

Katorga : the libretto

Katorga

an OZET Performance

created by Aaron Meicht and Scott Blumenthal
with Daniel Baker

23 May 2014 • DRAFT

BRENDAN Dougherty:	DRUMS, ELECTRONICS
DANIEL Baker:	VOICE, PERCUSSION
AARON Meicht:	TRUMPET, KEYBOARDS, ELECTRONICS
MATT Mitchell:	PIANO, KEYBOARDS, ELECTRONICS
PAULA Matthusen:	LIVE VOCAL PROCESSING
BECKY Baumwoll:	The WOMAN

“There is general agreement that the death of Nadezdha Abkhazi precipitated the the prison reform movement of the mid-Fifteenth Generation and the eventual closure of the Katorga prison colony.

“Abkhazi, of Village Twenty, had been assigned to the City in the last year of the Fourteenth Generation. While working as a clerk in the Agricultural Resources Department, she became a member of The New Horizon, a secret, putschist organization. On the last night of the year, as some group members disrupted Festival celebrations throughout the villages, Senior Councilor Dzaglika was assassinated at his home.

“For her involvement, the Council sentenced Abkhazi to labor in the mushroom fields on Katorga. A woman with whom she lived was also questioned but never implicated in the plot.

“The Katorga prison, hewn from the main body of the OZET two generations earlier, trailed OZET at a distance of 6895km. Within a year, Abkhazi assaulted the Chief Jailor, then swallowed poison to avoid corporal punishment.

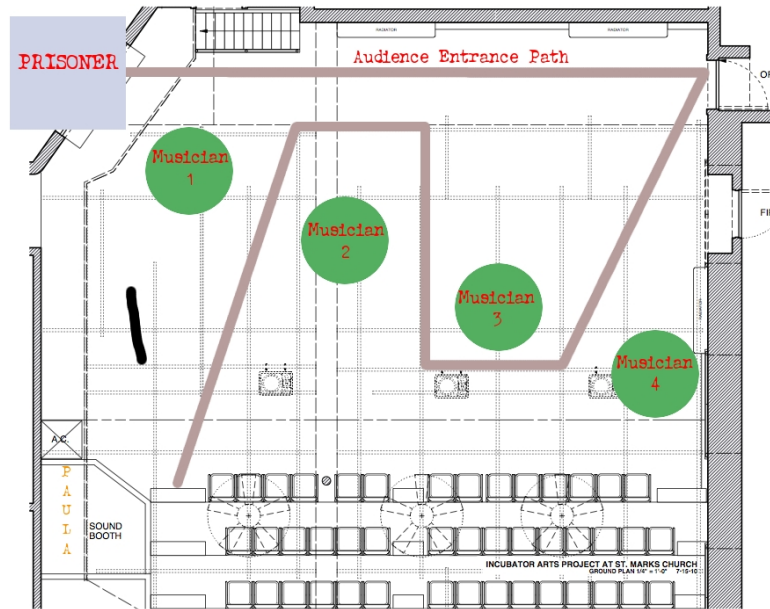
“After her death, Abkhazi's own account of her time in the prison was somehow disseminated, leading to widespread protest and calls for reform. The woman with whom she had lived was once again questioned and acquitted.”

Music continuous throughout.

O.
(0:00 – 12:00)

SUPERTITLE: Katorga

When the door to the theater opens, the music of the Katorga_o-Prelude has already begun. The audience enters a dark corridor running the length of the theater's back wall. One at a time, they are allowed to leave the corridor and enter the main space. To reach their seats, they navigate a jagged path that leads them past the FOUR MUSICIANS.



Incubator Arts Project at St. Mark's Church

Isolated in the playing space throughout the show, downstage of DANIEL, there is a reed basket. It is long with an open top. There is a thin blanket inside, the length of the basket. It covers a mound of something filling one half of the basket. In the other half of the basket, on top of the blanket is a pile of mushrooms and a knife. It is lit, visible throughout the piece; waiting.

At 3:30 DANIEL begins to sing from his position.

