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As of September 13, 2011

remixed/ reimagined

On June 23, 2011, MCA Chicago celebrated the achievements of MCA Stage with the **remixed/reimagined** Performance Benefit. This innovative evening was cochaired by MCA Trustee Sara Albrecht and MCA Performance Committee member Jay Franke. Our sincere thanks to all who contributed to the event and to all who continue to support MCA Stage in its 15th season.

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Photo: Kristopher Buckle

Theatr ZAR
The Gospels of
Childhood Triptych

Thursday—
Sunday,
March 29—
April 1, 2012

Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago

Teatr ZAR

Artists Up Close

This series brings together MCA Stage artists with the public for a variety of intimate conversations and training to provide insight into the creative process.

Talk: Pneumatics of an Actor: Theatre out of the spirit of music

Tuesday, March 27

As part of World Theatre Day, the League of Chicago Theatres hosted a talk by Jaroslaw Fret, who cofounded Poland's Teatr ZAR with fellow members of the Grotowski Institute. A packed house heard Fret explain their unique artistic process, which draws from musical sources centered on the Christian traditions of the East and West hemispheres, and emphasizes breath as it relates to the acting practice. He also showed film and sound footage of ZAR's investigative expeditions into Georgia, Greece, Corsica, and Sardinia.

First Night Thursday, March 29

Following the opening-night performance, audience members are invited to join an insightful discussion led by Peter Taub, Director of

Performance Programs, with Teatr ZAR Director Jaroslaw Fret and his company members.

Workshop: Flesh of Sound Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1, 11 am–2 pm

This exceptional opportunity to train with Teatr ZAR, the resident company of the Grotowski Institute, is a deep investigation of sound and rhythm. The members guide participants through their inimitable Balkan and Caucasus vocal patterns and physical improvisation to explore the connection of physical rhythms to the breath as well as physical contact between partners. Participants are encouraged, but not required, to attend both session days. Registration is \$15 per day, or \$10 per day with a Teatr ZAR performance ticket.

Saturday Speakeasy March 31

Following the performance, audience members are invited to mingle with the company in the lobby, with a cash bar and snacks available.

The Gospels of Childhood Triptych

Project leader: Jaroslaw Fret

All songs are gathered and arranged by the company:

Nini Julia Bang
Ditte Berkeley
Przemyslaw Blaszcak
Daniel Cunningham
Alessandro Curti
Jaroslaw Fret
Kamila Klamut
Aleksandra Kotecka
Matej Matejka
Ewa Pasikowska
Tomasz Wierzbowski

Lighting: Bartosz Radziszewski
Company manager:
Magdalena Madra

Presented in association with
Goodman Theatre

Part 1: Overture. Fragments on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.

Based the story of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, from the little known apocryphal gospels, this overture to the triptych ponders the “impossible story of resurrection” using a musical structure based on the polyphonic singing tradition of Georgia, Bulgaria, and Greece.

First performed October 2003 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Centre for Theatre Practices “Gardzienice,” in Brzezinka, the forest base of The Centre for Study of Jerzy Grotowski's Work and for Cultural and Theatrical Research.

Part 2: Caesarean Section. Essays on Suicide.

Caesarean Section draws on the music of Corsica, interwoven with songs from Bulgaria, Romania, Iceland, and Chechnya as an exploration of the question of freedom and its limitations, of existential suffering, and of the torment of contemplated suicide.

Part 3: Anhell. The Calling.

The musical score for this tribute to Polish Romantic poet Juliusz Slowacki and his biblical poem titled “Anhell” is inspired by Byzantine and Sardinian Paschal hymns. The poem, about an Angel that accompanies Anhell on a journey as his soul, is a meditation on life's journey toward death and the openness necessary to live and to die for our humanity.

First performed September 2009 at the Barbican Centre, London, as part of the triptych for its premiere at the Polska! Year, Great Britain.

Gospels of Childhood was conceived as three parts but is performed sometimes as separate works. The Overture and Caesarean Section were first performed in 2004, and Anhell. The Calling was premiered in 2009. Not linked in a narrative way, the parts of the triptych connect essentially through song. When performed together, associations, ellipses, innuendos, and inferences in each part pick up each other's collocations, as carillons or vibrating strings.

The running time is 180 minutes, with two intermissions. No late seating. Recommended for mature audiences.

Support for the MCA Stage presentation is generously provided by the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago.

Teatr ZAR is supported by the Wroclaw City Council, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland.

Ministry of
Culture
and National
Heritage of
the Republic
of Poland



Consulate General
of the Republic of Poland
in Chicago



About the artists

Teatr ZAR

cultivates an ethos of ensemble work through a long creative process, making original theatrical language based on music from numerous traditions found in both the East and West. The company is a multinational group that was formed in Wrocław, Poland, by apprentices of the Grotowski Institute during annual research expeditions to Georgia between 1999 and 2003. During these expeditions, the apprentices collected much musical material, including a core of centuries-old polyphonic songs that have their roots in the beginning of the human era and are probably the oldest forms of polyphony in the world.

Zar is the name of the funeral songs performed by the Svaneti tribe who inhabit the high regions of the Caucasus in northwestern Georgia.

Teatr ZAR attempts to demonstrate that theater does not only relate to *thea* (Greek for “seeing”) but is something that above all should be heard. From such hearing, deep images are born that would be impossible to create even by means of the most modern theater technology—images where the body of a singing actor shines and emanates with the energy of sound, of the song that lies within. Performances are just part of a long process of research, expeditions, personal explorations, and transformation.

