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The Use of Literature and Songs from Varying Cultures in Węgajty Theatre's *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane*

Abstract: Despite being produced and performed in 2000–2001, Projekt Terenowy Węgajty's theatrical production *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* has received practically no academic attention in the study of Polish Theatre. This article seeks to partly redress this by examining the use of German, Russian and Ukrainian folk songs in the production. The article examines the work against the group's earlier projects, which used a selection of Polish and European literature and music, as well as exploring the background behind the production and how songs from various cultures and languages were used to illustrate the Finnish epic. The article concludes by considering how effective the strategies were.

Keywords: European literature, folk song, Kalevala, Polish Theatre, Węgajty

In the autumn of 2000, Project Terenowy of the Węgajty Theatre performed *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* (Kalevala; unwritten fragments), a new piece based on the Finnish national epic, *The Kalevala* (Lonrott 1989 [1849]). The project was something of a departure for the group due to the use of a multitude of languages and a wider use of actors of different nationalities. It also incorporated various staging techniques which were either new to the group's work or were used to a greater extent than previously (in particular, theatrical masks and electric lighting). Despite these novelties, since it ended its performance run in 2002, almost nothing has been written about it except as part of condensed histories or accounts of the group's work. In addition, there exists, to the author's knowledge, no analytic writing about the piece. The current article seeks to address this situation by providing an analytical examination of aspects of the theatre company's work on this particular production. It will also examine the use of songs, alternative texts and language within the creation and performance of *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* and suggest that the use of some lyrics, intentionally or not, might have introduced a deeper

layer of narrative to the work. The article will conclude with a short assessment of the efficacy of the combined use of song and literature from the point of view of audience reception of the work[1].

The Village Theatre of Węgajty was founded in 1986 in the village of Węgajty, Warmia and Mazury in Poland. Amongst the founder members were Wacław and Erdmute (Mute) Sobaszek, now the only original members of the group. Influenced by such Polish theatre practitioners as Jerzy Grotowski, the group explored forms of performance which utilised "village" customs, such as seasonal rituals, songs, dances and music. The interest in "village culture" involved "fieldwork" to different ethnic and cultural communities in Poland to gather material as well as seasonal carolling in remote areas of Poland, such as the Carpathian mountains and the Suwałki region. Between 1986 and 2000, the company presented three plays, *Historie Vincenza* (Vincent's Stories) (1988) based on the writings of Stanisław Vincenz, *Gospoda ku Wiecznemu Pokojowi* (1992) based on Czesław Miłosz's *The Issa Valley*, and *Opowieści Kanterberyjskie* (1995) which used stories from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

The mid-1990s saw a splinter group appear, "Schola" Węgajty, focussing on medieval religious song (such as Gregorian chant) and liturgical drama (some of which was used in *The Canterbury Tales*). Schola and Projekt Terenowy (the fieldwork project) worked separately but came together for joint projects. However, by 2000 the artistic paths had separated to a point that, while both groups would continue to work in the theatre space, there would be no further joint projects. *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* would be Projekt Terenowy's first dramatic performance (as opposed to events such as carolling) (Jasińska 2012: 219–225).

Using songs from different traditions, countries and languages had long been a practice of Węgajty Theatre, being particularly notable in their carolling (Hill 2014a; Hill 2014b; Hill 2017; Pajda 2003) and earlier plays. *Historie Vincenza* used Hassidic and Ukrainian songs (Jasińska 2012: 222), while *Gospoda* used mainly Polish folk songs (at least one song having Lithuanian influences) and polyphonic singing styles. These helped to emphasize Poland's multicultural and multi-ethnic history (a long held aim of the group's work), whereas *The Canterbury Tales* included songs from medieval France and Germany, illustrating the influence of such cultures (German, French, Latin) on medieval Poland and the international

[1] The author undertook post-graduate fieldwork research at Węgajty as a participant-observer between 1999–2001 (funded by ESRC). During this time, he co-created and performed in *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane*, being the British actor stated in the text. Unless stated, information comes from personal communication or observation.

nature of the period, when borders were crossed and cross-pollination of cultures occurred through art and education as well as warfare[2]. Arguably, though, the use of these songs and melodies differed in intention from those within *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane.*

To understand this difference, it is necessary to consider some of the aims and motivations on which the choice of the source text and the songs were based, and to examine the history of *The Kalevala* and how it related to the members of the theatre company at the time of the project's inception. It should be noted, however, that while *The Kalevala* has been the subject of much academic focus, this article will not examine it in great detail as the focus of this work is the use of the text by Projekt Terenowy and not the Finnish epic itself[3].

