



LITHUANIAN NATIONAL DRAMA THEATRE



In search of mushrooms

10 January 2024, | Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, Lithuania

OPEN LAB PROGRAM

Presentation of special intervention
“Fungus Attack”

Audience – 95 people attendance

Participating: Director and actor Paulius Merkevičius, Mycologist Matas Gavenauskas

Introduction and moderation: LNDR producer Vidas Bizunevičius

OPEN LAB CONTENT

In the Open-Lab at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, Paulius Merkevičius' work was intertwined with the unveiling of his created spatial intervention/exhibition. The event commenced with a brief presentation by Vidas Bizunevičius on the "Stages" project, followed by presentations from the artist Paulius Merkevičius (a Resident artist and participant of the workshop) and mycologist Matas Gavenauskas (a selected professional in the field).

P. Merkevičius concisely outlined his fascination with the Fungus kingdom and advocated for its increased attention. Subsequently, in collaboration with mycologist M. Gavenauskas, they conducted a tour and presentation of the installation, delving into the specifics of each object. Throughout the tour, they elucidated the various uses of different types of mushrooms, such as acting as filters for soil, water, and air, breaking down organic and synthetic matter, serving as building material, fabric material, and even food supplements. M. Gavenauskas shared specialized knowledge about fungi, emphasizing their role as crucial facilitators of a sustainable lifestyle.

A short break ensued, during which the audience was treated to a cocoa drink and chocolate infused with various fungi for distinct purposes.

As P. Merkevičius and M. Gavenauskas engaged in conversation, they shared their personal fascination with fungi and their individual applications. They discussed the unexplored nature of the field and explored the potential uses of fungi in theatre. P. Merkevičius hinted that his upcoming performance would feature a set constructed solely from cultivated (or decomposed) fungi. He expressed his interest in researching fungi that autonomously produce light and pondered their potential applications.

Throughout the dialogue, M. Gavenauskas highlighted the differences between P. Merkevičius' perspectives and those of traditional mycologists, underscoring how their collaboration is paving the way for new research trajectories in the laboratory.

As the audience joined the conversation, discussions about fungi as potential filters for water and air grew more profound. Participants shared specific facts and the general impact of fungi on our ecosystem. Additionally, the audience became more engaged in understanding fungi as food supplements.

The fruitful discussion between artists and scientists extended for more than an hour, and afterward, the audience lingered to continue conversations with both the scientists and the artists.