Work by ZAR members addresses themes that in the contemporary world have been seemingly reserved for the religious domain. ZAR’s conviction is influenced by the Polish Romantic ideal wherein art complements religion and, crucially, fills the dynamic chasm between the everyday and transcendent life. Juliusz Osterwa, one of the greatest figures of twentieth-century Polish theater who tried to put these ideas into practice—

and whose ideas had a great impact on Jerzy Grotowski—once wrote: “God created theatre for those for whom the church does not suffice.”

ZAR underwent more than ten years of investigative research and development into ancient sacred songs in making the triptych. They performed the complete work, in three parts, for the first time in 2009 at the Barbican Centre, London. They have toured with the triptych to Los Angeles, Wrocław, Florence, and San Francisco, and performed separate parts in Athens, Edinburgh, Madrid, Beograd, Budapest, Paris, Cairo, Seoul, and New Delhi.

Since 2011, ZAR has been working on the project *Armine*, which is dedicated to Armenian culture and is being realized through expeditions and studies of Armenian tradition and history. To date the company has traveled to Istanbul, Erevan, and Jerusalem, meeting with locals and sometimes participating in workshops with Armenian choir members, other vocalists, and musicians. Aram Kerovpyan, leader of AKN, Armenian Choir in Paris, is a key research collaborator for the project. The world premiere of *Armine* is planned for fall 2013.

The company is Nini Julia Bang, Ditte Berkeley, Przemysław Błaszczak, Emma Bonnici, Daniel Cunningham, Alessandro Curti, Jarosław Fret, Kamila Klamut-Pawlik, Aleksandra Kotecka, Matej Matejka, Magdalena Madra, Maciej Madry, Ewa Pasikowska, Bartosz Radziszewski, Joshua Roberts, Simona Sala, Orest Sharak, and Tomasz Wierzbowski.

For more information about Teatr ZAR, contact: Magdalena Madra
magda@grotowski-institute.art.pl

Part I

The Overture. Fragments on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.

Teatr ZAR’s interest in gnostic elements from the beginning of Christianity provided the initial impulse for the Gospels of Childhood project. The performance itself oscillates between two threads: the story of Lazarus’s resurrection evoked through the mouths of his sisters Marta and Maria (Martha and Mary), and “the testimony of Mary Magdalene,” who, according to some gnostic sources, held an important position among the apostles and was in fact Lazarus’s sister. Among the texts included in the performance are scarcely known apocryphal gospels such as that of Mary Magdalene, Philip, and Thomas, and fragments by Fyodor Dostoevsky and Simone Weil.

ZAR collected the songs used in the performance during its expeditions to Georgia, Bulgaria, and Greece between 1999 and 2003. Of particular significance was its work with the Svaneti people who live in the highest part of the Caucasus Mountains. As part of an age-old tradition, these tribal people have kept alive their funeral songs, which are identified as the oldest form of polyphony in Georgia, and most likely the world. The project’s second musical plot comprises liturgical songs from the Eastern Orthodox monastic republic of Athos. These songs, connected to the Pascha (Easter) period, build the end part of the performance—the consolation.

The Gospels of Childhood Triptych tells the “late story of the flesh”—after love, after humiliation, after death—an impossible story of resurrection.



Sunday Morning by Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge (1831–94), postcard published at the beginning of the twentieth century

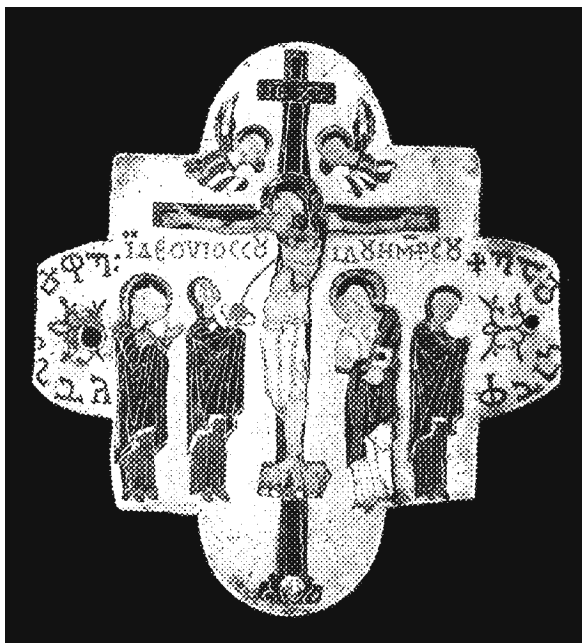
Marta/Maria: Ditte Berkeley/Kamila Klamut
And: Nini Julia Bang, Przemysław Błaszczak, Daniel Cunningham, Alessandro Curti, Jarosław Fret, Aleksandra Kotecka, Matej Matejka, Ewa Pasikowska, Tomasz Wierzbowski
Project leader: Jarosław Fret
Lighting: Bartosz Radziszewski

Let Hermann Hesse speak:

There is nothing in this world, that I believe in more deeply, no other manifestation is more holier for me than that of Unity—the belief that the whole world is the divine Unity, and that all the suffering, all the evil are a consequence of the fact that we—individuals—do not feel anymore that we are inseparable parts of the unity, that the ‘self’ claims too much significance . . .

It has never been easy for me, and no one has less talent for holiness than me; and yet I have constantly encountered that miracle, which Christian theologians so beautifully call ‘Grace’—that divine experience of making peace, of surrender and awareness, which is nothing else but the Christian offering of ‘self’ or Hindu knowledge of Unity . . .

