

ULTIMATE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

TOXIC PSALMS

DIRECTED BY KARMINA ŠILEC



ooooooooo
carminaslovenica

... the grandiosity of the staging rivals what one might see at the Met... an overwhelming aural and visual experience...
Šilec presents her arcana with a heavy dose of beauty and wonder...

Theatre Mania

... vibrantly theatrical, genre-blurring, unusual in its techniques, eclectic in its musical style and politically charged...
one hopes CS will become a regular visitor to New York...

The New York Times

... breathtaking and equally relevant multimedia suite... a sonically thrilling, disquieting premiere for Karmina Šilec's
Toxic Psalms...

New York Music Daily

... striking new work by the rabidly talented Carmina Slovenica... the ensemble and its director, Karmina Šilec,
have created haunting images...

The New York Times

... Carmina Slovenica is the musical answer to Bausch's groundbreaking concept of Tantztheater... provocative pastich...
the true highlight is the singing... indeed, Šilec has helped to shape these young women into crack musicians...

Opera World

... Carmina Slovenica are in your face, created by women, driven by women, not afraid to show their teeth or shout down
injustice... pure talent and virtuosity is astounding... the languages, time periods, and cultures blurred into
visceral emotion and reaction...

San Francisco Classical Voice

... Toxic Psalms adds a savage yet polished theatricality to the mix as well as an ambiguity all too rare in American perfor-
mance... all add up to an evening that's bracing yet, perversely enough, enchanting...

The New York Times





... jaw-droppingly gorgeous singing... strikingly staged by Karmina Silec... visually the show was elegantly spare... the women of Carmina Slovenica are collectively and individually heroic... they sent their voices peeling out like a band of angels...

New York Observer

... power of the performers... haunting theatrical moments...

Wall Street Journal

... innovative theater company Carmina Slovenica... intellectually challenging Toxic Psalms...

France Press

... at times somber and meditative, at times visceral... incredibly talented young women of Carmina Slovenica remind us that a collective can also be a positive power... with its high-contrast details, Toxic Psalms at times resembled a more budget-conscious Robert Wilson production... the performance's message was often submerged by the incredible visuals...

Hyperallergic

... the mighty but graceful Slovenian women's choir ...

New York Music Daily

... some listeners will recall the raw feminine energy of Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares, while others will see parallels with the work of Heiner Goebbels and David Lang... all will be moved by the show's condemnation of "men Killing for the glory of their psalms"...

The New Yorker



... while intoning glorious straight harmonies, which occasionally stop on a dime to spine-tingling effect... the sound is medieval and ecclesiastical, yet distinctly modern... it often feels like peering into an avant-garde nunnery...

Theatre Mania

... all of the material is conveyed with commitment and precision from this highly skilled vocal ensemble... in addition to making her cast sound extraordinary, director Šilec makes great use of the depth of St. Ann's Warehouse...

Theatre Mania Review

... a visceral slide into darkness...

The New York Times

... the excellent singers swirl, march, gesture and pose in the gloomy, cavernous space while singing music ranging from Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater" to pieces by contemporary composers from Scandinavia to Slovenia...

Wall Street Journal

... the choice of music spanned the centuries and the globe and was all the more fascinating, and relevant, for the ambitious and striking arrangements... and while it wouldn't be exactly accurate to characterize the movements of the choir as dance – Šilec calls it "choregie" – the choreography was just as ambitious, and amplified the disturbing quality of the performance...

New York Music Daily

... from the stunned reaction of the crowd last night, if you're on the fence about seeing this, you'd better move...

New York Music Daily

... Šilec's direction toyed with crowd dynamics on both the conformist and nonconformist sides with a coldly sardonic humor that offered momentary respite from the lingering bleakness of the music...

New York Music Daily





... hooting, hissing and ululating to protest man's inhumanity...

New York Review

... radiantly sung musical selections...

The New York Times

... Ms. Silec is savvy about maintaining dramatic momentum, and the performers execute every shift in tone with subtlety and agility...

The New York Times

... Why, then, did I leave St. Ann's smiling? Because "Toxic Psalms" proves that with even the most somber material, there can be delight in sheer virtuosity, in the intensity of live performance and in being introduced to a group one hopes will become a regular visitor to New York...

