



Marta Górnicka
Multitude
12.09.–08.11.2020
Ebensperger Berlin ∞ Luxoom Lab

Entrance

Marta Górnicka
Hymn to Love
2017
Video
45'

Luxoom Lab Hall

Marta Górnicka
Grundgesetz – Ein chorischer Stresstest
2018
Video
33'

Basement, Room 1

Marta Górnicka
Requiemachine
2013
Video
42'

Basement, Room 1

Marta Górnicka
Magnificat
2012
Video
37'

Basement, Video Chamber

Marta Górnicka
Constitution for a Chorus of Poles
2016
Video
27'



Marta Górnicka

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"Multitude" at Ebensperger Berlin, in collaboration with Luxoom Lab, is the first monographic exhibition of works by Marta Górnicka, a stage director and the re-discoverer of the choral principle. The exhibition presents film/sound installations of some of the artist's most important works: HYMN TO LOVE, GRUNDGESETZ, REQUIEMACHINE, MAGNIFICAT and CONSTITUTION FOR THE CHORUS OF POLES.

Marta Górnicka's works are well known to the German audiences as the artist has collaborated with German theatres for a number of years. Currently, she is an artist in residence at Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, where she has established the POLITICAL VOICE INSTITUTE – a socio-theatrical laboratory. In 2016, Górnicka received a nomination for the prestigious Deutscher Theaterpreis Der Faust for her production M(OTHER) COURAGE at the Staatstheater Braunschweig. Górnicka's works have been shown at many group exhibitions, including the 7th Moscow International Biennale of Contemporary Art 2017-2018, Late Polishness at the Contemporary Art Centre in Warsaw 2017, the Third Berlin Autumn Salon 2017 and the 1st Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art at the Tallinn Art Hall 2018. Her performance JEDEM DAS SEINE, produced by the Münchner Kammerspiele and Maxim Gorki Theatre, opened the Fourth Berlin Autumn Salon in 2019.

The title "Multitude" refers to the collective subject with whom Marta Górnicka works. It indicates the radically political dimension of her artistic exploration. THE CHORUS which she brings into existence as the sole protagonist of her performances is always both a critical tool to examine modern mechanisms of control, exclusion and violence, and a vehicle of community.

THE CHORUS contains the irreducible diversity of separate beings, each of whom has full legitimacy to participate in what they have in common: their collective voice and collective breath.

The politicality of Górnicka's CHORUS always goes in a particular direction. Throughout her career, she has engaged in the tensest conflicts of the societies in which she works. Her first theatre group THE CHORUS OF WOMEN, created in 2010 in Warsaw, Poland, gave voice to women who were experiencing growing oppression from the conservative alliance of each consecutive national government with the Catholic church post-1989. In Košice, Slovakia, Górnicka worked with the stigmatized Romani community. In Israel, she began work on her trilogy inspired by Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage". There, she created a CHORUS comprised of Jewish and Muslim mothers and children, and Israeli soldiers. The trilogy's subsequent parts HYMN TO LOVE and M(OTHER) COURAGE – were created in Germany and Poland respectively. The director engaged with the subject of rising nationalism and the horror and seductive beauty of a community built on excluding Others. The trilogy also returned to the communities' most difficult experience: the Holocaust, and mapped different spaces of the collective unconscious.

When an extreme right government rose to power in Poland and began dismantling democratic institutions, Górnicka summoned a CHORUS OF POLES to read the Polish CONSTITUTION collectively. Representatives of both the right and left side of the suddenly polarized Polish society stood beside Jewish people, Catholics, children, seniors, people with Down syndrome, actors and actresses from Nowy Teatr in Warsaw and THE CHORUS OF WOMEN, refugees unsuccessfully looking for help in Poland, members of the Vietnamese community and members of the paramilitary association "Strzelec". The multitude was not so much a theatrical image of society as it was society itself, with all of its contradictions, tensions and impassable divisions. By performing the text of the Polish constitution, it spoke many languages in one human voice.

In 2018, Marta Górnicka prepared a choral version of the German GRUNDGESETZ with Maxim Gorki Theatre. She summoned a post-migrant CHORUS of fifty Berliners in order to put the German Constitution to a stress test at the foot of the Brandenburg Gate. Diverse bodies and voices, with their individual stories determined by various political forces, met in the public space to ask the fundamental question: whether the GRUNDGESETZ could be a basis for a community whose identity is open to multitudes.

In Marta Górnicka's works, the collective voice of the CHORUS gains revolutionary power. It is a tool of political engagement, but also a space for what is unconditionally common. The voice exits bodies and enters them – no matter the language, the background, the story, the identity or the religion. And in order to emit voice, one must take a breath – which is shared with others. In its very form, Marta Górnicka's CHORUS communicates the basic human interdependence and the irreducible plurality of people. Especially today, when the CHORUS cannot take a collective breath, and when thousands cannot listen to it like they did at the Brandenburg Gate, it can be felt with great power.



