

Walker Arts Centre (Minneapolis), Festival d'Automne (Paris), Festival d'Avignon, Sao Paolo Biennale and the Panorama Festival (Rio de Janeiro). His performances have also been presented in visual art contexts such as at MoMA and MoMA PS1 (New York), the Performa Biennial at the Fondation Cartier (Paris), the New Museum (New York), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Serralves Museum (Porto), the Barbican Centre (London), Centre Pompidou Metz and the ICA Boston.

#### Cast

*Deathbed* (2022) with Ondrej Vidlar, Dila Watten Raworth, Perle Palombe, Songhay Toldon, Christopher Matthews, Titilayo Adebayo, Challenge Gumbodete, Josh Johnson, Trajal Harrell, Nasheeka Nedsreal and Frances Chiaverini

*Dancer of the Year* (2018) with Trajal Harrell

*Dancer of the Year Shop #4* (2022) with members of the Schauspielhaus Zürich Ensemble.

← Buy tickets from Schauspielhaus Zürich



A performance ticket purchased from Schauspielhaus Zürich allows the bearer a free visit to both our exhibitions until 22 May: Trajal Harrell on the second floor and the South African artist Igshaan Adams on the third floor of Kunsthalle Zürich.

Masks must be worn during performances, as is the case in other Zürich theatres. Visitors are not required to show Covid vaccine certification.

Opening hours: Tue–Sun 11 am–6pm, Thu 11 am–8 pm, Mon closed

Exhibition tours every Thursday at 6.30pm (free entry).

Löwenbräukunst Community Day takes place on Saturday 26 March with a children's 'Objets Trouvés' workshop, tours and more.

Please consult our website for up-to-date information on these and other events: [www.kunsthallezurich.ch](http://www.kunsthallezurich.ch)

Kunsthalle Zürich receives funding from



L U M A  
F O U N D A T I O N

## Trajal Harrell 04.03.–03.04.2022

### EN *Deathbed*, 2022

Friday	04.03.2022 (world premiere)	8 pm
Saturday	05.03.2022	8 pm
Sunday	06.03.2022	8 pm
Friday	11.03.2022	8 pm
Saturday	12.03.2022	8 pm
Sunday	13.03.2022	8 pm
Thursday	17.03.2022	8 pm
Friday	18.03.2022	8 pm
Saturday	19.03.2022	8 pm
Wednesday	23.03.2022	8 pm
Thursday	24.03.2022	8 pm
Friday	25.03.2022	8 pm

Performed twice in a varying loop. From 8–9 pm visitors can come and go as they wish; at 9.15 pm, doors will be closed and the work performed once more. Tickets can be purchased exclusively from Schauspielhaus Zürich.

## *Dancer of the Year*, 2018

Thursday	10.03.2022	8 pm
Wednesday	16.03.2022	7 pm
Tuesday	22.03.2022	8 pm
Saturday	26.03.2022	8 pm
Thursday	31.03.2022	8 pm

The work lasts approximately 50 minutes and starts punctually at 8 pm, with the exception of 7 pm on 16 March.

Only a small number of tickets for these performances are available; they can be purchased exclusively from Schauspielhaus Zürich.

## *Dancer of The Year Shop #4*, 2022

*Dancer of The Year Shop #4* (2022) is on show during normal Kunsthalle Zürich opening hours, daily except Mondays from 11am–6 pm, Thursdays until 8 pm. From 2–6 pm each day two performers will be salespeople, presenting the wares to customers.

Kunsthalle  
Zürich

Limmatstr. 270  
8005 Zürich

Kunsthalle Zürich, in collaboration with Schauspielhaus Zürich, presents three projects by pioneering American dancer and choreographer Trajal Harrell: *Deathbed* (2022), *Dancer of the Year* (2018) and *Dancer of The Year Shop #4* (2022).

Three years ago, Schauspielhaus Zürich and American dancer and choreographer Trajal Harrell approached the Kunsthalle Zürich to ask whether we could conceive of a collaboration. Why were they interested? And how might this be of interest to us? It soon turned out that we often talk about the same thing, but mean something different – and vice versa. Although we are active in the same field – visual performative culture – suddenly significant differences, that indeed make a difference, emerged. An institution like Kunsthalle Zürich, for example, welcomes visitors every day; they can come and go as they please, they are allowed to discuss what they see while in the space, to make noise and move around freely. A theatre such as the Schauspielhaus Zürich is unlike this: doors open in the evening at a specific time, punctuality is required, the audience sits and should not converse, cough or move. All this, of course, has a variety of effects on production, organisation and mediation. But this is precisely what interests Trajal Harrell, just as he is interested in the history and conventions of various dance forms, from voguing to postmodern dance to butoh. In the differences between forms Harrell discovers artistic as well as socio-political potential; by focusing on these details and challenging them, he can break away from cliché and preconceived ideas. In one of many conversations during the lead up to this project (see for example the conversation between Harrell and Daniel Baumann on [www.kunsthallezurich.ch](http://www.kunsthallezurich.ch)), he describes how he is sceptical of stage design, lighting, production and indeed the stage in general. He is fundamentally sceptical of the separation of auditorium and performance space. Accordingly, the audience of *Deathbed*, the work to premiere at Kunsthalle Zürich, will be seated on the dance floor at least spatially on a par with the dancers – and they will be able to, will have to and be encouraged to move. In this way, Harrell connects the operating modes of two institutions that are taken as given and fixed. At first glance, this may seem a detail, a formal gimmick (who cares?), but the world can change when unquestioned structures are challenged. Harrell's art is thus transgressive, created by analysing, absorbing and then reshaping the vocabulary of a tradition. In doing so, his pieces transcend established perspectives and equally gender boundaries, race and class differences, and build bridges between institutions, spaces and people that usually have little or no contact. Take the distinct audiences of Kunsthalle Zurich and Schauspielhaus Zürich! In a time in which we are encouraged to 'curate' our identities through demarcation and rejection, this transgression is more important than ever.

