

SHEKHINA

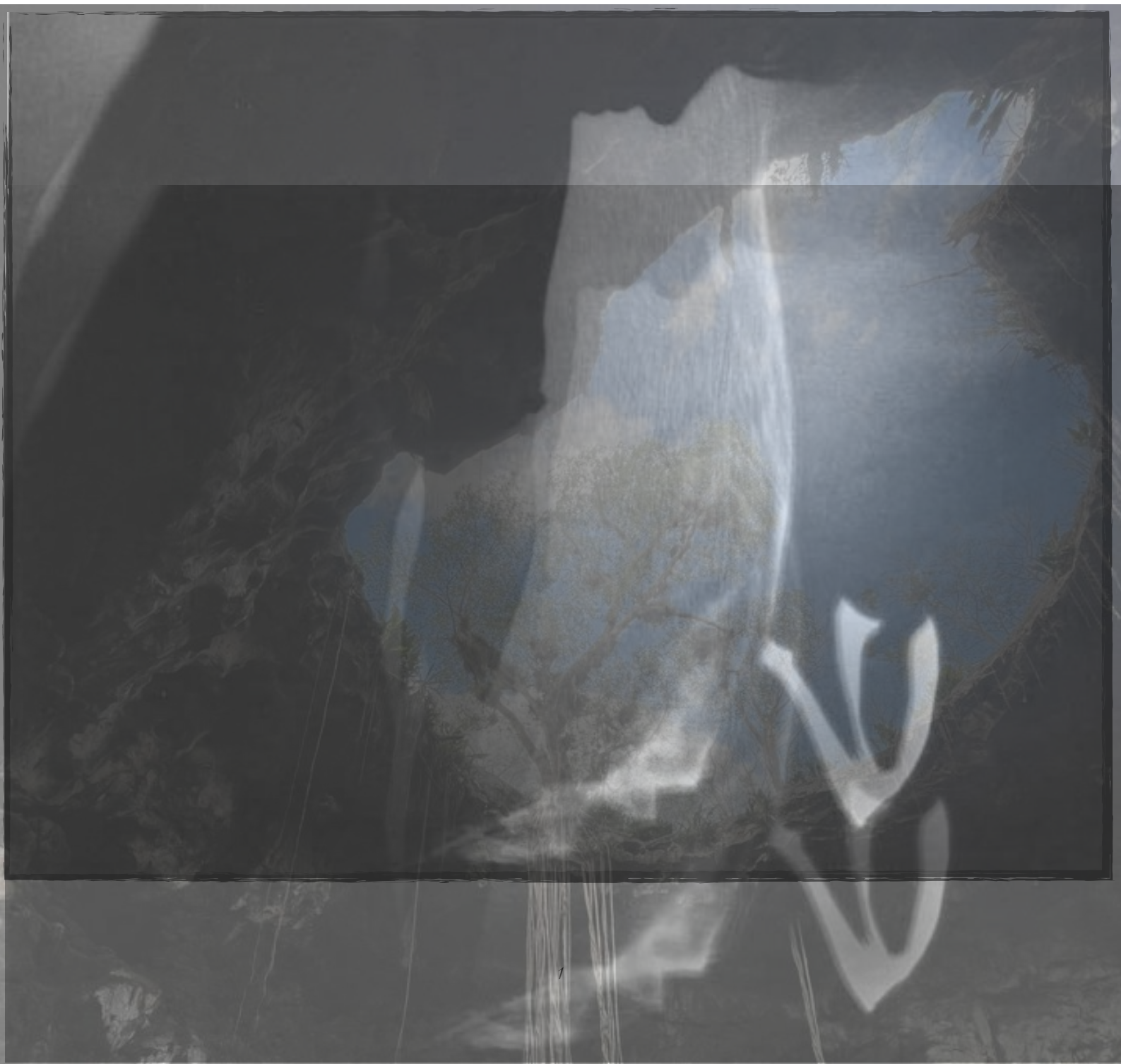
A multidisciplinary show

Theater, dance, polyphonic singing and musical composition,

Led by Tamara Lysek (CH)

*In collaboration with Kasia Stankiewicz (PL), Rémi Auclair (FR), Patrick Mangold (CH),
Nicolas Mayoraz (CH), Jean-François Meuwly (CH), Anthony Gerber (CH), Alicia Packer (CH)*

created by **Cie Porte-Bagages**



S H E K H I N A is a multidisciplinary show combining dramatic writing, musical composition on the double bass, singing and movement. This show is intended for the theatrical stage, but also for more unusual places like places of worship, synagogues, but not only. The aim of this play is to use music (song and double bass), speech (bilingual French and Polish) and movement to talk about **home and exile, wandering and belonging, spirituality and cultural heritage** - although never formally named, in this case Judaism - with, at the end of the performances, an **open and informal discussion with the audience**.