Marta Górnicka
Hymn to Love
2017
Video
45'

Entrance

HYMN TO LOVE is the final piece in Marta Górnicka's European triptych inspired by Mother Courage. The image of orchestra playing music in the death camps of the Holocaust is a starting point for Górnicka to address the rise of present-day European nationalism, and the migration crisis. In her libretto to "HYMN TO LOVE", she exposes the obscene language of politics today, quoting statements by fundamentalist fighters and terrorists (including fragments of Anders Breivik's manifesto 2083 – A European Declaration of Independence, and speeches by ISIL leaders Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Osama bin Laden) alongside addresses delivered by legitimate politicians.

Górnicka mixes Internet hate-speech with pop lyrics and patriotic songs. She makes use of musical and ritual structures, and samples national anthems and fragments of church liturgy in an attempt to determine where the song that emerges out of all these sources might take the audience.

Marta Górnicka:

In HYMN TO LOVE, I've composed a monstrous "National Songbook" out of various versions of the national anthem, marches, patriotic songs, religious hymns and folk songs – our shared musical repertoire, so eagerly being mixed by the nationalist rappers of today: 'TIS A DAY OF BLOOD AND GLORY!

When working on this project, I was haunted by the image of the concentration camp orchestra, which played marches, German classical music, and tunes from pre-war operettas. All the prisoners were forced to sing along. Music played a part in the Holocaust. I am looking into this alliance of song and murder.

I believe that the CHORUS, as a figure of the community, can show the workings of the collective unconscious. Its song exposes the frightfulness of a community bound together by their love for their country: of a homeland exclusively for people like us. A homeland which is like a family that has to be kept safe and pure by eliminating all foreign bodies – other races, religions, sexualities. Such a love is a perverse fulfilment of the commandment "Love thy neighbour as thyself"! It inspires Champions of Purity or Saviours to fight for our right to love our neighbours, as long as they look just like us. "You must honour me for my seventy-seven victims," Anders Breivik urges. "Actions like mine prevent a future civil war, which could result in the death of hundreds of thousands. I put the world in order. I come to heal." With a smile, Breivik insists he is completely sane, as the entire history of our civilization attests. He is right. How are we to respond to this horrific logic?

Cast

Sylwia Achu, Anna Andrzejewska, Pamela Adamik, Maria Chleboś, Konrad Cichoń, Piotr B. Dąbrowski, Tymoteusz Dąbrowski, Maciej Dużyński, Anna Maria Gierczyńska, Paula Głowacka, Maria Haile, Wojciech Jaworski, Borys Jaźnicki, Katarzyna Jaźnicka, Ewa Konstanciak, Irena Lipczyńska, Kamila Michalska, Izabela Ostolska, Filip Piotr Rutkowski, Michał Sierosławski, Ewa Sołtysiak, Ewa Szumska, Krystyna Lama Szydłowska, Kornelia Trawkowska, Anastazja Żak.

Credits

Conceived, written and directed by: Marta Górnicka. Music: Teoniki Rozynek. Choreography: Anna Godowska. Dramaturgy: Agata Adamiecka. Set design: Robert Rumas. Costumes: Anna Maria Karczmarzka. Puppets: Konrad Czarkowski (Kony Puppets). Lighting design: Artur Sienicki. Producers: Izabela Dobrowolska, Agnieszka Różyńska. Assistant to the director: Arnold Prządka. Assistant to the choreographer: Anna Krysiak. Assistant to the costume designer: Agnieszka Majkutewicz. Assistant and vocal coach: Joanna Piech-Sławecka. Technical director: Andrzej Szwaczek.

Co-produced by The CHORUS OF WOMEN Foundation, Polish Theatre in Poznan, Ringlokschuppen Ruhr, Maxim Gorki Theater
Partners: Goethe-Institut, Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle
Project co-financed by The City of Warsaw, The City of Poznan and Kunststiftung NRW.
Pre-premiere: 21.01.2017

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Marta Górnicka
Grundgesetz – Ein chorischer Stresstest
2018
Video
33'

Luxoom Lab Hall

On 3 October 1990, the union of the two German states was officially declared, and that day has been celebrated as the Day of the Germans ever since. On 3 October 2018, Marta Górnicka presented the Grundgesetz in front of the Brandenburg Gate with a chorus of fifty professional and non-professional actors from many different spectra of the civil society. They questioned the seventy-year-old legal text. This performative stress test sought to demonstrate the limits and the current tensile strength of the words in the constitution within the tensions of society: Who is the subject of the German constitution? In whose name does it speak? To whom does it belong? Who are "the people"? Who is "the majority"? Can a document which enshrines the fundamental rights "of all Germans" put a stop to violence and racism? Is any document that "guarantees" democratic values capable of "defending" them?

Marta Górnicka:

I'm interested in the tension between law and violence - the limits and durability of a consensus that protects us against violence and against seeing our opponent's death as the ultimate way of resolving conflicts. This consensus can only be achieved in language. The words that are written into laws are supposed to guarantee disarmament. They literally knock weapons out of our hands and enable us to overcome the rule of violence. But words can also arm our opponents. Every act of genocide or systemic violence, every refusal of solidarity that brings death, are first effected in language.

German society today is deeply divided. Two different visions of community are clashing - national and homogeneous versus open and diverse. A fight is waged with words and for words.