The enthusiasm we have for Trajal Harrel's work also has to do with our own approach and the Kunsthalle Zürich programme. In recent years, we have repeatedly championed breaking down boundaries, ideas and conventions. Be that with *The Playground Project* (2016), Rob Pruitt's *The Church* (2017) or *Georgian Modernism* (2018), as well as with exhibition projects such as *Scalable Skeletal Escalator* (2020). In this way we at Kunsthalle Zürich, akin to Trajal Harrell, attempt not only to captivate visitors but to inspire them far beyond art.

Trajal Harrell, born in Douglas, Georgia (USA) in 1973, became famous through *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church* (2009–2017). The starting point for the project was his question: 'What would have happened if someone from the voguing ballroom scene in Harlem had gone downtown to perform with the early postmodern dancers of the Judson Church in 1963?' The question

is how similar things can take place in the same place at the same time without encountering one another. In *Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at The Judson Church*, Harrel combined the tradition of voguing with the influential postmodern dance of Judson Dance Theater. 'What if...?' is one of the important motifs in Trajal Harrell's work. It allows him to ask questions that seem searching and speculative, but which provide clarity and insight. Not least, it allows him to reinterpret and rethink the history and tradition of dance and bring it to a new audience. This is why he is one of the most influential dancers and choreographers of his generation.

The three projects at Kunsthalle Zürich:

The starting point of *Dancer of the Year* (2018) was Harrell's 2018 'Dancer of the Year' award from the German magazine *Tanz*. How can one react to such an award? What does it mean, how is it to be classified, who is honouring whom? How does this honour relate to dance in general and to Harrell personally? Harrell responds with his solo work, *Dancer of the Year*, which acknowledges and incorporates the award, then reinterprets it: he literally passes the award addressed to him on to the audience. *Dancer of the Year* is self-critical, it is a gift given, an honour honoured and it enables new reflection.

In *Dancer of The Year Shop #4* (2022), Harrell sells objects that are personal possessions and belong to his family. It is a shop; it's also a museum shop. It imitates and celebrates how art is a commodity in a way that is not possible in dance and theatre, while art's market value can unfortunately no longer be overlooked anywhere in the art world. But *Dancer of The Year Shop #4* is also a stage (two actors adopt the roles of shop assistants every day) and thus theatre. At the same time, it is an exhibition, because the objects are displayed in vitrines like works of art – and may also be art. In other words, everything is what it is (shop, theatre or exhibition), and always something else besides. But centre stage are the objects, their origins, the references and memories attached to them and that they evoke. Ultimately, the shop also poses questions of heritage and history, of justified or unjustified appropriation and its marketing.

*Deathbed* (2022) is the third element and heart of the Kunsthalle Zürich project. Originally planned for 2020, *Deathbed* is part of the *Porca Miseria* trilogy commissioned by Manchester International Festival, Schauspielhaus Zürich, Onassis Stegi, Kampnagel Hamburg, Holland Festival, Barbican, Dance Umbrella, NYU Skirball, Berliner Festspiele and The Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi. In this ambitious trilogy, Harrell brings together three women of literature and recent history, all of whom were despised and attacked, but who responded to fierce assaults with an idiosyncratic mix of pride and fighting spirit. They are Medea, outcast and murderer of her own children; Maggie, the aloof and explosive protagonist of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955); and the pioneering choreographer Katherine Dunham (1909–2006). *Deathbed* is dedicated to Dunham; Harrell combines the aesthetic relationship to death and ritual that is central to the Japanese expressive dance butoh with his memories of the African-American dancer. Dunham was known for creating a space for African and Caribbean dance traditions and rituals on stage and travelled the world with her own dance company in the 1940s and '50s. She was also an activist, going on hunger strike against the deportation of Haitian refugees from the US and fighting for equality in her own country.

Trajal Harrell, b. 1973, lives in Athens and Zürich. His work has been shown in numerous theatres, biennials and festivals, including The Kitchen (New York),