

WASCO!

hetpaleis & Voetvolk/ Lisbeth Gruwez & Maarten Van Cauwenberghe



photo: kurt van der elst

April 12 - 27th 2024



VOETVOLK
LIBBETH
GRUWEZ
MAARTEN
VAN CAUWENBERGHE

hetpaleis

WASCO!

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intro



photo: Danny Willems

Ten kids and a big supply of paint. When jazz sounds through the speakers, the group gets moving. Lines appear and traces of color emerge. Gradually the children appropriate the space, which they transform into a three-dimensional painting.

Choreographer Lisbeth Gruwez and musician Maarten van Cauwenberghe explore the interface between drawing and dance in WASCO! The spontaneous and authentic actions of the children shape the choreography. The soundtrack consists of jazz tracks from the period when action painting originated, whose impulsiveness helps inspire this performance. If freedom has a form, what does it look like? WASCO! is an invitation to search for a renewed sense of freedom. An explosive action painting performance. Unbridled, chaotic and wild. And sometimes gentle.

[more info](#)
[scene images](#)

at hetpaleis
from April 12 - 27th
+ on tour

credits

concept	Voetvolk Lisbeth Gruwez and Maarten Van Cauwenberghe
choreography	Lisbeth Gruwez
sound design	Maarten Van Cauwenberghe
dance	Lita Assam, Madeleine Camara, Yahto Claes Oussehmine, Lara Corrias, Lilith De Groof, Kymaisha Geduld, Gus Van Goethem, Martha Van Goethem, Lily Williams and Adriaan Winand
artistic assistance	Victoria Rose Roy
coaching children	Fran Van Gysegem
dramaturgy	Koen Haagdorens
stage design stage and light design	Stef Stessel
light design	Dirk De Hooghe
helping hand	Jits Vandamme
with the support of	Belgian Federal Government's tax shelter measure via Casa Kafka Pictures
courtesy of	Walter Meersmans
co-producer	MA Scene National de Montbéliard
international distribution	hetpaleis & Materialise/Stéphane Noël

interview WASCO!

Ambassador Yuna in conversation with Lisbeth Gruwez and Maarten Van Cauwenberghe

WASCO! premieres on 12 April. It promises to be a colourful action painting performance with ten children on stage. Early on in the rehearsal process, ambassador Yuna (9) went to explore the paint-spattered set. What were the choreographer, Lisbeth Gruwez, and the musician Maarten Van Cauwenberghe (Voetvolk) planning to do?



photo: Fred Debrock

Yuna: What on earth has happened here?

Lisbeth: We wanted to find out with our dancers how much paint we were going to need. I'm afraid we went a bit over the top, though! (she laughs) The set has got pretty dirty.

Maarten: Dirty? I think it looks fantastic.

Yuna: But your play is called WASCO!, isn't it? That means wax crayon, not paint.

Lisbeth: That's right, and we're all going to create a big work of art with crayons and paint. You need a base layer first, you see, to give it a distinct texture. Splatters of paint are ideal for that.

Maarten: Then we're going to put big strips of paper onto that huge painting for the young dancers to draw on with crayons.

Lisbeth: We chose the title because "wasco" is such a great word and it reminds us of "what's going on?" in English, which Flemish children pronounce as "wasco-ing on?"

Yuna: Do you often work with children?

Lisbeth: No, this is the very first time. It's really exciting.

Maarten: hetpaleis helped us select ten young performers aged 6 to 12. Voetvolk is always looking for new forms of dance and collaboration. Doing a production with children was still on our wish list. So when we got the request from hetpaleis, our minds were soon made up.

Yuna: How did the first rehearsals go?

Lisbeth: They were fantastic. I love the way children think, how they use their imaginations, what they're like.

Maarten: Now we're concentrating on how they move. And how we can direct that a bit. We'll see if we succeed.

Lisbeth: If you just let them do their own thing, they often use the most fantastic moves, things a choreographer would never think of.

Yuna: You're going to draw and dance. What do those two things have in common?