1. The Kalevala; history, relationships and approach to the work

The Kalevala was created by Elias Lonnrot (1989 [1849]) through the compilation and conflation of ancient folk songs of the Finnic-speaking people, from areas such as Karelia and Ingria. Lonnrot collected much of his material whilst travelling and working as a health officer, meeting numerous rune singers (a Finnish singing tradition) and recording the songs and lyrics (by ear and hand). He later merged different songs and stories together (including works collected and donated by fellow folklorists), making changes and additions where necessary, to create a cycle of heroic tales based on the oral tradition in style and content. Published in 1835 and in an expanded form in 1849 (the so-called *"New" Kalevala*), it became an international literary hit and a significant force in the growing Finnish independence and cultural movement (Bosley 1989: xiii). The work comprises eight sections (cycles) with fifty cantos. It includes stories of powerful wizards, demi-gods and warriors, with each cycle revolving around a particular character from whom it takes its title. The cycles are:

1) The first Vainamonen cycle (cantos 1–10): This cycle introduces a powerful old shaman who, amongst other things, is responsible for the creation of the land of Kalevala and a mysterious (and unspecified) object known as the Sampo, forged by his friend, the smith Ilmarinen.

[2] See the Węgajty Theatre website: http://teatrwegajty.art.pl/pliki/tresc.php?go=16 [accessed: 06.12.22].

[3] For academic texts about *The Kalevala*, I draw the reader's attention to Bosley's introduction to his translation and the accompanying bibliography (Bosley 1989: xiii–lvi).

2) The first Lemminkainen cycle (cantos 11–15): A brash young adventurer kidnaps a wife (Kyllikki). He subsequently abandons her and sets out for the Northland to find a new wife. He is killed trying to fulfil three magical tasks but is resurrected by his mother. This cycle was one of those used in Węgajty's work.

3) The second Vainamoinen cycle (cantos 16–25): Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen the smith compete for the Maid of Northland. Ilmarinen wins and marries her. Although this cycle was not used in the production, the wedding features in the second Lemminkainen cycle and Ilmarinen's wife is an important figure in the Kullervo cycle.

4) The second Lemminkainen cycle (26–30): Lemminkainen gatecrashes the wedding and slays the Master of Northland during magical and physical combat. He then takes refuge on an island, where he eventually beds all the females and has to flee their angry husbands. This cycle was the other main source for the Węgajty production.

5) The Kullervo cycle (cantos 31–6): The young Kullervo is sold into slavery. Ill-treated by his mistress, Ilmarinen's wife, he causes her death and flees, reigniting the warfare which caused his earlier calamity. At one point he unknowingly seduces his own sister, who subsequently drowns herself. Following the death of his family, he later takes his own life. This cycle was also used to a limited degree in Węgajty's work.

6) The Ilmarinen cycle: (cantos 37–8): The widowed Ilmarinen attempts to create a new bride from gold.

7) The third Vainamoinen cycle (cantos 39–49): Vainamonen and a band of heroes (including Ilmarinen and Lemminkainen) attempt to steal the Sampo from Northland.

8) The Marjatta cycle (canto 50): Marjatta, a young virgin, becomes pregnant after eating a berry. Vainamoinen sentences the baby to death but it speaks on its own behalf and berates him. The old wizard leaves, handing the land to the child. This is often seen as an allegory of Finland's Christianization and the rejection of paganism.

2. Background to the Węgajty production

The last decades of the twentieth century saw a number of events leading to the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of *The Kalevala* (1999), including the publishing of *The Kalevala*: *an epic of Finland and all mankind* (Kirkinen/Sihvoof 1985). The title provoked some thought in the members of the Węgajty theatre

and elsewhere, especially in relationship to events in their own area, such as the forthcoming EU and NATO membership of Poland. In addition, personal associations with Finland and *The Kalevala* became part of the discussion about a possible future collaboration between Węgajty and a Glasgow-based theatre group, BestKept Sekret, of which the author was a member (I had spent some time in Finland and researched Saami music). Węgajty's own history of fieldwork and collecting oral history, songs and music in remote regions formed a connection with the history of Elias Lonrott. Slowly, the scene was set for work on the project to begin[4].

The underlying theme of the project would be different to the previous plays. Whereas they focused on the relationships of different cultures to Poland and cultures within the country, the emphasis now would be on highlighting the "international" nature of the "epic of Finland and all mankind", applying the songs and languages of other countries to the Finnish source-material. Amongst those events to which the performance would allude were: war (the break-up of Yugoslavia was still taking place), movement across Europe, the opening of borders and the meeting of cultures (a particular interest of Węgajty). The latter aspect was reflected in the international make up of the group.