Unity, the one I cherish—wrapped in the veil of multiplicity—is never boring, bleak, cerebral, nor a theoretical unity. This is pure life, full of



Georgian icon

games, torment and laughter. That unity was represented by the God Shiva, who danced with the world until it fell into pieces, and it was also represented in many other images since it never abhors any representation nor comparison . . .

. . . This is what life is for me: flowing between two distinct poles, journeying back and forth between two pillars supporting the world. I wish I could constantly point out to the spiritual multiplicity of the world and constantly remind that at the basis of this multiplicity there lies Unity itself . . .

I will never make both poles of life come closer, I will never be able to write the double voice notation of life's melody. And yet, driven by a mysterious command, I will follow my inner voice and will constantly renew such attempts. That's a spring that makes my clock tick.

(Hermann Hesse, Theme of Unity)

Verses (Part I)

1. Closing

Always late, time-lacking; we still arrive too late to understand.

Cmidao Ghmerto, chant from Sioni Church, Tblisi, Georgia

2. Infinity

This voice has lived here for two thousand years.

It looks as though I'm already on the right track. So let me tell you that in the last analysis, this world of Gods—I don't accept it, even though I know that it exists.

Like a young babe, I am convinced that our sufferings will be healed and smoothed away, that the whole offensive comedy of human conflict will disappear like a pathetic mirage, and that, ultimately, during the universal finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, there will occur and become manifest something so precious that it will be sufficient for all hearts, for the soothing of all indignation, the redemption of all men's evil-doings, all the blood that has been shed by them, will be sufficient not only to make it possible to forgive but even to justify all the things that have happened to men—and even if all of that becomes manifest and becomes reality, I will not accept it. I understand what a shaking must rend the universe when all that is in heaven and under the earth flows together

in one laudatory voice and all that liveth and hath lived exclaims "Just and true art. Thou, O Lord, for Thy ways are made plain."

It may very well be, perhaps, that when I reach the moment in my life at which I see it, or rise up from the dead in order to do so, I myself may exclaim with all the rest "Just and true art. Thou, O Lord!", but it is something I do not want to do. I want to be here when everyone suddenly discovers why it has all been the way it has. I want to see it for myself, and if by that time I am already dead, then let me be raised up again.

3. The Dream of Mary Magdalene A dark dream, slicing it by knife

Upalo Jeso Christe (Christ have mercy on us), chant from Sioni Church, Tblisi, Georgia

4. Calling Death—the Journey

The Logos comes out of the mouth. And whoever feeds from the mouth will be perfected. The perfect are conceived through a kiss, and are born. This is why we kiss one another.

Romelni Kerubimstasa (who looks like the cherubin), chant from Sioni Church, Tblisi, Georgia

5. Wake up

6. Blessed is the Womb that has not conceived

Blessed is the womb that has not conceived and the breasts that have not given milk. Whoever has come to know the world

has discovered the body, and whoever has discovered the body, of that one the world is not worthy.

Psalm 103 in Greek

7. Crying of Miriam of Magdala

Yet, when you see your likeness you are happy. But when you see your images that came to being before you and that neither die nor become visible, how much will you bare?

Be brave. And even if you doubt have courage towards such or other forms of nature.

God giveth you a body as it hath pleased him. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection.

Amin, excerpt from Georgian liturgy

8. It is necessary to rise in this flesh, since everything exists in it

Some are afraid lest they rise naked. Because of this they wish to rise in the flesh, and they do not know that it is those who wear the flesh who are naked. It is those who [...] to unclothe themselves who are not naked. You say that the flesh will not rise. But tell me what will rise, that we may honour you. You say the Spirit in the

flesh, and it is also this light in the flesh.
But this too is a matter which is in the
flesh, for whatever you shall say, you say
nothing outside the flesh.
It is necessary to rise in this flesh, since
everything exists in it.

Cmidao Ghmerto and Kriste
Ardsgam Kwdretiġ, Svanetian paschal hymns

9. The Youth in Linen Robe leaves

10. Hesychia

—Where do you come from murderer?
Where are you going vagabond?
—That which oppressed me has been slain
And that which encircled me has
vanished.
My craving has faded and I am free from
my ignorance.
I left the world with the aid of another
world.
A design was erased by virtue of a higher
design.
—I did not see you descend,
But now I see you rising.
Why do you lie, since you belong to me?
—I saw you, though you did not see me,
nor recognise me.
I was with you as with a garment, and
you never felt me.

Dzwiragi I Kwiria, Svanetian songs

11. Preparation. First

12. End of Wedding

A człowiek, który bez miary
Obsypany twymi dary
Coś go stworzył i ocalił

A czemuż by Cię nie chwalił.
Wielu snem śmierci upadło,
Co się wczoraj spać pokładło.
My się jeszcze obudzili . . .

13. Healing of Miriam

—Lord, dost thou not care that my sister
hath left me to serve alone?
Szen Giga Lobt, excerpt from Georgian liturgy

14. Stoning

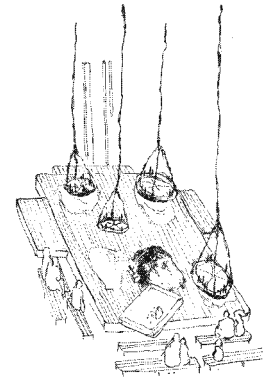
15. Przybądźcie z nieba na głos naszych modlitw

Mieszkańcy chwały wszyscy Święci Boży.
Z obłoków jasných zejďte aniołowie,
Z rzeszą zbawionych spieszcie na
spotkanie.
Anielski orszak niech twą duszę przyjmie.
Uniesie z ziemi ku wyżynom nieba,
A pieśń zbawionych niech ją zaprowadzi,
Aż przed oblicze Boga Najwyższego.

