

SOURCES AND THE FUTURE

4 elements
work in progress

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Joanna Wichowska

ON RESPONSIBILITY -
BY WAY
OF AN INTRODUCTION

Local-global, traditional-modern, one's own-strange, social-individual, centre-periphery, culture-nature, future-past: for many years now in Theatre Węajty, work has been going on to establish new patterns of relations between these classical binary oppositions. The points in which the aforementioned opposites meet (proving to be mutually complimentary) at the same time delineate the territory of the Theatre's artistic practice, year by year broader and broader. The hereby work shows fragments of this territory. It sums up a certain stage of activity and at the same time draws its tomorrow's horizon.

The future exists only as a hypothesis, but it does not free us from responsibility for its shape – Wacław Sobaszek suggests in his essay – just like work with the past (with tradition) does not mean that we should glorify it regardless of circumstances. Drawing at the many years practice of carolling in Suwalszczyzna and the Beskid Niski Mountains, Sobaszek sketches the practical and theoretical context in which the newest performances of the Theatre came into being: *Water 2030*, *Earth B* and *Fire*. First of all, however, he asks a series of questions concerning the place which nowadays is, or can be, taken by a theatre such as Węgajty.

About the process of work on the performance (co-created by young students and shown within the frames of Easter expedition in the Suwalki Dziadówek) tells the report of Katarzyna Łukasiewicz – written from the perspective of a “novice”, a new person in the band, focused on personal experience, it is at the same time a short review of specific theatre workshop practices in Węgajty. Zofia Bartoszewicz, calling on particular scenes which happened in the winter 2011 in Dąbrowa Dolna in Świętokrzyskie Mountains and in Nowica in Beskid Niski Mountains, describes in turn the essence of the New Year carolling.

Water 2030 and *Earth B* come back in the notes of Erdmute Sobaszek, who relates the second part of the Caravan of the South 2011 – the expedition to Montenegro and Albania. Both the shows were shown in Albanian villages – in the versions adjusted to the reality of the place. A detailed description of the process of adaptation of the material for new, in that case complicated and painful, circumstances, is the

case complicated and painful, circumstances, is the best illustration of Węgajty's artistic strategy. The past (the "sources") cannot be left to itself and theatre work must be done in an unceasing dialogue with the reality around. Only then will it manage to speak also about what comes later.

The last of the presented texts is a kind of a commentary to the Albanian expedition, but at the same time it places this experience within the perspective of the problems currently faced by Europe. "One needs definite actions which would build bridges over divisions, and create more stable bases for communication" - writes Emilia Hagelanz. We come back to the issue of responsibility.

Wacław Sobaszek

ABOUT THE FUTURE, ABOUT SOURCES AND THE FOUR ELEMENTS

1.

In the performance *Water 2030* we are asking questions about the future. About the future of water resources on the planet, and, more broadly: about our responsibility towards the future generations. We started the work on the show from the observation that before our very eyes, some dangerous crack is being made. Sociologists call it a lack of inter-generation solidarity. The same thing was said by Albin Krajewski, sculptor, inhabitant of the Social Care House in Jonkowo. His words we treated, with a grain of salt, as words of a guru. With some rarely found internal strength, clearly and simply he said that we are not preparing the world for our grandchildren. Quite the contrary – we destroy it, we spoil it, we create a worse Earth. This is how the idea for the next performance came about – *Earth B*.

This time, however, we tried to bring our thinking about the future to the present moment. During our work on *Water*, our attempt to imagine what the world is going to look like in twenty years proved a challenge both to the audience and to ourselves. It is not easy to think about the future. One has to learn first how to get through, to tear through, to the future. One way to do it is to try to get the future forms of the world out of those which exist already. So, preparing *Earth B* we were taking care that the performance, again turning towards the future, should at the same time be a search of its seeds in the present day. Degeneration of agriculture, degeneration of the relation of man to animals in the dying traditional farms and in massive farming became the subject of the masks created for the purpose of the performance, and of the masking scenes which belong to it. The scenes of the “carnival of animals”, human-animal, absurd confusion.

This is what it was like in previous seasons. In the present season, the season of *Fire*, we are actually focusing on what is here and now. Such is, one could say, the nature of fire. And theatre as well. It is important what is going on at the moment, between people. It began from the New Year show, entitled *New Year's Eve at the Central Station*. The participants of the January carolling workshop had a special task: to bring along records of their talks with homeless people. Their subject was to be “crisis”. Again, the impulse was a thought of the sociologist Ulrich Beck. The awareness of a crisis became, in his opinion, so wide-spread that one can talk about it with the homeless. It turned out that the workshop participants prepared their material mostly in the last moment. Many talked to the homeless on railway stations, on their way to Węgajty.

We composed the text of the show out of records realized on stations of Cracow, Wrocław, Berlin, Szczecin and Olsztyn. A quotation from one of the talks: "Crisis? What crisis?!" became an outset slogan of this year's work on the carnival show, and at the same time – a seed of work on *Fire*. The subject of the performance works, here sketched lightly, is one thing. The other is the fact that the performances form a series. The fourth sequel will probably be called "Air", somebody will say. Right, at the stage of "Earth B" we didn't know that. Finally, though, we allowed ourselves to be carried away. Let there be four elements, long live Empedokles!

2.

The pra-premiere of *Fire* took place during the carolling expedition. Somebody asked then in what way this element was present in the tradition of early spring rituals. The matter is, however, much broader than the search for direct and specific allusions at tradition. It is, first of all, the question how theatre performances relate to rituals and to the local context.