Whose vision 'promotes world peace'? Who is 'the nation'? Who forms 'a majority'? Who is the citizen? Who is the alien? Who does this country belong to? Who are 'ALLE DEUTSCHEN!'?

By subjecting the Basic Law to stress testing, we test the maximum workload and capacity that its words can handle.

Cast

Maryam Abu Khaled, Emre Aksızoğlu, Abd-Almalek Arabo, Tamer Arslan, Elmira Bahrami, Christian Behrend, Mareike Beykirch, Wera Bunge, Karim Daoud, Saro Emirze, Aylin Esener, Hala Faisal, Tahera Hashemi, Björn Hauke, Katrin Heller, Lénárd Kókai, Mai-Phuong Kollath, Léonie Kurtz, Thibaud Kurtz, Lindy Larsson, Mariette Morgenstern-Minnemann, Nika Miškovi, Jasmina Musi, Magda Roma Przybylska, Soraya Reichl, Mathis Reinhardt, Tucké Royale, Filip Rutkowski, Abak Safaei-Rad, Elena Schmidt, Marie-Carlotta Schmidt, Nathalie Seiss, Sandra Selimovi, Simonida Selimovi, Zora Schemm, Helena Simon, Johanna Skirecki, Peter Sondermann, Fatima Taih, Hasan Taşgin, Füsün Türel, Volkan Türel, Linda Vaher, Annika Weitzendorf, Rika Weninger, Dusty Whistles, Paul Wollin, Mehmet Yılmaz and Berliner Fanfarenzug e.V. und SG Fanfarenzug Potsdam e.V.

Credits

Concept, libretto, directing: Marta Górnicka. Stage design: Robert Rumas. Concept choreography: Anna Godowska. Choreography Berlin: Tomasz Wygoda. Composition: Marta Górnicka, Polina Lapkowskaja. Costumes: Isabell Reisinger. Dramaturgy: Aljoscha Begrich. Translation libretto: Andreas Volk. Collaboration translation libretto: Paulina Dominik. Recording & live cutting: Jesse Jonas Kracht. Vocal coach: Lénárd Kókai. Management fanfare parade: Nancy Dressel. Collaboration dramaturgy/chorus casting: Julia Büki. Artistic advice: Agata Adamiecka. Technical directory: Thomas Kirsten. Coordination sound/video: Christopher von Nathusius. Sound: Benjamin Schultz. Video: Jesse Jonas Kracht. Assistant director: Dominika Homa, Isabella Sedlak. Assistant stage design: Luisa Puschendorf. Assistant choreography: Therese Nübling. Assistant costume design: Ottavia Tröster. Project director: Christine Leyerle. Production: Marie Milbacher, Leonie Webb. Child care: Shiran Shasha. Dramaturgy intern: Finja Wilke. Directing intern: Paola Borys, Janna Dohrmann. Producer: Maxim Gorki Theater. Premiered 03.10.2018

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Marta Górnicka
Requiemachine
2013
Video
42'

Basement, Room 1

“WE ARE THE WORKERS OF THE WORD. WE MUST SAY WHAT OTHERS CANNOT”

REQUIEMACHINE is a radical political statement that exposes the foundations of the neoliberal social system. It is choral theatrical essay about the enslaving power of the system that turns the human subject into a mere cog in the wheel. In a posthuman world everyone becomes a worker/labour robot, hostage to the reproduced ideology of the labour society, torn between superhuman work and the terror of unemployment. REQUIEMACHINE, which premiered in 2013, was a continuation of Marta Górnicka's project for a modern tragic CHORUS that serves as a means of critical reflection on humans as they are shaped by the norms of culture, society, economy and religion. This time, the voice of the CHORUS was directed against the universal domination of market forces. It was the body/voice of a society torn between the fear of unemployment and the excessive demands of the workplace. The collage libretto made use of poems by the Polish poet Władysław Broniewski, a socialist involved in attempts to construct an egalitarian Poland, who experienced the defeat of his ideas.

“I am the burnt sacrificial offering of every system”, Broniewski wrote, highlighting the dramatic tension between the crushing pressure of ideology and his belief in the power of the poetic word that was supposed to revolutionize the world and to save human subjectivity. Today, these texts, transposed onto the choral apparatus of the collective body and voice, are truly striking. Revolutionary poems from the 1930s sound like a corporate anthem extolling high-efficiency performance in the workplace.

Marta Górnicka:

REQUIEMASZYNA is an essay about the relationship between money and power. It was originally inspired by the robotic rhythms of Broniewski's poetry and his harrowing biography, which I mashed up with Benetton's Unemployee of the Year advertising campaign, the Imperial March from Star Wars, Social Realist songs, heavy metal music, and the rasp of the poet's cancer-stricken voice. I wanted to expose the totalitarianism of contemporary strategies of supervision and discipline: mechanisms that transform residents of the neo-liberal paradise into an army of robotic workers.

