

[PRESS RELEASE]

UK premiere of *False Start* (dir. Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski) in first run at 2022 Edinburgh Fringe

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False Start, from acclaimed French-German theatre-maker Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski, will have its UK debut in August 2022. The show asks a simple question: What happens when you train for something your whole life, only to fail at the crucial moment? What started as a 5-minute performance for runners at a Marathon in 2018 has evolved into a 55-minute performance, and runs at Summerhall during the Edinburgh Fringe this summer, having been postponed in 2020. Using elite sport as the ultimate metaphor for performance pressure, four actors take the audience on a journey bursting with music, tension and humour, to explore the true meaning of failure in sport, but also in life.



FALSE START

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A director who weaves music and bodies into tableaux vivants

Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski is a Brussels-based, French-German director and scenographer known for her striking performance language interweaving theatre, music, visual arts, and literature. Active since 1994, she has a strong international presence, including productions at Aix-en-Provence, Berlin Biennale, National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Taiwan), Festival Musica Strasbourg, Wiener Festwochen, Oper Stuttgart, La Monnaie, and Théâtre National in Brussels. She is also the founder of Lucilia Caesar, a performing arts laboratory in Brussels. Her work is pluriform and often reworks old art in new ways, for example, *In H-moll* (2001) a production where 10 actors performed Bach's D-minor mass without musicians, stripping the music back to expose its rawness and fragility.

Elite sports, the art of the fugue, and a touch of surrealism

In *False Start*, Ingrid turns to the world of sports and explores what philosopher Isabelle Queval described as the "extreme consequences of this cult and the obsession with performance". Inspired by Usain Bolt's infamous false start at the 2011 World Athletics Championships – a moment that cost Bolt his title – the play opens with four actors crouched in their starting blocks. They then race through vignettes of extreme physical and emotional tension – a Formula 1 pit stop, a penalty kick in a football match, a figure skater falling over – that is diffused as the scene cuts and we find ourselves in an ad break, or see someone on their sofa, watching the match on TV.

Inspired by the baroque fugue form, *False Start* eschews linear narrative in favour of juxtaposing motifs, intertwined with techno, Pink Floyd, Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, or recordings of a live match. At the end, the four actors return to their starting blocks, and we are left to ponder our own interminable race against the clock – and ourselves – in modern life. Given the slightly surreal touches, perhaps it is fitting that the first full version of *False Start* in 2018 was performed in Belgium. That production was described as "beautiful – magnificent, even – but struck with strangeness." (Martine Dumont-Mergeay, *La Libre Belgique*, September 2018), and "baroque, quirky and pictorial" with "a classical aesthetic, greatly spiced up by a gently iconoclastic and playful wit." (O. Hespel, *Le Vif Express*).

Inspired by an iconic sporting fail

Director Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski explains the production's backstory: "The idea for *False Start* came to me when I saw Usain Bolt get disqualified in the 2011 Athletics Championships. It led me to reflect on the constant desire to outperform ourselves, and how we cope with failure. I think we all feel this pressure nowadays... And exploring this on stage is exciting, because sport has an incredible power to take us into some emotions. If you think about the passion attached to high-level sports it is almost like a religion, requiring the ultimate effort from the performers, and complete devotion from its spectators."

Dates *False Start* runs from 3-7 and 9-14 August at Summerhall, Edinburgh (<https://www.summerhall.co.uk/>). The performance is in English, and lasts 55 minutes with no interval. The press preview is on **3 August**.