

WHS & Sungsoo Ahn Pick-up Group:

SWAN OF TUONELA

Dance and contemporary circus with music by Jean Sibelius

The swan of death clashes with everyday reality. Melancholic tones are fought with muscle exercises. Classic ballet movements twist out of their places. From underneath traditional beauty a raw and ludicrous combat breaks through.

Poetic orchestra music rips apart to reveal its flesh and bones. High culture shows its bloody roots below the charming surface and breaks to liberating laughter. What doesn't kill makes stronger.

This international collaboration reinterprets the Swan of Tuonela by Jean Sibelius as a stage performance. New music composed for the performance is in dialogue with Sibelius' symphonic Lemminkäinen Suite and his piano, violin and cello music.

The renowned Korean choreographer Sungsoo Ahn and Finnish circus pioneer Ville Walo get hold of Sibelius' composition together with three exceptional musicians. In the hands of these five artists the Swan of Tuonela gets reconnected with contemporary reality by means of inventive remixing, pole dance and fans that flutter as a swan.



Sungsoo Ahn

Korean Sungsoo Ahn has worked as a choreographer for more than 20 years. The Julliard graduate is currently directing the choreography department at Korea National University of Arts School of Dance. Recently Ahn has created commissioned choreographies for Korean National Ballet and the traditional dance company of Korean National Theatre.

Sungsoo Ahn Pick-Up Group has a unique combination of dancers, some with background in traditional Korean dance, and some coming from pop culture and street dance. The addition of Korean traditional dance adds an exquisite movement of arms and hands to the original dance choreographies created with Ahn's particular hybrid technique integrating ballet and modern dance techniques.

Since its initial formation, the Sungsoo Ahn Pick-up Group has performed at several notable venues. While in America, Ahn's company performed at the Joyce Theater, and the Lincoln Center Out of Door Festival and Dance Theater Workshop. Since returning to Korea, the list has grown to include well-known venues such as the Tanzhaus nrw, the Dansens hus, and the Mousonturm at the 2010 Korean Dance in Europe. Ahn's technically demanding choreography has been well received in the performing arts industry. He has received several awards for his dance productions, including the Scripps/ADF Humphrey-Weidman-Limon Award for Choreography, and the Bonnie Bird North American Award.

Ville Walo

Ville Walo is a pioneer of Finnish contemporary circus, and his company WHS is one of the most internationally active performing arts groups in Finland. Walo has performed in around 40 countries in most wellknown contemporary circus, theatre, dance and puppetry stages and festivals of the world.

Ville Walo is renowned for his original juggling style that balances on the boundary surfaces between juggling, puppet theatre and dance. He is a pioneer, innovator and reformer of contemporary juggling, who in his work explores new juggling techniques and physical and spatial movement in juggling. Walo has expanded the expression range of juggling towards visual theatre and object theatre.

Walo has worked as the artistic director of 5-3-1 Festival of New Juggling as well as of Cirko Festival of New Circus in Helsinki. Besides his own group and solo work, he has been working together with Jérôme Thomas Company.

The Arts Council of Finland gave Walo a 5-year artist grant starting from 2006. In 2010 the Finnish Cultural Foundation awarded Walo a special price for his eminent work promoting high quality Finnish culture. In 2012 Walo received an artistic grant from Niilo Helander foundation and in 2014 he got a 3-year artistic grant from Arts Promotion Centre Finland.



Group

Choreography: Sungsoo Ahn

Direction: Ville Walo

Performers: Ville Walo, Noora Juppi, Juhee Lee, Hyun Kim, Jeeyun Kim, Heehwon Yang, Hauschka, Samuli Kosminen & Markus Hohti

Sound design: Heikki Iso-Ahola

Music composition: Jean Sibelius, Samuli Kosminen, Hauschka & Markus Hohti

Lighting: Jere Mönkkönen

Projection design: Matti Niinimäki

Sets & costumes: Anne Jämsä

Production: WHS & Sungsoo Ahn Pick-up Group

Co-production: Verkatehdas & Seoul Arts Center



Anne Jämsä

Anne Jämsä is a costume and set designer. She is interested in developing visually expressive ways of using objects on stage. She has a Master's degree in Scenography and a Bachelor's degree in History. Currently she is researching the theatrical possibilities of object manipulation as a doctoral student in the Scenography Department of the Aalto University School of Art and Design.

