

„Rromano kidipe“ / „Wier schemen unz“

by Adrian Gaspár

by Koloman Polak

Scenes from two chamber operas – based on the accounts of concentration camp survivors Hugo Höllenreiner and Ceija Stojka. Digital first performance.

Concept/ Stage-director	Bruno Berger-Gorski
Production management	Elly Nabel
Assistentin Regie und Produktion	Adriana Hernández Flores
Assistentin Regie	Julitta Dominika Walder
Dramaturgy	Sandra Broeske, Michael W. Schlicht
Scenery	Tadeusz Krzeszowiak, Theater Maribor
Costumes	Anna Kreinecker
Masks	Barbara Demuth-Honauer
Choreography	Mirja Chuni
Répétiteurs	Anna Souchon, Radmilo Petrovic
Lighting design	Tadeusz Krzeszowiak
Lighting technician	Celalettin Er
Camera	Ziga Krainic, Szymon Olszowski, Rodolfo Neyra
Camera, Documentary	Monica Pantel
Editing	Simone Carneiro
Recording Producer, Mix	Marco Batistella (www.mb-records.at)
Stage Hands	Salih Alaswi, Rami Rafea Abusaeeda
Historical research	Tadeusz Krzeszowiak
Location Scouting	Sandra Broeske

RROMANO KIDIPE (The Roma Assembly)

Music theatre scenes by Adrian Gaspár, for string quintet, two sopranos, bass-baritone, bass and tenor.

Libretto from texts by Hugo Höllenreiner and Bronisława Wajs (Papusza)

Composer	Adrian Gaspár
Conductor	Simon Krečič
Director	Bruno Berger-Gorski
Papusza 1 (Soprano)	Janette Zsigova
Papusza 2 (Soprano)	Zuzana Rasiova
Hugo Höllenreiner (Bass)	Theodore Coresi
Josef Mengele (Bass)	Karl Huml
Hugo Höllenreiner as a child, Hugo Höllenreiner's blood brothers	Reoven Kaimbacher, Lian Huml
Book burner, a Rom	Koloman Polak

Roma-Ensemble

Soprano	Zuzana Rasiova
Mezzo-soprano	Julitta Dominika Walder
Mezzo-soprano	Kamila Korgól
Tenor	Alexander Kaimbacher
Bass	Karl Huml

In other roles:

Mirjan Chuni, Milca Jurj, Moldovan Marcela-Laura, Mihai Miša Jurj,
Martina Zivanovic, Marcel Zivanovic, Rami Rafea Abusaeeda, Salih Alaswi

Instrumentalists:

1st Violin	Cristian Ruscior
2nd Violin	Juan Pablo Bedoya-Parra
Viola	Antoniú-Theodor Andreescu
Violoncello	Ana Perčević
Double bass	Lilli Rollenitz

**WIER SCHEMEN UNZ (We are ashamed) (Ceija - Metamorphosis)
By Koloman Polak for two percussionists, Flute, Piano, Elektronik
instruments, two Sopranos, Tenor, Bass und Cantor.**

Composer	Koloman Polak
Conductor	Simon Krečič
Director	Bruno Berger-Gorski
Ceija Stojka (Soprano)	Zuzana Rasiova
Ceijas Bruder Karl, Ceijas husband (Tenor)	Alexander Kaimbacher
Ceijas Echo, Voice of the dead Romni (Soprano)	Janette Zsigova
Voice of the dead Ossi Stojka (Tenor), Cantor	Shmuel Barzilai
Karl Stojka as painter	Adrian Gaspár
SS-Officer	Karl Huml
Ceija as a child 1	Filia Peyer
Ossi Stojka as a child, Rom extra	Slagean Sorin Jurj
Girl in the kitchen	Martina Zivanovic
Boy in the kitchen, Rom extra	Marcel Zivanovic, Slagean Sorin Jurj
Instrumentalists:	
Percussion 1	Kristof Hrastnik
Percussion 2	Jani Leban
Flute	Gerhard Peyer
Piano, electronic instruments	Koloman Polak

A production of the association Europäisches Musiktheater e.V.,
Cologne.

Digital first performance, 29th June 2020, in the course of the German
presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2020-
2021.

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of the Federal Republic of Germany.

