

MOTHERS

PEACE
&
POTATOES

MOTHERS A SONG FOR WARTIME

CONCEPT & DIRECTION: MARTA GÓRNICKA | LIBRETTO: MARTA GÓRNICKA & ENSEMBLE

WORLD PREMIERE
29/SEPTEMBER 2023
TEATR Powszechny WARSZAWA
3/4/NOVEMBER MAXIM GORKI THEATER BERLIN

WWW.GORKI.DE

The project is co-financed
by the CITY OF WARSAW



In cooperation with the
ALLIANCE FOUNDATION
FOUNDATION

Production: CROSS OF WOMEN FOUNDATION in co-production with TEATR POWSZECHNY WARSZAWA / MAXIM GORKI THEATER BERLIN / FESTIVAL D'AVIGNON / MAILLON THÉÂTRE DE STRASBOURG SCÈNE EUROPÉENNE / SPRING PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL UTRECHT / THEATRE ST. PÖLTER - FESTIVAL FÜR GEMEINHARTIGLICHKEIT



MARTA GÓRNICKA

**MOTHERS
A SONG FOR WARTIME**

*A performance for 21 ukrainian, polish, belarusian mothers
and children*

World premiere: 29 September 2023, Teatr Powszechny, Warsaw

French premiere: 4 October, Maillon, Théâtre de la Ville de
Strasbourg, Strasbourg

German premiere: 4 November, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin

*“Our performance is about women and war.
About defense mechanisms and responsibility.*

About our reaction to a war in Europe.

*About the rituals of wartime violence against women and civilians
which are unchanging.”*

Marta Górnicka



MOTHERS A SONG FOR WARTIME of Marta Górnicka, this is the proposition of big theatrical and political strength.

Manuel Piolat Soleymat, LA TERASSE

In MOTHERS artist Marta Górnicka proposes powerful political reactivation of antique chorus

Caroline Chatelet SCENEWEB.FR

5 stars for MOTHERS

The latest incarnation of Marta Górnicka's choral project is a strong, moving, perfectly constructed and performed statement by woman experienced by war and dictatorship

Aneta Kyzioł, POLITYKA

Shchedrivka performed by a choir of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters is simply moving. And for several reasons. Firstly, because it is about regaining the voice and the place where this voice can be heard. Secondly, because it contains wishes for all of us. Thirdly, because of the tribute to the tradition of Ukrainian singing, a living voice that pierces and deeply touches. This singing is a space which cannot be appropriated. And this voice is a voice that, despite everything, cannot be silenced.

Wiktoria Tabak, DIDASKALIA

Le Maillon Theatre Strasbourg presents the French premiere of MOTHERS – A SONG FOR WARTIME by Polish director Marta Górnicka. When a chorus of women speaks the reality of the current war, making theater an art in direct contact with the present. This proposal of great theatrical and political force will be on the program of the next Avignon Festival.

Manuel Piolat Soleymat, LA T



The wartime rituals of violence against women never change. War asks Europe the ultimate questions: about responsibility in the face of danger, and about our defense mechanisms. Out of the testimonies of mothers and children—Ukrainians, Belarusians and Poles: those who have fled war; those who have fled persecution; and, finally, those who have welcomed them in Polish homes—Marta Górnicka, Polish director, creator of the CHORUS OF WOMEN and the founder of the Political Voice Institute at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, creates a choral performance with her ensemble.

The cast comprises 21 Ukrainian, Polish and Belarusian women aged 9 to 71, each with her unique political experience and a different life story; refugees from Mariupol, Kyiv, Irpin and Kharkiv. This CHORUS OF MOTHERS FOR WARTIME seeks a new, post-opera choral voice that draws from the female choruses of the seventh century BC.

Ukrainian children's rhymes, traditional songs, spells and political statements all meet and mix with each other.

The performance “*for wartime*” opens with a *shchedrivka* (Ukr. щедривка) – a traditional Ukrainian song, a wish of happiness and rebirth of the world. It dates back to pre-Christian times and is likely thousands of years long. The ritual of singing a *shchedrivka* was performed by women only, or by women and children and it was always addressed to a particular person. People believed in the power of the song, trusting that its words and the good wishes would come true. Today, these sung wishes are addressed to all people, for a new time; for their entire life.

