

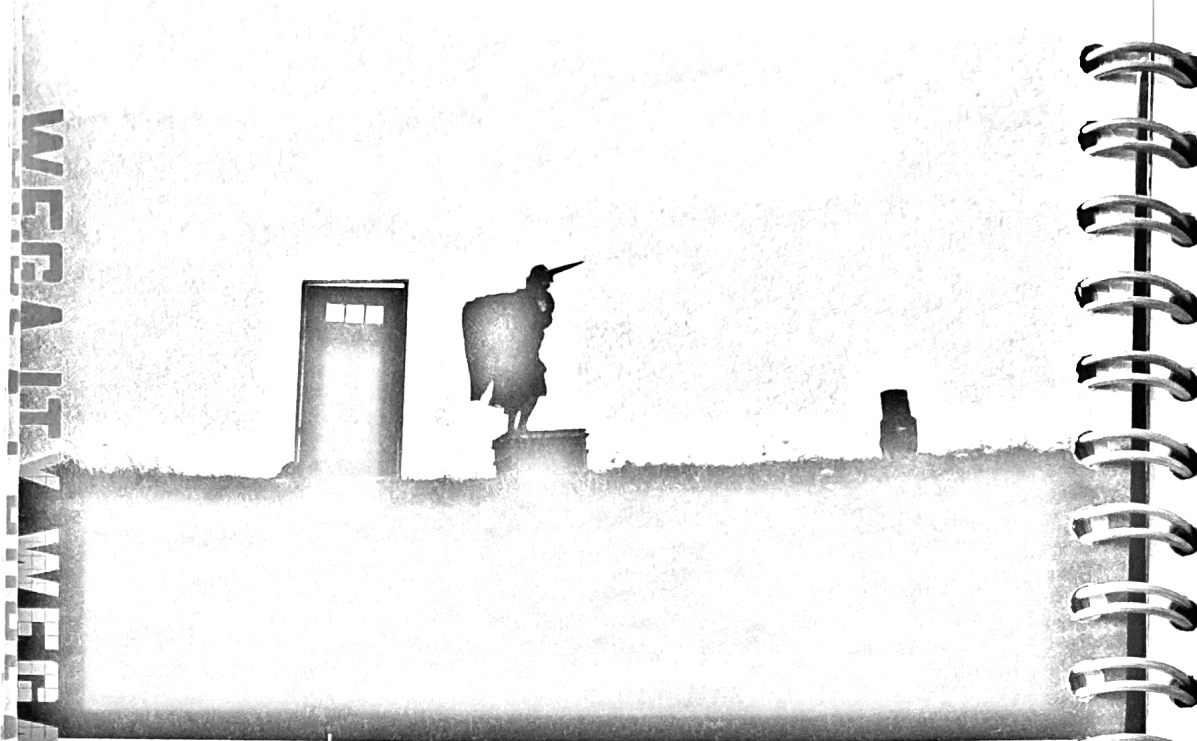
TEATR "WĘGAJTY"

