

## Rita Mazza - Sign poetry

If Rita Mazza's portrayals had to be described in one word, it would be

"exactly" - the "exactly" where, in sign language, the lower jaw tenses and an imaginary thread is stretched tenaciously through the air with both thumbs and index fingers. But what you see is not tough. "Matters of Rhythm" is Mazza's first work that gives the impression: "That's it! You can leave it like that!". The artist herself says in the video interview. Mazza, born in Turin, came to Berlin in 2010, initially still committed to classical theater. With the main role of Sarah in "God's Forgotten Children", she went on tour for a year after the premiere in 2015 and performed on a large theater stage in 50 cities. For the last time.

Through the artistic direction of the "Festival del Silenzio" 2018, the Italian became aware of dance and performance as forms of expression through the pieces submitted. The piece follows shortly before the corona pandemic

"Vier", where she combined music and sign language for the first time under the direction of Athi-na Lange. It was here that she came into contact with the Berlin Sophiensæle, which supported Mazza and other artists as part of the "Ma- king-a-Difference" program, and later developed "Space 1880", "Dandelion II" and, most recently, "Matters of Rhythm". With "Dandelion II" is the sequel to the groundbreaking poem by Clayton Valli, who influenced generations of visual vernacular artists. Mazza finds a connection to ballet in Valli's typical gestural poetry, which resembles a much-reduced bone broth. She resists being labeled "abstract". Rather, her pieces are comprehensible, catchy.

### **Voice and identity**

The exchange with Christine Sun Kim is encouraging. She also works at the interface of auditory and visual society, primarily drawing attention to exclusion, where sounds and spoken language and the culture associated with them are knowingly or unknowingly placed on a pedestal. In doing so, she holds up a mirror to the public and uses the art form of the meme, but without following trends. She brings her works to the surface through drawing,

