

DEPARTEMENT CULTUUR, JEUGD & MEDIA

ULTIMAS 2016
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Ultima 2016 Performing Arts

ABULEUS

Twenty years ago, a place was created where young people could express themselves artistically. Youth theatre for young people did exist, but professional theatre and dance by and for young people was still very scarce in Flanders. But then along came ABULEUS, a festival that turned into a fully-fledged breeding ground for young theatre and dance talent. A performing arts house in Leuven where since then – last year ABULEUS celebrated its twentieth anniversary in style – young people have been able to turn their hobby into their passion. Many take their very first steps there to become a celebrated choreographer, theatre maker, actor, dancer, scenographer, critic or other profession working on and alongside the stage. The list of names who have turned their passion for art and culture into their profession is long, so any attempt at a summary would be incomplete.

Imparting a love of culture and art to young people is no small task. As a child, at best you will still enter the theatre holding mum's or dad's hand, but once this child is a young person, they want to go their own way. Nevertheless, studies are showing that this is the crucial age when a love of culture fades or lasts, the age when culture lovers are born. When children no longer hold a parent's hand to walk, when they no longer go to the theatre or to a dance show, this is where ABULEUS opens doors to them, without holding their hands, with great enthusiasm and genuine interest and trust in the different abilities of these youngsters.

Dirk De Lathauwer and his team have been doing this and more for twenty years now. By giving young people the opportunity to perform on stage, by giving young artists the chance to develop their talent, and above all by putting on strong dance and theatre shows. By making an artistic breeding place, together with the other art partners at Vaartkom in Leuven, now located at OPEK, Leuven's art warehouse.

ABULEUS has an incredible record but also remains self-critical. ABULEUS thus set up a diversity programme when it became apparent that young people from immigrant backgrounds were less quick to find that open door than their peers. Diversity must also be wider than this alone: it's also about gender, about orientation, about mixing dance and theatre, about cooperation between professionals and non-professionals. The experience of culture should be something for everyone, created by everyone. A utopian vision? It's a dream that can come true at ABULEUS.

And it has done for the past twenty years now. We have already celebrated this big anniversary... but let this prize be the icing on the cake. Because everyone should be able to taste culture, and young people are hungry. Hip Hip hooray!