'WĘGAJTY' THEATRE

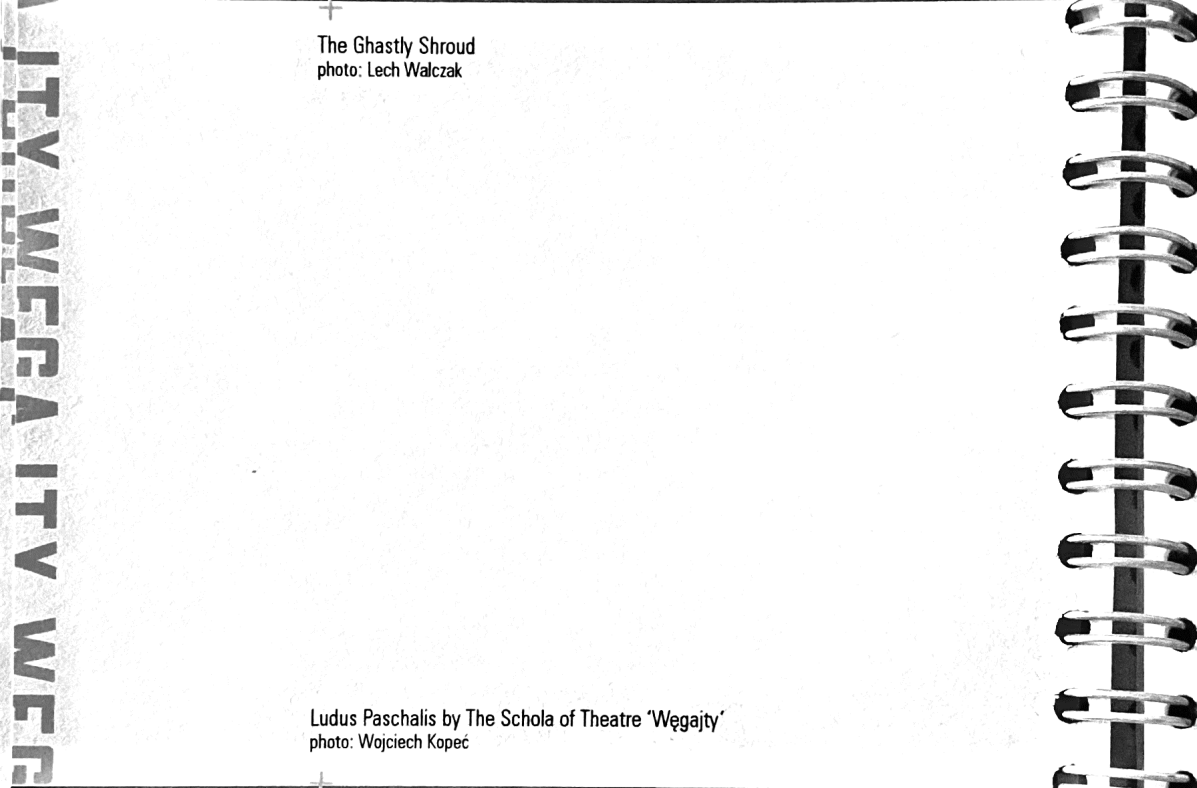
Like Gardzienice, Teatr Węgałty ['Węgałty' Theatre] takes its name from a village in which it has built a home—the company made a theatre in a barn on a smallholding off the beaten track in Poland's Warmia region. The group's founders—Wacław and Erdmute Sobaszek (who previously worked with Olsztyn's Pracownia) and Wolfgang and Małgorzata Niklaus (who arrived via Gardzienice)—settled in Węgałty to establish a company that sourced Grotowski and Staniewski as models but aimed in its own direction. *Historie Vincenza* [Vincenz's Stories], their first production in 1988, drew on traditional values, customs and stories. Music and song also played strong roles in the work. The production spun an Hasidic tale animated by puppets and told in an effective and extremely simple fashion by a man sitting at a table. Between episodes of the story, the ensemble performed music and dance scenes.

Though differences from Gardzienice's journeys were apparent from the start, Węgałty also developed Expeditions in rural Poland. The company timed their travels in keeping with the ritual year of the countryside—at Easter they travelled with *Alilujka*¹ and at Christmas with carols. They performed such rituals in villages where, though the traditions were still remembered, the practices were already lost. Songs, stories and materials discovered along the way were also absorbed into new works. *Gospoda ku Wiecznemu Pokojowi* [The Inn Towards Eternal Peace]—based on texts by the Polish Nobel Laureate Czesław Miłosz, by Mikołaj of Wilkowiecko and by Johannes Bobrowski—is haunted by mourning songs uncovered in the Suwałki region. *Opowieści Kanterberyjskie*, the company's staging of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, is also supplemented with related stories from the Warmia region.