The New York Times

A group of women, likely performers, are shown from the chest up, wearing black outfits. They are clapping their hands and looking towards the camera with serious expressions. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the performers.

ULTIMATE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

8 TABLEAUX

Molto Adagio: Banality of Evil

Individuum - Collectivum

Ghetto

The Subject Tonight

This Is My Body that Is Given to You

Relay of Youth

Ridding Through the Marshes

Big Other

“I’ll tell you. You’re young, but you’re one of us,
and I’m one of us, so I’ll tell you.”

Performed by the Vocal theatre **Carmina Slovenica**
Directed by **Karmina Šilec**

Costumes: Belinda Radulović

Set Design: Karmina Šilec

Lighting Design: Andrej Hajdinjak

Sound Design: Danilo Ženko

music:

Adventurous juxtaposition of music from medieval to the present times with fascinating sounds of extended vocal techniques.

Jacob Cooper: Stabat Mater Dolorosa / The Sorrowful Mother Stood (excerpt)

Bronius Kutavičius: Paskutines pagoniu apeigos / Last Pagan Rites

Karin Rehnqvist: Puksanger / Timpanum songs (excerpt)

Liga Celma: Sauceja dziezma / A Song

Tellu Virkkalla: Tuullet / Winds

Sergei Rachmaninoff: Bogoroditse Devo / Rejoice, O Virgin

John Pamintuan: De profundis / From the Depths

Lojze Lebič: Mozaiki / Mosaics

Sarah Hopkins: Past Life Melodies

Syrian orthodox (arr. **K. Šilec**): Wa habibi / My Beloved

Boaz Avni: Kyrie eleison / Lord, Have Mercy on Us

Veljo Tormis: Raua needmine / Curse upon Iron (excerpt)

Giovanni Pergolesi: Sancta Mater Speciosa / The Beautiful Mother Stood (from Stabat Mater)

texts:

Stanislaw Lem, Hanne Blank, Svetlana Makarovič, Hafiz, Jean Luc Nancy, Karmina Šilec,

Ifigenija Zagoričnik, Drago Jančar

pre-recorded sounds:

Marko Hatlak, Musica Cubicularis, Karmina Šilec, Willi Bopp, Danilo Ženko, Big Band of Slovenian Army forces

voice: **Dean Santomieri**



CHOREGIE

Choregie is a performance in the 'no-man's-world', – a world that is not a world of music, nor drama or dance; it is a scenic adventure, a musical and scenic ritual.

Choregie focuses on the creation process that brings the musical notion of composing to the theatrical aspects of performing and staging. It is an art form among art forms that is independent and has no hierarchy of elements. Sound and image carry different meanings and with this coexistence a third meaning can be achieved. In Choregie, a 'meta composition' is created by positioning different music materials into a bigger composition. The working process of Choregie has no segregation of production steps, and the composition process of performance is prolonged by the process of staging until the moment of the performance. Treatment of voice, movement, light, image, sound, gesture and other elements of theatrical production is mostly based on musical principles and compositional techniques, and so musical thinking applies to the performance as a whole. Different elements in the performance merge into one (movement, singing, word), all means are used either in a balance or in favor of one; a fusion of all this gives very different semantic directions. Inside this field a dialogue starts between the sound and the sound space, between the space and the performers, between the performers and the audience, between the audience and the sound. In such a creative process we are interested most in the things that do not only have an unambiguous meaning. Sometimes we simply don't want to narrow down a text (either music or words) to one meaning only. It seems exciting to allow the familiar (or unfamiliar) materials, on which Choregie is built, the possibility to discover in them always and again new perspectives, various levels and even layers. Such exploring always becomes an open process. The music itself becomes interesting also in other ways as it gets references in a non-musical world. Sometimes it is light, sometimes a word, then again a space; sometimes it is more references at the same time. The basic disposition of Choregie is music which refers to other fields, music which reacts to other fields.



TOXIC PSALMS

Toxic Psalms are a reflection of the spiritual anguish of today.

The word 'toxic' derives from the Greek Toxon (meaning weapon, bow), while the word 'psalm' derives from Psallein, meaning 'playing' (an instrument) as well as 'to snatch', 'steal' or 'remove'. Toxic Psalms metaphorically mean to draw a poisonous bow which is being played on in gloria to 'move something away' - tense psalms that are about to be released. At the centre of the project is the shaman idea: everyone and everything that man creates can be turned against him if used without respect for life. To have control over something matterless, we control it with the knowledge about it and so gain power over it. The almost sinister thought *"I'll tell you. You're young, but you're one of us, and I'm one of us, so I'll tell you."* gives the Toxic Psalms its tone. Death speaks and murderous plague intones in the background of the whole concert arch.