Cast

Antoni Beksiak, Justyna Chaberek, Maciej Dużyński, Michał Głowacki, Bartos Grędysa, Mateusz Gudelis, Anna Jagłowska, Borys Jaźnicki, Ewa Konstanciak, Adam Konowski, Wiesław Kowalski, Grzegorz Kuraszkiewicz, Janusz Leśniowski, Maciej Łagodziński, Kamila Michalska, Grzegorz Milczarczyk, Jakub Mróz, Magda Roma Przybylska, Anna Rączkowska, Dominika Stefańska, Dawid Wawryka, Anna Wodzyńska, Łukasz Wójcicki, Marcin Zarzeczny

Credits

Libretto based on texts by Władysław Broniewski. Concept, libretto, direction: Marta Górnicka. Musical score: IEN. Choreography: Anna Godowska. Literary advisor: Agata Adamiecka. Set design: Robert Rumas. Costumes: Arek Ślesiński. Light design: Tomasz Sierotko. Stage management: Marek Susdorf, Film editing: Maria Smereczyńska
Producer: Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, Warsaw
Co-producers: La Filature - Scène Nationale, Mulhouse, Le Maillon – Théâtre de Strasbourg, Ringlokschuppen, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Théâtre National de Strasbourg
Pre-premiere: 24.03.2013

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Marta Górnicka
Magnificat
2012
Video
37'

Basement, Room 2

In MAGNIFICAT, THE CHORUS OF WOMEN is confronted with the most sacred image of femininity within the Church – that of the Blessed Virgin Mary. With its ideological and aesthetic power. With the magnetic force of this sacred icon of femininity. Bible passages, food recipes, texts by Elfriede Jelinek and Adam Mickiewicz, and fragments of Euripides' Bacchae are mixed by the choir with computer sounds, the clicks of shutters and flashes, and quotes from the press. Rhythmic speech and pop culture one-liners intertwine with traditional forms of sacral music. Notes of the Magnificat are sampled and serve as a soundtrack for cultural texts and commercials. An ideological-sonic remix is created. The Virgin Mary descends from holy paintings.

MAGNIFICAT premiered in 2011. It was Marta Górnicka's second performance with THE CHORUS OF WOMEN, the all-female ensemble established in order to form a modern choral theatre and to regain the female voice for the theatre at the same time. Both had been forgotten and buried in the androcentric form and conventions of modern drama theatre. The revival of women's collective voice in relation to the ancient idea of the chorus as a political body was a strong aesthetic and political act, especially in the context of the strengthening conservative forces in Polish society.

Marta Górnicka:

MAGNIFICAT is a statement about the woman in the Church's system of power, made without the use of sacred or non-sacred words. It is a post-opera form which gives rise to the polyphonic, pop-cultural MAGNIFICAT.

Cast

Justyna Chaberek, Ewa Chomicka, Alina Czyżewska, Paulina Drzastwa, Alicja Herod, Anna Jagłowska, Katarzyna Jaźnicka, Ewa Konstanciak, Ewa Kossak, Katarzyna Lalik, Agnieszka Makowska, Kamila Michalska, Katarzyna Migdalska, Jolanta Nałęcz-Jawecka, Natalia Obrębska, Anna Rączkowska, Anna Rusiecka, Monika Sadkowska, Kaja Stępkowska, Karolina Szulejewska, Iwona Tolbińska, Agata Wencel, Karolina Więch, Anna Wodzyńska, Anna Wojnarowska

Credits

Concept, libretto, director: Marta Górnicka. Score: IEN. Choreography: Anna Godowska. Literary advisor: Agata Adamiecka. Conducting consultant: Marta Szeliga. Stage design cooperation: Anna Maria Karczmarska. Costume design collaboration: Aleksandra Harasimowicz. Light design: Tomasz Sierotko. Stage management: Marek Susdorf, director of video: Kasia Adamik, director of photography: Mateusz Wołoczka, camera operators: Kasia Adamik, Mateusz Wołoczko, Michał Zuberek, editing: Kasia Adamik, Hubert Komerski, sound design and editing: Adam Wilk, color correction: Raman Kriszna Moorti, production: Paulina Drzastwa, Anna Galas
Producer: Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, Warsaw,
Premiere: 27.06.2011



Marta Górnicka
Constitution for a Chorus of Poles
2016
Video
27'

Basement, Video Chamber

In the first year of the rule of Law and Justice Party, when it became clear that the right-wing government and the parliamentary majority were attempting an attack on the democratic order in Poland, and society was being split into two hostile camps, Marta Górnicka gathered over fifty people from both the left and the right wing of the political conflict in Poland to read the Polish constitution together. Actors from Nowy Teatr, football fans, members of the paramilitary association "Strzelec", Christians, Vietnamese and Jewish people, THE CHORUS OF WOMEN, Muslims, refugees, people with Down syndrome, seniors, and children formed THE CHORUS OF POLES. The show premiered on 1 May 2016, that is the International Worker's Day, during a great national debate caused by the turmoil surrounding the Constitutional Tribunal in Poland.