16. Preparation. Second.

Another attempt to visit the grave

—He promised to teach me, but he didn't
teach me anything.
Sometimes he stopped speaking and from
a shelf on the wall took some bread, which
we shared. This bread had a real taste of
bread. Never after have I felt this taste.
He poured me and himself wine which
had a taste of sun and earth from which
this place had been built.
He promised to teach me, but didn't teach
me anything.
One day he told me "Now leave." I never
tried to find him since I understood that
he had come to me by mistake.



Fragments on
Intimations of
Immortality from
Recollections of Early
Childhood by Maria
Stozek

Sometimes I cannot restrain myself from
recalling, with fear and guilt, fragments of
what he had told me.

—Do not touch me. He said, do not touch
me.

17. A certain Man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany; J, 11

—A certain man was sick, named
Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary
and her sister Martha.
—It was that Mary which anointed the
Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet
with her hair, whose brother Lazarus
was sick.
—Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister,
and Lazarus.
Therefore his sisters sent unto him,
saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou
lovest is sick.
—When Jesus came, he found that he had
lain in the grave four days already.
Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem,
about fifteen furlongs off.
—Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus
was come, went and met him, but Mary
sat still in the house. Then said Martha
'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my
brother had not died'
—When she had so said, she went her way,
and called Mary her sister secretly.
When Mary was come where Jesus was,
and saw him, she said unto him:
"If Thou hadst been here my brother had

not died.
If Thou hadst been here my brother had
not died.
If Thou hadst been here."

Kyrie Eleison, excerpt from Gerogian liturgy,
Sioni Church, Tblisi, Georgia

18. Jesus's Lamentation—ZAR

19. Consolamentum—a Letter

When I was a little child,
And dwelling in my kingdom,
In my father's house,
and was content with the wealth and the
luxuries of my nourishes,
from the East, our home,
my parents equipped me (and) sent me
forth;
and of the wealth of our treasury
they took abundantly, (and) tied up for
me a load
large and (yet) light, which I myself could
carry,
And they took off from me the glittering
robe,
Which in their affection they made for me,
and the purple toga,
Which was measured and woven to my
stature.
And they made a compact with me,
And wrote it in my heart, that it might
not be forgotten:
"If thou goest down into Egypt,
and bringest the one pearl."

Megistis Pascha, Byzantine chant from Athos

20. Raising the light. Easter Tropawrion from Athos Christos anesti

Let them be born for one childhood.
For everyone shall be salted with fire.

Part II

Caesarean Section. Essays on Suicide.

The title of this performance is a metaphor for suicidal compulsion and the involuntary force that pulls us back from the brink.

Caesarean Section’s musical structure was developed from a base of polyphonic Corsican songs, into which Bulgarian, Romanian, Icelandic, and Chechen songs have been woven. Its subtle power and energy owes a debt to composer Erik Satie and his discovery of the intensity that can be transmitted by each and every drop of sound. Through contact with and integration into this contemporary theater piece, the traditional music material becomes transformed and takes on a new form, becoming seamlessly interwoven with intensive movements by the performers. ZAR also acknowledges the great literary influence of Aglaya Veteranyi on this work.

During the research process, members of ZAR made several trips to Corsica in search of new material for the emerging musical score. Their active participation in paschal liturgy in Tox near Bastia represented a pivotal moment. Therefore the climax of the performance is characterized by the liturgical music of Corsican confraternities. While the score’s basic “tectonics” are grounded in Corsican music, they have been interwoven with Bulgarian cries, calls, and incantations to enhance the musical dramaturgy.

Women: Ditte Berkeley/Kamila Klamut
Man: Matej Matejka
And: Nini Julia Bang, Przemyslaw Blaszcak, Alessandro Curti, Daniel Cunningham, Jaroslaw Fret, Aleksandra Koticka, Ewa Pasikowska, Tomasz Wierzbowski



Teatr ZAR poster by Bartosz Radziszewski

Project Leader: Jaroslaw Fret
Music Collaboration: Mariana Sadowska
Collaboration on the Movement Score: Vivien Wood
Lighting: Bartosz Radziszewski

Let Albert Camus speak:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest—whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer . . . These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect . . .

In a man’s attachment to life there is something stronger than all the ills in the world. The body’s judgment is as good as the mind’s and the body shrinks from annihilation. We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking. In that race which daily hastens us toward death, the body maintains its irreparable lead.

After many others, yes indeed, but how eager they were to get out of them! At that last cross-road where thought hesitates, many men have arrived and even some of the humblest. They then abdicated what was most precious to them, their life. Others, princes of the mind, abdicated likewise, but they initiated the suicide of their thought in its purest revolt. The real effort is to stay there, rather, in so far as that is possible, and to examine closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions. Tenacity and acumen are privileged spectators of this inhuman show in which absurdity, hope, and death carry on their dialogue. The mind can then analyze the figures of that elementary yet subtle dance before illustrating them and reliving them itself.

(Albert Camus, *Absurdity and Suicide*)

Verses (Part II)

1. Overture
The glass bell of a heart. It pounds within and never misses. When it tolls we never know whether it is by mistake; is it just a joke perhaps?

2. Tenderness. Conversation by spilled wine.

We stay dead much longer than alive, thus as the dead we need much more luck.