It was decided that each actor/character would use a different language (this was also easier as the British actor spoke very little Polish). This would, in part, be used to emphasize the different regions, such as the Northland (the Lady of the North being played in Ukrainian). Lemminkainen's wandering nature and movement across borders was also reflective of the English language the actor used. The initial (spoken) languages were English, Polish and Ukrainian. With the addition of songs, German and Russian were included and, later, Saami. Ironically, Finnish was the last language to be added, at the suggestion of Keith Bosley (author of the English language translation) when the company wrote to ask permission to use his translation. The Ukrainian and Polish translations were by Yevgeny Tymchenko (1995) and Jerzy Litwiniuk (1998) respectively, with additional Polish excerpts by Józef Ozga Michalski (1980). For the sake of clarity, all quotations used in this article will be taken from Bosley's translation. In the theatre production these would only be spoken by the actor playing Lemminkainen; lines by Kyllikki and the Lady of Northland (played by Marijka Lubyantseva) were in Ukrainian, whilst other characters used Polish.

[4] Actors also noted the historic links between Finland, Scandinavia and their own regions, including a common thread of Viking culture.

After several readings of the selected texts the group decided that the "narrative" text of the poetry would be discarded and only the characters' lines of speech would be used, which allowed any overly repetitive lines or phrases to be dispensed with. This resulted in the abandonment of the use of the poetic rhythm as the spoken lines occasionally halved the lines of the poetry and/or broke the metre. *The Kalevala* is noted for its use of a trochaic tetrameter, often referred to as "Kalevala-metre" (Bosley 1989: xxi; Kallio 2017), although Bosley devised his own metre for his translation[5].

The next major concern was which parts of the epic to use. *The Kalevala* is not only a long text but the project was limited in both finance and time (the British actor only being available for around twelve months), therefore using long sections of text was problematic. Eventually, it was agreed that the work would focus mainly on the first and second Lemminkainen cycles and the Kullervo cycle.

3. The Lemminkainen cycles and the Kullervo cycle: background and relationships

The relationship between these three cycles is interesting and was part of the concept of "unwritten fragments" (*fragmenty niepisane*) of the project's title. However, for a spectator an understanding of the connections might require a knowledge of *The Kalevala* and its history. Arguably, as discussed below, without such knowledge it would be hard to follow the non-linear narrative in the performance's structure.

A number of similarities exist between the Lemminkainen cycles and that of Kullervo, such as the characters' time as farm labourers, their desire to go to war (and the destructive effects of doing so) and the seduction (or kidnap) of the young maidens (Kylliki, and Kullervo's sister). While this might just seem a common theme in folk song, Bosley points out that the figure of Lemminkainen in *The Kalevala* is a composite of several characters from different rune-songs: Lemminkainen ("Wanton Loverboy"), Ahti ("The Islander") and Kaukomieli ("Farmind", a roving Viking-like character) (Bosley 1989: xxxii). Throughout the cycles of Lemminkainen he is often referred to by these names interchangeably (something which

[5] "The only way I could devise of reflecting the vitality of Kalevala metre was to invent my own, based on syllables rather than feet… I eventually arrived at seven, five and nine syllables respectively, using the *impair* (odd number) as a formal device and letting the stresses fall where they would." (Bosley 1989: l).

might also cause the audience problems). Bosley further points out that the story of Kullervo is very much Lonnrot's own creation, being formed from different stories, including those of characters such as Lemminkainen (Bosley 1989: xxxii).

An important source for Kullervo's unwitting incestuous intercourse with his sister may well have been a song about Lemminkainen (Bosley 1989: xxxii). Whilst discussing the text, one actor pointed out that in the second Lemminkainen cycle the hero hides from the armies of Northland on some islands where, his mother suggests, his father had also hidden some years before (canto 28, lines 277–300, Lonrott 1989 [1849]: 400)[6]. Canto 29 sees the Wanton Loverboy bed most of the women and maidens on the island before fleeing their enraged menfolk. If, as may be supposed, his father was of a similar ilk, then at least one (or more) of the females might have unknowingly been his half sister. Through this method of reading and deconstruction of *The Kalevala*, the structure of *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* sought to highlight some of the links and subtexts of the cycles.

An important point to note concerns the use (or non-use) of the relevant literature. While the themes of the play reflected aspects of the Kullervo cycle, and the character was mentioned in the publicity material, no actual section of the Kullervo cycle was used in the performance and at no point was the character named. Kullervo's lamentation for his sister, positioned in the performance structure soon after the slaying of the Master of Northland, was not played using *Kalevala* lines but using a couplet from a Saami lullaby, *Oađe oabbažán*[7].