Marta Górnicka reacted to this crisis with a powerful gesture: she showed that the Polish constitution is not a project for an ethnically homogeneous group, but for an extremely diverse political community. Announcing the performance, she wrote a letter to the Polish society:

Dear Society,
How are you? How are you doing? We are asking because your life has recently accelerated a great deal. A lot has been going on with you. As you know, in the theatre we often address you and talk about you a lot. And we even speak on your behalf. A lot of words have been revolving around you with an ever-greater velocity, load and striking distance. The Polish-Polish war with words, so they say.
HOMELAND, TRUTH, NATION, CITIZEN, ENEMY, PATRIOT, TRAITOR, EVERYONE, CONSTITUTION. And it is impossible to talk using ammunition.
Whose are "Polish values"? Mine? or Yours? What is it that is taking freedom away from us? Is there any US?
We want to ask you about it, Society. We want to ask about it in the theatre.
So this time WE ARE INVITING YOU onto the stage to read the Constitution
(libretto)

CHORUS OF POLES:

(solo)

The Republic of Poland is a commonwealth of (CHOIR) ALL citizens.

The Republic of Poland is a commonwealth of all (CHOIR) CITIZENS

EVERYONE shall respect the freedoms and rights of (solo) OTHER, OTHER, OTHER, OTHER OTHER OTHER
OTHER OTHER. OTHER OTHER OTHER OTHER. OTHER OTHER OTHER OTHER. OTHER OTHER OTHER
OTHER. OTHER OTHER OTHER OTHER. OTHER OTHER OTHER OTHER. OTHER OTHER OTHER OTHER

The colours of the Republic of Poland are white and red

-WHITE

-RED

-WHITE

-RED

-WHITE

-RED

WHITE! RED! INVINCIBLE! COLOURS!

What do you think, Society? Fun, huh? Words are there to be spoken.

Will you drop by? Let's talk.

And if you do not want a Homeland? Then add some spice and eat it;)

Cast:

Marta Adamczewska, Beata Banasik, Sebastian Biały, Grzegorz Brandt, Helena Chmielewska-Szljajfer, Ewa Chomiczka, Paulina Drzastwa, Maciej Dużyński, Dawid Dziarkowski, Bartosz Gelner, Krystyna Gielecińska, Violetta Glińska, Alicja Herod, Edina Iliasova, Anna Jagłowska, Rafał Jatczak, Maria Jolanta Nałęcz Jawecka, Katarzyna Jaźnicka, Borys Jaźnicki, Mateusz Józwiak, Gubani Khay Kharoeva, Ewa Konstanciak, Maja Kowalczyk, Wiesław Kowalski, Grzegorz Kuraszkiewicz, Kim Lee, Zaretta Mamaeva, Mateusz Marciniak, Marta Markowicz, Kamila Michalska, Mateusz Michnikowski, Olga Mysłowska, Natalia Obrębska, Ngo Van Tuong, Michał Pęszyński, Jacek Poniedziałek, Anna Rączkowska, Paulina Sacharczuk-Kajper, Natalia Samolijk, Jakub Sitek, Michalina Sitek, Kaja Stępkowska, Kamilla Tantasheva, Ton Van Anh, Dawid Wawryka, Karolina Więch, Anna Wodzyńska, Anna Wojnarowska, Viet Thu Lan Pham, Raisa Zaurbekova, Piotr Zwolski.

Credits

Concept, direction, text: Marta Górnicka. Dramaturgy: AGATA ADAMIECKA. Choreography: Anna Godowska. Spatial design: Robert Rumas. Visual identity: Luka Rayski. Lights: Artur Sienicki. Producer: Nowy Teatr, Warszawa. Premiere: 01.05.2016

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Marta Górnicka

Multitude

A conversation about her exhibition at Ebensperger with Agata Adameicka.

Translated by Aleksandra Paszkowska

Agata Adameicka

Your first monographic exhibition presented at the BERLINER GALLERY WEEK is entitled MULTITUDE. How does that term relate to your CHORUS, the formula that you have created and developed over the recent decade?

Marta Górnicka

Multitude is at the very heart of what the CHORUS is to me. It is its most important principle and the core of its politicality. An instant definition of that term is readily available on Wikipedia, the most popular source for Internet knowledge: multitude is a term from political philosophy which refers to social movements as organisms of individuals acting together. It means a group of people, a PLURALITY which cannot be classified through any other category than its shared existence.

Clearly, this refers directly to the basic principle of the CHORUS as the sole protagonist and simultaneously a collective of particular, diverse, varied beings. Since the beginning, the politicality of my CHORUS has relied precisely on that condition of simultaneous collectivity and singularity. I created the CHORUS in furious opposition to contemporary theatre, which understood and staged the CHORUS as a mass of indistinguishable entities. Therefore, for me, MULTITUDE is simply CHORUS, a community of individuals with their individual voices, creating a polyphonic, multidimensional piece in which the body, language and voice articulate each other and themselves, interpenetrate, intertwine.

The category of multitude strengthens that kind of thinking, but it also redirects it into new areas and complements it. It emphasizes not so much the inclusion of Others, but the orientation towards what CONNECTS US ALL.

Inclusion assumes a certain hierarchy. We invite Others into our world, we open up to them because we feel that they are allowed to belong. You are proposing a shift which I understand as a more politically radical idea of participation.