Photo: Mayra Wallraff

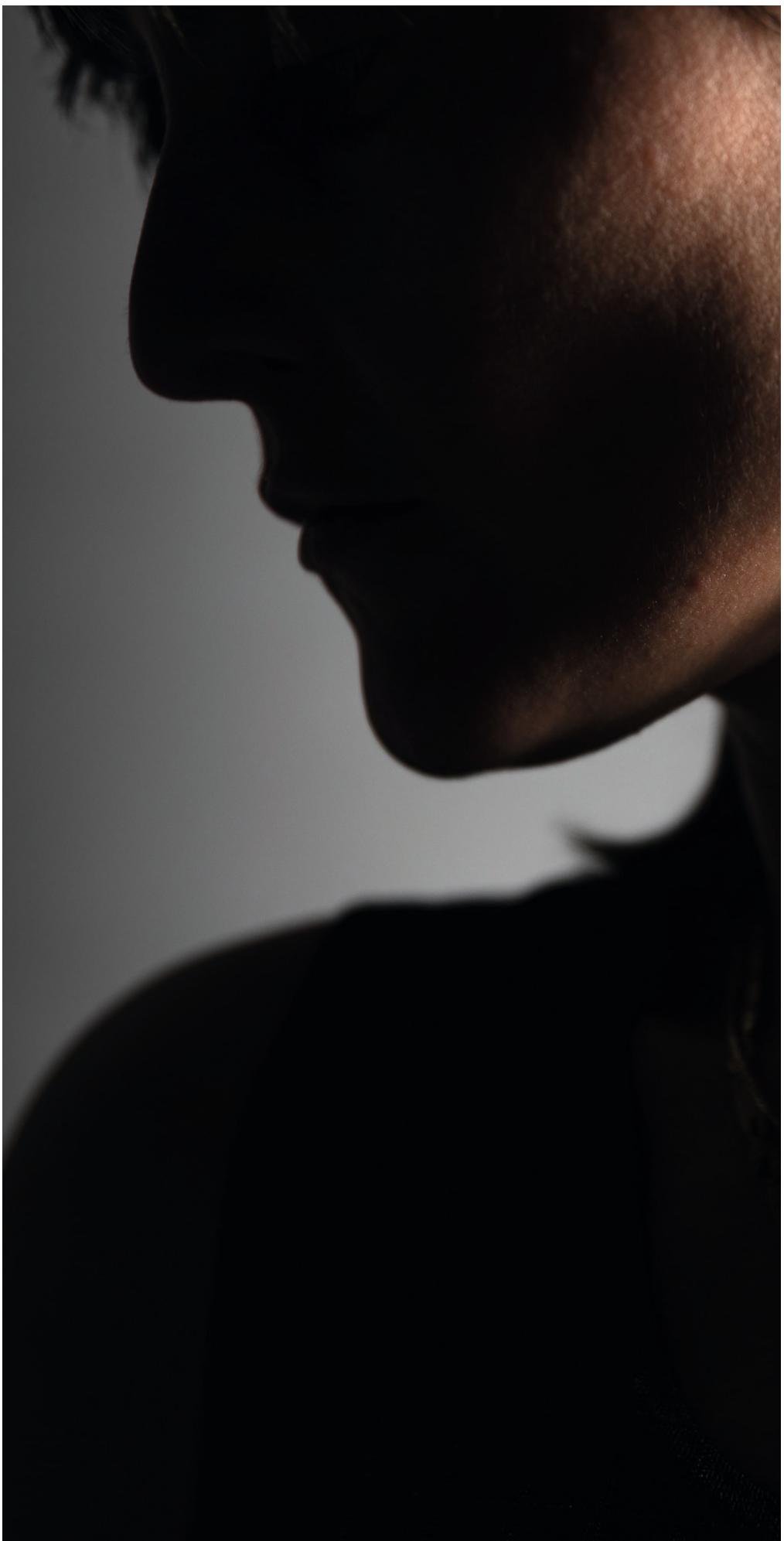




Photo: Patrick Berger

## Dorothée Munyaneza "umuko"

works with written language. Mazza on the other hand

concentrates on visual expression and uses a repertoire of sign language art, visual vernacular, dance and ballet, as well as the rhythms of music. This is combined almost matter-of-factly with suspended lamps, which the artist manipulates like instruments in "Matters". She calls her expression performance or dance performance. Where "Matters" was a pure study of the possible, the new performance "The Voice" aims to go on the offensive. Here, according to the announcement, she will "intimate connections between identity, sexuality and acoustic articulation" in order to investigate topics such as control, cohesion and shame. This promises nothing less than a challenge to a society that sees hearing as the norm that applies to everyone and everything.

Willi Felix Zante

**Sophiensæle, from August 28 to 30**

"umuko" is a tree from Dorothée Munyaneza's childhood in Rwanda. Born in Kigali in 1982, the artist had to flee from the Hutu hit squads almost thirty years ago. She became a singer and musician in London, then a dancer and choreographer in France. And she did this without giving up her musical inclination. So it is no wonder that music and voice play a major role in her previous pieces, in which she evokes her youth or the fate of women and their children raped by Hutu commandos. And now, in "umuko", even the first violin. Mu- nyaneza - who has long since matured into a kind of ambassador for her country - returned to her homeland as part of a cooperation between local institutions and the Chail- lot Theater in Paris, France's Théâtre National de la Danse. As a result, she presents a "new generation" from her home country in "umuko", and they dance, sing and make music as if from

one piece. Which by no means means that people would gather on stage around what Munyaneza describes as a "bright earth-colored, i.e. red" tree. Rather, the production shows how much it is part of a Western choreographic research that is looking for new, more distanced forms of ritualization without throwing the energy and mystery of its origins overboard. In pieces in which she herself performs on stage, Munyaneza manages the synthesis of origins and stylization quite brilliantly. Which raises the question of why she doesn't let go a little in "umuko" and make the ambience more relaxed? Perhaps her aim was to avoid any suspicion of folklore? What remains is an outstanding panel of living art from a country with enormous potential.

Thomas Hahn

**HAU1, from August 15 to 17**