

Political activism and the sharing of observations took centre stage at the Baltic Circle Theatre Festival – the November festival received acclaim for its timely program.



Camille Auer in the performance Ruff Knowledge – Photo: Tani Simberg / Baltic Circle

The 2023 festival carried the weight of inequality by making space for community and activism. Sharing observations and various forms of listening were highlighted in the festival's exceptionally diverse program, which gathered full audiences.

The international Baltic Circle Festival, held in Helsinki from 17 to 25 November, delved into current horrors, reinforcing their counterforces: community, polyphonic dialogue, and reconciliation. The 2023 festival opened with a discussion and workshop addressing the implementation of the truth and reconciliation work for the Sámi, and it concluded with a statement against the genocide of the Palestinian people. Throughout the week, discussions at the festival strengthened the notion that solidarity is expected from art institutions. For Baltic Circle, this means concrete actions in both minority identity politics and societal conflicts.

"Reconciliation is perhaps the central question of our generation. How can reconciliation be achieved between nations, with the land, and within oneself in a complex world? We invited the

leaders of art institutions to a dialogue with the Sámi Truth and Reconciliation Commission and initiated a collaboration aimed at rethinking the national narratives maintained by art institutions. I want to encourage colleagues to abandon monoculture and take an interest in Finland's multicultural history and present," says the festival's Artistic Director **Hanna Parry**.

Since 2017, the festival has brought attention to the human and land rights issues of the indigenous Sámi people. Collaboration with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission addresses the topic within the structures of society and the art world as institutions prepare a joint strategy for reconciliation work.

Anticolonialist statements, not only in the domestic but also in the Palestinian context

Artists raised funds for aid organisations in Palestine, shared information, and used their works to create space for collective grief, anger, and radical solidarity. Baltic Circle, together with Finland's indigenous, Black, Brown, immigrant, and anti-racist groups, signed a comprehensive [appeal](#) crafted by **Ruskeat tytöt** (Brown Girls) urging the Finnish government to prioritise common human rights over white rights and to demand Finland to cease supporting Israeli war crimes and apartheid through arms trade.

"We still have the opportunity in Finland to speak out against colonial violence, and many artists and art institutions are now reinforcing that voice. Art has a unique ability to address complex phenomena on both an informational and emotional level, shift perspectives, increase empathy, and dismantle black-and-white thinking. It is needed now more than ever, in addition to direct action, so that we can have peace and a future on this planet."

The sold-out Baltic Circle employed over 50 freelancers from the independent sector and 30 volunteers this year, attracted around 2500 attendees, welcomed dozens of international guests, co-produced seven domestic premieres and three international premieres. The festival also offered the audience plenty of free programming: clubs, workshops, lectures, and discussions.

The 21st Baltic Circle Festival will take place in November from 15 to 23, 2023.

More information:

Press pictures

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Baltic Circle is an international theatre festival that creates intensities in the city, takes stands on current questions and ignites dialogue. The festival offers its artists space to imagine and explore what theatre and performing arts could be, and to its audience, it offers an opportunity to experience the newest trends in performing arts.