A few years ago we made a brave decision. We decided to end every season of Different Theatre School, that is the season of carolling, carnival and alleluia, with a new performance. It is almost three times that we have managed already. Almost, because *Fire* is still a baby. Every time we show the new performance in Dziadówek, in Suwalszczyzna, on the Hańcza Lake.

In 2010 year, on Easter Sunday, in other words – Water Sunday, we played *Water 2030* in Dziadówek. In one of the scenes, the ballad of the dragon found its place – a story which takes place on a lake, a mysterious lake, as deep as Hańcza Lake. A year later, we showed there *Earth B*.

Dziadówek is a place where over twenty years we have been working to revitalise the tradition of *volotchebne*, a custom very much connected with the element of earth. It is an early-spring rite. One walks on the earth, inhaling its smell, which was absent earlier, during the winter. One looks at a newly ploughed field and sometimes it is as if you saw the very nakedness of the earth. There is a curious tradition, an anthropological foundation myth, a story of the first *volotchebnik*, who was dragged, in horizontal posture, over the fields. Imitating love-making gestures, he fulfilled a magical task, giving fertility to the earth and good harvest to the people. So much for mythology and old rituals. Today's Dziadówek is decadent agriculture and old villagers, growing steadily older. In this world, which cannot catch up with the present day, we showed a performance which draws at its roots, but whose clear horizon is the future. It is an action which goes in two directions at the same time, in accordance with Jane Goodall's "roots and shoots" philosophy.

3.

Symbols, ritual motifs, anecdotes are only one layer of the performance, a kind of an aesthetic game. It is worth, however, to work with the very experience of an element, in the case of our actions – first of all, the earth.

A theatre fieldwork expeditions is getting down to earth, standing on the earth in the sense of getting away from everyday entanglements, of a vital simplification, focusing on what is happening here and now. Nowica in the Low Beskid Mountains, January. We come and immediately we are drawn into a whirlpool of carolling. And here we stand, face to face

with people, we come into houses, we rub sides with somebody's life.

On one side: getting down to earth in metaphorical sense, relating to a deepening of communication and being among people, on the other – earth in a very concrete sense, experienced sensually. The latter opens the way to other experiences. One element calls forth the next ones. Everything depends on internal readiness, and the readiness appears when our determination is accompanied by affirmation of the world around. Several times during Easter expedition there were swims in the lake. Water, on which here and there there still are floes of ice, burns like fire. So far, nobody has caught pneumonia.

4.

Remaining in the circle of first and elementary things, one should gather some thoughts on the subject of tradition. An expedition is a meeting with tradition. How is one supposed to make this meeting fresh and authentic? Among us, there are new people, who come here for the first time – what we can do is we could simply accompany them, without any interference. And we too, “the elders”, have a chance to taste the expedition in a new way, provided we keep an attitude which shall be at the same time open and critical. We will loose the authenticity of being here if we are too polite, if we start pretending anything. For example – an unconditional acceptance.

For many years, we did not know what to do with the presence of the Jew character in ritual theatre. Is it really a character or a stereotype? Can it exist outside of the context of humiliation, of beating? Is it necessary that he has a hunch, stuffed with pea-stalks,

and a staff raised above his head, as if in ritual? Earlier, the staff appeared in our carolling props set as the equipment of the shepherd, the leader of the goat. I observed how deeply the gesture of raising the staff, the stick is rooted in our genes, even on seeing an animal. What is biologically and scenically exciting, with time had become disgusting to us. We didn't want the shepherd scare the animal with violence any more. Impulsive reactions of this kind and the way of thinking which stands behind them in traditional society, are still lingering now, also in relation to women. Does our refusal to accept these phenomena mean we get away from reality, become idealistic? What shall one do with the language of violence in the verses of folk songs? Are these songs in danger of extinction if we, after all, resign from some of the verses?

Such doubts concern mostly the attitude of the new man. Something tells us that we should treat the material with the greatest care and never skip a verse. We must remember, however, that nothing really frees us from choosing. And penetrating. What appears as unity to us, used to be sewn from many different matters in the past.

Once we found a beautiful song which was sung to us by a very old lady in Podlasie region, in Szczęsnowicze. We wrote down all the verses. The next day, in the neighbouring village, her brother showed us a record of the same song, with a different set of verses. He was much younger than his sister, who was born at the beginning of the century, he went to school in the thirties. That time added to the existing verses anti-semitic ones.

Not only that time, anyway. Similar sense had the last verse of the canticle carol „Żydzie, Żydzie...” (“O Jew, O Jew...”) (M.M. Mioduszeński, *Pastorałki i kołędy*, Kraków 1843). The carol starts beautifully but in the last verse the peasant threatens the Jew: „Żydzie, Żydzie wnet ja cię nauczę, jak cię z tyłu, jak cię z przodu tą pałką wymłóć!” (“O, Jew, O, Jew, soon I’ll give you teaching, when from the backwards, when from the frontwards I’ll give you some beating”) What for? For the fact that he “knows the old Lord God fine, but the little one, he doesn’t understand” „starego Pana Boga jak należy umie, ale tego maleńkiego jeszcze nie rozumie...”?

We tried to cut the last verse out, yet it did not seem enough. Something wrong was hanging in the air. The solution came when the carolling expedition was joined by a young adept from Israel. Together, we created a new verse, in which we put another theological thought about the Messiah, now a Jewish one. Now, the song became something like a dispute. It stopped to be the old song. What relief!

5.

