

# The Vibrations of Silence

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“Aditu” on the Werkstattbühne of Pfalztheater Kaiserslautern – A project of the dance company and the PIH Frankenthal. “Aditu” the newest dance project of the Pfalztheater, puts you in a world, where silence is way louder than the spoken word and where the “mute” ones determine their own history – only with the language of their bodies.

Silence. Darkness. Everyone is lying on the ground – motionless. There’s the sound of a pumping heart from the off – pumping slowly first, but then it gets stronger and stronger. Suddenly there’s the sound of an incoming WhatsApp Message. Everyone immediately wakes up. The lights of the smartphones screens breaks through the darkness. Then the silence shifts into a hectic and noisy scene with people running around. But what about those who aren’t able to speak? How do they fit into noisy companionship?

The basque word “Aditu” has several meanings like to hear, to listen, to understand and at the same time even to smell and to agree – so it seems to be about perception in general. The project “Aditu” – led by the deaf choreographer and dancer Jone San Martin and Mikel R. Nieto – unites the dance company of the Pfalztheater with pupils, teachers and user of sign language of the PIH Frankenthal.

In “Soundcheck” all people with limited hearing abilities introduced themselves in their own ways. At the entrance the team of the Pfalztheater gave out ear plugs to the audience. One might have assumed, the ear plugs were meant to save their ears from loud music during the dance show – but that wasn’t the case. There was no music at all. There were only the sounds of the protagonists, which they ejected to express their feelings, their thoughts and their messages. It seemed as if those sounds simply flowed out of the bodies and movements.

Those who are in charge of the common language, aren’t more powerful. Everyone is part of a whole unit. Occasionally spoken words seem to be kind of disturbing and unbearably loud in this setting of aesthetic silence. At the same time the silence, that occurs, when the actors express themselves in wordless signs, often is quite oppressive.

Silence is a constant reality for deaf. The dance show is an opportunity to experience this reality on your own and to notice, that being deaf, doesn’t either mean you’re invisible nor that you’re mute. One simply uses alternative tools and vibrations to communicate.

Conclusion: Jone San Martin and Mikel R. Nieto succeeded in something nearly impossible. They managed to blur out the boundaries between different forms of communication. And with “Aditu” they force us “normal” speaking people to overthink the way we perceive our world. Both artistic leaders clearly show that it is possible to dance without music, to communicate without words and to understand what the others want to tell you, even without a sense of hearing. They literally let the deaf decide over their identity, their emotions and their statements. They formed their world and their stories with body language, joy, grief, confessions, desperation, surprise, love – they communicated all of that with facial expressions, gestures und movements.

Because in the end languages in general build way more boundaries and walls between humans than we are aware off. Spoken words are used as weapons way too often – right before the real weapons are drawn. With “Aditu” Martin and Nieto take the words away from the weaponized language and pass it on to those who have no words. At last there is a certain kind of peace in the silence.

– Translated by Raphael Wilberg.