The final structure of the play was non-linear and shifted predominantly between the two Lemminkainen cycles. The performance began with the "birth" of Lemminkainen, appearing from beneath a folding paravan, and covered much of the first cycle (cantos 11–13), including the kidnap of Kyllikki, up to his first journey North to court the daughter of the Mistress of Northland and carry out the first of his quests, to catch the Demon Elk, but also included interactions between Lemminkainen's mother and the Mistress of Northland from the second cycle. The stage was later darkened and the story moved to the chasing of the Elk and the wedding of Northland, the magic battle between Lemminkainen and the Master of Northland and Lemminkainen's flight (second cycle, cantos 27–28). This was interrupted by the short Kullervo scene mentioned above. The narrative then returned to the first cycle with the confrontation between the Mistress of Northland and Lemminkainen's mother and the subsequent resurrection of Lemminkainen with

[6] Hereafter, all the canto references will number the canto and the relevant lines.

[7] Initially, a poem by the late Andrzej Suryn, a personal friend of the Sobaszeks, was proposed but later discarded.

the actor being "raked" from under the paravan, a distorted replay of the birth-scene (played without speech to incidental music on a fiddle). The revived Lemminkainen declares his intention to return home but is entreated by some women (Marijka using multiple masks) to stay, but he declares his decision to return home (taken from the second cycle, canto 29, lines 331–378) and exits the stage. He then returns for some comic ad-lib with the audience before fleeing a pregnant Kyllikki.

4. Songs

The dramatic performance was interspersed with a number of melodies and songs which were used to either change or enhance the mood of the corresponding scenes. As noted previously, these were from a number of sources and cultures, some traditional folk songs and others based on standards. The songs were, in order of use:

Chłopek (Yokel): A Polish folk song about a lusty young man (see Appendix 1).
Ein Kleiner Matrose (A little sailor): A German children's song based on a popular melody, (see page 61 below).
Rusalki: (Mermaids) A Russian song from Rusalki/Green Week, the period before Pentecost, (see page 64 below).
Widele Wedele: A German folk song about animals dancing at a wedding (popularised by the Austrian composer Vilma von Webenau), (see Appendix 2).
Kropewiane: A Ukrainian song from Rusalki week, (see Appendix 3).
Oađe oabbažán (Sleep, sleep my sister): A lullaby in the Saami language[8].
Laksin Raukka Raatamaa (Pitiful, I set off to toil): A Finnish song about a drunken farm labourer, (see Appendix 4).

In the following section, the rationale behind the use of the songs is explored and how, in some cases, their use either created allusions to certain other parts of *The Kalevala* and/or created a potentially deeper meaning and symbolism of the scene. The songs will be examined in the order they appear; however, *Ein Kleiner Matrose* and *Rusalki* will be dealt with separately (out of chronology) to allow an analysis of the use of these songs for dealing with deeper subjects and themes.

The song *Chłopek* is a traditional Polish song which Wacław Sobaszek learned from his grandmother in the Sandomierskie region of Poland. Sobaszek explained

[8] The actor who suggested and sang this song heard it from a recording of a Finnish Saami female vocal trio, Angelin Tytöt (Saami: *Aŋŋel nieiddat,* Eng: *The girls from Angelin*) and presumed it was a traditional lullaby. It was later found to be an original song written by band-member Tuuni Lansmann from the group's 1993 album *Giitu*. The song involves repetition of one line and a joik (traditional Saami singing style).

that the song is in the vein of such Blues tunes as Muddy Water's *Mannish Boy*, celebrating a youthful, brash masculinity. The fragment used, being the first song in the performance, is also a possible rejection of a rural lifestyle, reflecting Lemminkainen's mindset as he leaves home to go North (canto 12).

The song was then followed by a "shamanic-style" dance with a Saami reindeer-skin drum, reflecting Lemminkainen's earlier boast (canto 12, lines 140–210) about his shamanic prowess and victory over "Lapps"[9] and his skill as a reciter and soothsayer. When attacked, Lemminkainen was caught off-guard, being naked at the time.

> But I, such a man
> Did not greatly fret at that;
> I became a soothsayer
> I turned reciter: I sang
> The witches with their arrows
> The shooters with their weapons
> The wizards with their
> Knives, the wise men with their steels
> Into Tuoni's steep rapid (Lonrott 1989 [1849]: 136–137)[10].

This text, followed by Lemminkainen's declaration to go to war, then the song *Chłopek* and drum dance not only signifies his raw masculinity but introduces the notion of song-as-weapon (a major feature in the epic), where battles are fought with magical (en)chanting, as is later seen in the encounter with the Master of Northland at the wedding.

The wedding itself is introduced with two songs, *Widele, Wedele* and *Kropewiane*. The first song tells of a beggar's wedding where all the animals are invited as guests and musicians. As well as introducing the theme of weddings, the lyrics suggest the outcast status of Lemminkainen as an unwanted guest while the mention of animals foreshadows the magical battle with the Master of Northland, where they "sing" (magic) different animals, each of which attacks the other man's animal (canto 27, lines 200–281)[11].