THE PROJECT

Bruno Berger-Gorski has previously developed libretti and dramaturgy for music theatre pieces with several contemporary composers. In Luxembourg he staged together chamber operas by Camille Kerger and Knut Vaage, and in Bonn and Luxembourg works by Josef Tal and Ella Milch-Sheriff. In 2019 he created a dramaturgical interconnection between two independent musical works by Peter Eötvös and Salvatore Sciarrino in his production for the Theater Biel-Solothurn.

For many years Berger-Gorski has been working with the Rom composers Koloman Polak and Adrian Gaspár on a possible production of their first chamber operas. Both composers are internationally established in the area of concert music. Koloman Polak has composed the scores for several *Schauspiele*, while Adrian Gaspár is so far best known for his jazz and world music compositions. Independently of each other these composers set to music material on the fates of two Rom witnesses and survivors of Nazi period concentration camps – and the common theme is the point of departure for Bruno Berger-Gorski to bind the works together in his staging.

Unlike the Holocaust, the Porajmos – the genocide of Rom and Sinti people on racial grounds – has only lately been recognized. Many have never received any compensation for their suffering. Roma and Sinti are still the object of social discrimination. For Adrian Gaspár it was a personal meeting with the Auschwitz survivor Hugo Höllenreiner which spurred him on to compose his chamber opera *Rromano kidipe*. Koloman Polack's piece is dedicated to the life story of Ceija Stojka, a well-known Austrian Rom artist and Auschwitz survivor, who in the 1980s was the first in Austria to draw public attention to the systematic annihilation of the Roma under the Third Reich. Both Stojka and Höllenreiner have been engaged actively as eyewitnesses in the promotion of a culture or memory, and given many public talks on their experiences, above all in schools.

This project was originally planned to be a theatrical performance in Berlin in front of invited guests on 29th June 2020 in the course of the German presidency of the IHRA. Now, because of the coronavirus crisis, only certain scenes are being staged and in a digital performance. The composers have prepared the following scenes as a 'work in progress':

RROMANO KIDIPE

Music theatre scenes by Adrian Gaspár, for string quartet, two sopranos, bass-baritone, bass and tenor.

Three paintings by the concentration camp survivor Karl Stojka – *Chaos, Resistance Movement* and *Standstill* – form the inspirational basis for music which is linked up with the life story and poems of the Romni Bronisława Wajs (Papusza). Papusza, who survived the Second World War hidden in the woods of Volyň, had been married at the age of 15 to a significantly older Rom. The marriage was unhappy and childless.

She taught herself to read and write, against the explicit wishes of her extended Rom family, and became in the course of her life a well-known poet, writing in the Romani language, Romanes. The Polish writer, Jerzy Ficowsky, a Gadscho (non-Rom), learned Romanes and translated her poems with Papusza into Polish. They published her work together to a strong positive reaction, but Papusza herself was expelled from her extended Rom family, as a 'betrayal of Rom secrets', and she had to live on her own after that, on one occasion as a patient in a psychiatric clinic.

Papusza's scenes, sung by the Rom singers Janette Zsigová und Zuzana Rasiova, form a frame for the concentration camp survivor, Hugo Höllenreiner's monologue. In this he tries to process his traumatic experiences as a child with his brother (among other things, taking part in Josef Mengele's medical experiments) recounting them to a group of present day Roma (as a chorus).

These scenes represent the current state of a planned longer music theatre composition, which is being prepared by Gaspár and Berger-Gorski for a later theatrical production.

WIER SCHEMEN UNZ (We are ashamed) (Ceija - Metamorphosen)

By Koloman Polak for two percussionists, Flute, Piano, Elektronic instruments, two Sopranos, Tenor, Bass und Cantor.

The scenes by Koloman Polak deal with the life of the Romni Ceija Stojka, who with her brother survived various concentration camps as a child, and as a young woman initially worked selling carpets. Later she

won widespread recognition as an emancipated artist with her poetry, as a singer, and in old-age also as a painter. Her paintings and drawings, such as 'Wier schemen unz', have been exhibited all over the world.

The role of her brother, Karl Stojka, who also later made a name for himself as a painter, is performed in Berger-Gorski's staging, at different stages of his life by the two composers Koloman Polak and Adrian Gaspár.

This opera for two sopranos on the life of Ceija Stojka is planned to be divided into three parts, representing her childhood, youth – with its longing for artistic freedom – and old age. The current production shows only the middle stage of the artist's life, in which (making a dramaturgical link with the story of Papusza) she is forced to assert herself as a woman against patriarchal institutions.