Gnossienne III, Erik Satie

3. Opening of Heaven
*I imagine Heaven. It is so insurmountable that immediately I fall asleep to comfort myself.
When awake again I know that God*

is a bit smaller than heaven. Otherwise we would fearfully fall asleep during a prayer.

4. Suicides’ Catwalk
People are afraid of God, therefore they go to heaven. There is a special section there for circus performers who can fly.

JESUS CHRIST IS ALSO
A CIRCUS PERFORMER.

5. Infection. First.
*A man. A woman. A table. An eye.
A woman stoops. So does the man.
And now: this does not exist.
A woman and a man. A table. An eye.
Everything is just a language.
A story.*

6. To remove my skin
Right on the floor. The world has stuck to me. Square miles of skin. Continents of skin. Under your watchful eye I learn from snakes.

7. Engagement (to a knife)

8. Infection. Second.
*We had no language between us.
Only words.*

9. Dream. Miscarriage.
A glass bell. A tiny bell. And color of unborning.

10. Tango

11. Suicides’ Heaven. Why am I not an Angel.



The Triumph of Death
(detail) in Camposanto,
Pisa by Buonamico
Buffalmacco

*Most of everything happens without us
anyway. God has heart full of the Dead.*

This is dreaming through sound.

15. Taming the Madness
He knocked on the door.

Nothing.

He entered.

*One saw brightness only.
I have cooked light for dinner.*

Eat!

*God wrinkled his nose. This would not
be the first time when he would ruin his
stomach with light.*

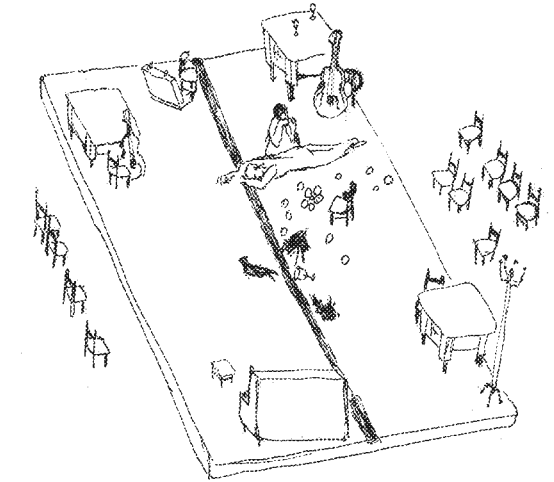
Eat!

Hmmm, said God. What? Hmm.

*Zachary's Chant, sung in Corsica on Good
Friday*

16. My Body a Tear
*In each new town I make a pit in the
ground under our circus caravan, then put
my hand in there, and then the head and
then I listen.
How God breathes under the ground and
chews. Sometimes I wish to dig through
to him, though I am afraid that he might
bite me.*

GOD IS ALWAYS HUNGRY.



Draft from *Caesarean Section. Essays on Suicide* by
Maria Stozek

Kyrie Eleison, Corsica

17. Toasts
*The color of soul smeared
on this side of sky.
And the glass ash.
Rain.*

18. Catatonia
*I do not scream.
I have rejected my mouth.*

Gnossienne I, Erik Satie

Part III

Anhelli. The Calling.

A tribute to Polish Romantic poet Juliusz Slowacki and his journey from Naples to the Holy Land, via Alexandria, Cairo, and Damascus, during which he wrote *Anhelli*. The performance's musical core is based on Byzantine and Sardinian hymns as well as Orthodox Irmoi.

Anhelli's theme is one that resonates with the essence of theater and its place in this world. It is a theme of unity and disintegration of life, of corporality, of our own selves. It is a theme of possession. Of making a vessel for the other, for a stranger's life, even a future life, out of our own selves. This is a theme of being possessed by an angel.

How can we provide an angel with transit through a human body; how can we let that angel live there for a moment? In what musical form? In what vibration?

We live in cathedrals of our own bodies, with ornamentation and gilded facades, where placement and relations with others are of the utmost importance. But *Anhelli* calls for small country wooden churches where we can remain enclosed in aloneness. Closed within. Instead of cathedrals—small temples of the heart; small churches of the body; chapels and meeting halls. Where we can call the spirit of our forefathers; call the Angels. Their wings are not snow white, rather the ash-gray of ebbing souls.

We need to involve our entire inner being, our entire life force to create a vast space inside, create a void as empty as a Siberian abyss. So empty that it sucks in.

Anhelli: Matej Matejka
Ellenai/Eloe: Ditte Berkeley/Kamila Klamut
And: Nini Julia Bang, Przemyslaw Blaszczak,
Daniel Cunningham, Alessandro Curti, Jaroslaw
Fret, Aleksandra Kotecka, Ewa Pasikowska,
Tomasz Wierzbowski
Project Leader: Jaroslaw Fret
Lighting: Bartosz Radziszewski

The prānas (sense-organs) disputed among themselves about who was the best [among them], [each] saying: “I am the best,” “I am the best.”

Then as the vital breath was about to depart, he uprooted the organs [from their places] just as a noble horse tears up the pegs to which its feet are tied. They came to him and said: “Revered Sir, be thou our lord; thou art the best among us. Do not depart from us.”

*Then the organ of speech said to him: “That attribute of being most excellent which I possess is thine.”
Then the eye said: “That attribute of firmness which I possess is thine.”*

*Then the ear said: “That attribute of prosperity which I possess is thine.”
Then the mind said: “That attribute of being the abode which I possess is thine.”*

And people do not call them the organs of speech, the eyes, the ears, or the mind, but the prānas. The prāna alone is all these.

