

Threads, Pieces, Sounds, Gestures, Stories

52 Hz – An episode of an artistic journey

Performance review: 52 Hz, directed by Andrzej Kowalczyk, Solvay Modern Art Centre, Cracow, Poland, December 4th, 2015.

With the participation of: Zofia Kalińska, Teresa Welmińska, Tomasz Dobrowolski, Andrzej Welmiński, Andrzej Andzik Kowalczyk – Actors of the Cricot 2 Theatre; Adam Wójtowicz, Grażyna Borowik, Anna and Gabrysia Dzierża, Patka Fabin, Marta Kontny, Małgorzata Palka, Maja Saraczyńska, Agnieszka Wierny and Partners, Anna Kozłowska, Helena Urbańska, Zuzanna Zając, Maciej Nowak, Krzysztof Satora and Partners, Tomisław Wasilewicz

On the evening of December 4th 2015, at the Solvay Modern Art Center in Cracow, the Polish theatre director and visual artist Andrzej Kowalczyk, former actor of Tadeusz Kantor's world famous Cricot 2 Theatre, presented to the public the premiere of his production *52 Hz*, a theatre piece that can rightfully be called "an episode" of an artistic journey that brought together former actor colleagues from the Cricot 2, fellow artists, as well as new collaborators, eager to be a part of Andrzej Kowalczyk's project. The artistic voyage that the Polish director and his collaborators embarked on had begun in the summer of 2015 at Cricoteka, during a series of workshops led by Cricot 2 actors, entitled *Very Short Lessons*, continued with *52 Hz*, and was further enriched artistically following the premiere of *52 Hz* at the Solvay Modern Art Center. It is a "living" artistic manifestation that continues to grow, adding new layers and acquiring new meaning with each step. Andrzej Kowalczyk's summer workshop and ensuing performance at Cricoteka (July 5th 2015) – titled *Conversations at... the search for past totalities*¹ – was an initial

¹ For information about this workshop and the other "very short lessons" please see our article: Eugen Wohl, "A Year of Celebration: The Centenary Birthday of Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990). Glimpses into the Activity of Cricoteka – Center for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor", in *Studia UBB Dramatica*, LX, 2, 2015, p. 301-307.

stage of *52 Hz*, a successful attempt at instilling new life and artistic meaning into kantorian objects: a metal door (*Let the Artists Die*), a wooden board (*The Return of Odysseus*), a cannon chassis (*Wielopole, Wielopole*).



Fig. 1. Andrzej Kowalczyk's production *52 Hz*, Solvay Modern Art Center, Cracow, Poland.

Photo: Jacek Maria Stoklosa

All these objects and others, as well as most of the characters introduced in *Conversations at...* – the eerie, puppet-like characters portrayed by the renowned Cricot 2 actors Teresa and Andrzej Welmiński, Zofia Kalińska, or Andrzej Kowalczyk himself, the Little Girl in the Red Dress and the rest of the “wandering troupe” of artists – returned to the stage in *52 Hz* to continue their quest. A beautifully orchestrated “chaos”, as Kantor’s productions were also often perceived, *52Hz* is a theatrical *tour de force*, emphasizing Andrzej Kowalczyk’s directorial mastery in bringing together *threads, pieces, sounds, gestures* and *stories* – the overall art work is the result of the collaboration between all the actors involved – and in skillfully “crocheting” various artistic manifestations (theatre, architecture, painting, sculpture) in an interdisciplinary manner. The resulting performance is a powerful meditation on Art and the Artist. The work of the artist rests on the thin, imperceptible, fragile and easily destructible border between the material and the indefinable; it lies within

apparently nonsensical, petty or easily overlooked objects (Tadeusz Kantor called them “poor objects”), stories, legends, sounds, gestures. Similar to the lonely, and to this day unidentified with precision, 52-hertz whale, whose unusual calling (at the frequency of 52 Hz) fascinates the world, the Artist longs to be recognized solely by the unique intensity, “frequency”, of his/her artistic achievements. In its turn, Art, as the result of a creator’s desire to touch the untouchable, to disregard all limits and impediments, is – and this is an image that concludes the Solvay production – similar to the endeavors of the legendary hero Icarus: a continuous quest (“wandering”), an attempt to fly towards the sun wearing wax wings.

