



## Radical Theatre Yesterday and Today | an international conference

**Friday November 15, 2013 / 10:00 – 17:00 /**

**Conference room of the Goethe Institute, Masarykovo nábřeží 224/32, Prague 1**

The arts versus social issues. Politics and art. Working with untrained performers. The principles of devised theatre. Theatre and community. These are the topics that creators of contemporary theatre are increasingly concerned with. What are the specifics, assumptions and principles of art in a social context?

Speakers: Lola Arias (ARG), Boris Bakal / Bacači Sjenki (HR), Johanna Freiburg, Ilia Papatheodorou / She She Pop and Gob Squad (D), Márta Schermann (HU), Edit Kaldor (NL), Barbora Uríková and Ivana Rumanová / Truc Sphérique (SK), Maria Schejbal and Krzysztof Tusiewicz / Teatr Grodzki (PL), Jana Svobodová and Ondřej Hrab / Archa Theatre (CZ), Eugen van Erven (NL), Chris Torch (S), Jiří Sulženko (CZ) and others. Moderator: Jiří Havelka.

The conference will be simultaneously interpreted into Czech.

Fee: adults CZK 150, students and seniors CZK 80

Conference co-organized by the [Archa Theatre](#), the [Goethe Institute](#) and the [Arts and Theatre Institute](#)



The conference is part of the Art & Politics theme of the House on Fire network and is supported by the Culture Programme of the European Union.



## PROGRAMME | Radical Theatre Yesterday and Today

**10:00 - opening, welcome speech: Ondřej Hrab and Jana Svobodová**

**10:10 – 10:30**

### **2. Chris Torch: RESISTANCE - Cultural Strategies for Political Change**

Culture and conflict are intimately connected. All conflict is based in a cultural context. The theatre has always been a forum for debate, provocation and researching new visions for our lives, both individually and collectively. The words “theatre” and “democracy” were both used for the first time in the same decade, 2,500 years ago in the Greek civilization. The connection is equally intimate today, although clouded by institutionalization and “national identity” projects.

I will use my experience with the Living Theatre (1973-1977), Jordcirkus/Earthcirkus (1977-1991) and as a producer/initiator with Intercult (1996-present) as a background for my presentation.

**Chris Torch** is founder and Senior Associate at Intercult, a production and resource unit focused on culture, ideas and the arts. Created in 1996, it is a publically financed institution, based in Stockholm, managing both a designated Europe Direct office and Access Europa, a platform for cultural organizations in Sweden focusing on international collaboration. Torch earlier initiated SHIKASTA, the first multicultural ensemble at the Swedish National Touring Theatre/Riksteatern. He was the company’s first artistic director (1992-1995). He was also one of the initiators of Re:Orient festival in Stockholm (1993). In an earlier life, Torch was born and raised in an Italian-American family in Cleveland, Ohio. After a few years in the USA and Italy as an actor with the legendary Living Theatre, he settled in Sweden in 1977. He formed the independent Jordcirkus, where he worked for 13 years as an actor, director and stage designer. Intercult focuses to a large degree on exchange and co-production with the European Neighbourhood, reflected in the project CORNERS, launched in May 2011 (<http://www.intercult.se/corners>) as well as the long term SEAS project, 2003-2010 (<http://www.seas.se>), both partly financed by the EU Culture program.

Apart from large-scale project design, Torch plays a role in developing intercultural policies. He lectures regularly and serves currently on the board of Culture Action Europe, Europe’s most important platform for cultural policy development. He has served earlier on the boards of The European Museum Forum and the Platform for Intercultural Europe. During 2012-2013, he is the designated expert following the work of the EU Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group on Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Diversity, with representatives from 22 EU Member States.

**10:35 – 10:55**

### **3. She She Pop: The Art of the Collective, the Collective as Art**

**She She Pop** are a female performance collective of seven members, founded in the late 1990s by graduates of the Applied Theatre Studies program in Gießen. Their shows are devised as a collective. Texts and concepts are developed together by the performers.

For She She Pop, the stage is a space for a utopian conversation. Decisions are made, various forms of dialogue and social systems tested, and social rituals learnt and transformed. She She Pop see it as their mission to

explore the social boundaries of communication and transgress them in a purposeful and artistic way in the protected theatrical space.