“In the past, the CHORUS was supposed to sanctify the uniqueness of life and serve a rebirth, a recovery. It was the opposing force to ANNIHILATION. Our performance draws on that force.” **Marta Górnicka**

*At a time when Ukraine is crying out, we need practices from long before the birth of the theatre; those brought by the CHORUS.
We need the theatre with its power of transformation.
With its power to remember what is most monstrous, and what war trauma wants to remove from the field of vision.
A theatre of new forms of solidarity and new rituals.
A place where a better world is imaginable and possible.*
Marta Górnicka for Theater der Zeit

A reading of the libretto of Marta Górnicka’s MOTHERS. A SONG FOR WARTIME took place at the Avignon Festival on 23 July 2023.

Link

<https://festival-avignon.com/en/edition-2023/programme/reading-of-mothers-a-song-for-wartime-332090>



Creators

actors – Liza Kozlova, Palina Dabravolskaja, Svitlana Onischak, Kateryna Taran, Svitlana Berestovska, Valeriia Obodianska, Sasha Cherkas, Darya Novik, Yuliia Ridna, Natalia Mazur, Aleksandra Sroka, Katarzyna Jaźnicka, Bohdana Zazhytska, Anastasiia Kulinich, Hanna Mykhailova, Katerina Aleinikova, Elena Zui-Voitekhovskaya, Kamila Michalska, Maria Robasziewicz, Polina Shkliar, Ewa Konstanciak

concept, direction – Marta Górnicka

libretto – Marta Górnicka & ansamble (Ukrainians–Belarusians–Poles)

music – Wojciech Frycz, Marta Górnicka, traditional Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish music, a quotation from Mykola Leontovych's *Shchedryk*

choreography – Evelin Facchini
stage design – Robert Rumas
costumes – Joanna Załęska
dramaturgical collaboration – Olga Byrska, Maria Jasińska
video, video documentation – Michał Rumas, Justyna Orłowska
video projections – Michał Jankowski
lights – Artur Sienicki
vocal coach – Joanna Piech-Sławecka
stage manager and director's assistant – Bazhena Shamovich
choreographer's assistant – Maria Bijak
movement workshop – Krystyna Lama Szydłowska

Ukrainian libretto translation – Olesya Mamchych
Belarusian libretto translation – Maria Pushkina
English libretto translation – Aleksandra Paszkowska
German libretto translation - Olaf Khul
Ukrainian ethnomusicology consultation – Anna Ohrimchuk
Ukrainian children's games consultation – Venera Ibragimova
in-rehearsal interpreter – Marharyta Huretskaya
subtitles – Zofia Szymanowska

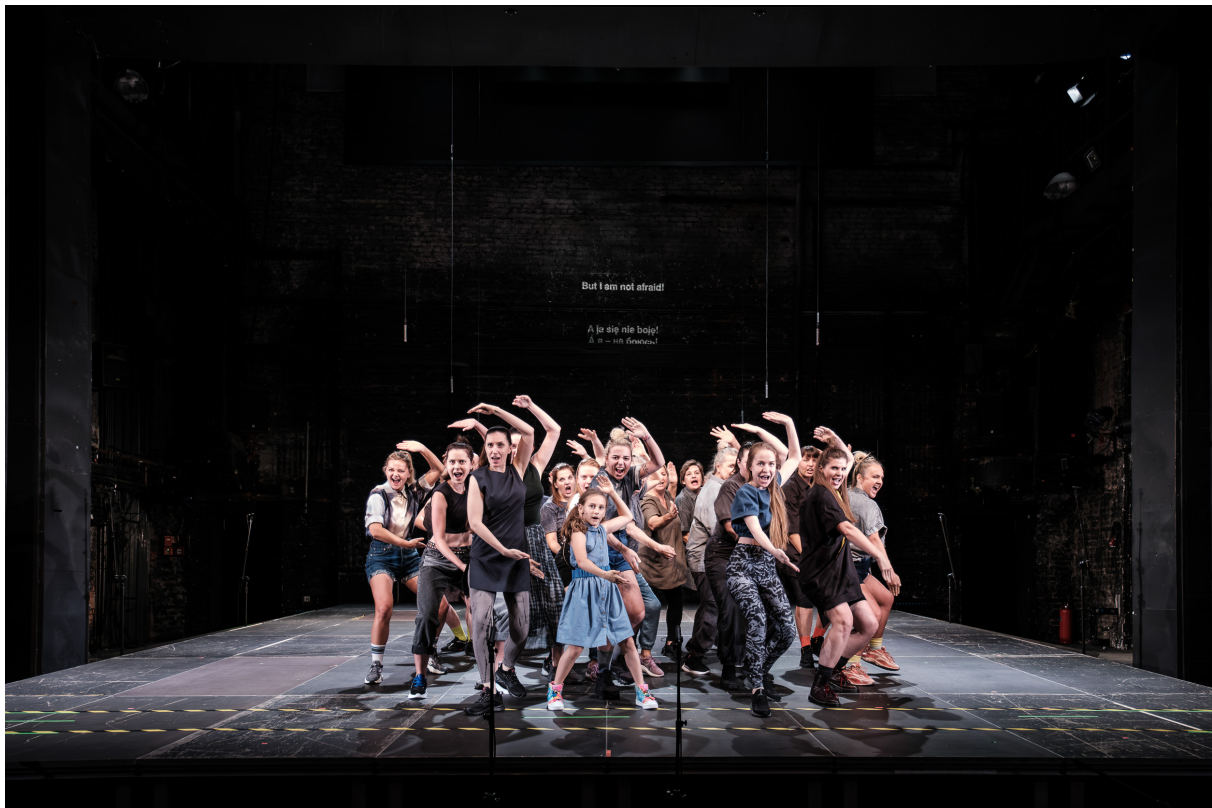
CHORUS OF WOMEN Foundation producers – Marta Kuźmiak, Iwa Ostrowska