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[9] As "Lapp" is now considered a derogatory term for Saami people, I use it in quotations outside of any quote.

[10] Lemminkainen's destruction of the "Lapps" in Tuoni, the River of Death, foreshadows his own death and dismemberment in the river.

[11] Although the scene in the play was based on this section of canto 27, the incantations of each character were created by the actors as rhymes (in Polish and English), reminiscent of children's games, and enacted as shadow play against the wall.

The Ukrainian song *Kropewiane* is a ritual song traditionally sung around Green Week, leading up to Pentecost, and a time when waters are cleansed of evil forces and the spirits of the dead are remembered and honoured. In addition, the period sees one evening where young, unmarried couples go off together into the forests to search for a magical flowering fern (ferns do not flower), suggesting themes of courtship. Hence it was chosen for the section of the play which dealt with the wedding as it contains not only themes of romance, sweethearts and heartache (reflecting marriage, perhaps) but also darker, supernatural elements, such as the Tuoni river.

The final song was a Finnish one, *Laksin raukka raatamaa* ("Sorrowful, I set off to toil") and a later addition to the work. Originally the ending of the performance was very abrupt, with the cast leaving the stage, the light being extinguished and Wacław saying "dziękujemy!" (thank you). However, the actors agreed it was a weak ending, so the comic ad-lib scenes were added, with Lemminkainen attempting to seduce a female audience member in multiple languages before Kyllikki appears, visibly pregnant, and starts haranguing him. The cast then dance off stage singing the song, which was found on a CD of archive recordings of Finnish rune singers, *The Kalevala Heritage* (Ondine Records 1995).

The lyrics tell of a drunkard who goes to market to sell his wares and returns to his disgruntled wife via the tavern (presumably spending all the money) (Asplund 1995: 26). The song has a catchy tune (and an easy-to-learn chorus), which engaged the audience. Furthermore, the lyrics suggest Lemminkainen's original work on a farm and his discontent at having to settle down with Kyllikki. Following the aforementioned scene with Lemminkainen forsaking his sweethearts and returning home, it suggests the cycle will restart.

5. Two songs: a deeper analysis

As the descriptions of the songs show, the relationship between the song texts and the themes of the accompanying scenes (Lemminkainen's departure, the wedding etc) is fairly straightforward. To some extent the songs bolster the storyline and may also assist the audience in following the potentially confusing narrative structure (provided they understand the language of the songs). Even so, there were two cases within the songs where there were deeper meanings and suggestions of wider themes. In one case, this was intentional from the outset and the choice of the song was made accordingly, whereas in the second the themes only became apparent after the troupe began working with the song and a more intense examination and

exploration of the *Kalevala* text was made. This section will examine the songs *Ein Kleine Matrose* and *Rusalki* and how their apparently unrelated lyrics provide a deeper exploration of both the stage action and links to the *Kalevala* imagery.

The German song *Eine Kleine Matrose* is a well known *Singspiel*, a children's game which involves gestures and dancing. While the lyric is from an unknown source, it is based on a melody *Der Mai ist gekommen* (May has come) by the composer Justus Wilhelm Lyra[12].

Ein kleiner Matrose umsegelte die Welt.
Er liebte ein Mädchen, das hatte gar kein Geld.
Das Mädchen muss sterben, und wer war schuld daran?
Der kleine Matrose in seinem Liebeswahn.

A little sailor sailed around the world.
He loved a girlie who had no money at all.
The girlie had to die, and who was to blame?
A little sailor with his love madness[13].

While the lyrics appear at odds with the idea of an innocent song for children, it might be considered that such dark themes are not uncommon in children's rhymes and games.

The song accompanied a scene in *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* where Lemminkainen, having travelled to Northland, confronts the Mistress of Northland, demanding one of her daughters for his wife. The old woman rejects his advances on her daughters, firstly citing his current marriage to Kyllikki and then, when he declares his intention to divorce her, by setting him the first of his tasks, catching the Demon's Elk. The spoken text was taken from Runo 13, lines 1–30.

[Lemminkainen:]
'Hag, now give of your wenches
Bring one of your girls this way
The best of the flock for me
The tallest of your wench brood!'…

[12] See: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ein_kleiner_Matrose [accessed: 03.12.2022]. Lyra's melody was written in 1842 for Emanuel Geibel's poem of the same title. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Mai_ist_gekommen [accessed: 03.12.2022]. This song is a well-known "Wanderlied", a song popular amongst scouts and other outdoor enthusiasts, which also fits the image of Lemminkainen as a wandering hero.