During the rehearsal phase Berger-Gorski suggested that Koloman Polak should write the tenor role of Ceija's husband and then the part of her brother Ossi, who died in the concentration camp while still a child, for a cantor. The cantor would then sing in the finale the Jewish prayer for the dead, *El Male Rachamim*, for murdered Roma and Sinti, establishing a musical link with the Rom hymn *Djelem, Djelem*. The composed 'improvisation' for cantor and percussion in the current composition makes an extremely moving ending to the piece. The text of this prayer for the dead, traditionally sung for holocaust victims, has been adapted for this production by Shmuel Barzilai, the senior cantor of the Jewish Community of Vienna.

Jewish prayer for the dead, *El Male Rachamim*
for the Roma and Sinti-Victims of Nationalsozialism

Merciful God, enthroned on high,
Give perfect rest,
Under the wings of Your divine presence,
To the souls of all Roma and Sinti,
Men, women and children, murdered in Auschwitz
And other concentratioin camps in Europe
By the nationalsocialists and their collaborators.
The whole community prays for their souls.
May they rest upon their lying place in peace and let us say: Amen.

Ceija Stojka (1933 – 2013)

Ceija Stojka was born in Styria on 23rd May, 1933. Her family was part of the Lovara Roma and traveled around Austria as horse dealers. Her father, Wacker, was deported to Dachau in 1942 and murdered in 1942 in the Hartheim Euthanasia Centre. She herself was deported at the age of ten in early 1943 to Auschwitz-Birkenau along with her mother and five brothers and sisters. Her little brother Ossi was infected with Typhus in medical experiments there and died. Ceija was later transferred to Ravensbrück concentration camp, from there to Buchenwald, then to the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück, and finally on to Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated by British troops on 15 April 1945. Only six members of her extended family of about 200 people survived. After the war, Ceija settled in Vienna, where she lived until her death.

Ceija Stojka was the first Rom in Austria to speak and write publicly about the genocide of Sinti and Roma under the National Socialist regime. She wrote her first book "Wir leben im Verborgenen" ('We live in hiding') in 1988, marking the beginning of a period of artistic creativity. She began to paint and to write, principally to help her to come to terms with her past and everything she had experienced. Her 'dark' pictures, as she herself described them, circle around the horror of the extermination camps, while her 'light' pictures show the beautiful side of her life: journeys, memories of her beloved family, living in nature. Involvement in music making was later added to her writing and painting. In 2000 she released a CD, 'Me Dikhlem Suno' ('I had a dream'). Her natural creativity converted everything in her environment into art. Her art work was exhibited first in Vienna and then throughout the whole world. The Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, one of the most visited museums in the world, has had work of hers on show since 2019, giving her long overdue recognition as an independent, original artist.

Ceija Stojka

Auschwitz is my coat.

You are afraid of the dark?
I tell you, when nobody is about on the streets
You don't need to fear.

I'm not afraid.
My fear stayed in Auschwitz

and in the camps.

Auschwitz is my coat
Bergen-Belsen my dress
And Ravensbrück my vest.
What should I fear?

Hugo Höllenreiner (1933 – 2015)

Hugo Höllenreiner was a German Sinto and survivor of the Porajmos, as the Rom and Sinti genocide is known in Romanes. He grew up in Giesing, an area of Munich, where his father had a house and dealt in horses. When he was nine, he and his family were arrested by the Nazi regime on 8th March 1943 following the 'Auschwitz decree' and on 16th March 1943 they were deported to the 'Gypsy Camp' in Auschwitz, where Josef Mengele carried out human experiments on him and his brother. With the deportation, the family property was confiscated and taken over by the '*Volksgemeinschaft*' (the people's community). After periods in Ravensbrück and Mauthausen he ended up in Bergen-Belsen. He, both his parents and his five brothers and sisters survived the genocide, but 36 of his relations were killed. After the war, his family returned to Giesing, but later moved to Ingolstadt. His education after the war and the liberation didn't last long however: discrimination persisted and the teachers summarily threw the 'Gypsy kids' out of the classroom. Consequently Höllenreiner had to begin his working life at 13 as a door-to-door salesman selling brushes, making a significant contribution to the family income with it.

Hugo Höllenreiner received no compensation under the *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* (Federal Compensation Law) or other comparable schemes for the injustice he had suffered, despite applying for it. For fifty years he found he was unable to speak out about his experiences: 'My head was always full of it though, every day. I never found rest.' Since the late 1990s however he has often talked publicly about his experiences, speaking with the authority of an eyewitness.