Johanna Freiburg was born in Hamburg in 1971 and lives in Berlin. From 1991 to 1997 she studied at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen. She is a founding member and performer in She She Pop. Since 1994 she has also been a member of the German-British artist collective Gob Squad.

Ilia Papatheodorou was born in Stuttgart in 1971 and lives in Berlin. From 1992 to 1997 she studied at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen. She is a founding member and performer in She She Pop. She was a sometime guest performer with Haug/Wetzel of Rimini Protokoll and Gob Squad.

**10:55 – 11:15**

**Coffee break**

**11:15 - 11:35**

#### **4. Márta Schermann: Life Donation**

Personal records, artistic reflections on memory and desire, public theatre with homeless people, filmstrips about They and Us, fairy-tales for adults

**Márta Schermann** (1969) actress, director has been working as an actress for almost 20 years with various theatre companies (Arvisura, Sofa Trió, Female-line, Dogtroep/NL), but lately more and more often as a director. Besides intensive involvement of other arts (fine arts, contemporary music and dance) her works are characterized by site-specific performances. Her works have taken place in a botanical garden, a steam bath, a market, and elsewhere. Her recent plays have balanced on the borderline of reality and fiction. In addition to professional artists, ordinary people in special situations appear in her theatre performances. She has worked for example with migrants, Roma, homeless people, doctors and pregnant women. These performances appeal to the audience with humour and variety, bringing them closer to social problems that are otherwise difficult to face.

**11:40 – 12:00**

#### **5. Jana Svobodová, Archa Theatre: For whom and why?**

What is the reason for a theatrical event? How to involve people in the artistic process who have not yet encountered theatre and do not consider themselves as artists? How to tell a story together and for whom?

Jana Svobodová presents a project with the working title *The Promised Land*. A group of artists from the Archa Theatre working for a year in a small town in East Bohemia, where Roma, the local natives and immigrants in the refugee camp live side by side, but do not communicate with each other. Prejudice and hostility rule. Can theatre and its practices create an environment for dialogue?

**Jana Svobodová** graduated from Prague Theatre Academy. Her early artistic experience was influenced by artists like Peter Schumann in U.S. or Min Tanaka in Japan. As a director Jana Svobodová has focused since

2003 on projects that are based on cooperation between professional artists and representatives of specific social groups. For the creation of *Chat – Dangerously Easy Liaisons* (2003) she involved representatives of hip hop culture. The real stories of hip hop artists also formed the basis for the production of *SenAnderSen* (2006). Since 2004 she has focused on the theme of foreigners who are looking for a new home in the Czech Republic. A series of workshops across the Czech Republic culminated in 2005 with the project *At 11:20 I Will Leave You!*, which took place directly in the refugee camp. This theme was again taken up in the 2006 performance of *The Strange Neighbour* staged in the Danube House, huge modern administrative building in Prague. Together with writer Hana Andronikova she created the performances *Dance Through the Fence* (2008) and *Jesters, Spies and Presidents* (2010). She is the author and director of the documentary theatre project *Misunderstanding 68* (2008) and *Window of Opportunity 89* (2009). Her recent production *Solo for Lu* (2012) was created with the Chinese performer Jing Lu. Her projects have been presented at festivals in the Czech Republic as well as in US, Japan, South Africa, Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and other countries. She translated into Czech language the *Viewpoints* book of Anne Bogart and Tina Landau which (published by Theatre Institute Prague in 2007). Director Pavel Koutecký shot the documentary films *Come Closer, Candy* (2005) and *I Will Have a Beautiful Life!* (2006) reflecting her theatre work. She is the artistic director of the Archa.Lab - Centre for theatre research. Since 2010 she has been an artistic director AKCENT-international festival of the theatre with outreach.

