



PRESS RELEASE

SVEN GATZ

FLEMISH MINISTER FOR CULTURE, MEDIA, YOUTH AND BRUSSELS AFFAIRS

Saturday 13 September 2014

TAZ wins Flemish Culture Award for Performing Arts 2013-2014

Today, the Flemish Minister for Culture Sven Gatz presented Theatre by the Sea (TAZ) with the Flemish Community Award for Performing Arts for 2013-2014. The presentation took place during the annual Theatre Festival at deSingel in Antwerp. The jury selected TAZ as laureate because of its response to the many challenges facing the performing arts scene: local embedding, the visibility of Flemish creations, interculturalism, new presentation models, the inflow of young talent, etc.

There was a time when TAZ was a peripheral phenomenon. It exerted itself for artists who, officially, were not even artists yet. It organised both fireworks and street theatre, on the fringes of tourism. And it was literally on the fringes. The faith with which Luc Muylaert and his associates have built up their festival from the sandy soil since 1997 could best be compared to the American pioneering spirit. Over the past 17 years, TAZ has not just revealed itself as one of the largest performing arts events in Flanders, but has also become an interchange where young artists 'meet' established names, like the sea meets the mainland. A place where theatre is absorbed by music and where the arts encounter an audience which they are sometimes claimed to have lost. As a pioneer, TAZ has culturally fed and enriched the Ostend area.

The jury praises the sustained balance of TAZ, acting as an inspiration for the performing arts sector. The festival reconciles audience-friendliness with artistic innovation and interdisciplinary experiments. It creates an inviting atmosphere around art, without letting itself be carried along with the culture of experience. Although it has grown exponentially, it has not renounced its core mission, thanks to broad support and a diverse financial base. TAZ reminds us that being popular and artistically fascinating is not a paradox. TAZ is not just a relaxing cultural feast, but also acts as a social think tank, devoting attention to the unknown, without losing artistic quality. However, this Culture Award is mainly a tribute to all the volunteers who have selflessly committed themselves year after year to making it the success story it is today: a wonderful example of what theatre and dance can mean to the Flemish people.

Flemish Minister for Culture Sven Gatz said: "Marvin Gaye – somewhere between being washed ashore in Ostend and being an 'artist in residence' *avant la lettre* – once stated: 'I am not a star. At least, I don't consider myself a star'. This also holds true for TAZ, which is a cultural festival without much ceremony, but instead shines like a bright star in the sky of Flemish arts."

The Theatre Festival

The award ceremony for the 2013-2014 Flemish Culture Award for Performing Arts took place during The Theatre Festival (from 4 through 14 September 2014) in Antwerp. During the presentation Stefan Perceval (Young Theatre laureate TAZ#1997) and Wannas Capelle (Young Music laureate TAZ#2005) , amongst others, delivered a eulogy for the winner. The TAZ band conducted by Stef Kamil Karlens paid a musical tribute to the Ostend festival.

More information is available at the [website of The Theatre Festival \(Het Theaterfestival\)](#).

Flemish Culture Awards 2013 -2014

On the proposal of a jury of experts the Flemish Minister for Culture pays tribute to individuals or an organisation that in the course of the past season made a notable contribution to cultural life in Flanders. The Flemish Culture Awards create public awareness of the laureate at a major event in the sector, which generates attention and appreciation for both the sector and the winner.

A cash prize of €12,500 is connected to the Culture Award. The Government of Flanders sets aside €20,000 for the Flemish Community Award for General Cultural Achievement. Each laureate receives the bronze statuette 'La ultima isla' by Philip Aguirre.

More information is available at: www.cultuurprijzen.be