

The bodily life of the metaphor

Choreographer Arno Schuitemaker already has an intensive professional career behind him, but he has never previously taken to the stage himself. This is an exciting moment, but also the perfect way for him to share his fascination for his subject – the metaphor. Schuitemaker explains: 'It is intriguing to see how our brains enable us to think metaphorically.' Metaphors link unrelated concepts to one another, resulting in endless associations and interrelations, which in turn conjure up a broad palette of emotions, experiences and impressions.

Schuitemaker had already declared his love for the workings of the brain in *The Fifteen Project*. In the latter, he took a detailed look at mirror neurons, which play an important role in creating connections between people. 'I like to work with subjects that awaken my curiosity, but that in my view also contain something substantial. The way in which the brain processes information is essential to how we view the world and other people.'

An important source of inspiration for the performance is the book *I is an Other* by James Geary, from which the performance's title is derived. It was this book that prompted Schuitemaker to start searching for the physical nature of metaphors. 'Metaphors are very physical and regularly involve movement. For example, we take a "leap in time". Our knowledge of how it feels to leap enables us to create this kind metaphor.' The intricate web of our thinking is difficult to comprehend, meaning that we are barely conscious of the influence metaphors have on our life. For Schuitemaker, the stage is the perfect place to explore this unconscious influence. 'The way in which a metaphor works starts with perception. Both the performers and the audience perceive it. These perceptions give rise to sensory associations, creating a common experience.'

He worked intensively with the dancer Mitchell-lee van Rooij, lighting designer Ellen Knops and composer Wim Selles. Schuitemaker wanted to keep the performance as transparent as possible. 'As the theme is complex and ambitious, I wanted to begin from a clear starting point: the body. Its physicality exposes the workings of metaphors in a tangible way, and my aim is to effect a physical experience for both performers and audience alike.'

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