It should be noted that although the story of the main protagonist is linked to Judaism, **this play does not aim to defend a political or religious cause, but rather to portray the state of a third generation that is questioning its place and its role in the transmission of a memory and traditions**.

In gestation for several years, the first performances will be held at the **Théâtre de l'Oriental in Vevey from 31 January to 4 February 2024**. Following this, a tour is currently being organised elsewhere in Switzerland and abroad, including Poland (Grotowsky Institute, Wrocław, Teatr Kana, Szczecin) and Alsace, in some of the many abandoned, museified or transformed synagogues. A collaboration is currently underway with the Association des amis de la Synagogue de Schirmeck in Alsace.

Synopsis

*Schätzeli claque la porte.
Elle claque toutes les portes.*

Schätzeli comes from a Jewish family. She practices and integrates customs and rituals of the community in which, as an adult, she no longer recognizes herself. By questioning her cultural heritage and her belonging to a minority group whose tragic past she feels on a daily basis, she sets out to understand her own relationship with spirituality.

*Discrètement, elle se faufile au premier rang des femmes.
Elle écoute la prière. [...]
Pour un instant, l'errance lui offre une trêve. [...]
La Shekhina l'a trouvée là.*

Stray dog on the earth, Schätzeli seeks the Shekhina, a feminine divine presence on earth taken from the old Jewish mysticism. She searches for it in her family traditions, in her rituals, in her community. As she wanders, she tries to grasp her family history to understand and define her own identity.

Tamara Lysek

Écrivaine, comédienne, chanteuse et pédagogue

Tamara Lysek – Swiss social pedagogue, writer, mover, singer, actress – codirects a theatre company for over a decade, Cie Porte-Bagages (porte-bagages.ch). Over the years, her practice has become multidisciplinary, mixing mainly writing, theatre, dance and singing, also using these tools in the social field through: workshops for minor migrants and teenagers in difficulty (OVAM+Théâtre de Vidy, Fondation La Clairière), dance sessions without age limit or experience prerequisite. After obtaining a **Master degree in Art History, Modern French with a specialization in Dramaturgy** at the **University of Lausanne**, she studied **Jacques Lecoq Pedagogy** in Barcelona, a professional training in physical theatre. At the same time, she worked on singing (lyrical, polyphonic) as well as dance (especially *Gaga* dance, a constantly evolving movement language, for both dancers and non-dancers). In her opinion, theatre cannot be dissociated from the socio-political situation of our time and should be used to create openness and enhance communication between communities.



Creative process

Il est dit que la Shekhina accompagne les exilés.¹

THEATRE
Roule - Bagages

For a long time I have been questioning the notion of home. What does it mean to feel at home somewhere? Believing less and less in the idea of a given geographical place and more and more in a state of inner peace, I turned to my cultural and religious roots, that of a people marked by exile and wandering. I thus wrote the text of this play to reflect the weight and the questionings that are mine and that seem to me to be those of many other human groups throughout the world.

My family roots almost always lead to Poland. Almost, because the only branch that deviates from it is that of my paternal grandmother who was originally from Alsace. In 2021, unintentionally, I met two artists, one Polish, the other French, who are now an integral part of this project. We are thus leading a Swiss-French-Polish collaboration, which could, who knows, add a little balm to the wounds experienced by the generations that preceded me.

Studying Jewish mysticism, I had a decisive encounter with the figure of the Shekhina, who represents the radiance or presence of God and whose name derives from the verb *shakhan*, which means precisely: to dwell, to reside.

« And so from the beginning, He [God] took as His companion the *Shekhina*, which is to say, His own presence in the Creation. Thus the *Shekhina* became the wife of God and therefore the mother of all peoples. When the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans and we were dispersed and enslaved, the *Shekhina* was angered, left God, and came with us into exile. Actually, I myself have thought this: that the *Shekhina* also let herself be enslaved and is here around us, in this exile within exile, in this home of mud and sorrow. »²

The theatrical work includes three levels of reading which are declined in the feminine: the notion of the divine in the form of the Shekhina, the grandmothers who represent the past generations marked by the Second World War and finally Schätzeli, a woman of nowadays, three generations after the war, who seeks to define her own identity without cutting herself off from her roots.