MONITOR SUBTITLE: "The One Hundred Year-Old Man"

DANIEL (as 100 YEAR-OLD MAN)

you forgot not together but alone remembers the father and yesterday we found
those crowns there under trees now I know where to look

come back meet me where we had tea didn't we and boiled eggs

SUPERTITLE: Retraction Holiday

At 10:00, after the audience has taken its seats, the WOMAN appears at the entrance to the

main space. She is carrying an empty collecting basket.

DANIEL (as 100 YEAR-OLD MAN)

there is my son my name and with a nose for this job

I.

(12:00 – 18:00)

SUPERTITLE: Into the yard and out of the yard

The MUSICIANS perform Katorga 1a-To Prison. The WOMAN walks the path to its end and continues to far stage right where a ladder leads up to the catwalk. She climbs up past PAULA and continues along the catwalk to the upstage right corner of the theater where she enters her prison cell: a soundproof, glass-fronted booth.

She sits, silent.

Below, DANIEL sings Katorga 1b-Little Purpose.

MONITOR SUBTITLE: The Jailor

DANIEL (as WARDEN)

What beauty behind us.
Silver eyeball, see us and turn.

Forget everything
all you won

pass through the gate
wait in the yard

finally
you lose
your ability
to say

our wobbly history
waited for your hand.

There is little purpose then
in saying
(singing)

II. (18:00 – 24:00)

SUPERTITLE: History: The Cleaving

As DANIEL sings the first part of [Katorga_2-Hold_The_Chain](#), a song of Katorga's creation, PAULA smuggles a microphone to the WOMAN in her cell.

MONITOR SUBTITLE: A Pioneer

DANIEL (as a PIONEER)

The men are strung along an unfamiliar road.
I am one of them, marching to the foot of the hill.
A camp is forming, with a tent
where the architects of the cut unroll their plans.

What a time to be born!
Our parents' peaceful years are gone; they grew wheat,
baked bread, and ate it, left a song or two.

We go to bend our backs and carve the world.
I never was so drunk before!
I never was so drunk before!

The hill is near; I see the sutured fence, the houses
up above where prisoners are crowded.
From home we saw the hill but not the houses
although we rarely looked
until that midnight when the anger boiled over,
fences twitched and snapped
like filaments as
men came down and home
unwelcome.
Some were rushing
toward the city

aiming for the courthouse walls.
Some with gray tongues begged to stay
and haunt a once known room.

They ended dead or gathered up but cousins died as well.
The council sent the call to cut away the hill
gouge iron from the cliff to forge into a chain
to coil inside a cave like entrails of a calf.

The children of our time --
pioneers of the cleft --
now men along the road.

The swift stroke shows mercy.
We won't forget that quiet will be broken.
When our hands are finished digging
we will have to hold the chain.

The microphone reaches the WOMAN.

MONITOR SUBTITLE: Her, as a girl

AARON (as the WOMAN when young)

That moon is my own.
I can squint and put my fist out and
I think I hold the leash.
I can draw it in or let it drift.
I can walk to the cliff and write stories of falling.

III.

(24:00 - 30:00)

SUPERTITLE: Night

The MUSICIANS perform Katorga 3-The Group. The WOMAN begins to speak urgently into the microphone, but her words cannot be heard, only the abstract sounds into which they have been processed by PAULA.

WOMAN [text from **John Ball (1385)**, **Bob Avakian (2010)**, **Frantz Fanon (1961)**]

#1

COUSINS, things cannot go right on OZET and never will, until goods are held in common and there is no more a distinction between us and the COUNCIL FOLLOWING, but we are all one and the same. In what way are those whom we call COUNCIL greater masters than ourselves? How have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in bondage? If we all spring from a single father and mother how can they claim or prove that they are OZET more than us, except by making us produce and grow the luxury which they enjoy?

They are clad in velvet and silk, while we go dressed in coarse wool.

They have the vodka, the spices and the good bread: we have the rye, the husks and the straw. They have shelter and ease in their fine manors, and we have hardship and toil, the wind and the water in the fields.

