

Breaking the Spell.

Feminist performances and practices of being-with

"Breaking the Spell" is an artistic research project that reflects practices of being-with in contemporary performing arts. It is a space of common learning, that hosts diverse formats of encounters and reflects artistic practices which are deeply political and poetic at the same time. It proposes to think of a feminist perspective not necessarily as a theme, but mainly as a very logic of work. Observing carefully how the artistic practices are situated in the local environments, it asks how they can build and maintain transnational bonds. "Breaking the Spell" emerges from the desire to understand how to make art between the ends of the world.

Borrowing its title from the book by Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, the project emerges from the desire to answer the sorcery without sorcerers¹, a capitalist and patriarchal realism, that urgently requires new spells to be cast on. The artistic practices of being-with are understood here as situated ones, deeply embedded in the local ecosystems and genuinely curious about who they are shaped with. They pay special attention to the embodied experiences and to the lived knowledge; they are deeply political in their rhythm; they focus on setting the space of gathering with collaborators and audiences as much as they focus on its topic; they question the notions of progression and growth as the basis of development; they acknowledge the labour of care and maintenance as crucial elements of artistic practice and refuse to take part in the competition for new and loudly shouted ideas. Thus, these practices challenge the working modes in the performing arts field, refusing to follow the flow of hypermobility and hopping from one festival to another. Instead of seducing large audiences for one evening and disappearing, they propose an ongoing encounter and stay in a given local context for longer, trying to attune to its sound, landscape and urgencies.

We would like to understand how the methods of being-with in the contemporary performing arts, which are situated in a local context, can form transnational alliances. What can we see while our feet stand firmly on our local ground and thoughts are being shaped with colleagues and audiences situated elsewhere? How might this constellation influence the way we think, work and gather? We strongly believe the artistic practices of being- and thinking-with offer, reflect and generate new political languages and perspectives of performing arts, that we need more than ever before. Therefore, we aim at starting a catalogue of practices, methods and recipes for situated artistic practices, that can be further developed far beyond the

¹Philippe Pignarre, Isabelle Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery. Breaking the Spell*, trans. Andrew Goffey, Palgrave Macmillian 2011, p. 135

project frames. We will be looking for the spells that we need to cast in order to break the capitalist and patriarchal realism through. As Verónica Gago pointed out "we don't know what we're capable of until we experience the displacement of the limits that we've been made to believe and obey."²

The idea of "Breaking the Spell" emerges from a genuine need of strengthening each other in the everyday fights against female and feminized bodies. In that sense, it is deeply grounded in the context of the recent backlash against women's rights and nationalist turn in many countries. If the practices of being-with are situated in the body and its capacity to perceive and to feel (affects), what happens when that very body is endangered? How can the notion of "witchcraft" be recalled here as a political category, an answer to the hostile political context? How and if is the form of resilience possible in case of artistic practices rooted in the local ground, when that very ground gets destroyed or becomes hostile?

Container

In each project location the venue will become a "container" - a fluid space for sharing, manifesting and reflecting artistic practices, that welcomes new unexpected relations, contexts and encounters emerging between them. A container is understood here as a metaphor and a way of work: a space to hold on to, to gain strength from, to contain and carry our situated practices and struggles. Its shape is not fixed though: in every location it takes a form that resonates with the local landscape it becomes part of; it slightly transforms every day, responding to the gathered practices, to the rhythm of the conversation and to the surroundings. Gathering artists, thinkers and audiences, it invites them for a journey, where individual and common paths mingle and unexpected trajectories emerge.

Programme

The "Breaking the Spell" journey will take place from March 2022 to March 2023 and will be hosted by four European performing arts institutions: Residenz Schauspiel Leipzig, Müncher Kammerspiele in Munich, Performing Arts Institute in Warsaw and Vooruit in Ghent. In each of the locations, closed working sessions will be followed by a public programme, prepared in close cooperation with the hosting organisation. Throughout the whole journey Breaking the Spell will be accompanied by NOTES, a project by Ivana Muller, which will manifest in each of the four cities.

One of the project traces will take a form of a book gathering artistic practices, working methods, traces and spells, generated and shared during the four encounters.

²Verónica Gago, *Feminist international. How to change everything*, Verso, 2020, p. 2

With

Bodies of Knowledge (BOK), Aleksandra Borys, Silvia Bottiroli, Alicja Czyrczel, Charlotte Eifler, Begüm Erciyas, Martina Hefter, Samara Hersch, Caroline Kapp, Lina Majdalanie, Agata Maszkiewicz, Giorgia Ohanessian Nardin, Agata Siniarska, Swoosh Lieu, Ingrid Vranken, Stefanie Wenner

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Production

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Project curated by

Marta Keil and Residenz Schauspiel Leipzig

in cooperation with Münchner Kammerspiele in Munich, Performing Arts Institute in Warsaw, Kunstencentrum Vooruit in Ghent and Grzegorz Reske

Funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation

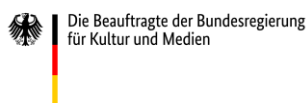
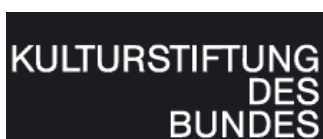
Funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media

“Notes” by Ivana Müller is supported by

Institut Français

Republic France

Gefördert durch die Kulturstiftung des Bundes. Gefördert von der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien.



Mit freundlicher Unterstützung des Institut français und des französischen Ministeriums für Kultur / DGCA

