

Tanzschreiber

The Dance Review Portal – Current Critiques of Berlin Dance Events



Kongresshalle, heute Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 1989 | Collage made by Darcey Bennett and Jerem...

Songs of Cranky Hope and Solidarity

1. June 2021, Evgeny Borisenko

Language: EN

Puddles the Pelican continues her tour and lands, silver-feathered, on top of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt for a short online concert within the framework of the conference ‘Diversity Affects | Troubling Institutions’ on 29 May 2021. This magic bird performs at dusk with her band, giving birth to an iridescent pearl to celebrate the reopening of HKW after a more-than-year-long closure due to the pandemic. She sings and walks in beauty, jazzes between grief and hope, invoking solidarity and revolution amid the troubled waters of our times.

Imagine a post-apocalyptic sea, full of stinking oil, and infested with mutated monsters. Toxic clouds spit putrid farts onto its greasy surface. The world as we knew it — this world hardly worth mourning — is recognisable only by the rusty shells of skyscrapers protruding from the waves like an old man’s fingers. A cruise ship quietly drifts under the sullen clouds towards the void: she shelters the freaks

and the exuberant, the quirky and the queer, the unrepentant sinners and the saddest queens, the pimps and the hoes, the crippled and the outcasts. She once cruised through utopian pasts, but now floats through a dystopian present. This vessel of hope and grief saved a pelican from the ocean, covered in oil and tears, and looking like a squashy pulpy lump of magic. Puddles The Pelican mourned her home and her sister, lost in the infinity of the oily ocean. A caretaker and a born entertainer, the bird found her voice on Level Minus Nine of the ship, where she became activities director and opened a cabaret. She has been performing there ever since. Now she has come to Berlin, under the late-setting sun, in front of the vast oyster-shaped roof of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Puddles, assisted on stage for the very first time by her band, The Angels of Split Prysm, is a confident wreck. She squawks, sings and speechifies, stutters and falters, delivering greasy jokes and anecdotes from times gone by. She preaches togetherness and solidarity, consoles the aggrieved, and, then, a moment later, turns on her heels and cackles. At times she seems on the verge of bursting into a rage against universal injustice, but no, no, no: she recomposes herself and dives into yet another mournful Jim Morrison-fuelled ballad, or perhaps a groovy bossanova. She is a feast to watch — a healer and a diva. Yet she also exudes the sadness and the jitters that she has carried with her from her previous incarnations. Puddles' bittersweet confessions and dark poetry are at once painful and tempting, as if she wants us to pull out the itchy stitches sealing our wounds, and to embark with her on an unsettling journey. But we have all become masters of mindfulness and avoidance over recent months, so why abandon our comfort and confront the eerie truth that we are all drifting blindfolded towards the void? Is anyone out there really ready to get lost on the countless levels and decks of the vessel Puddles the Pelican calls home? If you are crazy enough to fancy the trip, you won't be bored: she told me there was a casino on Level Minus Seven, and I bet there's also a brothel and a night club — remnants of our haunted past.

Despite the drama and the all-pervading sense of unavoidable doom, Puddles does not intend to bring you down. In one of her rambling interludes, she tells us of a pigeon she once met who told her: 'There's a dead clown inside of you that wants you dead. If you wanna live, start telling stories that make you feel good.' Puddles is a master of this ancient survival tactic and tells us the stories that have saved her life. There's no need to gather around a bonfire — or plunge into the swampy waters of the dying ocean, for that matter. The shiny bird will fly over, drop some precious pearls and feathers on her way and it *will* make you feel better. Her stories, poetry, and songs will make you giggle, bring you to the point of melt down, or even have you collapse in tears, and forget your way home.

Photo collage credits: Kongresshalle, heute Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 1989 | Landesarchiv Berlin, (c) Hans Scherhauf; (c) Ayla Pierrot Arendt & Nadia Perlov; collage made by Darcey Bennett and Jeremy Wade.

“Puddles the Pelican and The Pregnant Oyster, Songs Of Cranky Hope and Solidarity” is [available on the HKW website](#).

Credits:

Concept and Performance: Puddles The Pelican; Production Magic and Collaborator: Darcey Bennett; Backing Vocals: Valerie Renay, Harald Stojan; Piano: Quentin Tolimieri; Percussion: Liliana Zieniawa; Synths and Sound Engineering: Philipp Kullen; Text: Allison Wiltshire, Jeremy Wade; Dramaturgy: Maika Knoblich; Artistic Mentor: Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy; Light: Andreas Harder, Emma Juliard, Ilia Harder, Jonathán Harder; Film: Christopher Hewitt, Cosmo Panama; Film Editing: Christopher Hewitt; Costume: Josa Marx (dress), Claudia Hill + Kahori Furukawa (Robe); Make Up: Rà Nikolaidis; Wig: Benjamin Kiss; Rehearsal Direction: Michael Rolnick; Technical Support: Jan “Zimbo” Zimmermann. Special Thanks to the incredible Ezra Green for the contribution of his poetry. Special thanks to Daniel Neugebauer and the entire HKW team for their support.

Tags: [Haus der Kulturen der Welt \(HKW\) \(EN\)](#), [Jeremy Wade \(EN\)](#), [Puddles the Pelican \(EN\)](#), [The Angels of Split Prisms \(EN\)](#)

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