And from us must come, from our labor, the things which keep them in luxury. We are called COUSINS and beaten if we are slow in our service to them, yet we have no one we can complain to, none to hear us and do us justice. Let us go to the COMPUTER and show them how we are oppressed, and tell them that we want things to be changed, or else we will change them ourselves.

If we go in good earnest and altogether, very many people who are called COUSINS and are held in subjection in their own VILLAGES will follow us to get their freedom. And when the COMPUTER sees and hears us, it will remedy the evil, either willingly or otherwise.

(pause for Sung text)

MONITOR SUBTITLE: *The New Horizon*

DANIEL (as the GROUP)

We're suffering from the poverty of our life.
Then artificially create the conditions of our...
Our own intoxication and escape by getting drunk.

I don't trust that guy.

WOMAN

#2

One example that my COUSINS have cited before—and it's worth citing again because it very sharply gets to this point, and to the very nature of the historical limitation of the COUNCIL, with all of the proclamations about its being universal and being the highest and final point of human development—is the question of the “right to eat.” Or why, in reality, under this system, there is not a “right to eat.” Now, we can proclaim the “right to eat,” but there is no such right with the workings of this system. You cannot actually implement that as a right, given the dynamics of OZET and the way in which, as we've seen illustrated very dramatically of late, it creates unemployment. It creates and maintains massive impoverishment.

Many, many COUSINS cannot find enough to eat and cannot eat in a way that enables them to be healthy—and in general they cannot maintain conditions that enable them to be healthy. So even right down to something as basic as “the right to eat”—people don't have that right under the COUNCIL. If you were to declare it as a right, and people were to act on this and simply started going to where the food is sold as commodities and declaring, “We have a more fundamental right than your right to distribute things as commodities and to accumulate capital—we have a right to eat”—and if they started taking the food, well then we know what would happen, and what has happened whenever people do this: “Looters, send them to KATORGA.”

#3

Come, then, COUSINS; it would be as well to decide at once to change our ways. We must shake off the heavy darkness in which we were plunged, and leave it behind. The new day which is already at hand must find us firm, prudent and resolute.

We must leave our dreams and abandon our old beliefs and friendships of the time before OZET began. Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this COUNCIL, where they are never done talking of COUSINS, yet murder COUSINS everywhere they find them, at the edge of every one of their own VILLAGES, in all the corners of the SPHERE. For generations they have stifled almost the whole of our COUSINS in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration.

For OZET, for ourselves and for humanity, COUSINS, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new woman.

DANIEL

Connive to fight the tyrant.

The violence,
The violence that we expect...
Is expected.

IV.

(30:00 - 48:00)

*Each DIALOGUE in Section IV is preceded by a variation of
Some Needed Forging.*

Dialogue 1

DANIEL sings Katorga 4a-Some Needed Forging-1:

She is alone
with the voices at night
hinting at her fate.

One put coals to her feet.
One painted a tender picture
of her suffering.

Between that side of her life
and the side she headed for
there were crossings.

Some were worn and lit,
Some were almost forgot,
Some needed forging.

BRENDAN and MATT begin speaking to the WOMAN from their positions, as if in two separate dialogues with the WOMAN. She remains in her cell. DANIEL and AARON perform Katorga 4b-2013_4_6.

BRENDAN (as the ASSASSIN) (spoken)
Where were you? It's almost morning.

MATT (as the RECRUITER) (spoken)

You look sad, Nadezdha.

BRENDAN

Weren't the directions clear? Central Highway. Third of August, toward Village Five.

From her cell, the WOMAN replies to BRENDAN but, as before, her words are audible only as sounds.

MATT

I thought at first you were just lonely. Still new to the city.

BRENDAN

So what? You're alone. Same roads, just dark. So walk.

The WOMAN replies to BRENDAN.

MATT

You'd find your way, I thought. Make friends. But every day I see you. And I begin to realize...

No. This is a different kind of sadness.

BRENDAN

If you aren't back before daylight everything is ruined.
Can I trust you? I have my doubts.

The WOMAN replies to BRENDAN.

MATT

I think: she is not suffering for herself. She sees something. Something is haunting her. There is a problem she doesn't know how to fix.