From a formal point of view, music is of paramount importance in this production. Musicality of the French language, but also Polish, musical compositions - without recognizable language words - inspired by Klezmer, Jewish prayers from Eastern Europe, but also gypsy melodies - this other people dedicated to perpetual travel -, so many rhythms and tones that will come to weave in a single thread the need to feel at home, in oneself.

¹ All quotes in italics on the right are excerpts from the script of the play (in french). The idea of the Shekhina being a divine presence that follows the exiled people is found notably in the Talmud, Megillah, 29a See also: STAROBINSKI-SAFRAN, Esther, « La Shekhina, figure du féminin », *Pardès*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2007, pp. 141-149.

² LEVI Primo, *Lilith et other stories, Moments of reprieve*, p. 44. The narrator, Primo Levi, recounts an episode from his time in Auschwitz: The 'house of mud and sorrow' refers to the Auschwitz camp in which he is a prisoner at the time this story is told, on a rainy day.

Musical composition, lights, scenography & planning

Home is where all your attempts to escape cease.
Naguib Mahfuz

THEATRE
Porte · Bagages

⌘ Performance dates and work schedule

We will play the opening performances at the **Théâtre de l'Oriental in Vevey from 31 January to 4 February 2024**. We are currently organizing the tour in Switzerland, Poland and Alsace. We will rehearse two weeks from August 1 to 15, then two weeks from September 25 to October 8, 2023, then four weeks from December 28, 2023 to January 30, 2024.

⌚ Set design and lighting

Aiming for a bare space, we will not use any set design during the show. However, we will build an entrance hatch for the audience, to share our creative process with the audience via texts, images, objects and music. The costumes will also be versatile, becoming elements of the set as the show progresses.

Without a set design, light becomes of paramount importance for the design of a high-contrast stage space, all shadows and geometric lines (inspired by Yan Godat's work in *Ivanov* by Emilie Charriot, *Arsenic*, 2016) aiming at a visual experience that can plunge the spectator into his own imagination. To do this, we collaborate with the accomplished lighting designer **Nicolas Mayoraz**.

λ Musical composition and polyphonic songs

As the show is mainly musical, then set in motion and enhanced with some texts, **Rémi Auclair**, composer and double bass player is a key player in this project. Inspired by endangered melodies, we will take them out of their religious context to interpret them and rewrite musical and vocal accompaniments. In addition to our three voices and the double bass, we will use all sorts of objects to generate poetic or realistic sound worlds that allow the audience to travel with us as we weave our tale.

Collaborators

Kasia Stankiewicz

Polish mover, singer, actress

Kasia is a Polish born international and interdisciplinary theatre maker. She started her actor training at Royal Central School of Speech in Drama and then did her BA in European Theatre Arts at Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, both in London, combining it with Physical Theatre Training at Real Escuela Superior De Arte Dramático in Madrid. After graduating in 2019 she worked with Moon Fool Theatre Company on *Genesis*, *The ACT* International Voice and Performance Residency (Italy). She then worked in Wrocław where she was involved in voicework and polyphonic singing with Choir Nana with whom she co-led two editions of “Songs Healing Wrocław”. She has also worked at Grotowski Institute with Studio Kokyu performing in 'I Come To You River: Ophelia Fractured' (premiere in October 2020, studiokokyu.pl). The show was awarded the winning prize at the 24th and 25th Gdansk Shakespeare Festival and Audience Award at OFF Kontrapunkt in Szczecin and is currently touring Europe. She is now working on a physical theatre performance “Macierz” which will premiere in Teatr Kana, Szczecin in 2022.

Rémi Auclair

French musician, composer, double bassist

Rémi studied political science at the IEP (Toulouse) and electric bass at Music'halle and double bass at the conservatory (Renaud Gruss, Philippe Junker). After working with many artists from Toulouse in the 90s, his collaboration with Joël Barret opened the way for him to move to Paris in 2001. Since then, he has been involved in contemporary circus, with the Grand Céleste circus, cinema, theater and storytelling. For more than 10 years, he has been nourishing his compositions with a meticulous work of research around the sound richness of the double bass, using an electroacoustic treatment of the instrument. He works with many artists with whom he records and tours in all Europe such as: Valhère, Kiss my Frogs, Boudoir, Paul Kunigis. He taught at the musical workshops of Toulouse until 2002 and is currently teaching at the conservatory of Franconville.

