaisa Niemi brings to the stage a more nervous, more uncertain person, who all the time needs to assure her strength, tells Takeda's character what to do and assures herself that 'she is beautiful'.

Takeda is in her clear performance – as according to Teresa of Avila's teaching - deeper in her mind than Niemi is. If the encountering of the two women is been thought in terms of what Avila teaches, Niemi doesn't know herself yet so well, and she is stuck in the first rooms of her soul curled into herself, as insecure. Takeda teaches her in her own way to get deeper, and to let the earthly desires go.

The performance doesn't go forward with too much holiness or devotion, but the both characters are also shown in a humoristic light. In Kaisa Niemi there is even more ability

for comedy. The both characters have come to the island clearly to search for something: to forget and also to find. They come to encounter the sorrow of an old Irish story told on the island. Sippola's poetical repetition of the text brings its own kind of piece: feeling of circulation and feeling of waves splashing against the shore.

Saari asks big questions about death, fear of death, and about overcoming that fear. It asks what individuality is, what loneliness is, and what a community is in the middle of a city. One can always get back to these thoughts by reading the very rewarding program of the performance.

SAARI WORKING GROUP

DIRECTOR AND SCRIPT

MIIRA SIPPOLA is a theatre director and writer and leader of Myllyteatteri. She has graduated from the Helsinki University with the MTh from theology, She has studied theatre in Theatre Academy and abroad with SITI Company and in Japan, in the Program for the Suzuki Acting Method. Miira is inspired by the physicality on the stage and the archaic powers in the human being — and islands.

ACTORS IN SAARI:

KAISA NIEMI holds a MA from Theatre Academy's dance programme (2003), and works as a freelancer dancer.

YUKO TAKEDA holds an MFA in Acting from Univ. of Arkansas, USA. She attended SITI Summer Theater Workshop (2006) in New York and Suzuki Method of Actor Training Program in Toga (2008).

SOUND

JOHANNA STORM holds an MA in sound design from Theatre Academy (2005) and has worked within performance- and visual arts with artists such as Joonas Halonen, Jenni Kivelä, Eeva Muilu and Terike Haapoja. For the moment Johanna is being inspired by open spaces, big winds and distances.

LIGHT

JANI-MATTI SALO graduated from TAMK University of Applied Sciences, School of Art and Media as a light designer. At present Jani-Matti is a MA-student at Theatre Academy of Finland, The Department of Lighting and Sound Design. For the moment Jani-Matti is being inspired by people in (urban) spaces.

COMPOSER

JOHANNA JUHOLA is a musician who graduated from Sibelius Academy's folk music programme (2008). Tango Nuevo and other forms of passionate music are especially close to Johannas heart.

COSTUMES AND SCENOGRAPHY

PAULA KOIVUNEN is a production designer and actor who have graduated from University of Art and Design Helsinki (2006).

LINKS

Myllyteatteri website: <http://www.myllyteatteri.fi/>

Saari – The Island, see clip on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvmtbQKaFkY>

Download press photos: <http://www.helisorjonen.fi/saari/>

For more details of Edinburgh festival Frindge:

<http://www.edfringe.com/>

<http://www.zoofestival.co.uk/>