BRENDAN

What's that you brought?

The WOMAN replies to BRENDAN.

MATT

Would you like to tell me?

BRENDAN

"The Voice of the Pioneers."

MATT

Don't think of me as a stranger. Yes, you work behind this door, I work down the hall behind that one. We are still colleagues. Cousins. Maybe I've seen what you see.

BRENDAN

"Stand up! Our cousins in every village are suffering... The Oligarchs of the Council have pressed their sweaty hands over the mouths of the people. We cannot eat. We cannot speak."

The WOMAN begins to speak.

BRENDAN

If you were caught on the road with these... The council would give you a tug and unravel the whole network.

The WOMAN replies to BRENDAN.

MATT

I know what you've been told. Keep quiet. A leaking conduit corrodes the whole system. Don't worry. I don't want your secrets.

BRENDAN

Do you really think our cousins need slogans and screeds any more? Fresh paper to wipe their asses, maybe, but it's hardly worth the risk of carrying them all the way back to Village Five, sneaking them around the blockade and through the woods before daylight.

MATT

I'll tell you what I think. You are still young, and you thought life was supple, but little by little you feel it hardening around you.

BRENDAN

What they need is action.

MATT

What you thought was possible

BRENDAN

something catastrophic

MATT

doesn't seem to be any more.

BRENDAN

We can't wait any longer. Enlightenment. Reform. Too late. People are starving and while they get weaker the Council gets stronger.

MATT

But you still can't help wanting the world to be the way you imagined it.

BRENDAN

We have to hit them back.

MATT

Let me ask you a question: what do you think of my hat? Is it too eccentric? Not the fashion any more, I know. This green thread here; that used to be the style. Each village had its own vein of color. I'm drawn to the old things. I like to imagine the days when the pioneers were still building something. When festivals weren't just commemorations. Instead people put down their tools and drank because they had just reaped their first harvest from a new field. Laid a new road. Won a good decision from the Council, back when the Council's only role was to settle disputes justly. Can you imagine? How different things were once?

BRENDAN

Can you carry this bag? You'll have to move fast, but don't jostle it.

MATT

Have you been to Milktown?

BRENDAN

Councilor Dzaglika. He lives on Zhytomyr Street. Third floor in the rear.

MATT

There's a tavern where I meet with some friends.

BRENDAN

There is an alley on the right side of the building. Take the bag down the alley and leave it by the back of the building.

MATT

Run by a man from Village Twenty. Left there before your time.

BRENDAN

It's a small package, but powerful enough.

MATT

We talk. Sing songs. Do you like to sing?

The WOMAN answers, but it is not clear who she is talking to. MATT and BRENDAN stop talking and listen.

MATT

I think you'll find our hearts to be in the same place as yours.

BRENDAN

Don't be stupid. If we told you your part before now you might have told someone else. A leak could ruin everything.

The WOMAN answers BRENDAN.

BRENDAN

There are others who have been in the group much longer than you have, and who understand better what has to be done. In your position, you have different choices to make. So?

The WOMAN answers BRENDAN.

BRENDAN

Our cousins in the villages are sleepwalking. They know there is plenty of nitrogen in the soil; they know that is not why the crops fail. But still they do what the Council tells them to do: all day long, add more shit. Councilor Dzaglika says we will solve our problems with manure. OK. We will solve our problems with manure.

MATT

Don't think it over. Come have a drink with us. You'll like the others. We were all villagers once, chosen for greater responsibility. There's no need to be sad. Reason, yes, but no need.

Dialogue 2

DANIEL sings Katorga_4c-Some_Needed_Forging-2:

The brittle cold
of her breath-crowded bed
tempts her to recall

how she once had a home
how a ruby voice would flicker
as she fell asleep.

She might have kept things that way.
Never weaving with the spiders
their conspiracy.

A room warm and lit
tea set out on a box
quieting conscience.

*PAULA begins speaking to the WOMAN from her position. BRENDAN, AARON, DANIEL
and MATT perform [Katorga_4d-2013_11_29](#).*

PAULA (as the FRIEND) (*spoken*)
The moon through the window. Hm.
From your bed?