Lisbeth: I really like drawing, myself, and I'm fascinated by action painters. They put a huge canvas on the floor and then splash big blobs of paint onto it with their brushes. The movement is especially important, the energy that is transferred to the work of art.

Maarten: One action painter, Jackson Pollock, used to paint to jazz music. So we thought, "cool, let's do that." The children listen to music, draw and dance all at the same time.

Lisbeth: Choreography actually means drawing in space. And that's what we're going to do now.

Yuna: What will the music sound like?

Maarten: I've chosen jazz music that was played between 1945 and 1965.

Lisbeth: That's also the period when action painting emerged.

Maarten: The different types of jazz music composed at the time are all related to each other. That sets the limits within which we can play.

Lisbeth: Otherwise the possibilities would be endless.

Maarten: I use all those pieces of jazz music to create a different world.

Lisbeth: Like a DJ.

***“Choreography actually means drawing in space. And that’s what we’re going to do now.”
- Lisbeth***

Yuna: Is it good music to dance to?

Maarten: If Voetvolk chooses existing music, it's almost always music that people believe is impossible to dance to. We once did a production with music by Bob Dylan, for example...

Lisbeth: ... and you really can't dance to that. At least, people didn't think so. And now, too, we have found that our young performers are finding their way in jazz music surprisingly fast.

Maarten: Maybe that's because jazz can be so varied. Sometimes the music is really wild, and sometimes you only hear a few subtle notes.

Lisbeth: They're very musical kids, as well. When the music starts, they start moving by themselves straight away. As if they'd swallowed the notes.

Maarten: Jazz is also freedom. We definitely want that freedom to be in our production.

Yuna: Can children do more than adults?

Lisbeth: Sometimes people say that everyone can draw, but that's not actually true. All children can draw, though. Spontaneously, unselfconsciously, without thinking. Sometimes that results in really great drawings.

Maarten: Drawings that adults can often no longer do.

Lisbeth: The best drawings I've seen, the ones stuck to my fridge door with a magnet, were drawn by children. Sometimes it's something they've drawn from life, a cat or their family, and sometimes it's pure energy. Then I see real dance in it.

Yuna: And is that what you're going to show on stage?

Lisbeth: We want to teach the children to make their movements REALLY big. Not like a little sheet of A4 paper where they have to be careful not to go over the lines. They can splash all their crazy energy onto big sheets of paper.

Maarten: Children always come up with something new, as well.

Lisbeth: That's right. Older dancers are more likely to repeat a nice move, but children stay unpredictable. I'm really curious. I'm confident about it, but I might have grey hair in three months' time all the same. (she laughs)

**“No one on stage is older than 12 years old.
That's really unusual.”
— Maarten**

Yuna: How did you bring the children together?

Maarten: We held a series of auditions. I think we saw more than a hundred children.

Lisbeth: Since we could only select ten children, we had to get to know each performer a bit...

Maarten: One might have a good feel for timing, another is good at making decisions. And someone else keeps track of everything that is going on or has a strong sense of responsibility.

Lisbeth: That way, we built up the team step by step. Like a kind of society in miniature, where everyone finds their place and can work well together.

Maarten: That's also what makes the piece so special: no one on stage is older than 12 years old. That's really unusual. The children have a lot of responsibility.

Yuna: What have you learned from the children?

Lisbeth: How wonderful a feeling can be. With older dancers, you sometimes have to peel back a few layers before they can surrender to it. Children do that spontaneously.

Maarten: Children can also get completely absorbed in their concentration if they are doing something they really enjoy.

Lisbeth: And they're unpredictable, too. I really like that.

Yuna: Will it be an improvised performance?

Lisbeth: Sort of, but within certain rules. We want to keep some control, for example control of the colours and the music. But we don't control the rhythm.

Maarten: The intention is to have a lot of freedom and craziness in the performance.

Lisbeth: It will be a game between the dancers and the paper. During the rehearsals, we are finding out how far we can take that.

Maarten: And that means we won't know what form the performance will take until the very end of the rehearsal process. There are exciting weeks ahead...

who is who

WASCO's



I think I will keep dancing even after WASCO!. My solo with my crayon is one of my favourite things and so is the group of other dancers, of course!

