

Niebo

“The Flow Quartet” Part Four

Dramaturgy and Staging Notes / Chris Baldwin

THE VENUE - HALLA STULECIA

Niebo is performed in **Halla Stulecia**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in 1911-13 by the architect Max Berg. No other space could so perfectly hold such a large audience AND symbolise the multi-cultural heritage of this city.

THE STORY - WHO IS THIS MYSTERIOUS NARRATOR?

The Story is narrated by a mysterious woman who enters the stage from the AUDIENCE. She seems to provoke the action, introduce the city to the audience, and introduce the character Nina to the audience.

Nina is our first woman. We see how she works in the city, cooking and feeding the workers who are building and maintaining the infrastructure. We see Nina fall in love with a circus performer called Bluebird. Their child, **Anna**, is seen growing up. But the city is changing and both Nina and Anna are seen to be rejected by their own city. War breaks out. Mother and daughter are gradually made into “the others” by the citizens until Nina is killed. Bluebird also dies as war envelopes the city.

Anna survives the war. She witnesses the complete abandoning of the city by its occupants – her fellow citizens. She is the only one who remains. New people are seen arriving. Anna is also a witness to the new arrivals.

Anna meets and falls in love with Josef. He is a new arrival from the East. At first Anna is rejected by the new citizens, as she is clearly a “remainder” from the other times – but, thanks to Josef, she is accepted. They have a child called **Maria**.

Maria is seen going to school as a child. She is seen going to university and becoming an architect. She is seen taking part in political demonstrations and being attacked by the riot police.

We then see the key moment in the show. The mysterious Narrator takes the place of the actress playing the 22 year old Maria. She, the narrator, is Maria today.

We, the audience, witness Maria (narrator) directing the building of the steeple as it is placed upon the Spirits. Maria oversees the raising of the bell into the steeple. It is she, Maria our narrator, who rings the bell. In her body the experience of the three generations of women of her family are embedded. She represents the principal traditions of the city.

DESIGN:

The design of the show is based on three interlocking elements:

1. Two holes:

Two holes in the floor of Hala Stulecia have been especially constructed for this event. Through these holes the whole cast (around 100 people) both enter the stage and exit the stage – acting as a poetic metaphor for those who left the city and arrived in the city during the 20th Century. This idea was inspired by the sculpture in a Wrocław street entitled, “Pomnik Anonimowego Przechodźnia” (The Statue of the Anonymous Walker) in which people are seen disappearing into the ground and others appearing the other side of the street.

2. The Spirits of Wroclaw:

Designed by Philippe Geffroy for **Przebudzenie** (Spirits of Wroclaw - Opening Ceremony) in January 2016. Each spirit represents a different part of the soul of the city; Rebuilding, Flood, Innovation and Many Faiths. In **Przebudzenie** these Spirits travelled through the streets of Wroclaw waking up the town and telling multiple stories about each of their souls.

Their return to this show is deeply symbolic. Not only do they represent the four essences of the city – but the architect behind their “coming together” is our narrator. It is she who raised the bell in **Przebudzenie**.

The spirits are important characters in their own rights in Niebo. They are seen raising from 3.5 metres to six meters but being destroyed and collapsing. We see how much effort it takes to rebuild them again – there are no hidden machines, all is done by rope and human force and muscle, in front of the eyes of the audience – another central metaphor of this city.

At the climax of the performance the four Spirits are united and a 5th element, a steeple, is flown in from above, from the sky (Niebo). Of course, this is not magic. It is the consequence of human ingenuity overseen by our narrator, Maria. And embedded in the geometric design of the steeple is her symbolic message: the three religious geometric patterns associated with the religions of the city, and with her own family, are present... for those who wish to see.

3. Multi-media use of Hala Stulecia.

The walls and floors of the building are used to create the feeling that the audience is immersed in the event. Designed by Pawel Pajak (Lighting) and Piotr Masuszak (Animation) the work incorporates images of the city during the length of the 20th Century.

MUSIC:

The music for Niebo is the result of a musical conversation between five composers representing the international diasporas of the city. This two-year process was led by Wroclaw composer **Pawel Romanczuck** and musical director **Alan Urbanek**.

The first steps was taken in 2015. A sequence of short musical patterns were composed by Romanczuck and performed in an extended form in **Przebudzenie** (Spirits of Wroclaw Opening Ceremony) by musicians using specially designed and built instruments.

These same musical patterns *were then offered to four young orchestral composers* representing the diasporas associated with the history of the city.

Names of Composers:

- Amir Shlip (Germany)
- Udi Perlman (Israel),
- Jiří Kabát (Czech Republic) and
- Adam Porębski (Wroclaw, Poland)

These four composers each wrote a movement of the Wroclaw Cantata which was performed in a multimedia event to an audience of 80,000 people at FLOW in June 2016. The orchestra and choir was composed of orchestras from Poland, Germany, Israel and Czech Republic.

(for details, photos and videos see <http://chrisbaldwin.eu/flow-quartet-3-flow/4592952259>)

A final union of the music from the opening ceremony and Flow has been prepared for Niebo and will be performed by singers and instrumentalists from Poland and Israel.