WOMAN
Tucked under blankets.

PAULA
Could they, though?

WOMAN
It arced across the sky. Came up from the horizon and over.
So if your window faced the right way

PAULA
I guess so. That's a good one.

Pause.

Ocean, of course.

WOMAN
Naturally. To see or to swim in?

PAULA
Both. The waves.

WOMAN

The sound.

PAULA
Too obvious.

WOMAN
Were they loud?

PAULA
I don't know.

WOMAN
Maybe like a barrel rolling in the loft.

PAULA
Softer, I think. Like stalks
bending.
Birds. Hundreds of them in the sky at once.
In the trees.

WOMAN
What sort?

PAULA
Anything but chickens.
Sparrow. Is that one? Swallow? Geese.

WOMAN
How long did we have them?

PAULA
No more than a year. When cats could fly, the birds were fucked.
I wish I could have heard the choirs, at least.

WOMAN
There?

PAULA
No, here. In the Second... Third generation?

WOMAN
I don't

PAULA

No?

Well, back then some people could still imitate bird songs.

WOMAN

They sung?

PAULA

It was something like whistling. The ones who had heard it, from the First Generation, taught children from the Second and the really good ones got so popular they formed groups and performed together at village celebrations. Fairs or what have you. They would do a forest full of birds. Birds at sunrise. Late Autumn.

Then in the Fifth Generation people started to say, well, this is bad. This is clinging. Pioneers should look forward. So just as fast as the birds disappeared the choirs were gone. And then no one knew anymore what they sounded like. And no turning back.
So, birds. Definitely.

Long pause.

Nadya? Are you still awake?

WOMAN

Yes.

PAULA

I wish you wouldn't go out so many nights with those people. To Milktown? Are they so interesting?

WOMAN

You're jealous.

PAULA

And bored. Last night

I actually let Grigori take me to a wrestling... thing. Exhibition.

The men of the water works against the men of the archives with an open tournament for women.

WOMAN

That sounds...

PAULA

Oh, it was. You know, I think you would have done very well. Come with me to the next one and enter yourself.

Pause.

You never even want to talk about them.

No answer.

You can have your secrets. We all do.

Even me.

I never told you I was a generator.

WOMAN

Don't say that.

PAULA

A bearer. Is that what you prefer? I'm not sensitive about the words.

WOMAN

When?

PAULA

Two years ago. Right before I came to the city.

Pause.

A girl.

WOMAN

Have you...

Do you know where she is?

PAULA

No. People think the Population Board will tell you for a bribe, but they won't and I didn't try. It's better not to know. But you have to keep yourself from wondering.

There was a woman and a man in my my village who were sure they had found each other. They were one generation apart, had the same blue eyes, same hair. Otherwise not much resemblance that I could see. But every morning he'd find her and he'd kiss her cheek before going to the fields. He saved his money to buy her little things: a handful of fresh lisichki once a year, new boots. She bragged to her friends about how strong he was, how kind, and handsome. It was vulgar.

"I am my own, and I am everyone's." Right?
"I am myself only and I am a pioneer always."
I believe that. Don't you? I know it's meant to be recited by children, but don't
you? Deep down? Isn't it right?

WOMAN
Sister.

PAULA
Don't call me that. Now you're the one being childish.
Our teacher used to lock the girls in a closet for saying that.

WOMAN
But not you.

PAULA
Yes, once. Standing in the dark beneath a shelf of hats,
breathing in wool. Then the door would open and she would say
"Come out now and look at things right. You can look at a cow with your eyes
crossed and say that you have two cows, but you won't get more milk. She's a
cousin, not your sister; call her by the right word."

WOMAN
You learned your lessons too faithfully.
Do you really think she believed that? Deep down?

PAULA
How else do you teach children?

Long pause.

PAULA
I don't want to go to sleep, Nadya. When I wake up
everything is stale. I do wonder
if she
the girl
this new generation
will make things different than
they are. I wonder if she could do that.