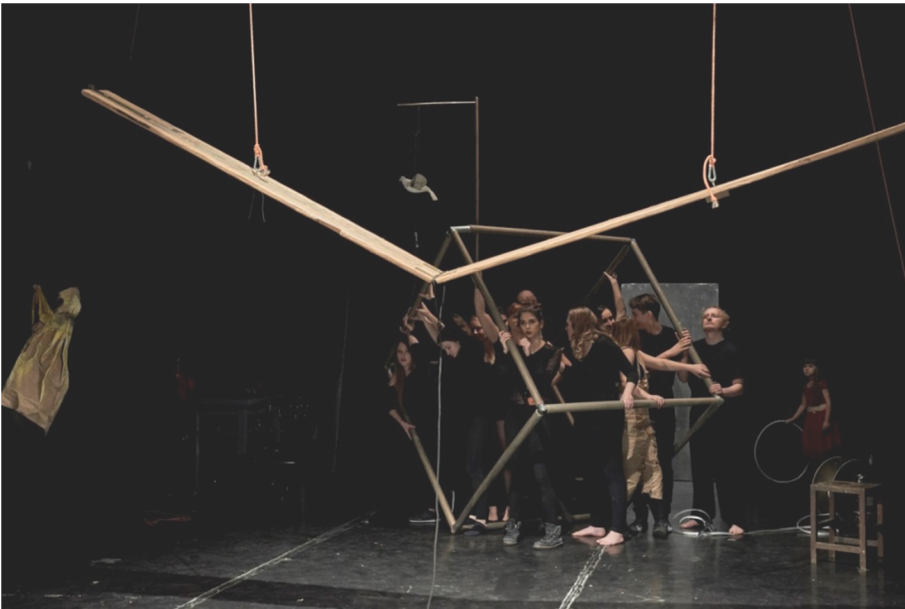


Fig. 2. Andrzej Kowalczyk’s production *52 Hz*, Solvay Modern Art Center, Cracow, Poland.
Photo: Juriana Jur

Remarkably executed in terms of its “stage orchestration”, powerful in its message, *52Hz* can best be described as a “theatrical station” of an artistic odyssey whose starting point is clear, but which is far from being over, continuing to grow and surprise with each new element added. A few days later, on December 8th 2015, exactly twenty-five years after Tadeusz Kantor’s death (December 8th 1990), in the courtyard of Cricoteka, Andrzej Kowalczyk and his team of artists reunited – at the same time with contributions from other fellow artists who wished to pay homage to Tadeusz Kantor – to create the

52 Hz Sign, yet another performative brick on the foundation of this project, later continued, "reflected", by the event entitled *Huge Sign Below Cricoteka Mirrors*. Here is how Andzik Kowalczyk describes it: "The performance *52 Hz Sign* was an element of forming the *Huge Sign Below Cricoteka Mirrors*. The participants to all the artistic events leading to this, with our involvement, unveil their sign. For the time being the group is being assembled as a collage. Hopefully one day we shall gather together in greater numbers and the Sign will encompass limitless spaces".



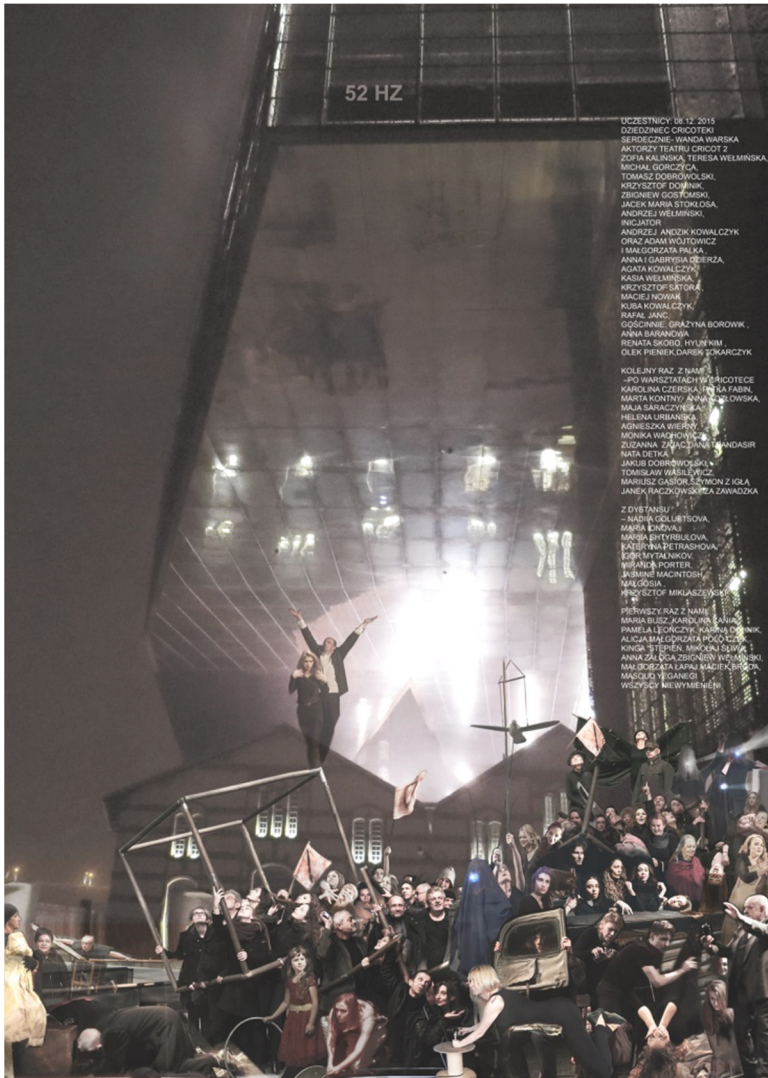


Fig. 3& 4. Andrzej Kowalczyk, *52 Hz Sign*, Cricoteka Courtyard, 2015

Returning briefly to the December 4th production *52 Hz*, it is also worth mentioning that it was not the only artistic event hosted by the Solvay Modern Art Center that evening. It was followed by Andrzej Kowalczyk's painting and installation exhibition, also titled *52 Hz*, and Małgorzata Palka's photography exhibition, *Oknawspomnień* (*Window Memories*).



Fig. 5. Theatrical photography by Małgorzata Palka, exhibited at the Solvay Modern Art Center, Cracow, Poland, 2015

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