Teatr Powszechny producer – Magdalena Płyszewska

production – CHORUS OF WOMEN Foundation

in co-production with – Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw; Maxim Gorki Theater (Berlin); Festival d'Avignon; Maillon Théâtre De Strasbourg Scène européenne; Spring Performing Arts Festival (Utrecht); Tangente St. Pölten – Festival Für Gegenwartskultur (Austria),

partners – Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw; Nowy Teatr in Warsaw; Euro Scene Festival in Leipzig; Ukrainian Institute; For Freedom Foundation in Warsaw (an independent public non-profit working for



migrants from Ukraine, Chechnya, Belarus, Tajikistan who have settled in Warsaw); “Przystanek Świetlica” (a recreation center for migrant children and adolescents); The “Sunflower” Solidary Community Center (supporting for the Ukrainian artist community in Warsaw).

This project is co-funded by the City of Warsaw.

Excerpt from an interview with Marta Górnicka by Moïra Dalant at the Avignon Festival:

Your new project provides female victims of war with a space to speak.

For several months now, I have been working in workshop mode in Warsaw with a group of 21 women who were affected by the horrors of war in Ukraine and the pressures of political persecution in Belarus, and those who have given them refuge in Warsaw. At the same time, I have been collaborating with Ukrainian ethnomusicologists in search of what war cannot touch: the tradition of the living voice and of Ukrainian song. This is the paradox of this war: it has allowed us to plunge more deeply into Ukrainian culture.

THE CHORUS is for me a tool for examining the defense mechanisms activated in us by war, but it also a tool that allows to restore memory, voice and language. The voice of women not as the victims of war, but on the contrary: as its protagonists.

The cast comprises women aged 9 to 72. They come from Kyiv, Sumy Irpin, Kherson. They are survivors. They are witnesses to violence and bombings. Today, they want to use the power of their voice to name the unnamable. One of the creators, Natalia, only brought to Warsaw one thing she wanted to save from the war: a traditional Ukrainian instrument called bandura. This instrument is for me a symbol of the power of the voice and the power of women.

This is about finding what is still living in the rubble. In the gathering, in the chorus.

(...)

Excerpt from Marta Górnicka's speech in Avignon on 20 July 2023:

A war is being fought in Ukraine. This war has been happening for many months now. A war you might not know much about. A war which perhaps, from time to time, disappears from our field of vision. A war which is too close not to care—and maybe this is why we don't



want to think about it. Then, we easily switch from atrocious images to memes with cats and dogs on Facebook and Instagram. This is why this performance is being made.

Reading at the Festival d'Avignon: July 23, 2023. Information: [here](#).
World Premiere: 29.09.2023, Teatr Powszechny, Warsaw.
Premiere in Germany: 04.11.2023, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin.
Premiere in France: 04.10.2023, Maillon, Théâtre de la Ville de Strasbourg, Strasbourg.