**12:05 – 12:25**

## **6. Ivana Rumanová, Barbora Ulříková-Truc Sphérique, Stanica Žilina:**

### **Think, write, send, participate. On the limits of participation and confusion of critics.**

One does not have to be a critic or a member of a grant committee to notice that participation is all the rage today. Invitations to various forms of involvement are literally pouring in. Originally a revolutionary movement in the search for an alternative to the commodification of art, it is now a major marketing and PR tool from multinational mobile operators to non-profit organizations. Participation in the area of art is one of the key words to unlock grant subsidies. Naturally, like any other tool, it can be used meaningfully or vice versa, but if taken as a positive, it threatens to transform into a kind of new paradigm. One of the problems is the lack of relevant criticism to constructively evaluate arts projects with social outreach. We ourselves share in the organization of participatory projects: whether at Stanica Žilina-Záriečie or the PBlog association. We will present some of them as well as the doubts and questions regarding participation that trouble us and that we consider worthy of discussion.

**Barbora Urříková**, studied cultural studies at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra. She is currently working in the Stanica Žilina-Záriečie cultural centre as a dramaturge and an active member of the PBlog civic association, which organizes cultural projects in the town of Považská Bystrica.

**Ivana Rumanová**, is a PhD student at Charles University in Prague, Institute of Ethnology. She completed internships at the EHESS and IRCAV, Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris. She implements projects at Stanica Žilina-Záriečie and the PBlog association while exposing their doubts arising from her dissertation dealing with participation in art.

**12:25 – 13:25**

**Lunch break**

13:25 – 13:45

## 7. Boris Bakal: The Years of Dangerous Dreaming

For whom do we perform today? Who are we and how are we educated? What kind of conditions and process do we need for our work? Which kind of producer can produce us and why? Where is courage of the mind and courage of the deed? Can we act what we preach?

“Fear is unhappiness, but courage is not happiness, but fearlessness, not courage that demands more than the power, therefore, not courage, but fearlessness, soothing, open-eyed, that can bear anything.” F. Kafka

**Boris Bakal** - theatre/film director and actor, intermedia artist, activist and macrobiotic cook born in Zagreb, SFRJ (now Rep. of Croatia). Throughout 30 years of his career, he authored theatre and film projects, performances, installations and multimedia artworks which have been presented at festivals and exhibitions in over 20 countries worldwide (including Bologna Cultural Capital of Europe 2000, Steirischer Herbst, Bollwerk Beluard International, Eurokaz, Urbanfestival, Thealter, Bitef, Interferences, MESS and others). His work is marked, among other things, by pronounced exploration of the site/time-specific and the interactive elements of arts. Boris was also visiting lecturer at: New York University, Stony Brook University, SACI Studio Art Centers International (Florence) and Columbia University. He is co-founder of several artistic and activist platforms/associations, e.g. Shadow Casters, Flying University, Orchestra Stolpnik and Croatian Antiwar Campaign. Boris is currently working on various film, intermedia and theatre projects: “Ex-position” (film/postproduction), “Concrete love” (film/production), “Urban Hum” (theatre/production) and “On the Verge of Reason” (video-web-serial/postproduction).

13:50 – 14:10

## 8. Eugen van Erven: The radical, the avant-garde and community arts

In Western humanities and social science scholarship, the term “community” has been employed since at least the beginning of the 20th century, at first favourably (e.g. Williams 1965, Turner 1982, Cohen 1989) and later increasingly critically (e.g. Nancy 1991 and Kwon 2002). When we broaden the perspective and include, for example, critical views from India nourished by “communalism” (Bharucha 2001) and negative associations in post-Communist contexts, the picture of an inherently benign *comunitas* becomes more complicated. However, if the latest developments in Europe and Latin America are any indication, there may still be a future for the combination “community” and “art”. And if we throw “avant-garde” into the mix that future might actually become quite bright. Most studies of community-based art trace its origins to folk cultural traditions or to the multifaceted emancipation of under-represented groups after World War II. A closer look at some seminal radical avant-garde performance practices, however, suggests a fascinating alternative history that can be made to productively intersect with community arts and help to broaden its scope. Thus, intriguing links become visible, such as in the fascination of both movements with everyday life, public space, and non-artists.