[13] https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=4691 [accessed: 03.12.2022].

[Mistress of Northland:]
'I'll not give of my wenches
Bestow any of my girls-
Not the best, not the worst not
The tallest, not the shortest
For you have a wedded wife
A married mistress.'…

[Lemminkainen:]
'I'll tie Kylliki outside
to the village threshold steps
to foreign gates, and from here
I will get a better wife.
Now bring your daughter this way
Loveliest of the lass flock
Fairest of the braided heads!'…

[Mistress of Northland:]
'No, I'll not give my girl
To men of no account
To idle fellows.
Only beg for girls
Ask after flower-heads when you
Have skied for the Demon's elk
From the Demon's furthest field (Lonrott 1989 [1849]: 147).

Wacław Sobaszek felt the scene, rather than a proposal of marriage, seemed more reminiscent of a customer demanding of a brothel-keeper to see her stable of prostitutes. He had an image of a sailor in a red-light district of a port town[14]. It was felt that *Eine Kleine Matrose* would add a maritime flavour, whilst the association with children's games would create a tension with the portrayed scene[15].

Following the third section of the text (where Lemminkainen demands to see the girl for the second time) the melody of the song is played on the accordion (by Sobaszek) and Lemminkainen leans against the wall of the stage, adopting the pose of a stereotypical macho sailor (arched back, cigarette packet rolled in his t-shirt sleeve, hands hanging from his waistband, accentuating his groin). As the music plays, a female figure appears, sashaying across the stage. There then

[14] Appropriately the song is particularly popular in the port city of Hamburg, home of the notorious Reeperbahn red-light district.

[15] Although it is hard to gauge whether this was intentional, given that the use of the instrument is prevalent in the theatre company, for this author the use of the accordion in this context also reinforced the image of a seedy sea-port, "old" Europe and "lower" culture.

begins a form of "mating dance" in mime-show, where each character engages in (deliberately comic) exaggerated posturing and head movements. Eventually, the woman returns behind the paravan, only to reappear above it, flaunting her naked shoulders (suggesting that she is topless). Lemminkainen rushes to join her, only to be stopped by the paddle-wielding Mistress of Northland, who bars his way and tells him he will only get the girl after he hunts the elk (section four of the text). As both characters leave the stage, Sobaszek begins to sing the lyric.

After the exit of the performers and the end of the song, the lights go out and the atmosphere darkens, aided by the Slavonic songs (sung in harmony by Marijka and Mute), as the depiction of Lemminkainen's tasks begin. Iza Walesiak explains that the difference in lighting symbolises Northland (Pohjola) and the darker elements of life, "unknown powers, of death, but also of dark temptation" (Walesiak 2002: 12)[16].

As well as creating a comic scene prior to the darker (both textually and visually) element of the piece, *Eine Kleine Matrose* reinforced a number of themes running through the work (travelling, crossing borders, encountering different cultures) as well as the death of the young maiden mentioned in the lyrics, foreshadowing the death of Kullervo's sister as a result of his carelessness in his "love madness". Indirectly, the scene and the song also hinted at a subject which was prominent in the news at the time, the matter of international sex trafficking and sex tourism, particularly with regards to the contemporary wars taking place in the Balkans.

The dimming of the lights (using electric lights, something new in the company's work) was accompanied by the black shrouded figures of Marikjka and Mute walking together across the stage (not as named characters but simply as singers) singing *Rusalki*, a Russian song about the legendary water demons, rusalki (singular *rusalka*), which are common in Slavic folklore. Frequently compared to mermaids (although rusalki have legs rather than tails), these entities are often spirits of female suicides who later haunt the water, often drowning or tickling young men to death. They are believed to be particularly active in the mid to late summer, particularly during Green Week leading up to Pentecost[17]. However, as with the midsummer traditions of Polish *noc kupały* the waters are spiritually cleansed at the end of Green Week and the rusalki are exorcised until the following

[16] Translation taken from the Węgajty Theatre website, http://www.teatrwegajty.art.pl/pliki/english/etresc.php?go=12 [accessed: 03.12.2022].

[17] While not considered by the theatre group with regards to the text of the song, it is a delightful coincidence, considering the linguistic aspects of the production, that Pentecost was the time in the New Testament when people began speaking in many languages.

year (Arrowsmith 1977: 189–92; Geleta 2022). The song tells of rusalki sitting on a birch branch, asking for bread and salt, traditional elements of Slavic hospitality but also connected with wedding rituals.

На гряной неделе
русалки сидели
рано рано
сидели русалки
на кривой березе
рано рано
на кривой березе
на прямой дороге
рано рано
просили русалки
и хлеба и соли

In rusalki week
Rusalki sat,
Early, early
Rusalki sat
on a crooked birch,
Early, early
On a crooked birch,
on a straight road,
Early, early
The Mermaids asked,
for bread and salt.