Scenes move between different spiritual worlds of the past and the present. The setting is an imaginary world moving among the shadows of our ancestors and is a reflection of modernity at the same time. Toxic Psalms are a reflection of the spiritual anguish of today. Through music the project reflects Palestine, Syria, Pussy Riots, weapons, concentration camps, blood feuds, extinctions, contaminations of religions, and creates a reflection of human brutality. The life of a man is changed into a drama here and now: men killing for the glory of their psalms. The author's poise is not one of an agitator - stirring the feeling that "something has to be done" - it is rigorously contemplative. Despite this 'detachment', the violence in Toxic Psalms is politically stressed and religiously marked. Religion is one of the main reasons for murderous violence in the world. But true morality requires from us to accept full responsibility for our actions without hiding behind the figure of the big Other and to accept full responsibility for actions without hiding in the anonymity of a group.



THEATRE OF VOICE

The project Toxic Psalms is a voice Exploratorium in itself.

In the performance the voice is impersonated and becomes an independent manifestation, a personality or personalities. At the same time the voice becomes, embodies, transforms into a completely different character, a different spirit. It has a direct link to the whole specter of emotions. A psychoanalytical language of sounds is built, as the sounds create a 'sound landscape' which controls the theatre or concert stage.

By following innovations in terms of comprehending beauty and the depth of the meaning of vocal music, the project represents a rich presentation of various sound colors. The sound itself is being delivered by the singers in a creative process in which changes of registers, various vocal techniques of throat singing, natural timbre, nasal singing, Kulning, edgy Balkan sounds and cultivated bel canto articulation seem so natural and simple as if it were a spontaneous game, an everyday form of communication. Contrasting sound colors, in which voices slide one past the other, spiral into rhythmic entanglements and merge in a music expression of our time. Because of this sound dramaturgy the project is unique, unaffected, some sort of a 'new age', an absolute musical experience which crosses the borders of cultures, nations, beliefs and merges with the universal human soul into a harmonious organism.



collective

Crowds stir in people ambivalent feelings. They attract us and turn us off at the same time.

We are attracted by their spontaneity, by the strong impulses that they can produce. They turn us off because of their uncontrolled behavior, their strong physical power and psychological pressures on individuals, etc. It seems that crowds carry in themselves a power and characteristics which by far exceed the mere sum of psychological and physical characteristics of individuals in it. That is why it is tempting to worship images of large numbers of bodies. Simply because they are, when in a crowd, seductive as they collect power for everyone.

Something happens to individuals when they gather in a group. They think and act differently than they would on their own. Why do people in groups tend to suppress independent thinking and refuse to take responsibility for acting? Why is true leadership suppressed and undermined when most people become members of a group? Is it just the concentrated physical energy of so many people gathered in the same space? Is it the collection of demands, wishes, feelings, and drives of individuals gathered in a crowd? Is it some particular social influence which characterizes large groups of people and individuals simply have to yield to?

chorus

Chorus can take over from us and experience for us our innermost and most spontaneous feelings and attitudes.
(Slavoj Žižek)

The Chorus manifests a collective body, and as an organism it reflects a human desire to merge. At the same time, it manifests social phantasms. The collective becomes an individual and an individual becomes a part of the collective. A non-individual voice, a sound of the multitude of voices – choir, the whole union of bodies in a crowd creates an illusion of humanity as a single human being. Analogical of this monology (the Chorus works as a single character), the Chorus on stage (the Chorus works as a multitude) works as a mirror and partner of the audience. The Chorus admits that it is a simulation of the Crowd and is therefore the most genuine and the one most entitled to pass the message over to the Crowd. Namely, it is not an individual that stepped out from the Crowd, but its direct extension, a social subconsciousness, a mirror of the Crowd. Chorus as a phenomenon serves as a ghost limb of the society. It is not there, since it is collectively excluded from the Masses as it is performing for them, but it is still felt as an emotion, as a cry of society. Chorus is people who are moved.

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Supported by: Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia



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