

Q&A – Selected Works

Selected Works gives its audience an opportunity to experience newly developed and experimental performing arts and thereby increase the visibility of the independent field's producing effort to evolve the performing arts.

What is "The independent field of Performing Arts"?

The independent field of Performing Arts represents the many changing – professional – performing arts groups or individual stage artists (producers, directors, choreographers, playwrights, writers of performing arts texts, performers, actors, dancers, visual artists and more), who are not affiliated with any established theatre or institution, and who typically work with producing performing arts on a project to project basis.

When was the festival founded?

Selected Works first took place in 2014 at Dansehallerne. For the first couple of years, Selected Works was an integrated part of CPH STAGE but this changed with the festival in 2018. Now Selected Works has separated itself from CPH STAGE and become an independent festival.

Who is behind the festival?

In 2014–2016, the two interest organizations Independent Performing Artists and Stage Artists Without a Stage have initiated, organized and fundraised the festival. In 2016 a union was founded where a newly elected management would henceforth be in charge of the festival. The festival is curated by a team of professional performing artists, with an intimate knowledge of the independent field of Performing Arts in the Danish Performing Arts' scene. It is produced, arranged and administrated by a likeminded professional team within the field of performing arts. In addition, the festival employs volunteers to help. The festival has previously been supported by funds from the Danish Arts Foundation's committee for supporting projects within the performing arts. Today it is supported by independent funding from the Project Support Committee of Performing Arts within the Danish Arts Foundation, The Committee of Performing Arts within the municipality of Copenhagen, as well as other foundations.

How did the festival start?

The festival began as an idea of the two interest organizations Independent Performing Artists (IPA) and Stage Artists without a Stage (SAWAS) back in the fall of 2013. The primary inspiration came when we got multiple inquiries from independent performing arts groups who wanted to be a part of CPH STAGE, but who didn't have the opportunity due to a lack of accessibility to any venue, as well as a limited economy. Another reason was that after several years of work within IPA and SAWAS to acquire means and space for a new Open Scene in Copenhagen, at that time had only brought another funding pool, the Presentation Pool governed by the Danish Arts Foundation.

Subsequently, it has become clear that there is a great need for a festival that can expose works and artists from the independent field of Performing Arts, both to a wider audience and towards the field nationally, as well internationally. That is why, in 2016, we decided to detach the festival from CPH STAGE, with the ambition to achieve a greater exposure for the productions from the independent field of Performing Arts. The Organization Behind Selected Works and the selected board are now responsible for the festival.

Why do you organize the festival?

In the Danish performing arts scene there is a vast number of professional performing artists who are not connected to a permanent venue or theatre, or maybe their economic means to maintain a continuous operation are limited. They often work from project to project, receive production support, partly from foundations, partly from shifting support pools governed by the Ministry of Culture, and the artists are also often part of representing the Danish performing arts scene abroad.

It's a diverse field of the performing arts, that often, in terms of genre, differs from what else is presented at the established theatres. The production support to each of the projects, often only gives economic freedom to rent a stage for a short period and too many works suffer a short lifetime and reach an audience too small. Visibility for this part of performing arts community is important, because this is often where something new happens and it is where the radical performing arts have the opportunity to experiment. That is why there are some performing art genres that "live in the shadows", that often fall outside of the profiles that the established theatres have, and therefore a large part of the theatre-going audience has no clue that these genres even exist. Because of this, some truly amazing works get overlooked in the vast amount of entertainment offers that are presented to the audience. The independent field of Performing Arts grants an opportunity to grow and foster an audience that has a particular and specific interest for cutting edge performing arts and who wants to be presented with new currents and interesting performing arts experiments. That is why we choose to organize Selected Works!

How many works have you presented the various years?

The festival has presented about 60 works combined, including readings for the audience.

How is the festival arranged?

In the period of 2014–2016, it was Independent Performing Artists and Stage Artists without a Stage that did the fundraising part. The board in these two interest organizations summoned suggestions for curators and singled out possible candidates. After this, the board chose a team of three curators. The festival was scheduled by this curator team, which is replaced each year.

The annual replacement is to make sure that innovation, dynamics and diversity continues to play a role in selecting new works.

All of the professional performing artists can apply via an open call, in order to participate in the festival. This year there were 66 applicants out of which these 10

works were chosen. Then an external curator was appointed and selected by the board within The Organisation Behind Selected Works, in collaboration with the management of Selected Works. This year the management itself is a part of the curator team. When the works have been selected, the planning starts. The planning includes the coordination of living up to the technical demands of each piece of work, how big a stage is needed and what stages are available. From this, the planning of where each of the works can be performed starts. If the work is site-specific, then there is usually a lot of practical work around the production. Then there is PR work to be done, the program has to go on the website, the performances have to be entered into Tereba and the tickets have to be put up for sale. The festival days themselves are a giant jigsaw puzzle that our technical team has to coordinate, in collaboration with the large number of artists that are involved.

What is the vision for the festival?

The vision for the festival is to strengthen and reveal the independent field of performing artists in Denmark, both for the audience and for international interests (festival producers, curators etc.). There are many thoughts and ideas about how Selected Works should evolve in the future. The festival will not take place in 2020, because we are taking a break that year. In 2021, we are planning that Selected Works is a nation-wide event so that it will take place both in Dansehallerne in Copenhagen and on the Open Stage, Godsbanen in Aarhus. The dream is still that Selected Works also comes on tour for example to Odense and Aalborg. In our opinion, this contributes to the diversity of performing arts across the country. The independent field of Performing Arts wants to connect with new audiences and thereby strengthen and qualify the food chain and the synergy between performers in the Danish performing arts community.

The festival has had a steady growth both in terms of scope, volume and ambition, so there has been a need for a professionalization of the festival. In 2016 an independent organisation for the festival was established, The Organisation Behind Selected Works, that has engaged a management for the festival. Going forward, it is possible that there will also be a need to change the curating model for the festival. In 2019, we have approached this tentatively by inviting a single external curator, who, in collaboration with the management, is responsible for curating the festival.

What are the goals for the festival?

We dream about expanding the activities of the festival, thereby allowing Selected Works to come on a tour for example to Odense and Aalborg. In 2021, Selected Works will be presented in some form on the Open Stage, Godsbanen in Aarhus. Another goal is still to have a curated open stage for guest productions with its own programme, dedicated to the independent field of Performing Arts or under circumstances that are inspiring and that support the efforts to develop the performing arts artistically as well as production-wise, organizationally and for the audience.

Project Open Stage in Copenhagen is currently in the works. We have learned that the present Committee for Project Support for Performing Arts within the Danish Arts Foundation has it as a topic on the agenda. Until then, we dream on and the

festival is our way of showing that we will not settle for dreaming. As long as Copenhagen does not have an open curated stage for guest productions that is dedicated to the independent field of Performing Arts with the aim of creating visibility for the sector, then we need Selected Works!