The initial motivation behind using this song was the singing style and the mystic aspect of the lyrics, the contaminated waters of the rusalki suggesting that of the River of Tuoni (Tuoni being a kind of Finnish version of Hades), the scene of Lemminkainen's death and resurrection. However, over time there appeared a greater potential textual link between the song *Rusalki* and fragments of *The Kalevala* which the group had not used in the performance. This provides an interesting interpretation of this scene.

One of the ideas initially discussed for the staged project was the story of the singing battle between the old wizard Vainamoinen and the Lapland youth Joukahainen and its subsequent consequences (cantos 3–6, Lonrott 1989 [1849]: 22–67). Although the Lemminkainen cycles were chosen over this tale, elements were suggested throughout the finished work, not least in the figure of the fish-shaped lampshade used for performances and Lemminkainen's dance with the shamanic

Saami drum while reciting his own magical fight with a gang of "Lappish" witches (canto 12, Lonrott 1989 [1849]: 136–137).

The story of the singing battle sees Joukahainen challenge Vainamoinen to a magic singing battle. The older man easily defeats the youth, burying him up to his neck in the ground. Desperate, the young man promises he will give his younger sister to be Vainamoinen's wife. The distraught young maiden is less enthusiastic and subsequently drowns before the proposed marriage. She later returns in the form of a fish, which the old wizard catches. Just as he is about to cut it up to eat, the fish declares itself to be Aino, berates him for not realising this and subsequently swims away.

The figure of the drowned girl becoming a rusalka is, as previously mentioned, a common feature in rusalka-lore, so an immediate link between the song and the unused text is apparent. There is a further aspect of Aino's death which lyrically reflects the *Rusalki* song. Just as rusalki sit on the birch branch in the song, Aino herself is apparently seduced by three water-maidens sitting on the rocks by the shore.

> Early in the morning she
> Looked out at the headland's tip:
> Three maids at the headland's tip
> There were, bathing in the sea!
> The maid Aino would be the fourth
> And the slip of a girl fifth! (canto 4, Lonrott 1989 [1849]: 47).

Undressing, Aino enters the water and swims to the rock, only for it to disappear and for her to drown[18]. She next appears as a potential meal for Vainamoinen when he, mourning her death, sails out to sea to look for mermaids (canto 5, Lonrott 1989 [1849], 54–55). An intriguing, yet unclear, aspect of his actions is what exactly he is seeking the mermaids for. Is it possible that, like Lemminkainen's mother, he has some gift of resurrection and he is seeking the transformed girl, imagining her to be a rusalka-like figure?

The figure of the rusalka underlines the motif of the drowned girl, the seeming suicide, perhaps epitomised by the sister of Kullervo who, after realising she has unknowingly been raped by her own brother, drowns herself in the river. In both cases, the sisters are victims of male (fraternal) ego and desire, something which is also reflected in the abandonment which Lemminkainen inflicts on the women

[18] As Bosley points out, the text is "evasive" as to whether her drowning is suicide (rather than marry an old man), although the source song has a molested girl hang herself (Bosley 1989: xxxi). Lonrott adapted it to conflate it with those of Joukahainen and that of Vainamoinen's fishing trip.

in his life, often in the search for martial success. In this way, while not dealing directly with the story of Aino, the song makes a link between the mutual themes in the different stories, reinforcing the links of the source material but also reiterating the effects of war (and perhaps the international sex-trade with its objectification of women as "items" which can be obtained abroad) on the innocents (mothers, wives, siblings).

This section of the article has examined how at least two of the songs were used to create layered meanings and interpretations of the *Kalevala* text used within the performance. However, it is necessary to ask whether the artistic experimentation was as effective in relaying these themes to the audience. The following section will consider this matter and suggest some possible points where the artistic intention may have been less than successful in its endeavours.

6. The Artistic meets the Audience: reactions to the work

A major obstacle in assessing whether the artistic techniques used by the theatre company (use of original text, use of songs) were effective when presented to audiences is simply the lack of information on audience reception. The author will therefore present some suggestions based on their own observations and those of the small number of newspaper articles (there are only around half a dozen in the Węgajty archive) from the initial run of the production in 2000–2001[19].

While almost all of the reviewers comment positively about the music and song used in the performance (from an aesthetic level), two of them clearly voice their doubts about the efficacy of the production due to the audience's likely unfamiliarity with the source material. Przemysław Borkowski is extremely critical of the work, pondering whether most of the audience would have even known what *The Kalevala* was, let alone have read it (Borkowski 2002: 91). Dorota Mrówka likewise considers that the audience's lack of knowledge calls for some guidance, which is not forthcoming. The effect of the performance is therefore unfulfilling (Mrówka 2000).