We need a space which shall give some breath to the meeting, to the confrontation. Here we have to look for the fourth element, air.

With the passage of years, our carolling becomes more and more inter-cultural. People from different continents come to the workshops, from different religious traditions. Actually, we should not be surprised that usually they find themselves brilliantly well in our actions. The field of expeditions is borderland, Lemko-Polish (Beskid Niski, the Low Beskid

Mountains) and Polish-Lithuanian-Belarussian (the Suwalki region). The ground of the borderland is elastic, it more easily adjusts to the changes and the needs which in the times of globalisation come everywhere. Not only to great metropolises, where they are perhaps more clearly defined and classified.

Alleluias, *volotchebne*, also belong to the sphere of borderland. An expert on the subject, Janina Szymańska, calls them borderland phenomena (*Etnolingwistyka* 5/92, p. 97). Easter becomes in this framework an ecumenical tradition, a little detached, rachmanian. In this space, shamanist *lalymkas* fly around – strange songs, like the one about nine horns of the deer. Animal characters walk around which come from pre-Christian times. Yet, in spite of apparent fairy-tale-ness, everything here has a concrete dimension.

This borderland space, after twenty-three years of exploring, has a special meaning to us. There mix and cross different time vectors. Bread baked in the house and other healthy, village food do not belong only to the past. They also are a clearly forward-pointing vector.

Not only cities can be creative, also traditional and village space gives such possibilities. Recently, inhabitants of many world metropolises passionately try to build a new kind of community. In our activities, there appears the caroller, animator of culture, well grounded, acting with a plan, with a purpose. He comes into a village house, stands with his back to the TV set and blocks people from seeing the screen.

In a difficult area he practices his „minimal art”.
Something like scattered, single gestures, etudes,
constant dialogue.

Let us not stop at that. We are about to sketch out
a performance.

29 IV 2012

Katarzyna Łukasiewicz

EASTER EXPEDITION 2011

(EXCERPTS FROM A STUDENT'S REPORT)

The Węgajty alleluia expedition is a chance to spend the unbearable Easter (to me it does not mean a lot, I do not go to church) in a completely unique way. Nowadays Easter usually means visiting family, consumption and, first of all, free-and-frivolous time. Węgajty Theatre offers a different way of meeting our holiday tradition. We tear away from daily life, we are transported to a different reality, we go to the countryside and walk round the houses carolling, from a house to a house, from a vodka to a vodka, from cucumber to sausage, from the merry smile of Ms Halinka to the cackle of the toothless youth, Józio.

Before we set off to the Suwałki region, for a couple of days we had been working in Węgajty, in the theatre. That was the time of preparation, the time for thinking things over, for getting to love the place, for the contact with nature, for adapting oneself to the peculiar rhythm, so different from the rhythm of everyday. Węgajty is not only the theatre, it is also the forest, the road from the village to the theatre itself, the place where we sleep and its hosts, the relations with another person. Coming back at evenings to “one’s own” bed in the house of Mrs Ela Goerigk one could feel at home. Without the morning guessing game about what Mrs Ela had made the jam of, entering the day routine would be incomplete. And without detaching oneself from the everyday, without getting united with the place, focused on what’s around – the work would not be that effective.

All the workshop exercises had a deep sense – they were directed towards the performance, which was to become the crowning of all the work. Different from for example in Gardzienice theatre, where, yes, we did have “reciprocity” workshops, “vocal” and “physical” workshops, but nothing really came out of them – after three days we simply came back to Warsaw. And the Węgajty work became fulfilled in Dziadówek, during the alleluia, that is visiting the village houses with the Easter carolling and during the show of *Earth B* in the penthouse of Henryk Podbielski, one of the village farmers.

Nature trip, that is a run in the forest. From other participants I heard stories about how one ran in Węgajty in the winter, about rolling about in the snow... I was suspicious: rolling about is not enough,

where is the ideology of that rolling? Night runs I had known before from my scout's times: chases, winning the banners, runs to get the scarf, to gain the badges one by one, night games ending with a bonfire, stealing jam in the dark – such were my first associations. Whereas our run reminded me of the descriptions of experiences of the participants of Grotowski's para-theatrical activities, quoted in Professor Leszek Kolankiewicz's texts "On the Way to Active Culture" („Na drodze do kultury czynnej"). We were like a pack of wolves, listening out for voices from afar, like horses who have found hay to pluck at, like a family of cave people who are not able to communicate in a way different than inarticulate noises and gestures, like a forest band listening for the sound of stones, like children who run down a hill.

Massage. I discovered how pleasant it can be, when you are being massaged by good hands. And when you let yourself be touched – and sometimes there is a problem with that. Not always it was easy to me to feel completely free, for example – to stop controlling my hand, which should just fall down, dropped down by the partner (whereas it became stiffly suspended in the air). To stop thinking about the fact that I am being touched by a stranger, just to feel touched – and that's all. What helped me break all kinds of barriers were the exercises building the relation with the partner, trust, the awareness of one's own and the other's body.

Dance exercises. The dances were not exceptionally complicated, but my lack of the sense of space and perhaps my dyslexia caused me to have problems with coordinating my own body. When should it be left, when should it be right? I have to practice in front of

a mirror or to see the leader in front of me, in order to be able to repeat the steps quickly. Of course, the most essential is common play, after all, we are not performing on stage or fighting for award. It is not about perfection, about controlling whether every move is done properly. Mine weren't. I prefer to dance on my own, I don't even know the basic steps for the waltz. The most pleasant were the group dances, less so – the bits that were danced in couples. Everybody dances in a different way, one has to adjust oneself to the partner, look them straight into the eyes, it is not for me, it is too bold.