(Chhāndogya Upanishad vi 6, 12, 13, 14, 15)

*Sit on a low stool since early morning, bring your mind from the head to the heart, focus it and hold it there. Deeply bent, until you feel intense pain in your chest, shoulders and neck, call persistently in your thought or in your soul: Kýrie Iesú Christé, eléésón me!
[. . .]
Hold as well the movement of your breath, so that you do not breathe easily. After all, a breath of air, coming from the heart, dulls your mind and stimulates the intellect. It leads the mind away from the heart, leading to oblivion, or guides it from one thing to the other so, before it becomes aware of the peril, it finds that, what it should not.*

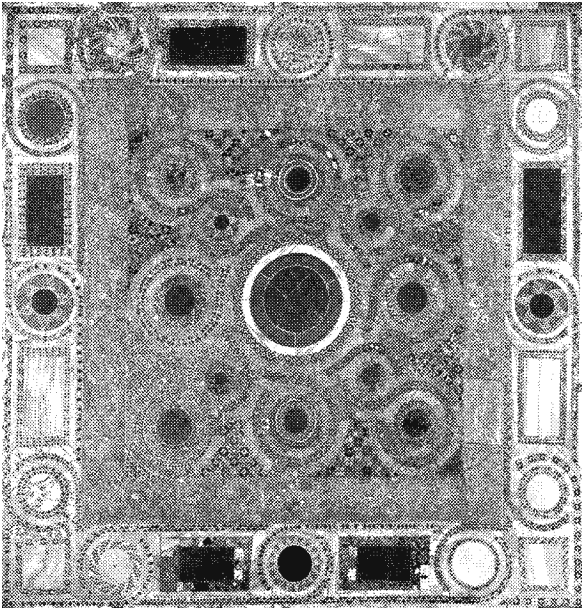
(St. Gregory of Sinai)

Some say that prayer is better than memory of death; I praise them both, since, by nature, they are one.

(St. John Climacus)

Verses (Part III)

*Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessed face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice*



(Fragment of Ash-Wednesday by Thomas Stearns Eliot)

1. The Storm

Behold our hearts fatigued worse than the bodies.
Behold the bells tolling after the dead prophet!
Behold the Angelus for those who do not see the sun.
And behold! They rise . . . They have risen from the dead,
but they cannot roll the stones away . . .
May those who have the soul rise!
May they live!
For this is the time of living but for the strong.

Irmos of Holy Friday

2. Communion of Saints. Jerusalem of the Sun.

Tread lightly for this ground 'tis but a vast graveyard.

Floor of the Iviron Monastery, Athos, tenth-eleventh century

Greek Hymn, fragment of Great Compline, II Plagal Mode

3. Prayer of shining Flesh/Bodies

4. Tobias and the Angel

In your breath abides the Holy Spirit

Irmos Bogoroditse Dievo

5. Nuptial Chamber. The Sacrament.

*Awake, north wind and come, you south!
Blow on my garden, that its spices may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden, and taste his precious fruits. [. . .]
I was asleep, but my heart was awake.
I have taken off my robe. Indeed, must I put it on?
I have washed my feet. Indeed, must I soil them*

(Song of Songs, 4,16; 5,2; 5,3)

6. I need that goddamn Miracle AMIN

*Have you not taken on the flesh?
Does the pain not gnaw at you and the death not scare?
Does not your mother bear you? That once there rose within you
the memory, with terror of the 'ere Genesian graveyard . . .*

(Juliusz Slowacki, *The Ghost King*, variation of the text 247b)

*Nothing has hurt you
According to hopes*

... Na odludnej wieży
Twój trup—rzucony przez krwawych
rycerzy
Gnije ... i węże skoczyły na ciało.
A w dalekości—duchów tajemnica [. . .]
Łąki mgłą ćmione...przesrebrna
gwiazdzica
Srebrną swą strzałą rani i przenika.
Garnki płaczebne ... i koń wojownika,
Słowiańskie dary zwykłe... błyskawica
Stosów, co lasy sosnowe rumieni ...
Pieśń wzlatująca ponad huk płomieni—
Dla innych. Pamięć twoja pogardzona,
Pod głową wieniec z gadzin czoło
chłodzi ...

Your angel rises, breathes (departs).

(Juliusz Slowacki, *The Ghost King*, variation of
the text 244)

Miserere, fragment of Paschal chant from
Cugliere, Sardinia

7. Sarah's Prayer. The Calling.

—And thus possessed I am with your
breath,
That keeps wake beyond the edge of
grave
And grows where angels' wings would
come

Romelni Kerubimtas, Hymn from Sioni Church,
Tbilisi, Georgia

8. Meeting

*To reach that which you do not recognize,
You need to go through that which you do
not recognize.
To reach that which you do not possess,*

*You need to go through that which you do
not possess.
To reach that which you do not know,
You need to go through that which you do
not know.
To reach that which you are not ...
You need to go through that which you
are not.*

(Paraphrase of *Mount of Excellence* by St. John
of the Cross according to the drawing by Diego
de Astor)

WE, FILLED WITH SPIRIT . . . ,

Fragment of the service *Three Young Men in
the Fiery Furnace* from the 2406 manuscript of
the Greek National Library, transcribed by M.
Adamis

9. Gift of Tongues
VENI SANCTE SPIRITUS

Fragment of *Missa Vultum Tuum*, Corsica

10. Let us place Three Crosses

Let us place three crosses in imitation
of the suffering of our Lord and on
those three let us nail three soldiers
each most virulent in his own company,
and the one whose life will last the
longest, with him the victory.