These critiques highlight (although do not directly point out) a problem of adapting the play by dispensing with the narrative verse. The characters are presented without background or explanation which the narrative verses would have supplied. The symbolism of the songs and the efficacy of the dialogue, therefore, is

[19] The reviews were taken from photocopies in the Węgajty Theatre archive. In some cases page numbers have been impossible to confirm.

of questionable effect for an audience unfamiliar with *The Kalevala*. Not having read the epic, would a spectator be able to negotiate the non-linear plot of the production, let alone identify references contained within the songs? Jasińska's comment that the intertwining of Kullervo and Lemminkainen's stories leaves the audience unsure of whether they are dealing with one hero or two (Jasińska 2012: 221) is somewhat telling, as the character of Kullervo is never mentioned in the performance, nor are any specific lines from the cycle used. This suggests that without the knowledge from the show's publicity, she might not (assuming she had not read *The Kalevala*) have known about Kullervo at all from the production. The critiques and reviews of *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* suggest that the work was not totally successful in its attempt to convey the required meaning to the audience. However, it should be noted that the number of works relating to the production is around half a dozen, which is not representative of the number of spectators. For a clearer picture of the efficacy of the theatrical technique utilised, further research would be required which is beyond the scope of the current article.

7. Conclusion

This article has attempted to present previously unpublished details about the production process of a somewhat neglected work within the repertoire of Projekt Terenowy Węgajty. It has highlighted how the group worked with literary and lyrical material in an attempt to adapt a poetic epic for the stage, which may be of wider interest to researchers of the company's earlier and later work. As noted previously, very little has been written about *Kalevala; fragmenty niepisane* in over twenty years and it is hoped that the current work will create greater interest in the production and will also generate further research, which is most certainly needed.

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Appendixes: song lyrics and translations

Appendix 1:

Chłopek

Chłopek ci jo chłopek	Lad, you are a Lad,
Da i nie owsiany snopek	Not a sheaf of oats
I ty nie dzieweczka	And not a maiden,
Da i nie owsiano sieczka	And not oat chaff[20]

Appendix 2:

Widele Wedele[21]

Widele wedele, hinterm Staedele	Wiggly tails, behind the barn
feiert der Bettelmann Hochzeit	The beggar holds his wedding.
Alle Tiere, die Wedele habe,	All the beasts that have got tails
sind zur Hochzeit geladen	Are invited to the wedding,

[20] The song is difficult to translate exactly because of the elements of dialect. The translation is an approximation worked out between Sobaszek and this author. We chose the word "maiden" because "dzieweczka" may be interpreted as both "girl" or "virgin".

[21] Whilst the fragment differs from the version attached, the translation is based on https://lyricstranslate.com/en/widele-wedele-wiggly-waggly.html [accessed: 03.12.2022].

pfeift das Maeusele tanzt das Laeusele,	Pipes the Mouse, Dances the louse,
schlaegt der Bieber die Trommel	The beaver beats on the drum,
Alle Tiere die Wedele haben	All the beasts with wiggly tails
sind zur Hochzeit geladen	Are invited to come (to the wedding).

Appendix 3:

Kropewiane

Кропев'яне колесо колесо	A Nettle wheel, wheel,
Више лісу літало літало	Flew above the forest,
Вище лісу літало літало	Flew above the forest,
Много дива видало видало	It worked a lot of miracles,
Скільки в ведрі водиці водиці	How much water there's in the bucket,
Стільки в дівках правдиці правдиці	There's that much truth in the girls.
Скільки в небі зірочок зірочок	How many stars there are in the sky.
Стілько хлопцям болячок болячок	That many sore spots boys have.

Appendix 4:

Läksin raukka raatamaa

Läksin raukka raatamaa
kultani kanssa kuokkimaa,
hai jai raitetaa
kultani kanssa kuokkimaa.
Kuokin mie kesoisen päivän
kuorman heiniä kokosin.
Kuorman heiniä kokosin
toisen kuorman kukkaisia.
Mänin linnan turulle
kauppamahan heiniä.
Heilani kotona uotteloo
joko minun ukkoni tuloo.
Tuolt tulloo tupakkaukko
pitkä piippu hampahissa,
hai jai raitetaa
pitkä piippu hampahissa.

Pitiful, I set off with my loved one to dig the field, I dug the summer's day long,
I gathered a cartload of hay and another of flowers and went to the market in the town to sell them.
My loved one waited for me at home.
On my return she said, "Here comes the tobacco-man with a long pipe 'tween his teeth."[22]

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[22] © Ondine & Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society.