That's right. This is about a true recognition of the fact that we live in the same space, we breathe the same air! After all, the condition that the world is in today does not allow us to delude ourselves any longer that we can cut ourselves off, build a wall, a camp, some place THERE, which will ensure our safety HERE and keep away from all those unsettling Others. Apart from inclusion, we must urgently start thinking in the categories of being-together and participation, of the in-common, of belonging and sharing.

Hence my great need to think about the CHORUS today as a WORKSHOP FOR A NEW SOCIETY – a space where we not so much perform or create a representation of reality, but where we share particular skills and techniques: the breath, the voice, the connections of the breath and the voice and of the voice and the body, bodies and voices with each other, and bodies with technologies which have become part of our hybrid existence. The CHORUS possesses and develops particular *techné* – like the ancient chorus did. *Techné* is a set of practical skills which enables the CHORUS's being-together and facilitates the conscious reworking and communicating the experience of the community in its historical and political contest. The CHORUS should also share these skills.

It is from the need to share the CHORUS's *techné* that the POLITICAL VOICE INSTITUTE (PVI) at the MAXIM GORKI THEATER in Berlin. The PVI consists of 16 performers. Including the impulses of renowned choreographers and sound artists, we have been researching and rehearsing these body/voice techniques in regular workshops at the Gorki Theater. As an artist in residence, I have a strong connection to this house and greatly appreciate the chance to experience such a support and freedom, which is only possible due to the funding of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes, as they not only enable us to do a production but also to realize this laboratory working process.

Of course, such an understanding of art and politicality is an enormous task, because it requires one to transcend the logic of the state of emergency, the logic of the camp which has conquered our world and established the basic political paradigm for the twenty-first century. The CHORUS is travelling towards a certain horizon, and that horizon is MULTITUDE.

I imagine the MULTITUDE CHORUS as a circulatory system which coexists with other systems, bodies, voices, breaths, languages, the air and the earth. A polyphony, a plurality focused on a common goal, internally contradictory and coexistent at the same time.

In M(OTHER) COURAGE in Braunschweig, they were younger and older German women, the eighty-year-old Ingeborg Wender, Miłka... In Košice, they were Ewa and Duszán, Romanis from the ghetto. In Israel, they were the seventy-year-old Alia Hattab with her youngest daughter Sihrab Jwedi, Abu Lassan from Jaffa, Jewish women



intellectuals from central Tel Aviv, Israeli soldiers, both male and female: Gil, Matan, Mattia, Ross, and Arab kids. In Warsaw, it was Maja with Down syndrome, in Berlin – Zora. All of these individual people have made the CHORUS from within, often not having had any experiences in institutional theatre. They created, evoked or provoked internal tensions, which nevertheless led to Alliances of Multitudes.

Tell me about the CHORUS's journey before it finally stood in front of such a defined perspective. Where did you begin?

In early 2010, I started working at the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw, in an experimental mode. I wanted to create a radically contemporary form of CHORAL theatre; to refresh this old, ancient idea of the theatre and to find a new shape for it. To find a new stage language, a new actor, a new kind of theatrical text for the CHORUS as well as a new type of training – working with the body and voice. I had the opportunity to work and search for the alphabet for the CHORUS in very favourable conditions. We announced a public casting, I chose a group of thirty women of various ages and we put our best foot forward. Six months later, the first public presentation became a premiere. In the following years, we toured the production around the world intensively. My goal was to regain the CHORUS for the theatre and to regain women for the CHORUS, and I completed the task successfully.

I was focused on building a strong community – first all-female, then mixed – and at the same time on exposing the mechanisms of how the human being is shaped by social, cultural or religious stereotypes, patterns and norms. I staged my next performances: MAGNIFICAT and REQUIEMASZYNA. For me, they were two important answers to the ideological power of the Catholic church and of capitalist mechanisms. But reality was changing and so was the CHORUS. In its subsequent performances, it expressed the threat, the horror of the community, more intensely. In HYMN TO LOVE, I first showed the monstrous community which is formed around the notions of love and fatherland, and around the promises of “purity,” of “cleaning up the mess” and “instituting order.” I analysed ideologies and the reawakening nationalisms.

The chorus always constitutes a metonymy of human plurality (pluralitas), and embodies the political tensions and antagonisms existing within it. When a chorus of twenty-five performers enters the stage, with its one body-voice, the ambivalence of the community is immediately set in motion. On the stage, the chorus evokes primeval rituals of being-together, but it also elicits the horror and threat of the community, which consolidates around mechanisms of exclusion and becomes a justification for violence.

Today, we are in a desperate need for the ritual aspect of the CHORUS, together with an intensive practice of critical thinking and a space to express the antagonisms. These are extreme and contradictory tasks – but choral theatre opens up the possibility for such work.

With time, the formula and idea of the CHORUS that you developed in the theatre was becoming a more radical political practice. The CHORUS was regularly summoned in spaces of conflict, in excluded communities, in public spaces. It even reached for legal documents of the highest order, around which heated political arguments were centred at that time.