The memorial plaque for the Munich Sinti and Roma murdered by the National Socialist regime was put up in the Maxvorstadt as a result of an initiative of Höllenreiner's, after he put in a formal request for such a memorial on 10th October 1993 in the name of many other Sinti and Roma.

Bronisława Wajs ("Papusza" 1910 – 1987)

Bronisława Wajs, known as Papisza ('doll' in Romanes) is one of the best known Rom poets. She comes from a Rom community based on the Polish Plain. Officially her date of birth is 30th May, 1910 but she may have been born in 1908 or 1909. Her father belonged to a clan from Warmia, and her mother came from Galicia. Her father died in Siberia when Papisza was five, and eight years later her mother married Jan Wajs, from a clan of wandering harpists. She learned to read and write when she was 12 from farmer's children that she had met. A Jewish bookseller also taught her, in exchange for a stolen chicken. Papisza read a lot and asked her family to send her to school, but they refused. She was married at the age of 15 or 16 to a much older harpist, Dionizy Wajs, a relation of her step-father's. The marriage was not happy and remained childless.

During the Second World War her clan hid in the woods of Volyń on the border with the then Byelorussian SSR (now part of Ukraine). They left their horses and carts behind but carried their heavy harps on their backs. Papisza recounts all this in her longest poem, '*Ratwale jasva*' ('Bloody tears').

From 1948 to 1950 the Pole Jerzy Ficowski, an up-and-coming academic and writer, joined this Rom clan in its travels, learning their language and customs along the way – and also meeting Papisza. He recognized her great gifts and encouraged her to write. He translated the poems that she gave him into Polish and showed them to the poet Julian Tuwim, who was very enthusiastic about them. Thanks to Tuwim's support a first collection of Papisza's poems was published. Ficowski continued to dedicate intensive attention to the Roma and their way of life after his time spent living with them, and was appointed an official advisor to the Polish government on 'Gypsy questions'. As a result however, since she had been encouraged by Ficowski, and he also still cited her as the supposed source of many of his views, Papisza came to be seen by the Roma as a traitor.

She was declared *mahrime* (ritually impure) by the *Baro Šero* ('Great Head', a Rom elder) and expelled from Rom society. After this shock she needed to stay 8 months in a psychiatric institution, and only in the late 1960s/early 1970s began to write poetry again, before she fell definitively silent. After she had lived for many years isolated in the west Polish town of Gorzów Wielkopolski (where a memorial plaque to her has been placed on her former house in Kosynierów Gdyńskich Street) she was able to spend the last years of her life back with her family.

THE COMPOSERS

Koloman Polak

Koloman Polak, born in 1974 in Košice, Slovakia, is a member of the Rom community. He studied first at the conservatoire in Košice and at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, and later in Vienna and Graz. Besides composing, he works as a choirmaster and conductor. Until 2001 he was the director of the choir at the Rom theatre 'Romathan' in Košice, in 2015 he founded the Auscha Choir, and since 2019 he has been the director of the opera chorus at the opera theatre in Liberec, Czechia. He has conducted the North Czech Philharmonic, the Dresdner Barockorchester and the Dresden Sinfonietta. In 2001 Koloman Polak founded the first festival of contemporary music in Košice, and in 2016 he was made festival director of the Auscha/Úštěk Festival and of the Litoměřice Arts Festival in Czechia. His compositions have been premiered in Vienna, Bratislava, Luxembourg, Strasbourg, Pirna, Venice und Tel Aviv. He has also composed much theatre music, for example for the Klangtheater EXIL, the Theater im Rabenhof, the Theater Brett and „Dietheater“ in Vienna, the Landestheater Linz and many others.

Adrian Gaspár

Adrian Coriolan Gaspár is a Romanian-Austrian Pianist, composer and arranger, active in the areas of jazz, classical, Gypsy and world music. He was born on 12th May 1987 in Moldova-Nouă in Romania and grew up in his home village in the area of Pojejena, Romania, and in Mössingen, Germany, a member of an extended Rom family. From 1994 he attended school in Caransebeș, Romania, where he had his first piano lessons. He has lived in Vienna, Austria, since 1996.