Ieso, paschal chant from Castelsardo, Sardinia

11. The Column of Death

—*The fastest animal that you can ride
towards excellence: suffering.*
—*Audiam, quid loquantur in me Dominus
Deus.*

*I will turn silent and thus will heed what
my God and my Lord speaks in me.
And if he wishes to (make me the object of
his words) (speak to me), let him enter
my inner being because I won't come out.*

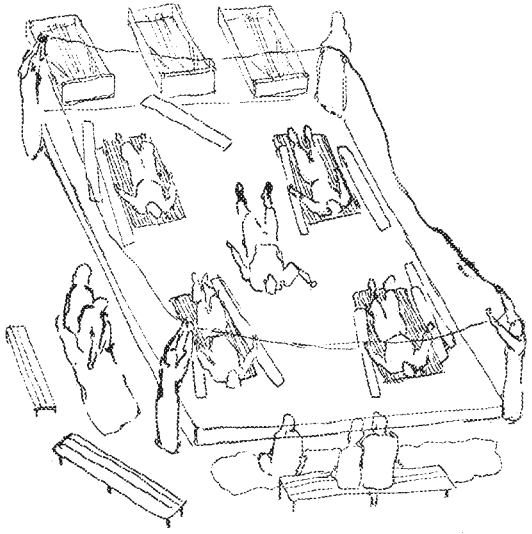
(Paraphrases of Master Eckhart's *On
Aloneness*)

**CUNTEMPLA CORO INDURANDU
SU LAMENTU DE MARIA**

Paschal chant from Orosei, Sardinia

12. Awaiting. Proskomide.

*I am not yet born; O hear me.
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat
or the stoat or the club-footed ghouls come
near me.
I am not yet born, console me.
I fear that the human race may with tall
walls wall me, with strong drugs dope me,
with wise lies lure me, on black racks rack
me, in blood-baths roll me.
[. . .]
I am not yet born; O hear me,
Let not the man who is beast or who
thinks he is God come near me.
I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would
freeze my humanity, would dragoon me
into a lethal automaton, would make me
a cog in a machine, a thing with one face,
a thing, and against all those who would
dissipate my entirety, would blow me like
thistledown hither and thither or hither
and thither like water held in the hands
would spill me.
Let them not make me a stone and let
them not spill me.*



Otherwise kill me

(Fragments of *Prayer Before Birth* by Louis
McNeice)

Irmos, for Dormition of Theotokos

The angel of the Lord announced
unto Mary.
And she conceived by the Holy
Spirit.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
Be it unto me according to your
Word.

And the Word was made flesh.
And dwelt among us.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray
for us sinners, now and at the
hour of our death.

Amen.

Commentary

Breathing as one

By Maria Shevtsova, Goldsmiths,
University of London.

Teatr ZAR takes audiences on a journey of polyphonic sound where compact simplicity penetrates through and through, uniting mind, body and soul as one.

So complete is this call upon the wholeness of human being that, at the end of a ZAR performance, listeners-spectators sit in silence, touched by grace. Applause at such a moment of profound spiritual illumination for some, of contemplation for others and of something palpable but indefinable for still more, would seem to be nothing short of sacrilege. The performers leave, never to come back for the bows and other such ceremonies of theatregoing. But, in the quiet, the energy they have released in the space is active, weaving between the members of the audience, as it had done during the performance, until they break its enveloping flow and leave, in their turn. From start to finish, a ZAR performance can be a momentous experience.

The group was formed between 1999 and 2003 when it undertook expeditions to Georgia in search of what are probably the oldest polyphonic forms in the world. Here, through the oral transmission of master to pupils, it learned 'Zar', funeral songs more than 2,000 years old and in a forgotten language of the Svaneti people, who inhabit north-western Georgia. These and other polyphonic songs and chants gathered principally from Bulgaria, Greece, Corsica and, more recently, Sardinia provided the material for the group's triptych, *Gospels of Childhood* (2003), *Caesarean Section/Essays on Suicide* (2007) and *Anhelli/The Calling*, which premieres in 2009.

From its inception, Teatr ZAR's aim has been to connect with the oldest traditions of music, rooted in Christianity, so as to reach the past.

By doing this, performers and audiences come towards something bigger than themselves: they transcend their ego, one might say, and achieve, through the chain of generations embodied in song and passed on across time, something like an openness of spirit that calibrates their present. It is perhaps for this reason that Jarosław Fret, the leader of ZAR, believes that our relationship with the past is of uppermost importance, allowing us to understand who we are, as part of humanity. He certainly believes, as did his great compatriot, director and theatre researcher, Jerzy Grotowski, that theatre has its deepest sources in song; and this makes singing indispensable for the creation of theatre work.

Singing is fundamental for generating energy, and is a means of exploring the emotions hidden somewhere deep inside performers. But it also frees these emotions, which the listeners-spectators recognise and catch imperceptibly, as if through their very pores. Theatre in such conditions is, for ZAR, the point where people's lives meet.

ZAR does not merely reproduce the songs it uses, but adapts them to the scenes developed though movement or with instrumental music played by the same performers who sing.

It could be cello, accordion, piano and an occasional wind instrument or saw taken from folk music. Spoken texts are added, sometimes in counterpoint to music or song, as happens with



Photo: Irena Lipińska

the story of Lazarus, Mary and Martha from the Gospel according to St John in *Gospels from Childhood*. At other times, speech, frequently as a solo voice, anticipates a strong instrumental or vocal sequence, as happens in *Caesarean Section*. Or else it works in tandem with a movement duo—movement duets being typical of the triptych—which requires great precision and timing together with acrobatic skill. Then, again, it is used minimally for dramatic effect. In all cases, speech, like movement and instrumental music, is an integral part of the patterns of breathing established, in the first instance, through song.