Dialogue 3

DANIEL sings [Katorga_4e-Some_Needed_Forging-3](#):

Her steps will end
in the stockaded yard.
Spotted from the fields

in the dusk of the year
fingers black and swollen from their
endless harvesting

Her basket cradles the knife
single-edged and double-faced
asking something

And the man ahead
ugly and arrogant
looms like the Council.

AARON begins speaking. SCOTT is behind him. BRENDAN, DANIEL and MATT perform [Katorga_4f-2013_6_20](#). Gradually, the WOMAN makes her way down from the booth and into the playing space in front of AARON.

AARON (as the JAILOR) (spoken)
In line. IN LINE. Line.
Are they in? Close the gate.
Are you ready with the scale?
Come on then.

SCOTT (as the GUARD) (spoken)
15-01-26. Group A.
Area A, then Area D.
536 grams lisichki.
161 grams black gruzdi.

15-01-62. Group A.
570 grams lisichki.
82 grams black gruzdi.

AARON
I don't know. I have to admit it.
I don't know why
these cousins

these women
chose

their lives

They leave me short of words.

SCOTT
14-18-11. Group C.
Area F.
501 grams black gruzdi.

AARON
I am not a scholar. I might
have a few observations to offer from
my years

What my mind lacks
my eye
penetrates. I can tell you
your fair complexions don't fool me.
But by the time I get to observe you women
well
you are already here.

SCOTT
14-16-20. Group C.
487 grams black gruzdi.

14-09-02. Group C.
556 grams black gruzdi.
110 grams lisichki.

More weighing continues under AARON.

AARON
And once you are here, no one there
wants to know
about you. Or your motives. Or your fate. Or me.
We are alone.

I wasn't ordered to change
you. You are here

to suffer. Suffering gives life to fear. Suffering
creates the stoniest memories. So why
do I waste my breath on you?

To make you suffer more?

You hate me. Maybe. Reason enough.
I don't think that's it though.

SCOTT
14-18-11. Group D.
Area M.
255 grams ryzhiki.

AARON
255 grams?
What were you doing all day?

He turns back to SCOTT.

Were you with her? Group D?

SCOTT nods.

What happened?

SCOTT shrugs.

Is there something wrong with Area M?

SCOTT
It's fine.

AARON
It's fine.
He says it's fine. Nothing wrong?

SCOTT shakes his head.

Nothing. Another from group D. Step out.
Group D. OUT.
Forward.

SCOTT
15-01-101.
623 grams ryzhiki.

AARON
623!

SCOTT
...625...

AARON
625! Ryzhiki! You see?
Retraction is coming. I need more. Fewer mushrooms means less money,
means I can't take care of you so well.

Enemies belong to history. OZET has no enemies. Why, then, do you insist on
creating them?

I don't like to lecture and I don't like to waste words. Let us struggle
with our questions together.

So tell me then.
Who
among you
can explain this to me?
Who can speak for her Cousins?

The WOMAN, who was slightly back from the playing area, steps forward.

Ah. You?
Her?
Look how brave she is.
No. Not you.
Scales.

[She doesn't move]

Go. It's not enough to step out. You have to be chosen,
don't you, and to be chosen you have to be worthy,
and your Cousins would never put you forward because they see
what I see.
See you sell your little carvings in the town and keep every kopec. Saving for
socks.

See you eat the last bite off your plate. See how you won't gamble at Bura.
See you hide your hands, and stew your poisonous thoughts. Living only
to leave us all behind.

I see. They see.

You

I can't speak with. I don't trust you.

Go to the scale. Now.

She doesn't move. He starts to confront her with the trumpet.

Take your harvest to the scale.

Look around! Who can speak for her Cousins?

You! To the scale! Now!

She doesn't move. He continues to blast away at her with the trumpet, with greater and greater violence. Finally, she pulls the horn away from him and smashes it.

V.

(48:00 - 60:00)

The MUSICIANS perform [Katorga 5-2013 9 26](#). The WOMAN pauses, then begins picking up the scattered trumpet pieces. She puts them in her basket. She picks up the basket and continues this picking motion even after the trumpet is completely gathered.