Bouncing Light Blue Yahto (6)



I get very happy when Lisbeth says to us 'go guys, go guys...'. She gives me and the others a lot of confidence, I am the oldest and sometimes have to lead when things are not right. From Maarten, I learnt a lot about music. How he makes a remix of all the songs. I really like that. I've been on a stage before, but here I really feel part of a professional team.

Shaking Pink Madeleine (12)



We are all different and I like that. I am very nervous about the premiere, but we are almost ready.

Painting Purple Kymaisha (8)



I like to move with my legs. Actually with everything, which is why I like everything about WASCO! It will be something crazy, I think with lots of splashes.

Splashing Blue Green Martha (11)



In the beginning, I couldn't slide, but I can do that well now. I have learned to move with my body much better. I think the scene of painting is the most fun. We get all dirty then.

Tripping Orange Lillith (8)



I came up with most of the moves myself, like the foot turn. The hand move is one of Maarten's moves, which is actually a really good dancer too. I find it super exciting, the premiere. Although the audience doesn't scare me. Playing a show without an audience, now that would be hard.

Tapdancing Green Gus (8)



The skate park is one of the funniest scenes. Madeleine counts 1, 2, 3, 4 and then she runs across the paper and then we all have to slide. You run really fast and then you set off on your hand and then you slide. But I also learned from Lisbeth and Maarten that you don't always have to dance fast, but that slow pieces can also be very beautiful.

Rocking Pink Black Adriaan (11)



For me, my solo means that when you're having a bad day, your feelings are all over the place. And that you get to let everything out. I feel very happy when I get to do that. For me, WASCO! is about the fun we have together. It's exciting but also super cool.

Swaying Red Lily (12)



Lisbeth and Maarten give a lot of creative inspiration to draw in our booklet or to dance. I really enjoy working with them. I think WASCO! is about being free with colours and about what happens when you leave children alone with paint and WASCOs. Needless to say, it will be a dirty performance.

Laughing Red Blue Lita (8)



I have some stress, but for now I think everything is going to be fine, so... I think people are going to see that it's clever that we're doing this on our own, without older people. That we do it and that we remember it all so by ourselves and I think they're going to love that.

Ritmic Blue Lara (9)

photos: Karolina Maruszak



photo: Siska Vandecasteele

Lisbeth Gruwez (°1977) | she/her

studied at the Urban Institute of Ballet and at P.A.R.T.S. and started her professional career with *Ultima Vez* in *The Day of Heaven and Hell*, a project about Pasolini. From 1999, she collaborated with Jan Fabre for the performances *As long as the world needs a warrior's soul*, *Je suis sang* and the famous solo *Quando l'uomo principale è una donna*. She was one of Fabre's *guerriers de la beauté* ('warriors of beauty'), and was also featured as such in Pierre Coulibeuf's film of the same name. She also worked with Jan Lauwers, Grace Ellen Barkey, Riina Saastamoinen, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Peter Verhelst, among others. She performed the lead role in *Lost Persons Area*, Caroline Strubbe's debut film.

Lisbeth is a dancer, choreographer and co-founder of Voetvolk. In addition to her work within Voetvolk, Lisbeth also gives movement advice (Maxim Storms, FC Bergman and Michael De Cock, etc..), regularly supervises workshops and is associated with the KVS as one of the KVS faces.

—

Maarten Van Cauwenberghe (°1976) | he/him

is a Belgian musician and composer, and the other half of Voetvolk's artistic team. He started playing guitar at the age of 12 and after studying commercial engineering (KU Leuven), he moved to the Jazz studio in Antwerp.

In 2000, he started working with Jan Fabre. He made the music for *As long as the world needs a warrior's soul*, *Je suis sang* and *Quando l'uomo principale è una donna*. There he met dancer Lisbeth Gruwez with whom he started working closely and founded Voetvolk in 2007.