The quality of these patterns changes for the various fragments that make up each part of the triptych and changes, as well, with what emerges as the overall character of each part.

The liturgical quality of sound and movement in *Gospels of Childhood*, for instance, is sustained by the different resonances of bells and gongs, spaced very carefully through the work. Actions of washing, which are full of biblical associations, strengthen its ritual aura. *Caesarean Section*, by contrast, has the dynamics of dance theatre and, for all its fleeting moments of delicate humour, has, in moments, the raw power of tragedy. Its musical structure is more complex than that of *Gospels*, the latter's theme of resurrection having now been replaced, once again in fractured pieces, by the existential agony of suicide. *Anhelli* is essentially a mystery, albeit inspired by Polish Romantic poet Juliusz Słowacki's journey to the Holy Land. This work has the hush, the misterium, appropriate for a subject dealing with possession by an angel. Flames of burning candles contribute to the



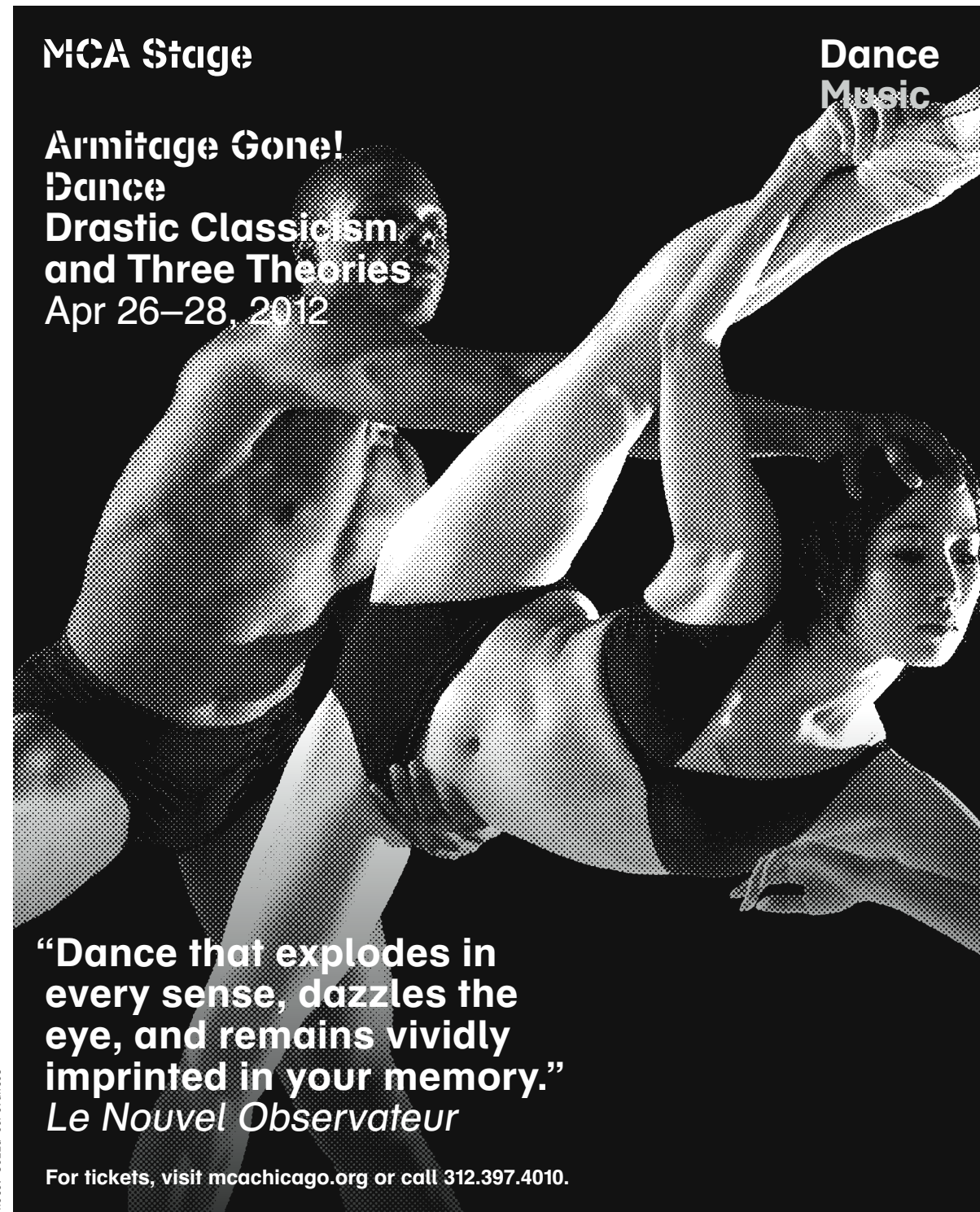
special atmosphere of ZAR performances, yet they also give light, both physically and figuratively. The performers are totally focused on what they are doing and are acutely aware of their partnerships with each other as they sing, play, move and speak. Their group harmony is, indeed, in the spirit of music, inviting audience members to breathe with them, as one.

Maria Shevtsova is Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London, and Editor of *New Theatre Quarterly*. Reprinted with permission from the author. First published in the Barbican Centre program for *Gospels of Childhood*, London 2009.

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