DANIEL (as the WOMAN)

I wanted to know
how the shape in the river
changed as I drew the line to me.
I wanted to know
would silver be silver
inside the palm of my hand
or would it dull
to ashen gray
to ashen white.

I wanted to know
just how wide is the desert
measured in steps I took alone.
I wanted to know
the way to the cistern
to tell cousins I met

to carry on
the well is near
the well's not dry.

They think they can weigh
on a scale unfamiliar
coins of a foreign currency.
They want me to say
I traded in secrets
and gave poison away
to those I loved.
I will not say
I will not sing.

Keep rags in your shoe
and your words to a whisper.
Time is not all it's said to be.
I want you to know:
I tried not to answer.
I tried staying my hand
until I found
it will get free.
We are not free.

VI.
(60:00 - 66:00)

Dialogue 4

BRENDAN, AARON and MATT perform [Katorga 6-2013 8 25](#). DANIEL leaves his position and comes downstage to the basket that has been waiting throughout. He sits on the ground and lifts the blanket off the covered half of the basket, draping it over the pile of mushrooms. Underneath is a small tin kettle. He lights a small fire and puts the kettle over it. He takes out a jar of very strong tea and places it next to the fire. He takes out a cup and places it next to the jar. He leaves the water to boil.

The WOMAN is watching DANIEL. He extinguishes the fire. He pours a little of the tea into his cup. He pours hot water over the tea. He takes out a small pouch and pinches some sugar into the tea.

WOMAN

You have sugar.

DANIEL (as 100 YEAR-OLD MAN)
Go away. I'll shout for your guard.

WOMAN
I'm very hungry.

DANIEL
You're all hungry.

WOMAN
Do you have food?

DANIEL
No.

WOMAN
Tsinara told me she'd seen you but I didn't believe her. I thought you were just a story.

DANIEL
Leave me alone.

She advances toward him.

WOMAN
Have you really been living here for...
she said a hundred years but that can't be true. In the fields.
I've been here for almost one. They told me to expect ten years. The Council
wouldn't say.
Now. I don't know. Will I go home when I'm forty? Or live here until I'm one
hundred?
Why don't you call for the guard?
It's Niko. The short one with black eyes. Do you know him? He's squatting in
the copse just past those rocks moving his bowels.
I only have four minutes. Or three.
Is your food under the blanket there?

The MAN picks up the basket and holds it to himself.

I have money. A little. Not enough for sugar, but I have a few kopecs.

No one in the camp will sell me food. They're afraid to.
What did you bring?

She reaches in to the basket and pushes the blanket back. Her hand comes back with two eggs.

The women said you live only on mushrooms. Where did these come from?
Surely an old man doesn't need two whole eggs.

DANIEL
One is for my son.

WOMAN
Where is he?

DANIEL
He is coming back.

WOMAN
I'll thank him when he does.

She puts back one egg and starts peeling the other.

DANIEL
You're a thief.

WOMAN
The warden won't let me eat until I've collected enough sticks for the rod. They have to be straight. No leaves. No wider than this finger. Alive, so they bend. I bring him an armful every day. I have to wait until the other women have weighed their mushrooms and then I stand in front of them all in the yard while he examines each stick.
Last night he threw out every one. The other women get their soup and their bread. I go to my bunk.
When he has all his sticks he'll soak them in salt water, and tie them together, and he'll beat me.

She eats the egg quickly.

He takes another cup from the basket, puts it in front of her pours tea, adds water. No sugar.

MAN

So this at least you don't steal.

She drinks it quickly.

MAN

I was never like you. Never a criminal. Never a criminal,
never a prisoner. Always here. Just this.

He holds up a mushroom from the basket and the knife.

This and this. Taught him. My son.
Taught him. Don't make a mistake.
Don't be fooled.

He reaches into her basket, picks up the mouthpiece of the trumpet.

This one.

Taught him to know. Left anyway. What did he want?
Vodka? Machines? Songs? If you want songs we will sing songs.

He sings.

She's a killer in disguise.
See her stem should pierce her cap
look how she lies.

He gives her back the "mushroom." He puts the kettle and the cups quickly back in the basket and covers them.