International tournée:

October 4, 5 and 6, 2023 – Maillon Théâtre de Strasbourg Scène européenne (France)
November 3 and 4, 2023 – Maxim Gorki Theater (Germany)
March 27 and 28, 2024 – El Teatre Lliure de Barcelona (Spain)
May 23-25 and 28-31, and June 1, 2024 – Spring Performing Arts Festival (Utrecht, The Netherlands)
June 5 and 6, 2024 – Landestheater Niederosterreich et Tangente St. Pölten – Festival Für Gegenwartskultur (Austria)
July 2024 – Festival d'Avignon

ARTE TV about French Premiere in Strasbourg:

<https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/117022-000-A/a-song-for-wartime-des-chants-de-femmes-par-dessus-la-guerre/>



Marta Górnicka – director, author, graduate of the Drama Directing Department at the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw and Frederic Chopin School of Music in Warsaw.

In the years 2009-2014 at the Zbigniew Raszewski Theater Institute in Warsaw she created her own concept of the CHORUS OF WOMEN a chorus theater - a modern tragic chorus. The birth of the group was

accompanied by the idea of "recovering the female voice" and creating a post-modern chorus theater - an aesthetic, formal and ideological concept of theater that combines the power of the collective voice/body, which is the source of the Western stage, with the contemporary criticism of language as a tool of power.

She created outstanding social and artistic projects, including: in Israel (*Mother Courage Won't Remain Silent. A Chorus for Wartime*, 2014), Germany (*Grundgesetz Ein Chorischer Stresstest*, Berlin 2018; *Grundgesetz – Federal Constitutional Court Karlsruhe, Jedem das Seine* - Kammerspiele Munich, *Still Life* -Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin 2021) or in Poland (*Here the Choir speaks...* 2010, *Magnificat* 2011, *Hymn to Love* 2017, *Constitution for the Chorus of Poles* 2019) - detailed documentation, also a list of awards and over 60 festivals around the world where Marta Górnicka's works were shown, are available at://gornicka.com/

Górnicka's performances *This is the chorus speaking*, *Magnificat*, *Requiemachine*, *M(other) Courage*, *Hymn to love*, were invited and presented worldwide during the most known theatre and directing festivals such as: BERLINER FESTSPIELE, Athens & Epidaurus Festival in Athens, International Theatre Festival MESS in Sarajevo, New SPIELART Festival in Munich, Festival International de Théâtre SENS INTERDITS in Lyon, International Theater Festival THEATER SPEKTAKEL in Zurich, Festival METTRE EN SCENE – Rennes, LESSINGTAGE in Thalia Theater Hamburg, SPRING Festival Utrecht

and HERBSTSALON Berlin. She has led drama workshops at prestigious stages such as Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Italy, X- Theater Tokio- Japan, Kammerspiele Munich, Thalia Theater Hamburg, Germany, National Theatre – Teheran, Iran and many others.

In Górnicka's performances and social projects, the chorus functions as a metonymy of the community, exposing its inherent tensions, revealing the mechanisms of exclusion and consolidation of the community, and talking about its relations of power and domination. At the same time, chorus in her performances is always a real community experience, opening access to rituals and communal practices that are source for the community at the level of breath, body and voice. Therefore, they have both a critical potential and the power of a renewed ritual - they are a living laboratory for examining and establishing a community.

She is a multiple winner of the ranking of the German portal Nachtcritik.de for the best play of the year in Germany and German-speaking countries, winner of the Award for Best Director – Fast Forward European Directing Festival, In 2019, Marta Górnicka won the “POLITYKA’S Passport” award *“for the contemporary concept of the ancient chorus as a vehicle of artistic and social change”*.

In 2022 Marta Górnicka has been awarded **The Bertolt Brecht Visiting Professorship at Centre of Competence for Theatre at University Leipzig**. Bertolt Brecht Professorship is awarded to the outstanding artists from the fields of theatre, dance, performance and media art. Since 2019, Marta Górnicka has been developing the **Institute of Political Voice** at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. The Institute is a workshop center for working with the collective voice/body and language, it is a social laboratory that works to build open, diverse communities and strengthen strategies of resistance and criticism towards violence in social life.

A short text

A performance of 21 Ukrainian, Polish, Belarusian mothers and their children. Of different ages and life stories. Refugees from Mariupol, Kyiv, Irpin. Those who have fled the war, and those who have fled persecution – all find their place in the CHORUS OF MOTHERS. A post-opera, ritual choral form which refers to seventh-century BC female choruses.

Premiere: Teatr Powszechny, Warsaw, September 29