He has appeared regularly in international festivals, for example at the Enter Music Festival, the Gărâna Jazz Festival, the Green Hours Jazz Festival in Bucharest, as well as at the Donauinselfest in Vienna, the Sziget Festival in Budapest, the Nisville Jazz Festival or the Exhibition Road Festival in London. He has performed with many well-known musicians such as Thomas Gansch, Alegre Correa, Martin Lubenov, Georg Breinschmid, Franz Hautzinger, Tom Reinbrecht, Klaus Dickbauer, Robert Bachner, Nicolas Simion, Theodore Coresi, José Areán, Wawau Adler, and Diknu Schneeberger, among others.

CONCEPT and DIRECTION

Bruno Berger-Gorski

Bruno Berger-Gorski, a German opera director with Polish roots, studied history of art, Italian literature, theatre and musicology in Erlangen and the University of Vienna. He takes a particular interest in contemporary music and in hunting out and rediscovering music that had been labeled as 'degenerate' and fallen unjustly into oblivion.

Worldwide he has staged more than 100 works in famous opera houses such as the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, in Sao Paulo, at the Amazonas Festival in Manaus, Brazil, at the Teresa Carreño Theatre in Caracas, in Montevideo, at the National Theatre and the State Opera in Prague, at the Florida Grand Opera in Miami, in Mumbai, at the National Theatres in Athens und Thessaloniki, in Ashkelon, Israel, at the Seoul Arts Center in Korea, at the State Opera in Kazan, several time at the Opera Zuid in Maastricht und in Bergen, Norway, in Budapest, at the Teatro Liceu in Barcelona, in Oviedo, in Teneriffe, at the Teatro Giglio in Lucca and at the Alexander Theatre in Helsinki.

In the German speaking world has put pieces on, among other places, at the Hamburg Staatsoper, in Magdeburg, Aachen, Trier, several times at the Oper Bonn, in Lucerne, Biel-Bienne, Salzburg and at the Kammeroper and in the Konzerthaus in Vienna.

Among these pieces there have been premieres of works by Adriana Hölszky, Udo Zimmermann, G. Klebe, K. Vaage, M Trojahn, T. Johnson, Ella Milch-Sheriff, Peter Eötvös, Salvatore Sciarrino und Josef Tal, among others. His staging of the Austrian first performance of Kurt Weill's *Der Silbersee* in Vienna and of *Baruchs Schweigen* by the Israeli composer Ella Milch-Sheriff in 2015 aroused widespread recognition in the press and from experts in the field. In 2016 further successful productions followed in the European Capital of Culture Wrocław as well as in Luxembourg and Bonn with the contemporary chamber opera *Garten* by Josef Tal and Ella Milch-Sheriff's *Conversation with a Stone*, with the conductor Marino Formenti.

At the Luxembourg National Theatre Berger-Gorski put on the two contemporary chamber operas *Someone is going to come* by Knut Vaage and Jon Fosse together with *Mond aus Kochender Milch* by Camille Kerger. In 2017 he was invited by Dallas Opera in the USA to mount a new production of *Samson and Delilah* with Emmanuel Villaume. The same year in Salzburg as part of the Festival he put on the first staged performances of Josef Tal's *Homage to Else Lasker Schüler* in the Museum der Moderne and the Salzburg synagogue with

Marko Feingold, and later in 2018 staged the piece again at the Jaffa Festival in Tel Aviv and for the Jewish Festival in Kraków. In Biel-Solothurn he staged *Radames* by Peter Eötvös together with Salvatore Sciarrino's *Lohengrin* as a double-bill, a production which was then invited in January 2020 to the Festival OPERA 21 in Bolzano.

In 2019 Berger-Gorski directed the Israeli premiere of *The golden dragon* by Peter Eötvös in the Geshen Theatre in Tel Aviv and was then invited to take this production to the Bartok-Plusz Festival in Miskolc, its first performance in Hungary. He also put on Offenbach's rarely performed pieces *Pepito* and *Ehemann vor der Türe* at the Volksbühne in Cologne for the Offenbach anniversary year and directed *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Daegu/ Korea and Puccini's *La Rondine* in Meiningen.

Early in 2020 Košice Opera invited Berger-Gorski to put on *Fidelio* for its 200 year Beethoven anniversary celebrations, and in 2021 he is due to mount an Austrian first performance of a rediscovered piece by Korngold at the Landestheater in Linz.

He has been invited to lecture at a number of international universities, among others, at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen, the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and as guest professor at the The University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. Besides this, he has taught many semesters as adjunct professor at the Detmold University of Music, the Friedrich-Alexander University in Erlangen and at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz (HfMT) in Cologne.