My egg is for him now.
Black eyes will see you. Gather sticks.

He leaves.

VII.

(66:00 - 72:00)

The MUSICIANS perform [Katorga 7-2013 8_18.](#)

Keeping the mouthpiece of the trumpet in her hand and leaving her basket, the WOMAN returns to her cell. She retrieves the microphone and speaks again; again her words are

audible only as sounds.

WOMAN [text from **Jacques Barzun (1941)**, **Susan Buck-Morss (1989)**, **Walter Benjamin (1940)**, **Charles Baudelaire (1863)**, **Louis Auguste Blanqui (1866)**]

(start after returning to the booth; approximately 50 seconds into the music)

#1

There was this Earth theory which explained evolution by natural selection from accidental variations. The entire phrase and not merely the words Natural Selection is important, for the denial of purpose in the universe is carried in the second half of the formula -- accidental variation. This denial of purpose was that theory's distinctive contention.

#2

I want to demonstrate with every possible emphasis that the perception of modern temporality is not unique, that the idea of eternal recurrence pushes its way into the thinking of many Cousins at approximately the same moment. Thus, the stars that the POET banished from her world are precisely those which, for the REVOLUTIONARY, became the scene of eternal recurrence and which, as an allegory of the cosmos, make a mass article out of the history of OZET itself. These figures of the 12th GENERATION not only share a lack of illusion; they have in common an inadequacy of political response. In the case of the PHILOSOPHER, nihilism, and the dictum: There will be nothing new. For the REVOLUTIONARY, putschism and ultimately cosmological despair; for the POET, the impotent rage of someone fighting against the wind and rain. Having no political understanding beyond that which, as with the REVOLUTIONARY, led to conspiratorial politics, the POET's ultimate position is one in which rage turns into resignation. As for me, she said, I shall be quite satisfied to leave a world where action is never sister of the dream.

#3

The key to the POET's political position is the image of petrified unrest, constant disquiet which knows no development. Petrified unrest is also the formula for the image of the POET's own life. In the era of Earth, when allegorical perception was similarly tied to an understanding of political action as conspiracy, the image of petrified unrest was provided by the desolate confusion of the place of skulls. But sui generis to the experience of OZET's middle generations, the hollowness that the era of Earth had found in outer nature now invades the inner world. Thus, the Earth allegory sees the corpse only from the outside. The POET sees it also from the inside. This means she experienced the death of the soul in the still-living body, and read material history as a world already sinking into rigor mortis. It means that for the POET, hell is not

something that lies ahead for us, but this life here.

#4

No, the revolutionary said, no one has access to the secret of the future. Scarcely possible for even the most clairvoyant are certain presentiments, rapid glimpses, a vague and fugitive coup d'oeil. The Revolution alone, as it clears the terrain, will reveal the horizon, will gradually remove the veils and open up the roads, or rather multiple paths, that lead to the new order. Those who pretend to have in their pocket a complete map of this unknown land--they truly are madmen.

#5

One role of sclerotia is to survive environmental extremes. In some higher fungi such as ergot, sclerotia become detached and remain dormant until favorable growth conditions return. Morels sometimes wait a century or more for fire to initiate fruition.

VIII. Petrified Unrest (72:00 - 78:00)

The MUSICIANS perform [Katorga 8-2013 6 16](#). Daniel sings.

DANIEL (as the WOMAN)
Chain and drum, dear sister,
Draw my exiled words to you.
I'll be gone by morning;
I won't bare my back for him.

I will become sclerotium
dormant until I can return
a century or more for fire to
initiate fruition
I will be

Gradually, the WOMAN stops speaking. Instead she puts the mouthpiece of the trumpet to her lips and plays it into the microphone. Again, PAULA transforms the sound into something else entirely.

Finally, the WOMAN sends the microphone back to PAULA the way it came.

The WOMAN exits the cell through a previously unseen exit at the back.

After Party (klangfläche)
(78:00 – 96:00)

*Playback of **klangfläche-2013_8_27** while the audience is invited to enjoy vodka with the performers and chat.*