At singing I wasn't the top either... However, when I stopped to think if I remember the words, if I am not losing the rhythm, I sang loud and brave. I do not sing everyday, at the most I sing to myself under my breath – in Węgajty for the first time I had the chance to hear myself, to hear my own voice. The work with the mask also wasn't easy. The audience has to see the mask *en face* – only during the last rehearsal did I manage to expose it the way it should be. I chose the mask of the red-cheeked woman...

It was very interesting to see the process of combining the material which we brought to Węgajty (it was supposed to concern the subject of the Earth) with the work on the masks, with elements of songs, and observe how all those elements become a whole, coming together to make a performance.

And finally – Suwalszczyzna – the realization of the sense of all our work done till that time. To the Dziadówek village we came on Easter Sunday in the evening. And immediately we set off carolling.

The inhabitants had been waiting for us already: the theatre has been visiting them year by year, for twenty years now. On Monday the carolling took almost all day. And at dusk – the performance. The audience very lively reacted to the masked characters, treating them like old friends: a guy with a giant phallus, the beggar woman, the prostitute, the village beauty with massive breasts, the guy with a beer-belly, the *volotchebnik*. Our “walking with the *volotchebne*” was lavishly rewarded: we were offered cheeses, bread, cucumbers, cakes, vodka, vodka, vodka and eggs for the road

Zofia Bartoszewicz

CLOSED DOOR, OPEN DOOR

(NOTES AFTER

THE CAROLLING EXPEDITION 2011)

Magic, that is – simplicity.

When in a house into which carollers come, the Hosts switch off the telly, the optics change. The attention shifts, focuses on what is happening live, between people, in the middle of the kitchen or the living room. The fact that someone switches the television off means that it is worth risking a deviation from the norm, and that already is really something.

Declaring some values comes much more easily than practicing them.

Carolling is values in practice. Such values as the meeting, being together, reciprocity.

The character of the goat who falls dead and then is resurrected, the ending of the King Herod scene, the singing of the good wishes carol to the Hostess and the Host. In every house practically the same, but every time – here and now – especially for this family, no other. It is important to me, the well-wishing, to wish people well.

Carolling may only happen when they open the door before You.

The experience of joy, its communal dimension.

And what if they don't open the door?

An experience of discouragement, quickly growing frustration, with which one has – equally quickly – to do something: by herself/himself, because nobody will do that for me.

In the house of the Graba family in Dąbrowa Dolna, the discouragement we had felt a moment ago becomes distant past. The energy starts coming back, going round quicker and quicker.

I suspect that on leaving this house, where this wonderful carolling happened to us and in which we experienced the most generous gratitude, everyone felt just as much grateful towards the hosts.

The more you give of yourself, not really by forcing yourself, but by being honest, the more you can feel you have been given a gift.

Rehearsals in the theatre and later in Nowica.

Improvising around Wei Yun Lin's poem and other texts – one of the actions that come from the centre

and are very important to me. (Wei writes: „Love the Corean war, the Tibetan massacre, terrorist attack, / like the fountain, the dove, the dogs in the park. (...)
Love politicians' empty talk, / at the same time, love the stumblings of democracy on its way. Love sexual scandal, gossip, corruption, / the way you love the embryo leaping in the belly.”)

Close encounter of what's intimate with what is outside. Also of what's local, with the global.
Jan's story about the round table, at which the representatives of one-hundred-twenty nations sat to answer one-hundred-twenty questions gathered all around the World.

In Nowica it proved that one can combine celebrating Christmas and the Sabbath.

In the old school building in Nowica, when the dance was really going on at full steam, in two neighbouring rooms, two musical words were vibrating, or perhaps rather two aspects of the same world. They came to exist together, without disturbing each other in any way. One could freely pass from one to the other, and when you opened the door, the sounds coming from the other room were like a whiff of fresh air.

Erdmute Sobaszek

TO TELL ABOUT WHAT ONE DOESN'T SPEAK ABOUT

(CARAVAN OF THE SOUTH 2011 IN
ALBANIA - EXCERPTS FROM A DIARY)

2.09.

We leave Shkodra, by bus and by taxi. Direction: Zogay by the Montenegro border, a picturesque fishermen village, pressed in between the shore of the Shkodra Lake and the Tarabosh mountain range. There is no TV or Internet here, few tourists reach it here. The taxi driver talks a lot, every now and again he laughs, loudly, coarsely. We go through a Gypsy village, the driver with a broad gesture shows to us the reality around. Justyna translates for us the Albanian word *Madjyp*. The taxi driver bursts with laughter, he says – People without passports! Hahaha! We reach the lake. It is like a combination of paradise and hell: the surfaces glimmers fabulously and around it – the mountains. The mountain range is black from fire. We hear that people tried to call for help with fighting the fire, but nobody reacted. (It would not be hard to quench the fire, the Montenegro firemen on the other side of the border were successful). Lack of interest,

lack of equipment. Some political grounds? There can be various motives: dishonest competition of German and Greek pharmacy companies, gaining the wild mountain sage, the practice of lowering the prices of ground under the development of growing suburban settlements or the destruction of illegal marijuana fields... Right... we are outside of the European Union... people have, in joint action, rescued only the cemetery. Mountain slopes are, apart from the lake, the basis of their living. They collect healing herbs, they graze their cows here. The smokes of fires on the slopes of the mountains around the lake – since now it is going to be an everyday view: at night all the more spectacular, because you can see fires from many kilometres' distance.

