

You use the rainbow as a reference to identity. How would you describe your own identity and its relationship to the image of the rainbow?

Nazanin: A rainbow is an optical effect that does not have a fixed location, it is not graspable. This concept links to identity which is also something that is so complex and multi-layered that you cannot put your finger on it. I was born in Iran, in Tehran, I grew up in Germany from the age of eight, later during my studies I moved to Paris and from there to Brussels where I have been living for a couple of years. All these languages and experiences became layers of my personality. Language is one thing, but it is the same with national identity, gender, profession, even age and political views. All these layers are not separate parts of my identity, but they all melt together to form what I am now. We are always more than one thing. We have the tendency to simplify in order to understand ourselves and others better, but at the same time we are actually also capable of seeing things from multiple perspectives simultaneously. So the image of the rainbow helps to point out that non-binarity and the complexity of our identities.

You use the story 'The Conference of the Birds' by the Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar as the libretto for your work. What does this mean to you and your work?

Nazanin: Attar's story just fits perfectly with the image of the rainbow, it questions the relationship between multiplicity and unity. In the story all the birds of the world gather and start a dangerous and difficult journey to find Simorgh, a mythical bird which represents the truth or the One. Only thirty of them arrive at the abode of Simorgh, where they learn that they themselves are the one they are looking for. 'Si' actually means thirty and 'morgh' means birds in Persian, together they are Simorgh. The one is multiple, and the multiple is one. In that sense there is that tension between plurality and singularity and seeing things from different directions. Compared to other Persian poets from that time Attar also uses very simple language, although his ideas are very complex. Another reason why I chose his work for this piece is that Attar was my father's favourite poet, being from the same town. For me it also was an approach to my mother tongue, to my origins and a way to get closer to my parents.

Light and the reflection of light has a special importance in your work. It creates movement without a body present on stage. What is the quality of this movement of light and its fluidity?

Nazanin: My research on reflections and mirrors was influenced by a very inspiring trip to Iran years ago. My first trip back for 20 years. I was impressed by the mirror mosaics, a traditional element of Persian interior architecture, that I saw in palaces, gardens and pavilions. Small reflecting pieces of mosaic are attached at different angles to the wall. You cannot see yourself in the reflection and your body becomes a moving but shapeless reflection of light. I found that very inspiring. Later in my research, light actually became like a performer for me. I like the fact that it is very free, it is mesmerising and changing its shape all the time in a way that human bodies are not capable of. This has a certain quality and makes it unpredictable. It has shape and loses shape at the same time, supporting this idea of multiplicity and fluidity again.

Interview with **Nazanin Fakoor** by **Andreas Fleck**