

ImpulsTanz: Refreshing about the beginning of the world with Akemi Takeya

Metaphor-rich and refreshing world premiere of "Schrei X8" by Japanese-born Viennese Akemi Takeya at ImpulsTanz.



Firstly, Akemi Takeya, as the founder of "Lemonism", is probably the only representative of her art movement in the world. Secondly, this Lemonism sees itself as an action against any art movement. And thirdly, the Japanese-born Viennese dancer, artist and singer reminds us that ism inventions could be fun again today after a long absence.

At ImpulsTanz, Takeya (60) is currently showing the world premiere of her new piece "Schrei X8" at the Odeon Theatre. It features a meter-high lemon juicing machine, dancer Evandro Predroni, percussionist Didi Kern and a grand piano that perhaps seems a bit sour because its keys remain untouched the whole time.

The title is borrowed from the album "Schrei X" (1996) by U.S. vocal art giant Diamanda Galás, to whom Takeya also briefly pays her vocal reverence during the performance. It becomes clear how well Galás (66), who celebrated her career highs in the 80s and 90s, fits the times again. One can hope for an overdue revival. Should that come true, Takeya will have foreseen it.

Deep bow

Likewise, she bows to Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramović, Andy Warhol, Nina Simone and Maria Callas, among others, all of whom have provided her with artistic references. This has its logic, because in "Schrei X8" Akemi Takeya makes her life story dance. She holds back with her own singing, originally wanting to become a singer.

In her characteristic mixture of power and fragility, Takeya demonstrates how strongly all of our lives are determined by formative influences and how far a character is shaped by their moderation. Evandro Pedroni appears in the Japanese-looking costume of, say, a lemon ghost: He's a good one, challenging but also protecting. Text passages, pixel images and spotlights deliver dances, a short story is told: about the beginning of the world, when there was only air and birds.

Culture shock in Vienna

Takeya moved to Vienna in 1991 and immediately had a culture shock. In this respect, the yellow in Lemonism can be seen as a reference to the fact that Europeans once assigned the skin color yellow to the indigenous people from the Asian region. The lemon juicing machine supports this image. Towards the end of "Schrei X8", its contents are pumped through a dress made of transparent tubes into which the performer has squeezed herself.

Since 2015, ImpulsTanz audiences have regularly learned about the reflective levels of citronism, and how refreshing it can be to work through the historical. As a metaphor for art, the lemon provides an apt spectrum of meanings: the signal color, the healthy vitamin, but just as much an acid.

(Helmut Ploebst, 7/24/2022)

<https://www.tanznetz.de/de/article/2022/schrei-x8-von-akemi-takeya-bei-impulstanz>

Performative round dance of images "Schrei X8" by Akemi Takeya at ImpulsTanz.

Takeya deals with the influences that have made her who she is. The references she makes don't have to be recognized by the audience, you can just get involved in the great scenes that emerge.

PAUL DELAVOS

For more than 30 years, Japanese-born Akemi Takeya has been a permanent fixture on the Viennese dance and cultural scene and a frequent guest at ImPulsTanz - Vienna International Dance Festival. No wonder that her latest piece "Schrei X8" was premiered there at the Odeon in Vienna. At the beginning of the piece is also the beginning of Takeya's life: in Japanese she tells about her birth and that it took more effort from the doctor until she made her first cry. Although the play is titled "Schrei X8," it is not so much about the scream itself. Only one scene is dedicated to screaming. In the process, Takeya also leads a workshop - already fully booked - at ImPulsTanz, in which she deals with vocal screaming. It continues with childhood memories. During this narrative, which is translated by subtitles, Takeya sits motionless at the front of the stage. The only movement at this point is an installation that drops lemons into a juicer to be squeezed.

Lemons have been a recurring feature in her work. As the piece progresses, there is a block of questions - some of them very personal - and she only answers some of them. She gives no answer to the question why yellow, which is asked again and again. It is not only the yellow lemons but yellow is also dominant in the costumes. When asked if it is really her last piece, a maybe comes back. The questions are asked by the performer Evandro Pedroni, who is a good counterpart to Takeya throughout the piece.

Towards the end, the collected lemon juice is also used: a dress was made from a transparent tube, which Takeya puts on. The filling of the dress and subsequent pumping out of the juice becomes a meditative moment. The costumes were also made by Takeya (costume assistance: Ruth Erharter), the objects were designed by Mathias Lenz. Only after the final applause do many references become apparent, the piece becomes more comprehensible: texts by Takeya are projected in which she discusses individual personalities such as Yoko Ono, Laurie Anderson, Diamanda Galás, Nina Simone, Marina Abramovic, Maria Callas, John Cage, Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys, among others, and the influence these people have had on her artistic development with their art.

It is a veritable round dance of images and sounds (the composition is by Takeya himself, the sound design is by Ursula Winterauer, the drums are played by Didi Kern) that crashes down on the audience: sometimes you don't know exactly where to put your personal focus. Should one read the text that is projected or rather pay attention to the performers? Should one concentrate on the pixel art (visual design: Maximilian Pramatorow and Yuwol June C.), in which faces can be recognized again and again, or not. Is it a ritual that is going on here and that one witnesses, or not. But this is exactly what makes the appeal of the piece again. A liberating moment becomes the scene in which there is really screaming and one thinks to oneself, maybe one should simply scream more often oneself, in order to be able to let go of emotions and perhaps also aggressions...