It is hot. Due to Bayram, the several days feast which ends the Ramazan, as well as because of the yet unfinished siesta, it is too early for our introductory visit at the village mayor. In such a case, we use our time to have a swim. The water is clear and warm, the stone shore covered with garbage. Giant weeds make swimming harder. We learn that the ecological equilibrium has been violated: the weed-eating fishes are gone. The process may be irreversible.

We are complete strangers here, we can only talk to people with the help of Ilir and Justyna. Sometimes we are also helped by Morgan, the young Belgienne, the fiancée of the son of the landlord of the house in which we are staying, who decided – at least now – to spend the rest of her life in the village.

In the evening, the street is full of people – young boys, older men, children. Women can be met when they are

going shopping or coming back from the shop (open till 10 p.m.) or when they are working, together with the men, on fishing boats. It is hard to live out of fishing alone, many families are helped by relatives living abroad. In the old times, people would go to work in Shkodra on foot: two hours one way. For some time now, it has been possible to reach the village by a narrow motorway, winding through the mountains and only weakly secured. Two times a day the bus goes, there are cars.

Ilir and Justyna tell us the basic facts about Zogay. That the last post of the Albanian frontier guard was here, that people here were pushed by the regime to play the role of confidants, reporting on the runaways who tried to cross the border through the mountains or swim it through the lake. The caught escapees (if they had not been shot on the spot) went to meet their death or – rarely – for many years to prison. Enver Hodja died in 1985, the legislation changed, the penalties for escaping were diminished to 6 months' imprisonment. The flow of refugees has grown bigger, but here, on the border, they were shot all the same. The only real change was a bigger number of victims. Persecuting this systematic dirty business of killing and the readiness to help the refugees from one of the blackest communist dictatorships would require international help. A lot goes to show that nobody has been interested: no government, no country. At the beginning of the nineties, more people were killed on Albanian border than before the dictator's death.

Till today, no-one in Albania talks about it. All the more here, in the place where for many years the nightmare has been taking place. This complete silence

strangely resembles the way in which today's world is silent about Albania.

The first rehearsals for "Ziemia" in the newly-formed ensemble, in the evening – a show of "Water" in Zogaj. First we walk round the village, playing music, inviting people for the show. It may be the first theatre show in the history of the village! The children of course came earlier, they helped us build the audience on the narrow terraces which, amphitheatre-like, tower around the "stage" – a patch of even ground, covered with concrete, in front of the local café, which people here call "the club". One could hardly imagine a more picturesque scenery for the show. Our stage lantern dangles in the air and our black screen stands against the background of lake and mountains. Into this bucolic landscape, bitter reality presses: the image of the still burning forest... People are all eyes and ears, they react to every gesture. After the show we meet Nebi and her husband; they stand us all a round of beer.

3rd September

Saturday: rehearsals for „Ziemia” continued, step by step we manage to introduce the first fragments of text in Albanian, e.g from the clown's words: „Ziemia (the Earth), Ziemia, Ziemia. Ziemia has no borders. Ziemia doesn't know where Poland is, where Albania (Squiperia) is, where Israel is...". Yes, indeed, it is a play about this village... but, anyway, we will want to find new scenes, taken straight from here. Morgan joins us with the flute.

In the afternoon, we go to the village: along a path leading towards the border, then behind the mosque where the mortar road ends. The last houses, burnt out

earth, rocks and ashes, empty spaces, finally two not very impressive ruined buildings. Above the gangway, the remnants of a metal sign "Poczta Zogaj"; two letters are left. It was not a traditional post office, but a place of transfer – and control – of foreign mail. At the same time – a post of frontier guards and the seat of the radar. Enormous lights controlling the surface of the lake were installed below. Straight behind the post office – a three hundred metres belt of borderland, behind it – Montenegro. To Montenegro belongs also the island which you can see well from Zogaj's stone beach. It was to that island that one had to swim. It is not far from the village, about 2 hours swim. But from here there was close to no chance to go unnoticed: the face of the lake was constantly monitored and the inhabitants of the village were obliged to inform the guards anytime they saw anything suspicious. Even children were entitled to check a newcomer's identity. Sometimes shots would fall from the shore which were not even shot by the soldiers. If the escape was to have any chances of success, you had to get into the water away from the village and the lake. The runaways had to swim about 2-3 hours in the river Buna which connects the lake with the Adriatic Sea and then swim with a wide arch avoiding the shore in Zogaj and approach the island from the other side. After an all-year training, a man could do all the way in 18 hours. There are no statistics saying how many people had drowned half-way.

Ilir shows the "post office" to us: here was the radar post (till last year, someone had still been sitting here), here – the commander's room. Here, against that wall, executions were done. Nobody knows, on what ground the decision was made: whether to shoot a man on the

spot or hand him over to the persecutor. Once they caught a couple, a boy and a girl, trying to escape in order to live together without the strict limitations imposed by the communists. Before killing the girl, the soldiers raped her, making sure that the gossip reaches the village. Then the bodies of the both were publicly carried round the local villages.