Besides his composition work for Voetvolk, he collaborated with Miet Warlop (for *One Song*, among others), Tristero, Collectif Transquennal, Manah Depauw, Alex Salinas and Antoine d'Agata. He also composed the music for *Yell for Cadel*, his own documentary about Cadel Evans, and for *Le Part Sauvage*, Guérin Van de Vorst's first feature film. Van Cauwenberghe also directed music videos for *A Brand* (Hammerhead), *Millionaire* (Ballad of Pure Thought) and *Vive la Fête*.

He is also part of the psychedelic electropunk band Dendermonde (with Frederik Heuvinck and Elko Blijweert) and the guitar trio Hikes (with Dag Tældeman and Rodrigo Fuentealba Palavicino). Between 2002-2004, Van Cauwenberghe was also a founding member of the band Babyjohn with whom he released two records on the LOWLANDS label. Currently, his work is released on the ROTKAT label.

As a commercial engineer, Van Cauwenberghe is also interested in the business side of the cultural field. In 2016, he won the Flemish Culture Prize for Cultural Entrepreneurship, awarded by the Flemish Community.

Stef Stessel (°1964) | he/him

is a scenographer, lighting designer and photographer. He is also a permanent member of theatre collective the Roovers and a guest lecturer at the RITCS. As a freelancer, he regularly collaborates with theatre companies such as Het Toneelhuis, hetpaleis, Laika, BRONKS, Muziektheater Transparant, KVS, LOD muziektheater, Theater Stap, ARSENAAL/LAZARUS, Kabinet K, KOPERGIETERY and BRUT and often works with Inne Goris, Simon De Vos, Carly Wijs and Thomas Bellinck/Robin.

Recently, Stessel designed the production Race (Arsenaal), BUZZ (KOPERGIETERY and LAZARUS), and Vaderlandloos (Jr.cE.sA.r, ARSENAAL and KVS). The latter creation was selected for the TheaterFestival in Ghent, where he also shaped Carly Wijs' performance Jongen (De Roovers/Teateri).

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Koen Haagdorens (°1971) | hij/hem

is dramaturge at hetpaleis. He previously worked for NTGent, De Munt, de Singel, Transparant vzw, het Toneelhuis, de theatermaker and Wunderbaum, among others.

hetpaleis

is a performing arts house for young audiences. It encourages children in their experience of art: as spectators, as interlocutors, as participants, as young artists. hetpaleis programmes various art disciplines and is a mirror for a world that is radically changing, a home for the adults of tomorrow.

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Voetvolk

is the dance company of dancer/choreographer Lisbeth Gruwez and musician/composer Maarten Van Cauwenberghe. The duo has already made more than ten performances, including It's going to get worse and worse and worse, my friend, AH/HA, Lisbeth Gruwez dances Bob Dylan, We're pretty fuckin' far from okay, The Sea Within, Piano Works Debussy, Into the Open and Nomadics. Voetvolk is currently making WASCO!, their very first performance with children, for audiences of all ages.

Voetvolk's work is largely defined by improvisation, performance elements, a detailed visual imagination and a delicate but razor-sharp dialogue between dance and sound design: Gruwez and Van Cauwenberghe direct each other with the aim of achieving a perfect symbiosis between the aural and the visual-physical. Voetvolk's performances have travelled halfway around the world and have been selected for the Festival d'Avignon, Julidans, Tanz im August, Dance Umbrella, the TheaterFestival and the Venice Biennale, among others.

Voetvolk is associated with KVS (Royal Flemish Theatre) and kc NONA.

performances

at hetpaleis			
12.04.24	19u00	première	
13.04.24	19u00	performance	
14.04.24	15u00	performance	
18.04.24	10u00	school performance	
19.04.24	10u00	school performance	
21.04.24	15u00	performance	
25.04.24	10u00	school performance	
26.04.24	10u00	school performance	
27.04.24	19u00	performance	
on tour			
30.06.24	16u00	performance	Tweetaktfestival, Utrecht (NL)



photo: Danny Willems

practical



photo: Denny Willems

info & tickets

Tickets for WASCO! at hetpaleis are on sale at €3 €8.5 €13.5 and €17. Bookable at hetpaleis on 03 202 83 60, info@hetpaleis.be or online at hetpaleis.be.

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