Jere Mönkkönen

Jere Mönkkönen is a lighting designer. He has graduated as a Bachelor of Culture and Arts from Tampere University of Applied Sciences majoring in Light Design. Mönkkönen has made light designs for several Finnish and Estonian performances by well-known artists and companies such as theatre director Kristian Smeds. Besides his design work, Mönkkönen has also worked as technician and a tour manager for companies such as WHS, Race Horse Company, Circo Aereo and Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Samuli Kosminen

Samuli Kosminen is without doubt one of the leading percussionists and electronic musicians in Finland. As a musician, composer and producer Kosminen has collaborated in numerous ways with a gigantic quantity of Finnish and foreign rock, pop, jazz, contemporary classical and electronic music artists.

These include for example Kronos Quartet (USA), Valgeir Sigurdsson (Iceland), Jónsi (leader of Icelandic band Sigur Rós), Sasha Siem (UK), KTU (USA-Finland), Emiliana Torrini (Iceland), Hauschka (Germany), PMMP, Jukka Perko, Pekka Kuusisto and Proton String Quartet. In the last ten years Kosminen has mainly worked with the band Múm from Iceland and with the famous Finnish accordionist Kimmo Pohjonen. Together with Pohjonen he has created four albums and composed Jussi-awarded music for the film *Jade Warrior*. With Múm Kosminen has published four albums and toured in Europe, America, Australia and Japan. Kosminen has been nominated for 2014 Harpa Nordic Film Composer award for his music for Susanna Helke's film *American Vagabond*.

Hauschka

The German pianist and composer Volker Bertelmann, who is nowadays better known by his performance alias Hauschka, is one of the most recognizable prepared piano players of our century. He is specialized in the prepared piano, whose sound is altered by the insertion of alien objects between or upon its strings, hammers and dampers. Hauschka excels on innovative playing on this instrument that was introduced to larger audiences by John Cage, and has composed and recorded numerous music pieces for prepared piano.

Hauschka has performed to sold-out audiences across the world and collaborated with a vast variety of artists including Tortoise and Jan Tomita. He has collaborated with several interesting musicians, such as Barbara Morgenstern, Mira Calix and Tarwater. Hauschka has worked also with cinema, theatre, dance and art. He has composed film music and composed music for Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus. Together with Stefan Scheider he has even made a remix of Wagner's *Parsifal*. He has released highly praised albums for FatCat and Karaoke Kalk, and his work has been featured in over a dozen films.

Markus Hohti

Markus Hohti is a cellist of great versatility – equally at home whether playing classical or baroque cello, performing at contemporary music concerts, chamber music festivals, and jazz clubs. He has recently developed an interest in electro acoustic music and cross-genre projects.

Hohti has performed at major festivals and concert halls, including Kuhmo Chamber Music, Pekka Kuusisto's *Our Festival*, Lucerne Festival, Salzburger Biennale, Tonhalle in Zurich and Berlin Filharmonie. He has premiered hundreds of new pieces and collaborated with renowned artists such as Ralf Gothoni, Cyprien Katsaris, Jaime Martin, Alasdair Beatson, Thomas Demenga, Rainer Schmidt and Gordan Nikolic.



World class musicians meet with virtuosic stage performers

Swan of Tuonela brings together a virtuosic Korean dance company, magic of contemporary circus, Sibelius' masterpieces and a group of musicians with exceptional talents. Composer sampler and percussionist Samuli Kosminen, pianist Hauschka and cellist Markus Hohti, are world class avant garde musicians in contemporary music that balances on the borderline between classical and popular.

Throbbing with fresh global culture, this performance gives new perspectives to Sibelius' classic compositions with exciting live interpretations and juxtapositions with new music.

The international coproduction will be premiered both in Korea and in Finland. The premiere in Finland will be organized in collaboration with Verkatehdas cultural centre in Hämeenlinna. The premiere in Korea will be held at Seoul Arts Center.

The performance is co-produced by Finnish WHS and Korean Sungsoo Ahn Pick-Up Group, who created the internationally acclaimed collaboration *Double Exposure* in 2012. The piece that was premiered in Helsinki Festival and SIDance got praising reviews and was loved by audiences both in Korea and Finland. Since its premieres *Double Exposure* has been invited to various festivals in Europe.