It is getting late, we go, as we had promised, to visit Nebi's house. Stone steps lead to the door, freshly whitened on the occasion of the Ramadan and the feast of Bayram. Nebi knows old weaving techniques and tapestry techniques, she managed to set her own workshop going. Now there is more than a dozen women working. We speak English, Nebi's daughter, Pranvera, translates for us. She studies Albanian literature in Shkodra. But she wants to come back to Zogaj when her studies are over, because it is "the best place you can imagine". We talk about how people used to live here in the old times, about the frontier. There is comparative material – I tell them about the Berlin Wall. Nebi tells us that party membership was in the times of the Hodja a necessary condition to survive. At some moment Nebi says "we were forced to tell on others". Pramvera, however, closes the subject quickly, saying "But now we are better". Finally we manage to hear songs. Wedding songs, fishermen's songs, first shy ("no, we have no songs"), then more and more brave and bold. We are less and less anonymous in Zogaj. The basic vocabulary: faleminderit (thank you), mirëmëngjes (good day), people answer us sometimes with a Serbian or an Italian word

4th September

A trial show of the Albanian version of Earth B in Shiroka.

Shiroka lies closer by Shkodra, it has a completely different character from Zogay, there are several restaurants, two internet cafés, and an empty promenade by the lake. Above, the mosque, the church, houses, gardens piled one upon the other under the burnt out wall of the mountain. And the summer residence of Ahmed Zogu, the pre-war Albanian president and king, after the war – changed into a holiday resort for children. Ilir remembers: one would get into the water on the sound of a whistle, the bath lasted the regulation three minutes, not a second more. The king's villa today: broken glass, empty fountain pools, crumbled concrete of the balustrade.

When on the first day we were looking around Shiroka for a place for the show, we were surrounded by a swarm of children – boys only. We decided to do with them a workshop of poyka swaying. On the day of the show, Iza and Justyna come here earlier. They have rice and stockings – the materials for making the poykas. Iza is brilliant at waving the poykas, besides she is quite experienced at yard pedagogy. Justyna acts as interpreter, even though our communication with the adepts of juggling anyway bases on the brief “Supeeeeeer!”. After some time the rest of the group come, we unpack the props. At the beginning, the scene with the camel: its fall and “recovery” under the influence of music, the way we do it in Węgajty during the Carnival show – the Zapust. We wander along one of the little streets here in the company with a group of boys from the poyka workshop. Our procession is a bit like a circus coming to town. The street, empty at first, fills up with people: they lean out of windows, they come down, the children's excitement reaches zenith.

We reach the terrace in front of Zogu's villa, we put the screen up. In the performance there are more and more Albanian sentences, like David's question: "Are there, behind the village, also playgrounds, or minefields?" Only now we are able to check if the audience are following the events, if the texts come home to them, if the meaning of the scenes gets through. Applause after the deer scene, hustle, careful listening, hustle. In the finale, Iza manages to draw the workshop boys into the action.

Action in Shiroka helped us come closer to our task in Zogay. We are still thinking: what should Earth B sound like in that place? We are, after all, in a completely unknown context: on one hand – the village's monstrous past, on the other – cultural difference. Big risk, lots of questions. Aren't we behaving like intruders, when we are trying to get to know something about the past? How are the inhabitants of a Muslim village going to react to the ribald, erotic scenes in the show? It is hard to ignore the fact that every day at five a.m. we are woken up by the voice of the muezzin... Even Justyna and Ilir feel uncertain in the face of the people living here, even though they have been coming to Zogay for a year already (they are working on a documentary about that place). Example: when we were asking about the possibility of showing the performance in the "club", the owner was suspicious at first: "This club is for everyone – no religious propaganda of any sort! One drinks rakiya here, you see..." But also this: a woman, who grabbed hold of Justyna's hand as she was filming the surroundings of the post-office: "One must not publish that anywhere!"

Time is getting more and more dense, every moment brings something new. We learn next words: peshk (fish), bukë (bread), fëmijë (children), natën e mirë (good night). Pranvera helps us memorize a couple of verses of a wedding song, which has, they say, more than fifty verses.

5th September

Exhaustion, people getting sick, a break in rehearsals. Conversation: Ilir about the film: it is supposed to speak about the long years of Albanian isolation – through people's destinies: the lives of the runaways and of the inhabitants of Zogay. Ilir knows a lot of dramatic stories. Someone ran away three times, twice he was caught and he served many years sentences in prison. He got rich in the West but in the nineties he came back to Albania. He lives in Shkodra, on the verge of complete poverty. Another man, an officer of high rank in some Albanian service, set off on a ship with some ten people's crew in the direction of the island, taking with himself his wife and a several-months-old daughter. From the Zogay village a shot fell, but they managed to get to the island. Only on the spot the crew had revealed the truth: the shot killed the child. The officer never came back to Albania. Another story: a teenager told his mother a strange dream: he dreamt that some portraits of the members of the Political Office fell off the wall. His mother immediately went to the Party Comitee: "My son has wrong thoughts". He was sentenced for fifteen years in prison. Why did she do it? Maybe she was worried about her other children – the boy had eight siblings. Everyone who ran away was aware that his relatives would be punished. "We were forced to tell on others" – what exactly hides behind that confession? The inhabitants of Zogay,

as we were told, signalled to each other the presence of strangers in the village with a special tin bell. Many of them carried weapons.

Another chapter are the stories which happened already after the fall of the communism. A family who for five years have been squatting in one room in the Italian embassy (why were they not given refuge earlier?). The civil war in 1997, caused by the breakdown of the so-called financial pyramids and mass escapes to Italy. Twenty-five thousand Albanians on two small ships in an Italian harbour (I can remember from television the images of people trying to get to the shore, hanging by the sides of the ships, falling off into the water). Another ship with over a hundred refugees – including women and children – smashed by an Italian vessel. Few had survived, the investigations drew on for years. It is known that somewhere there are collective graves of people killed on the Albanian border after the death of Hodja. Sometimes some family manages to collect money, they run the search for the missing ones on their own. Sometimes they find the body. About all that nobody speaks: neither in Albania, nor in Europe. One speaks about the failure to fulfil the conditions to join the EU, about Mafia and smuggling.

