

## Bizarre and Fantastic fiction

The new-established theatre group called Susie Wang tells a story that is both playful and strange in their first production: The Hum

Playwright and director: Trine Falch in collaboration with the others  
Sounddesign and music: Martin Langlie  
Lighting: Bo Krister Wallstrøm and Phillip Isaksen  
Scenography: Susie Wang  
Tech and stage: Ole Jørgen Løvaas, Susie Wang  
Venue: Rom for Dans, 14 Oct. 2017

Susie Wang is a quite new theatre group, it seems refreshing and nice, but its members are old trotters that have worked together before, two of them for a whole generation. In making The Hum they are breaking new and exciting ground. Susie Wang consists of Trine Falch and Bo Krister Wallstrøm who has worked together in several constellations including Baktruppen, Martin Langlie is a musician who plays with Valkyrien amongst other things, and actor Mona Solhaug. They present themselves accurately in this manifest-like text from The Hum's programme:

*Susie Wang grew up with a broken world view, but instead of reflecting the world in fragments, she is picking up the pieces and putting them together as dramatic storylines based on mimetic presence and identification. Susie Wang likes theatre that takes fiction seriously and acknowledges dreams, hallucinations and fantasies.*

And Susie Wang practices what she preaches.

### Room for stories

Who doesn't like being told a good old fashioned story that takes you along into new places? The Hum is that kind of story. The text is written by Trine Falch, who is currently an associated playwright at The Norwegian Centre for New Playwriting in Oslo. The motif for making The Hum is weighty and interesting enough to be quoted: *We find ourselves on the outskirts of the contemporary – a demented forever young kind of time where the past is forgotten and the future is dangerous. Without memory and full of desire we do not understand, we descend into a darkness where the environment jerks off heredity the way heredity likes it the best: primitive. We keep coming, but have nowhere to go.*

This creates a **room** where stories can be told.

The venue is at Rom for Dans. Both the performance space and the acting plays off the same mimetic presence, which at first seems childish, but then the naive

playfulness grabs hold and transports us into the world of The Hum. The floor is 'a beach'. It slopes like one and is covered with corrugated cardboard. It mimics a sandy beach. At the top of the slope, the audience is seated on sand colored pillows. At the bottom, the beach meets the ocean. A huge construction covered in reflective fabrics is mounted in weighted ropes in order to mimic the ocean with its ripples and waves. It also allows for the actors to dive into it and go for a 'swim'. Behind the ocean there is a powerful floodlight functioning as a sun. It to, provides both light and heat and soon the room is as hot as a day at the beach should be. We are on the beach a summerday and eventually the place gets really hot.

### **Homo Ludens**

The artists behind Susie Wang are known for their playful approach, handling play with great seriousness.

A woman in the next row from me calmly starts to undress. She (Bente Alice Westgaard) changes into her swimsuit, walks into the ocean and disappears never to be seen again. A man named Barni (Kim Atle Hansen) also wanders from his seat on to the beach where he changes into his beach attire before sitting down with his back facing us while staring at the sun. He starts crying and removes his glasses, leaving them on the shoreline to be taken by waves and carried out to sea by human hands under the reflective ocean fabrics. Martin Langlie sits by the side of the stage with his drums, making ocean sounds and the music supports the actions on stage in the same mimetic way.

A woman arrives on the beach. It's Sabine (Mona Solhaug), Barni's wife. They speak German and their conversation sets a strange and dreamlike tone. They have signed up for a snorkelling course, but find themselves on the wrong beach after having followed an old and peculiar looking sign. It turns out that the snorkelling course they had signed up for is held at another beach than the 'sehr altes und sehr merkwürdiges Skilt' has led them astray. The scenes when they apply sunscreen are long, lingering and realistic. Sabine wants a coke and after a fairly awkward blow job, Barni disappears into the waves in order to get her one.

### **The egg**

Sabine has since long noticed an egg in the shoreline. With Barni gone she is alone on the beach and the egg comes gliding towards her. She too is pulled towards the egg and sits down on it. A little later she lays down, having a snuff and relaxes. Kim (Mari Ferstad) enters the stage. She fiddles with her diving mask and talks Swedish to Sabine who answers in Norwegian. Reluctantly at first but as the scene progresses they develop a multifaceted relationship. Kim who comes across as a kind of a hallucination, hides her claws under patched fingers. She talks about a glowing civilisation deep under water and she drinks sunscreen. The atmosphere is playful but dark, even unpleasant and threatening at times. The two women have plenty of time to develop their relationship because Barni is gone for quite a while. The story evolves with a dream-like logic. The women have bought Save the Turtles t-shirts. We are given the notion that this is a beach where turtles lay their eggs. Eggs. A source of life. Life. A new human being? The women discuss different names. They agree on a biblical name. Kim, the dominant one, decides upon the name *Betyda* (*Signify*). And birth is given. Up from the sand/out of the egg comes a grown woman (Janne Aass). Barni has not drowned, he comes swimming with a

coke for Sabine and as one happy family of three they sit on the beach and watch the sun set.

Sabine has been relieved and we have been seduced. From a moment of hesitation against accepting the contract about this being a '*storyline based on mimetic presence and devotion*', we willingly let the story seduce us. Susie Wang's story was appealingly odd and a good theatre experience.