

PERFORMANCE

# QUADRA 16

CRIS MOREIRA



FREE  
REPUBLIC OF  
VIENNA  
FESTIVAL

27 – 31 May  
Theater Nestroyhof  
Hamakom

Life and death are often closer than we can bear. In 2008, Cris Moreira gave birth to twins. One of the two children, Francisco, died two days later. His body was laid to rest in that part of the 'cemetery of longing' in Belo Horizonte where only children are buried – Block 16. In her poignant lecture-performance *Quadra 16*, the Brazilian artist uses documentary material and audiovisual techniques to talk about her grief: she addresses the invisibility of pain in a society that treats pregnancy as a public event, but the loss of a child as a private matter. This is the first time that the artist, who has received several awards for her sociopolitical productions, is presenting her work in Austria. *Quadra 16* is a deeply personal and at the same time community-building solo performance that asks: Who will listen to a mother speaking about loneliness and death?

**Language**  
Portuguese

**Surtitles**  
German and English

**Duration**  
40 mins

  
barrier-free access

**Please note**  
After the performance,  
the audience is invited  
to engage in a discussion  
with the artist.

‘Theatre opens a  
space of presence,  
of listening that  
is rarely found  
elsewhere.’

CRIS MOREIRA

**Direction, Dramaturgy, Performance** Cris Moreira **Light design** Marina Arthuzzi, Cristiano Oliveira Araújo **Set design, Costumes** Marina Sandim **Audiovisual creation** André Veloso **Original soundtrack** Daniel Nunes **Translation surtitles** Melanie Strasser (German), Tempo Filmes (English), Jéssica Ragoni (English) **Production, Surtitles** Tiago de Macedo

**Production** Cris Moreira – Esparrama!

executed by the team of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

**World Premiere** March 2025, MITsp – Mostra Internacional de Teatro de São Paulo

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# ABOUT THE POWER OF THEATRE TO CREATE A COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

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## INTERVIEW WITH CRIS MOREIRA

**Thank you for your time. Where are you right now?**

Thank you for letting me be a part of this festival and that I can speak about such a sensitive issue with the audience. I am in Brazil at the moment.

***Quadra 16* is based on your life, your grief after the loss of one of your children and at the same time a reality of life for many women. Why does it take theatre to speak about it?**

Theatre opens a space of presence, of listening, that is rarely found elsewhere. Enacting a story live on stage in front of other people takes it beyond the purely individual and turns it into a collective experience. That is particularly crucial for *Quadra 16* because the piece is about experiences that are often silenced or suffered alone.

Speaking about these experiences in theatre lends them a physicality, a voice, a temporal aspect. It is a space that lets us share pain in peace without there having to be answers straight away. A space in which the audience can find themselves even if they didn't experience that very same story. There is something very

powerful and beautiful in this encounter between the person on stage and the audience, because it creates a connection of empathy and care.

The special thing about theatre is that it can turn an intimate experience into a collective experience and it opens a path for dialogue and listening. It also often opens a path to letting feelings come out that don't have a space outside.

**Were there any moments during rehearsals when you thought: I've reached the limits of theatre, I cannot or do not want to show this?**

For a while, I did not want to speak about João, Francisco's twin, in the piece. I was worried about infringing on his personal space. But then I realised that it wouldn't make any sense to treat the entire pregnancy, the grief and the motherhood without mentioning this deep bond that is also part of the story.

The desire to make this play arose out of the loneliness that is a part of grief, out of the recognition that so many other mothers have this experience and out of the desire that they – like me – don't feel so alone. Because I believe that theatre is a place to come together, I had to (and

still have to) deal with a part of my grief in this encounter with other women.

You received the renowned Brazilian theatre award Prêmio Copasa in several categories for your work *Rosa Choque* (Pink Shock). The play addresses violence against women as systemic in society. In *Quadra 16* you also break a silence that has permeated all of society for many generations. What do you hope for theatre to achieve?

I hope that the piece makes a contribution to starting a dialogue about an issue that is still surrounded by silence.

Pregnancies are frequently a very public experience. Many people want to ask questions, have an opinion, touch the woman's bump. When a child dies, however, grief is something private. There is no space for it where you can feel cared for. There is a collective embarrassment. People don't know what to say, how to act, and – often with the best of intentions – they avoid providing the woman with a space in which she can speak, cry, simply be among a community.

As it is such a sensitive issue, the grief around the loss of a child is often accompanied by intense loneliness. That is why I would like it if this play could give some solace to mothers who have also gone through this loss. If it could bring them some recognition and empathy and if it also helps their environment to better understand and respect their needs. Also that it leads to more care and receptiveness.

*Quadra 16* doesn't end the way plays usually end – darkness, curtain calls and applause. Instead, you invite the audience on to the stage to share a birthday cake with you and talk with you if they want. Why did you choose this form?

I chose to end the piece like this in order to celebrate the – albeit short – existence of Francisco and all the other children who left us much too soon. At the same time, I am trying to give some visibility to the women and their pain and experience, which are so often kept in silence. I want to show that it is possible to keep going, especially if we walk together.

**Do audiences react differently in different places or is there a pattern that can be found everywhere, a desire, a thought, an emotion that (almost) everyone shares?**

The reactions differ because everyone connects the piece with their own grief. They are not necessarily mourning a dead child; they might be mourning a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a soulmate, a friend. Grief is an extremely personal process, there is no measure that limits it and no instruction that could teach us how to pass through it.

What I perceive is how many in the audience are moved. Many cry, and those who don't cry and speak with me after the performance also show how deeply they've been touched.

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# BIOGRAPHY

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**Cris Moreira** is a Brazilian actress and cultural manager. Her work operates at the intersection of theatre, performance, and audio-visual formats and is characterised by a documentary approach as well as sociopolitical themes such as gender, memory, and social visibility.

She is a co founder of Esparrama! Gestão e Produção Cultural, a Brazilian cultural management and production platform that supports contemporary theatre and performance projects and enables their realisation both nationally and internationally. In addition, Moreira is a member of the artistic collective Conectores, with whom she has been researching the interconnections between performance, documentation, and media based dispositifs since 2009.

Among her best known works is *Rosa Choque* (2015), which addresses violence against women and has received multiple awards. With *Quadra 16*, her work is being presented for the first time at the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) and in Austria.

## PUBLICATION DETAILS

**Owner, Editor and Publisher** Wiener Festwochen GesmbH, Lehárgasse 11/1/6, 1060 Wien, T + 43 1 589 22 0, festwochen@festwochen.at | [www.festwochen.at](http://www.festwochen.at) **General Management** Milo Rau, Artemis Vakianis **Artistic Direction** (responsible for the content) Milo Rau, Artistic Direction **Translation** Nadezda Müngersdorff (wordsmithery) **Picture Credits Cover** © Tatti Motta **Produced by** Print Alliance HAV Produktions GmbH (Bad Vöslau) **Design** SIRENE **Studio Layout** Valerie Eccli

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