**Eugene van Erven** (b. 1955) holds a PhD from Vanderbilt University in the USA (1985). His dissertation was turned into a book entitled *Radical People's Theatre* (Indiana University Press, 1985), which was one of the first major studies of the political theatre that emerged from western student protests. His second book, *The Playful Revolution* (Indiana 1992), was about political theatre groups working in Asian dictatorships in the late 1980s. In 1988, Eugene returned to the Netherlands after 12 years of working abroad. Since then he has combined an academic career with practical work in the cultural sector, mostly as an events organizer and a facilitator of international collaborations. Currently he is director of the International Community Arts Festival in Rotterdam and an associate professor of media and performance at Utrecht University. His most recent books (and films) are *Community Theatre: Global Perspectives* (Routledge 2001) and *Community Arts Dialogues* (Treaty of Utrecht, 2013).

14:15 - 14:35

## 9. Edit Kaldor: The Potential of Powerlessness

Edit Kaldor introduces the concept and the project: Inventory of Powerlessness, which after Amsterdam will be implemented in Prague in the autumn of 2014.

If there is one thing that we are all experts in, it's powerlessness. It's an essential and fascinating aspect of the human condition. Working together in various European cities with a large number of local inhabitants, this long-term project proposes to bring together knowledge and experience about various states of powerlessness, and to present it in the form of a theatrical performance event. The investigation of the phenomenon is driven by curiosity and stays away from victimization or self-pity. Making the inventory and following through the impulses that stem from the web of powerlessness, the project aims to bring a complex, fundamental, and gut-understanding of power relations, and an insight into social, economic, and political structures that frame our lives.

**Edit Kaldor** is recognized internationally as a unique voice in the contemporary theatre landscape. She combines conceptually strong forms rarely seen in theatre with a personal approach to existential themes. Her pieces convey the inner experience, the emotional and thought processes of often marginal or extremely isolated individuals in today's fast-changing world. In her work Kaldor mixes documentary and fictional elements. She often works with nonprofessional actors, and builds the characters and narratives in her work on the essential qualities and biographies of the performers. Kaldor was born in Budapest. As a child she immigrated to the United States, where she'd lived for ten years before moving back to Europe. She studied English literature and theatre at Columbia University in New York, and at University College in London, and worked for years as a dramaturge and video-maker with Peter Halasz (Squat Theater/Love Theater, New York), collaborating on numerous theatre performances and film scripts. At DasArts (the masters of theatre program in Amsterdam), she started making her own theatre performances, which soon received international acclaim. She now lives in Amsterdam and works internationally. She has written and directed theatre pieces, which stretch the boundaries of theatrical conventions, like *Or Press Escape* (2002), *New Game* (2004), *Drama* (2005), *Point Blank* (2007), *C'est du chinois* (2010) *WORK* (2011), *One Hour* (2012) and *Woe* (2013). Her theatre performances have been presented at theatres and festivals in nearly every country in Europe and have also been shown in North and South America and Asia.

*"The way in which Kaldor uses the theatre, - a place for collective dialogue - as a platform to show extreme isolation and the inability to communicate is absolutely brilliant."* (La Presse, Montréal)

*"The work has a paradoxical directness. We sense here a very strong artistic personality..."* (Liberation, France)

*"It doesn't look like theatre, but it is. The best kind of theatre that exists."* (Folha de São Paulo, Brazil)

14:35- 14:55

*coffee break*

14:55 - 15:15

## 10. Maria Schejbal, Krzysztof Tusiewicz, The Bielsko Artistic Association Grodzki Theatre: Radical Theatre - Crossing Borders

Does radical mean effective? We would like to use the example of one of our international cultural projects: COAST – Community Oriented Art and Social Transformation to reflect on those aspects of art which support social inclusion and facilitate communication between performers and the audience, and also during the creation process of a heterogeneous theatre group. We will illustrate our presentation with short fragments of the film made during a Polish-German theatrical exchange organized in Poland one year ago.

**MARIA SCHEJBAL** - Head of Cultural and Educational Projects Department at Grodzki Theatre. Graduate of Jagiellonian University in Cracow (Drama and Theatre Department). Instructor of training programs for adult educators, therapists and volunteers (12 years' experience). Workshop leader in theatre education (16 years' experience) – working with young drug addicts and running an integration theatre group of adults, including deaf persons. Participated in several training sessions within the "Art in Action" European Program. Artistic and managerial internships in the USA, Serbia and Thailand. Scholarship holder from the Polish Ministry of Culture. Author of seven publications for teachers and educators. Psychodrama Assistant. Member of ASHOKA Innovators for the Public. <https://www.ashoka.org/fellow/maria-schejbal>

