

New venue: DeLaMar Theater



Malcolm Rock gets up to speed on the return of a troubled grande dame

You can't keep a Dutchman down. If he isn't reclaiming land from the disgruntled sea, he's opening theatres at a time when people have purse strings tightly pulled.

'The whole sector is dealing with the effects of the general crisis but crisis is temporary and mostly a psychological phenomenon,' declares Edwin van Balken, the director of the new DeLaMar Theater, which will raise its curtain for the first time in five years on 27 November. 'The thing about theatre is that it takes people's minds off hard times. We've sold more than 40,000 tickets and the building isn't even open yet.'

Van Balken is a theatre lover whose resume lists stints as retail manager of Schiphol Plaza and commercial director of Dutch Railway Stations. He wants DeLaMar, which is located on Marnixstraat behind the Theater Bellevue and opposite the Stadsschouwburg, to be the jewel in the crown of what some are calling Amsterdam's West End. (Of course, some might be so bold as to point out that the idea of Amsterdam having a West End may be a bit of a stretch).

Its twin auditoria – one designed to seat 600 people, the other with capacity for just over 900 – will host mid-market musicals, drama and stand-up comedy, for which neighbour and Bellevue director Jeannette Smit has only praise: 'By continuing the venue's rich tradition of variety programming, the DeLaMar will confirm the Leidseplein's status as the theatre district of Holland, while bringing life and colour back to what has become a pretty gloomy street of late.'

The debut production is a version of the well-travelled Menier Chocolate Factory revival of 'La Cage aux Folles', the Tony Award-winning

production that starred Graham Norton in London and Kelsey Grammer on Broadway, so proceedings are likely to have a favourable start, even if the theatre itself has a somewhat chequered history.

The first venue built on the site in 1947 was created for the Dutch actress Fien de la Mar, whose career on stage and screen had been curtailed during the war when she refused to register with the *Kultuurkamer*, the Nazi directory of artists. The theatre, designed by her architect husband Piet Grosseou, went bankrupt after only five years and Fien would later leap to her death from her Beethovenstraat apartment.

Utrecht cabaret performer Wim Sonneveld resurrected DeLaMar in 1952, intrepidly prefixed with the word 'Nieuw', but it too finally fell dark in 2005. (It's rumoured that under the stage he buried his Genesis Penning, a lucky medal he received from Fred Astaire, but recent excavations turned up nothing).

Even the current redevelopment, which has been funded to the tune of €60 million by stage impresario and 'Big Brother' inventor Jaap van den Ende, ran into trouble when its original contractor went bust, delaying construction by four months. Still, Van Balken, like Sonneveld before him, prefers comedy over tragedy: 'The Theater's past is very important to us because it lends a sense of history to the work we do today.'

Indeed, Fien herself might have ultimately seen the bright side, had she taken a peek at Van Balken's 2010-2011 season, which features productions of Mozart's farcical operetta 'Die Fledermaus', off-Broadway musical oddity 'Urinetown' and a comedy about the '80s generation with the intriguing title 'Expats'.

La Cage aux Folles opens 16 November; DeLaMar's official opening weekend is 27 & 28 November. (0900 335 2627 [€.35/min./]delamar.nl).

Theatre

How to use the listings

★ Means the event is recommended.
FREE All venues, events and exhibitions that are free.

How to be listed

Please send all listings to listings@timeoutamsterdam.nl by **13.00 on the 8th of the month** prior to publication. Information must include any admission charges, times, dates and a telephone number that we can publish. Listings are free but, as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed. Late or incomplete submissions will not be included.

Unless otherwise stated, performances are accessible to non-Dutch speakers

Sunday 7

★**Dwelling In Bed Ain't Bad Betty** *Asfalt Complex, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 282 (bettyasfalt.nl). Various times; €17.* English language version of Paul Haenen's two-hander about a gay male couple and their reflections on the love pursuit.

Wednesday 10 – Saturday 13

★**Life Interrupted: Shoah** *Compagnietheater Kloveniersburgwal 50 (520 5320/compagnietheater.nl). 20.00; €25/€20.* New musical exploring the human experience of people caught up in the horrifying events of WWII. Not to be confused with this month's other Holocaust musical, 'Westerbork Serenade'.

Saturday 13 – Sunday 28

★**Westerbork Serenade** *Various venues including Ostade theater, Van Ostadestraat 233d (xavierahollander.com/westerbork). Various times; €25.* Astonishing musical recreation of life in the Netherlands' notorious deportation camp. See feature, page 86.

Sunday 21 – Tuesday 23

★**Onderhuids (Under your Skin)** *Rozentheater, Rozengracht 117 (627 6162/rozentheater.nl). 16.00; €14.* This feisty, thought-provoking piece of physical theatre from the all-female troupe Fantasten is back in the Dam after a tour of the Netherlands. Through a series of absurd musical interactions, young women try to get to the bottom of what's real and what constitutes performance in the age of social networking.

Comedy & variety

Regular events

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays

NEW Your Worst

Fears *Boom Chicago, Leidseplein 12 (423 0101/boomchicago.nl). Mon, Tue, Thur 20.15, Sat 19.30; €20-€24.* Face what scares you, together

with Amber Ruffin and Lolu Ajayi. Improv, stand-up and video in the first show of the Boom Chicago Duos series aimed at creating more personal and edgy performances. ▶30 Nov.

Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays

Upgrade or Die *Boom Chicago, Leidseplein 12 (423 0101/boomchicago.nl). Wed, Fri, Sun 20.15, Sat 21.45; €20-24.* A 'how to' for combating (or embracing) the technologies that rule our lives. Sign up for a night of improv, music, video and interactive technology, maybe even Facebook. ▶13 Nov.

Fridays

The Friday Show *Easy Laughs, Crea Cafe 'Muziekzaal', Turfdraggsterpad 17 (525 1400/easylaugh.nl). 20.30; €8.* This Amsterdam-based international comedy group entertains droves and creates an energetic atmosphere. There's also a late-night show starting at 22.30 for €5. Pay a flat entrance fee of €12 to see both shows. After the second performance, stick around for the new easyLab free improv session.

Tricky Theater Magic Show *Tricky Theater, Oosterdokkade 10 (626 9383/trickytheater.nl). 20.30; €6.50.* Dutch magic champion Woedy Woet fuses magic and comedy in this show. *No show Friday 5 & Friday 26.*

Saturdays

Tricky Theater Magic Dinner *Tricky Theater, Oosterdokkade 10 (626 9383/trickytheater.nl). Boarding 18.00-19.00; €29.95, children €12.50.* Same deal as the Friday magic show but with a three-course meal included.

Sundays

Hole in the Boat *Comedy Café, Max Euweplein 43-45 (638 3971/comedycafe.nl). 20.00; €13, €33 including a three-course meal.* We'll never really understand the title. Nonetheless, end your weekend in laughter with this comedy two-hander.

By date

Wednesday 3 – Sunday 28

★**Cirque du Soleil: TOTEM** *Amsterdam Arena (0900 0233 [€0.40/min]/cirqueusoleil.com). Various times; €39-€199.* Cirque du Soleil is back in the Dam for the eighth time, this year with its breathtaking show 'TOTEM' (meaning life). While directing this spectacle, Canadian writer and director Robert Lepage remained loyal to his theatrical routes by ignoring refusing to ignore that which is taboo. Characters include an Amerindian dancer and a mad scientist. Evolution, in many senses of the word, and life's journeys are central to the show, which seems to posit the idea that maybe if we humans dream hard enough, we can fly. ▶10 Dec.