Nicolas Mayoraz

Light designer

Nicolas Mayoraz has been working as a lighting designer and technician as well as a sound and lighting manager since 1997 in many theatres such as the Théâtre de Vidy, Arsenic, Grütli, Théâtre du Loup, Théâtre du Poche (GE), 2.21, PullOff, Petithéâtre (Sion and Lausanne), Th. Benno Besson, L'Echandole, Nuithonie, Le Jorat, Le Pommier, TPR, Les Halles, le Crochetan, Valère, Th. de l'Oriental and many more. He collaborates in particular with P. Tenthorey (tours abroad, films, shows), J-Y. Ruff, G. Maire, A. Deladoëy, H. Cattin, C. Ladetto, F. Mudry, Bergamote, P-L. Péclat, F. Courvoisier, B. Amaudruz, A.S. Palese, L. Yahr, O. Seigne, M. Sauser, J. Barroche, S. Marcuse, S. Brunner, D. Deppierraz and S. Pinnelli (Cie Divine), M. Urban, J. Boegli, S. Gardaz, L. Yerly, Cie Pied-de-Biche, Les arTpenteurs, P. Harsch, T. Romanens, Nixart, Trio Norn, Solam, Arts-en-Ciel, HEMU VD. He organises various tours of shows in Switzerland and abroad as technical director and works on the technical side of events and festivals, such as the Festival de la Cité, Expo 02 or the Jeux du Castrum.

Patrick Mangold

Director

Patrick's professional activities are both in the legal field, where he specialises in labour law (Manufacture, Théâtre de Vidy, EPFL), and in the artistic field. On the artistic side, Patrick has trained through several practices, in particular in relation to physical theatre, Buto dance and contemporary dance. Today he works regularly with several companies/collectives in Switzerland (Géraldine Chollet, Cie C, Cie Utilité publique) and in France (Cie Pascoli, Collectif Ici-Même, Stéphanie Lemonnier, Cie Aux Pieds levés) for dance, theatre or performance projects. He also carries out projects through the Cie ADES, which he created in 2017 and is president of the Association vaudoise de danse contemporaine (AVDC). In his personal artistic approach, where bodywork is central, he seeks to put into practice the principle according to which dance is not only what can be seen, but it lives first of all inside the dancer; it is not the form that counts, but the invisible, inner movement.

Judith Desse, Cie Judith Desse

Choreographer

Jean-François Meuwly, Cie DesAires teatro

Dramaturge

Alicia Packer, Cie Porte-Bagages, Anthony Gerber, Cie Chantier interdit

External eyes

Mona Gorska

Costume designer

Extract from the original script (FR)

« Il est dit que la Shekhina accompagne les exilés.

Il arrive qu'elle se retrouve face à la Shekhina qui prend alors forme humaine, celle d'une femme qui se lamente et pleure l'époux de sa jeunesse, resté au pays.

Comme elle, elle tend vers l'union.

Mais peut-on s'arracher les racines pour élever l'âme vers le foyer ?

Errant sur la terre. Telle une femme qui vient de loin, de là où elle est née.

Elle ne peut rien posséder, car elle sait : cela est étranger, je dois rentrer chez moi.

Discrètement, elle se faufile au premier rang des femmes.

Elle écoute la prière.

La Shekhina dans chaque note, dans la lueur des lampes et des vitraux, dans le parfum de la grosse dame assise à côté d'elle, dans la douce vibration de ses propres cordes vocales. Pour un instant, l'errance lui offre une trêve.

Elle est ici chez elle.

Oma : Schätzeli, tu m'entends ? *Wie geht es dir meine Liebe* ? Oui, je suis à l'hôpital, ça va ça va, la nourriture c'est pas bon, ça me fait perdre des kilos, c'est bien. Quand viens-tu me voir ? C'est Fête bientôt ! Mais il y aura tout le monde, tu dois être là. Oui, oui les yeux ça va mal. Mais dis-moi as-tu rencontré des *comme nous* ? Ne reste pas seule dans cette grande ville... Oui, j'ai une autre opération du genou, c'est pourquoi tu dois absolument venir célébrer avec nous, Schätzeli.

Oma portait ses éternelles fausses perles au cou, aux oreilles, en broche. Les vraies sont dans un coffre scellé. Sur sa main gauche brillait le diamant offert par la mère de Opa, pas du toc, le seul bijou qu'elle ait pu emporter.

Comme Oma, Mami était pieuse et ridée.

Chez Mami, il y avait de tout partout: des photos, des fruits et de la poussière, mais aussi des livres de prières, des boîtes à bijoux vides, des tapis qui se chevauchaient, des produits de douche périmés, même les branches des petites plantes ne savaient plus par où pousser. »

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