Akemi Takeya with "Scream X8" at ImpulsTanz

By Rando Hannemann

She actually wanted to become a singer. Why things turned out differently and who and what inspired and influenced her is described by the Japanese-born artist Akemi Takeya, who has lived in Vienna since 1991, in her performative ritual "Schrei X8", which premiered here. Today she is a permanent fixture and her Far Eastern-European melange is something special in the Austrian dance and performance scene.

In the foyer of the Odeon in Vienna, the audience is greeted by a monitor standing on the floor, talking incomprehensibly softly with large lips that constantly change their powerful multicolour. Andy Warhol sends his regards. Dressed in black and even covering her head with a large black mask, she is carried onto the stage and set down in front. Recorded text spoken in Japanese and translated at the back, on the screen extending the white floor skywards, tells of Akemi in the third person. Of her first postnatal cry that wouldn't come, of singing exercises with Japanese pop songs, of a childhood close to nature and an adolescence in which only the beat of her heart and the murmur of her blood were inside her. Lemons fall from the ceiling, as if sent by God, into an apparatus that cuts them in half, presses them and collects the juice in a luminous container. The machine spits the peels onto the floor.

Wearing a yellow eye mask, as if now awakened to a life of its own, she squats on stage, snarling like the coyote Joseph Beuys lived with in "I like America and America likes Me". The predominantly yellow fabric sculpture on the left in front of the piano begins to live. Evandro Pedroni, a dancer, choreographer and performer born in Brazil in 1987, conducts it with shamanistic-ritual gestures into an interrogation that cuts through the surfaces and is only rarely answered clearly. Or self-reflection. The cloth bunny at the end of its plexiglass pole, presented to the audience like a trophy, tells of the beginning of the process of emancipation.

The bass drum kicks in. The third person on stage, the drummer Didi Kern with his sometimes highly complex, driving rhythms and the composer and producer Ursula Winterauer with her electronic sound jointly develop an acoustic co-performance of the first order. The self-playing piano was fed with music composed and recorded by Takeya.

And then the visual design by Maximilian Pramatarov and Yuwol June C.. For a very short time, Pramatarov lets a series of faces become recognisable out of pixel chaos, as if rising from the unconscious. Faces of artists who, with their approaches, intentions, methods and works, were and are essential inspirational-energetic sources for Akemi Takeya. June Chung contributed dynamically interwoven Japanese-German text, Mathias Lenz the construction objects and Ruth Erharter the costumes.

Nicholas Langer's lighting design culminates with a glowing X on the floor and 4 circling yellow spots each above and below. The monitor, after Pedroni feeds it lemons, glows yellow. A blue strip of light sweeps back and forth across the X. In this image, central to the understanding of the piece, the spiritual meanings of the titular "X" and "8" unite. The "X" embodies the principle "As above, so below", a physically and metaphysically highly complex metaphor. The "8" points to "the double happiness" of the 2x4 as well as to infinity. The yellow light of the source of infinite energy and eternal life shines from the stage. And the piano, that is Takeya, plays as if touched by a divine hand.

Akemi Takeya developed the concept of "Lemonism", in which she has been exploring 20th century art movements, Action, Cubism, Dada, Japan and other isms since 2015. The lemon is considered a symbol of fertility, purity and eternal life. Yellow is the dominant colour in "Scream X8". The yellow shaman, the yellow eye mask, the lemon juice. A yellow fringed scarf brings her to dancing life. A yellow scarf held with the mouth, covering her nakedness, becomes an image before the final scene for a life energy that feeds her exterior like that which then becomes her interior, nourishing her physical and her psychic body.

And the scream? Modified in many ways from the primal scream to desperate crying, militant "Ok! Go!" to the stifled croak towards the end and with "You never stop screaming." Akemi Takeya invites

us to a spiritual level. The scream as a physical expression of constant birth and birthing, of growth and passing away, is representative of an infinite process (the "8" in the title indicates it just as much as the supposed death at the end), which includes all modes of existence in the physical as well as the spiritual realm (the "X") and enables perpetual birthing, happy growth through integration. (Not first) With "Scream X8", a poetic, moving work, full of complex metaphor, Akemi Takeya places herself in the forefront of Austrian dance and performance artists.

The dress made of a spirally wound tube that descends on her before the end fills with lemon juice. Until it overflows, trickles out of her, the life. Only to flow back again into the luminous All-One that nourishes all life and is nourished by all life. "She is falling down. She is broken in the end. The world called it Dying." What a beautiful image for the eternal cycle of life. Wrapped in a cape sewn from colourful scraps of inspiration, she says goodbye.

After the end of the performance, the stage is deserted and while many are already leaving the hall, letters from Akemi Takeya to a number of artists roll up on the video screen. In them, she describes what impressed her about these personalities and what remained as lasting input for her artistic life. These letters (to Yoko Ono, Laurie Anderson, Diamanda Galás, Nina Simone, Marina Abramović, Maria Callas, John Cage, Andy Warhol, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, Joseph Beuys, Yukio Mishima, Kinuko Nishina and John Lennon) provide a fascinating and very personal insight into the thoughts and feelings of the artist Akemi Takeya. The piano continues to play for a while ...