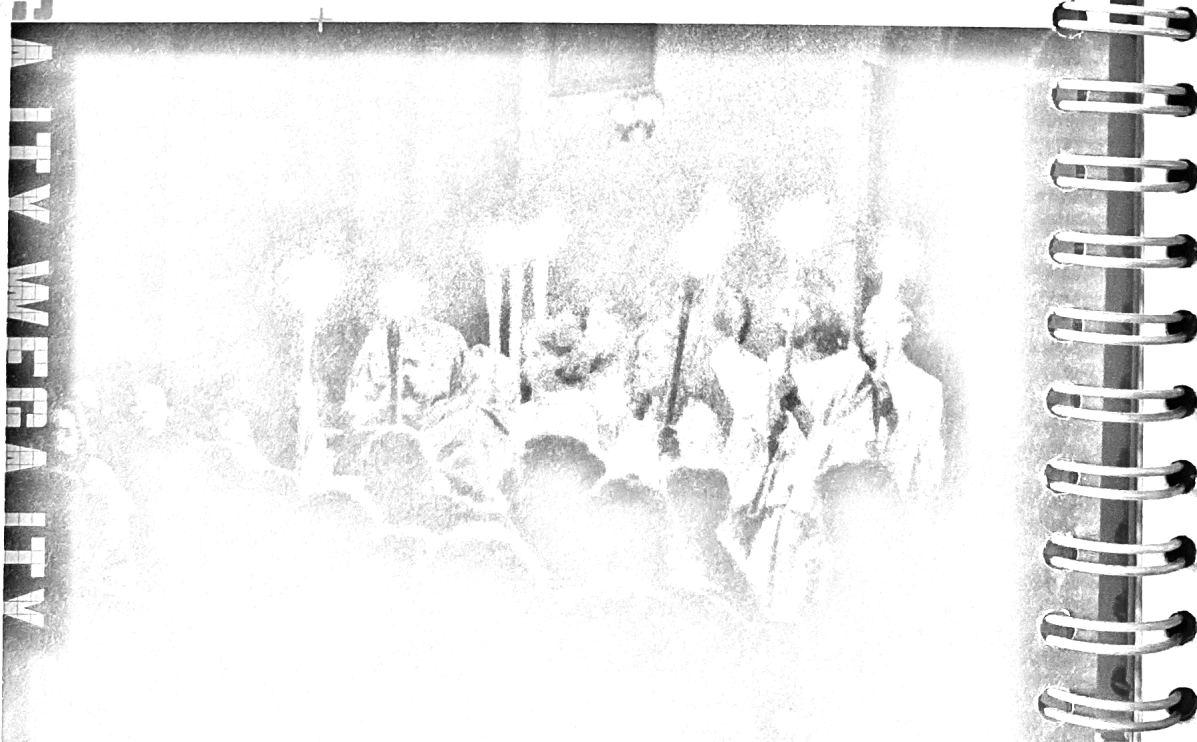
¹ A word in the vernacular which describes the old custom of 'carolling' at Easter – Translator's note



The Ghastly Shroud
photo: Lech Walczak



Ludus Paschalis by The Schola of Theatre 'Węgaity'
photo: Wojciech Kopec



From 1994 onwards, Węgajty began to work in two groups. Waclaw Sobaszek led the company's fieldwork project, *Projekt Terenowy* [Fieldwork Project]. Caroling and Easter Expeditions continued under his direction, but performances created from them became more distant from traditional culture. Sobaszek began to call these pieces 'syncretic presentations' because the group gathered elements from diverse cultures.

Węgajty's Fieldwork Project also created open-air productions in forests, fields and meadows. Audiences wandered with the actors and joined them in songs or simple actions. This form of outdoor performances was developed in *Upiorny Calun* [The Ghastly Shroud], based on Mickiewicz's *Forefather's Eve*, and *Missa Pagana*, based on the cycle of poems by Edward Stachura—accompanied by the renowned Polish composer Mieczysław Litwiński. Further open-air projects continued to take place on a workshop basis.

Since the region's folk culture no longer forms the main aspect of Węgajty's fieldwork, the structure of their indoor works has changed. Recently, the group has created widely multicultural performances such as *Kalevala* and *Syncyzna* [Sonland]. Every summer, Theatre Village plans festival-meetings of theatre, performances and music. The events take place over the course of a week in the unusually beautiful lake district of the Warmia region.