The CHORUS began entering political hotspots. In Israel, it was in the middle of a warzone. In Slovakia, it was in the middle of the largest Romani ghetto in the world. In Poland – at the moment of the greatest political impasse around its Constitution – it was on Warsaw's central square Plac Defilad.

In Israel, it was about meeting groups which existed in a situation of a deadly conflict and trying to show that your opponent does not have to be your enemy. That not every fight, every difference of opinion or every harsh word has to lead to eliminating the opponent. We staged a performance with a sixty-people CHORUS of Arab and Jewish mothers, Israeli dancer-soldiers, and Arab children, scored for four spaces in the MUSEUM OF MODERN ART in Tel Aviv. MOTHER COURAGE WON'T REMAIN SILENT. THE CHORUS FOR WAR TIME was in principle a chorus of two tongues (Arabic and Hebrew) and one voice. I gathered people who had no contact with each other in their daily lives, and remained divided by an invisible barrier. The CHORUS showed the body of the military conflict through individual biographies, voices, fractures, tensions, but also laughter. The body of the soldier was juxtaposed with the bodies of a woman and a child. “EVERYBODY here is an enemy. We just don't know what it means that EVERYBODY is an enemy. WE DON'T KNOW WHO IS WHO.”

A Jewish mother and an Arab mother stood beside one another on the stage and asked: Who is more human? You or I? They both make the same statement: that every mother is USED, that EACH must “service the war.” The Jewish and the Arab mother bears children for war.

Through such a definition of work, the group which after many months finally entered the stage was able to give a chance to the transformation of the fatal antagonism into agonism.

After the 2015 general elections in Poland, when the far-right, nationalist party Law and Justice rose to power, I reacted very emotionally by swiftly creating a CHORUS OF POLES in Nowy Teatr in Warsaw. I wanted to gather both sides of the political conflict on the stage as well as those who were being cynically exploited in that conflict. In CONSTITUTION FOR THE CHORUS OF POLES, they were refugees from Chechnya, immigrants, members of minorities, Jewish people, football fans. This was not about sounding in unison, but precisely about



making introductions between people whose opinions could not be reconciled in any way. Even then, it was already difficult. This performance was first presented on 1 May 2016, on International Workers' Day, at the heart of the national debate sparked by the turmoil around the Constitutional Tribunal.

I go wherever antagonized communities have no more room to breathe. I want them to regain the right to their common good – to their language, their air, their past, to living together on Earth.

In these cases, the situation of political tension awakened the need to GATHER. The most important and most difficult part of this process is always gathering the CHORUS, which is a multitude. Building a common voice which is both individualized and collective is also very difficult.

Let us consider the Polish and German context for a moment. It is in these countries that you have worked with the CHORUS most intensely. How do you perceive these two societies with their historical experiences through your work? Where do you see them going?

Both the German and the Polish society are trying to work through their own traumas, they are trying to “manage” them. Each time, there is a façade of WORDS, LANGUAGE. In both societies, it is evident how fast a monstrous community can be established, how quickly it births its purifiers, its Breiviks, its Stefan S.-s, rulers of language who relativize history, who reinterpret myths in their own way – creators of social fantasies. (Both in Poland and in Germany, the CONSTITUTION as a legal act is being appropriated. Each side of the conflict exploits it for their own purposes.) The Hanau shootings or the assassination of the mayor of Gdańsk in Poland were killings committed out of political hatred. Everywhere, in all of Europe, we are being deafened by ideological, synthetic samples.

Both in Poland and in Germany, I work with national songbooks, with patriotic, traditional folk and modern pop songs. In traditional songs, we can find an element of beauty, but also elements of violence and the lethal force of the community. There, the unconscious desires of the community are encoded. There, nationalist ideology is consolidated. But so is utopia, which can overcome violence. I mix fragments of military marches (Wenn die Soldaten), love songs, religious or old folk songs, quotes from Brecht's Mother Courage or Downfall of the Egotist Johann Fatzler as road signs for a variety of directions. Texts from the press, quotations from philosophers, sentences from sociological analyses, nursery rhymes, songs by Schubert, Bible passages, national classics and fragments of Nazi marches. The CHORUS uses them to reach phantasms which shape reality. In order to ask where “the truth” is. There is no history beyond war – says Brecht. Against whom is war waged today?

Sometimes, the chorus speaks in murderous phrases from patriotic songs. “Tis a day of blood and glory” (La Varsoviennne) or the national anthem. In Poland, France, Belgium or Germany, in all of Europe, the sense of community tied to “a love for One's Own” can be built in this ecstasy: that we can go to kill, singing. In HYMN TO LOVE, a radically diverse CHORUS sings, whispers and screams phrases from patriotic songs which build one collective body by eliminating any and all diversity and finding unity in hatred. This creates enormous tension. This way, on its own body, the chorus demonstrates mechanisms of eliminating otherness and of annihilation.

Annihilation, or the Holocaust, as a monstrous binding material for creating communities – this subject permeates all of my work. Heiner Müller's thought KEINE ENDE AUCHWITZ is a fundamental aspect of my work.

How can we overcome the fear of diversity in our societies? Is art not helpless when faced with it?