Wacek: Three islands come together in my mind. One is the island we look at everyday, the island on the Shkodra Lake, onto which the Albanians had been trying to get for years. The other is the Italian island Lampedusa on the Mediterranean, where the African refugees are trying to get. The third one – the Norwegian island Utøya, on which a rightist extremist killed 69 young people. On the wall of the

Zogay border passage, by which the caught runaways were shot, there is still a sign saying: "Nation above all." Were people shot here in the name of the idea of a nationalist state? Just like Breivik?

We are guests in Zogay – what can we understand within a mere couple of days? How to react to all these stories? From the beginning we wanted to build a new, "local" version of the show – in what way shall we include in Earth B the images which would relate to what happened here? And what should be the function of the show planned for tomorrow? Should it act the way the play did of the actors brought to the Danish court by Hamlet? Or like ancient tragedy, e.g. Antigone? Should it bare the guilt, provoke qualms of conscience or show the tragedy, keeping clear of judgement? How literal can our action be?

7th September

Earth B in Zogay.

The first scene: the camel mask sets off from before the café. We are surrounded by more people than usual, and what's more – exactly at the moment the camel walks out on the street, a man turns up returning from somewhere with his donkeys (!). The camel is followed the character of the "Immigrant" – Emi in the mask of the black-faced shoeblack. Commotion and laughter.

Scene two: we are coming close to the beach. The concrete breakwater looks like a giant stage. A dance of two women against the background of the sky. Their costume is a shared, two-person wedding dress. It makes the bodies of the two dancers unite, then – like a straitjacket – it becomes an instrument of enslavement, or it turns into a deathly shroud.

Zosia and Emilia dedicated their performance to the young couple of shot refugees we had been told about.

Scene three: we sing „By the Waters of Babylon”. The lyrics are now fresh, local („We lay down and wept for Thee Zion”). Right on the lake shore two other women are dancing. One of them walks into the water, swims away. We are not singing any more, Iza swims on, heading for the island. Only now do we realize that behind the railing of the café and in the higher part of the beach lots of people have gathered. They watch it all in absolute silence. Iza swims, she is far away already. Two fishermen, whose coming had earlier been arranged by Ilir, get on their boat. They jerk the rope and the engine starts off in a moment. The fishermen help Iza get onto the boat. Applause.

The remaining scenes of Earth are played before the “club”, under the swaying lantern. A crowd of people, turmoil, at the end – the boys are performing, the poykas spin in the air. Then – a common singing of the wedding song and Nebi playing the dayra (tambourine), and dancing, and more and more fishermen’s songs.

The participants of the Caravan of the South 2011
(an expedition to Montenegro and Albania):
Erdmute Sobaszek, Wacław Sobaszek, Justyna Wielgus,
Ilir Dragovoja, Zofia Bartoszewicz, Emilia Hagelgan, Iza Giczewska, Paulina Miu Zielińska, David Zelinka, Karolina Placha

Emilia Hagelganz

ABOUT THE BEAR,
FOR A LONG TIME FORCED
TO EARN HIS BREAD
WITH DANCE

(AFTER THE CARAVAN OF THE SOUTH 2011)

August 2011 – the Caravan of the Wegajty Theatre moves along the 20th meridian east of Greenwich, along the track of the woman suffering from long-sightedness – that is: Europe. Who is she and where are her borders, in what political clothes does she clothe her fertile soils and what people beat her with their dance?

Before we set off, however, I am packing my suitcase. I take with me a spiritual companion: the newest issue of the European magazine *Lettre Internationale*, No 93 – with the pictures of the Belgian multimedia artist, a playwright and director, Jan Fabre, with Arkadij Babchenko's report describing the experience of the war and of killing and with the moving story of the Chinese writer Liao Yiwu. Added to this luggage: a hat against solar explosions – a tangible heritage of a sublime, aristocratic culture, for the protection of eternal paleness.

(...)

To define Europe anew. That is the task of art, politics and probably – of everyone of us separately. And just look: the European citizens under the cover of World Wide Web have done their best to propagate all around the world the thesis of “Eurabia”. It was formulated in detail and published in a 1500 pages long manifesto by the assassin Breivik. The Norwegian massacre was a call to protect the native European blood. But why are the citizens of Europe so much scared of the Arab world? What has become of the solidarity with the young Arabian revolution? And how come that before our eyes, at the coast of Lampedusa, people are dying, and their dying is sanctified by the European directives? That’s one of Europe’s dresses: a senses-deceiving mirage of a caravanserai, not everyone allowed in.

There are also those who have managed to pass through the gate, though. In Albania everywhere we come across new luxury cars with Italian numbers. But what does life away from the beloved ones look like? And what happens when you come back to your supposed homeland?

„A dancing bear, having wrenched himself free, came back to the forest, and soon, as he was taught, he danced, on his hind-legs, for his gang, with great mastery. “Look! – he roared – this is art: this is what you can learn in the world. Try to do as I do, if you like my dance and if you can!” “Oh, go away with such art – an old bear purred – be it even the most difficult and rare.” (G.E.Lessing)

Many such dancing bears – me included – go through

Europe. They have learnt to live quietly, without leaving deep tracks behind. If that weren't enough, they are also occupied with removing tracks left by others. Ilir mentioned that the recent problems with the removal of garbage in Naples were caused among others by the immigrants' strike. Well, when the time of settling down in a country comes, it may sometimes give the hosts bitter hiccough.