**KRZYSZTOF TUSIEWICZ** - Renowned director of photography, film director and photographer - Diploma (with distinction) from the Faculty of Film/TV Cinematography, The National Film and Theatre Academy, Łódź. Teacher of photography and film-making. Directed several films depicting TG's artistic and educational projects and contributed the photography and graphic design for several educational books published by Teatr Grodzki. Arts and ICT teacher working with vulnerable groups, including charges of the Occupational Therapy Workshop (10 years' experience). Developed alternative arts-based teaching methods for disadvantaged learners in TG's "Animated Debate" pilot project. Experienced leader of adult training seminars. <http://www.tusiewicz.art.pl/> / [www.teatrgrodzki.pl](http://www.teatrgrodzki.pl)

15:20 - 15:40

## 11. Jiří Sulženko: Radical Theatre vs. the Establishment

Can municipal, state, and publicly financed theatre institutions create radical theatre? Are they obliged to do so? A discussion about experiences with engaged theatre from the point of view of the organizers.

**Jiří Sulženko** | Since May 2013 he has been the program director of the Plzeň – European Capital of Culture 2015 project. From 2007 – 2012 he helped manage the Zahrada cultural centre and the Street For Art Festival in the Jižní Město district of Prague. From 2004 – 2007 he worked at the Archa Theatre as a producer as well as PR and marketing manager. He graduated from the Production Department of DAMU and worked briefly as a PR coordinator for the One World Festival, to which he is grateful.

15:45 - 16:05

## 12. Lola Arias: Temporary Families

What kind of community can build a documentary theatre project: a temporary family, a therapy group, a utopian cell?

Taking inspiration from *THE YEAR I WAS BORN* performed by sons and daughters of the extreme right and left during the Chilean dictatorship as well as *THE ART OF MAKING MONEY* performed by beggars, street musicians, prostitutes and actors, Lola Arias explores how theatre can be a place of encounter, discussion and thinking together.

**Lola Arias** (Buenos Aires, 1976) is a writer, director, performer and songwriter. She collaborates with artists from different disciplines in theatre, literature, music and art projects. Her productions play with the overlap zones between reality and fiction. She works with actors, non-actors, musicians, dancers, children, babies, and animals. Centre stage in *Striptease* (2007) is occupied by a baby, while its parents fight out a duel by telephone. In *El amor es un francotirador* (2007), the performers relate true and fictional love stories while a rock band plays live. In *Mi vida después* (2009), six actors reconstruct their parents' youth in 1970s Argentina by means of photos, letters, cassettes and old clothes. Arias staged in Germany *Familienbande* (2009) at Kammerspiele, Munich, and *That Enemy Within* (2010) at HAU, Berlin. In Chile, she staged *The Year I Was Born* (2011), based on biographies of people born during Pinochet's dictatorship. Her last piece *Melancolía y Manifestaciones* (2012) opened in the Viennese Festwochen. Together with Ulises Conti, she composes and plays music, and released the albums *El amor es un francotirador* (2007) and *Los que no duermen* (2011). Her projects with Stefan Kaegi are *Chácara Paraíso* (2007) involving Brazilian police officers, and *Airport Kids* (2008) featuring global nomads aged between seven and 13 years old. In 2010-12, they curated a Festival of urban interventions *Ciudades Paralelas* in Berlin, Buenos Aires, Warsaw, Zurich, Singapore and other cities. She published *Las impúdicas en el paraíso* (2000), *La escuálida familia* (2001), *Mi nombre cuando yo ya no exista* (2005), *Poses para dormir* (2005), *Striptease/Sueño con revólver/ El amor es un francotirador* (2007), *Mein leben danach* (2010), *Liebe ist ein Heckenschütze* (2010) and *Los posnucleares* (2011). Her texts have been translated into more than seven languages, Arias' works for theatre have been performed at festivals, including *Steirischer Herbst*, Graz; *Festival d'Avignon*; *Theater Spektakel*, Zurich; *We are here*, Dublin; *Spielart Festival*, Munich; *Alkantara Festival*, Lisbon; and *Radicals Festival*, Barcelona. <http://www.lolaarias.com.ar>