Chorus theatre has tools to help people face their fear of diversity, because the chorus – as we understand it – is diversity and plurality in itself. This is why, together with the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, we brought into existence the Political Voice Institute. The new institution draws inspiration from methods of working with the body and the voice that we have developed, but it is even more strongly embedded in the social element. Working together there connects people who would not have otherwise met or existed together in a performative event in the social space. The CHORUS's first project in Berlin was a performance of the GRUNDGESETZ, staged at the foot of the Brandenburg Gate on the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Unification of Germany. Fifty special people gathered and stood at the Gate in order to face the heavy task of a critical articulation of the text of the German GRUNDGESETZ.

The method of working with the chorus already contains tools for transcending various divides. Our training is a search for a strong, COMMON voice, body, and breath as its basis, but it is also a question of how to use language, how to “play” with it using music. How to reshape and present the language of power and stereotypes, how to transcend it. Each of the performers or choreutai is aware of that entanglement. What do the words FREEDOM, PEACE, LAW, VÖLKERVERSTÄNDIGUNG really mean? We undermine the meanings of words, but we also look for the texts' abstractness, their sound. Rather than illustrating the word, music overtakes the space. Language is always the instrument of a certain ideology. It reflects conflicting attitudes. We try to examine these mechanisms, and to transcend the power of language in the body and the voice.

For each of my choruses to exist, the abilities of each person who co-creates it must be taken into account at the workshop level. This is only possible through recognizing and accepting the people's individual presence, which happens at the level of the body, the breath, the rhythm – outside of language, and therefore outside the ideology that permeates it. The chorus is open to working with people of extreme worldviews. It uses languages of



radical counter-audiences. It literally makes the bodies and words of Others meet.

Of course, rather than being the cause of the current crisis, the pandemic is only a symptom of the state that the world has already been in. And it hit the CHORUS right in its heart. Will the CHORUS stay silent and keep a safe distance at this moment in time?

For me, the pandemic is the end of an era and a symbolic death of the CHORUS. There is no real community without living breaths, there is no humanity without living bodies being together, there is no CHORUS without the breath – which is universal/common to the audience member and the performer. Therefore, there is no theatre if we cannot breathe and talk in it together. We are standing on the debris of the community / the theatre. The answer to the death of the COMMUNITY/ CHORUS is the ONE PERSON CHORUS. DIGITAL/RITUAL. DEFUSED. The CHORUS stops speaking in the literal sense. But it starts lip-syncing, uses technology which imitates voice, plays with the (non-)living voice, with distanced bodies and language, but it also multiplies its individual voice, turns the voice up to full volume! It is a CHORUS which functions somewhere between speaking and not speaking (like lip-syncing), but it is not silent. From one person, it grows into a multitude, it works with shreds, trash, key words, fragments of mythological songs and voices from computer games. It works with the scream, which comes from the very heart of the ritual, and with the digital laughter, which is its most powerful tool. This CHORUS plunges into death, but it still speaks in favour of life.

In Die Welt, German virologists warn us that choir rehearsals and weddings are the most dangerous forms of being together, of meeting. Scientists generally caution against all forms of GATHERING. Therefore, instead of the CHORUS, we now have a ONE PERSON CHORUS. Instead of SOCIETY: CHORUS – AN APP FOR ONE PERSON.

As an answer to the pandemic, but also to the diagnosis from before the pandemic, the CHORUS multiplies its voice and, speaking like a cartoon character, it lip-syncs: THE CHORUS NEVER DIES! – but it is already speaking as a one-man/one-woman chorus. This is because we are stuck in a profoundly paradoxical situation. How can we rebuild the world of relationships outside relationships? How can we re-tie our bonds outside of bonds? How can we find a shared breath without air?

So, when you are asking me whether the CHORUS still exists, I say: no. THERE IS NO MORE CHORUS. There is CHORUS – AN APP FOR ONE PERSON. This is exactly what we are currently working on with the Political Voice Institute and what will be the topic of the intervention “*Community: An App for one Person*” that is taking place at the Gorki Kiosk starting from the 10.09.20.

This paradoxical situation is described perfectly by the ambiguous Hebrew word magrepha, which literally means a scoop or shovel. In the Talmud, it is used in different contexts related to the Temple of Jerusalem. First, the mysterious magrepha is thought to have been a pipe organ at the Temple. Each of its ten pipes made one hundred different sounds, and so the instrument vibrated with a thousand voices. At the same time, an object called magrepha was also used to scoop ashes from the sacrificial offerings burnt at the altar and – as explained by Rabbi Shapiro in his laconic, but moving speech – to collect the ashes from the bodies of Jewish people. The magrepha – a tool for gathering the ashes of the dead and a musical instrument of a thousand voices – plays the loudest music of all.

This is the condition of the CHORUS today.

What we have left is the vibration of the voice, its trembling, which connects us to other beings and all people, and with the entire universe. Therefore, what we can do today is to engage in the practice of being together, in common. As a workshop of the VOICE, a workshop conducted in small groups, but with no masks, and the entire body engaged. From the death of the CHORUS to the WORKSHOP FOR THE NEW SOCIETY.