There is a need for specific actions building bridges above divisions and obstacles, creating more stable bases for communication. Our expedition along the twentieth meridian let us reach – with our theatre – people who are ready to fasten one end of the bridge on their side. I have a feeling that this journey, like an acupuncture session, has set in motion a freer Chi flow. And with real joy I would visit our hosts and neighbours again. To get to know this woman, sick with long-sightedness, even closer.

AUTORZY

Zofia Bartoszewicz

A free-lance artist, actress, performer. She sings and composes music (improvising), gives concerts, runs workshops. She collaborates with the Węgajty Theatre, acts, among others, in the plays *Ziemia B (Earth B)* and *Woda 2030 (Water 2030)*. Together with Erdmute Sobaszek she has realised the performance *Prolog komedii (Prologue for a Comedy)* based on texts by Wisława Szymborska and Anna Wojtyniak, an inhabitant of Nowe Kawkowo. She co-realises (together with Emilia Hagelgan and Thomas Enbergs) as well as creates the dramatic layer of the multimedia urban opera *Echo i Narcyzy (Echo and Narcissuses)* (premiere in March 2012 in Dortmund).

Emilia Hagelgan

A free-lance actress, performer and theatre educator. She was born in Novokuznetsk, Russia. Her actor's experience she gained among others in Atelier für physischer Theater (Atelier for physical theatre) in Berlin. She has studied different techniques of body expression, e. g. Jacques Lecoq and Living Theatre, butoh dance. She collaborates with different theatres and individual artists, e. g. with Theater Lebendich and Kompanie LAF – Liaison à faire. In Theatre Węgajty projects she has been participating since 2005. She is a co-author of the project of the multi-media opera *Echo i Narcyzy (Echo and Narcissuses)*. She has realized a short documentary *Gombrowicz w DPS-ie*.

Katarzyna Łukasiewicz

She is a student of Cultural Studies at the University of Warsaw (specialising in Culture Animation). She runs workshops for children and teenagers, teaching glass-cutting and showing how to make a relief inspired by the works of Henryk Stażewski. She does not know what her career is going to look like, but she might become a reporter for National Geographic.

Erdmute Sobaszek

An artist from Germany, in Poland she has been living since 1977. She took part in the works of the Olsztyn Interdisciplinary Creative-and-Research Centre "Pracownia" ("Laboratory"). Co-founder and actress of Węgajty Theatre, a clarinet player, culture animator, translator. She has co-created the performance *Prolog komedii* (*Prologue for a Comedy*). An author of culture-animating and artistic projects: „Pedagogika teatralna w akcji” (“Theatre pedagogy in action”), „Sztuka w obejściu” (“Art in the household”), „Visitors”. She runs a blog (www.wegajty.blogspot.com), works in the social movement Obywatele Kultury (Citizens of Culture).

Wacław Sobaszek

As director, actor and musician, for 30 years he has been creating performances in Węgajty (among others, *Historie Vincenza* (*Vincenz's Stories*), *Gospoda ku wiecznemu pokojowi* (*An Inn towards Eternal Peace*), *Kalewala - fragmenty niepisane* (*Kalewala – Unwritten Fragments*), *Synczyzna* (*Sonland*), *Woda 2030* (*Water 2030*), *Ziemia B* (*Earth B*)). Initiator and animator of long-run undertakings: Inna Szkoła Teatralna (An Other Theatre School), Wioska Teatralna (Theatre Village), “necessary theatre”, Interkulti, and author of realizations from the borderline of theatre and performance: „Woda z Fukuszymy” (“Water from Fukushima”/“Fukushima Water”), „86, rozstrzelana wielokulturowość” (“86, shot multicultural”), „Sztuka na bruku” (“Art on the Street”). He works in the Association for Culture Community „Borussia” and in the movement Obywatele Kultury (Citizens of Culture).

TEATR WĘGAJTY/PROJEKT TERENOWY

WĘGAJTY THEATRE/ FIELDWORK PROJECT

WęgaJty Theatre dates back to 1982. Teatr WęgaJty/Projekt Terenowy (WęgaJty Theatre/Fieldwork Project) was created in 1996. The core of the group are Wacław and Erdmute Sobaszek. Within the Fieldwork Project, there came into being for example the performances: *Kalevala – fragmenty niepisane*, (*Kalevala, the Unwritten Fragments*) *Upiorny całun* (*The Ghastly Shroud*) – an open air performance based on Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (*The Ancestors*), *Syncyzna* (*Sonland*) based on *Ślub* (*Wedding*) and *Trans-Atlantyk* by Witold Gombrowicz, *Woda 2030* (*Water 2030*), *Ziemia B* (*Earth B*), as well as three performances with the participation of the residents of the Social Care Home in Jonkowo – *Wesele, domena publiczna* (*Wedding, public domain*), *Iwona poślubiona* (*Iwona – Married*) and *Sen nocy letniej* (*Midsummer's Night Dream*). Fieldwork Project is involved in local social initiatives: ecological, animators', educational. Since 2000 the Project has been running Inna Szkoła Teatralna (An Other Theatre School) – a cycle of workshops and carolling, alleluia and carnival expeditions, and since 2003 they have been organizing the festival Wioska Teatralna (Theatre Village).