

Artist Spotlight: Week 4 Olga Macrinici

Writing From Home

20 – 24 April

As part of MotF's Artist Spotlight month we are launching a week of creative writing with Lincoln-based Moldovan theatre maker and cultural activist Olga Macrinici. As part of the 'Lincoln Live' programme Olga will deliver a 6-week workshop series shaped by participants from local immigrant or minority communities, who will use creative writing and storytelling techniques to navigate their experiences of immigration and relocation. Workshops will take place on Monday evenings, from 20 July – 24 August (visit our website for details). Until then we will give you a taste of the exciting workshops to come, with activities developed by Olga being shared throughout the rest of the week.

Whilst UK residents remain at home in isolation Olga will set a different writing prompt each day aimed at engaging all of our audiences and set around the themes of the workshops – ideas of home. We would love to see and share your work!

Your work can be as adventurous and creative as you like and can take the form of; a play / script, short story or poem. If you would like to share your writing please send it over to the MotF team on info@mansionsofthefuture.org or if you are sharing on social media use the hashtag #OlgaWritingFromHome and be sure to @Mansions_Future. We will post a collection of your work across social media throughout the week and via our blog on Friday 24 April.

Writing From Home

Interview with Olga Macrinici

Olga Macrinici is a Moldovan theatre maker and cultural activist, currently living and working in Lincoln. In her artistic research, Olga focuses on the influence of socially engaged projects in the community. Her works explore a wide range of documentary and collaborative practices. She also has extensive experience of working with young adults from vulnerable groups. Using applied theatre techniques, like Augusto Boal's methods, she creates a safe space where they can learn to express themselves and develop critical thinking skills.

In her previous work Olga has explored interculturality and marginalisation, intergenerational conflicts, gender and sexual orientation equity, heteronormativity and toxic masculinity, animal rights and welfare, climate and environmental justice. Her plays have been produced in partnership with AZART Centre for Cultural Projects and VERBARIUM International Contemporary Dramaturgy Festival in Chisinau (Moldova), "Ariel" Theatre for Children and Youth and the University of Arts from Targu-Mures, Reactor, Cluj-Napoca, International Literature and Translations Festival, Iasi (Romania).

1. You use playwriting and directing to shine light on the realities of life that are either considered as taboo or generally quite 'normal'. What draws you to this way of working?

I think about theatre like a super-power which gives me the opportunity to challenge the reality around me, play the game called "what if...?". Though I don't give answers in my work, I share my discoveries with the others. Create a safe space where they can reflect upon things,

empower them in asking their own questions: “What if we stop taking animals for granted and think about them as individuals?”, “What if we all had sexuality education in schools?”, “What if we could talk openly about death?”, “What if women would be given equal pay?”, “What if I tell you I’m an immigrant?”, and so on... Once you start using this super-power, it becomes quite addictive. You start seeing other ways of doing things, you react to the status-quo, and look for ways to change it.

2. A lot of your work is focused on providing a platform for young voices. Why do you think it's so important to give young people opportunities to be opinionative through art?

As a teenager, I have been part of a writing group, I volunteered for theatre festivals, and I've been lucky enough to have some amazing parents who gave me the freedom to explore what is out there. I had the chance to learn and discover myself creatively. I think it is important for a young person to be exposed to different types of creativity, it empowers you in taking action. This is probably the main reason I love working with young people. It is a way of giving back what has been offered to me, and in the same time, it is really inspiring. I am continuously amazed about the energy and creative power coming from the young people. It feels like nothing could stop them. Last year's protests for climate change have been a real lesson for the adults in the room. It gives me lots of hope in our future.

3. Immigration is a huge focus in the workshops that you will be running with Mansions of the Future. What do you feel about the UK's relationship with immigration, is there something you wish the UK general public knew that they perhaps don't?

Yes, immigration is the main focus of my work at the moment. Since I have moved to UK, this is continuously on my mind. There is a lot of talk around immigration in the UK, and given its colonial past, I feel there always have been. Unfortunately, I do not see too many people who have directly experienced it as a process and are encouraged to talk about it on stage. If you have a look at the last years' theatre productions, you would find a scarce number of them made by immigrant artists or which address this topic directly. I find it really strange, in a country where more than 14% of the total population are foreigners ([The Migration Observatory](#)). It feels like the British theatre system is self-sufficient, it cannot be influenced from outside. I am happy to learn about fellow artists who are doing their best in changing this pattern, and it feels like it is the right moment to do something about it. We are here and we have a voice. The more we talk about these things, the sooner the change will come.

4. Thinking about the recent developments in the COVID-19 health crisis across the globe, how do you now relate to your idea of home, has it changed?

Home became a very sensitive topic. It is not a place anymore, it is more of a philosophical concept. At the beginning of the crisis, I spent my days following news about the way countries are shutting down their borders and airlines are cancelling their flights. This is something I could never imagined just a couple of weeks ago. I woke up asking myself if I could ever go home again? Then I looked around me and felt at home. I am home. When I walk my dogs in Hartsholme park, when I say “Hello!” to my neighbours, when I visit my local charity shop. I am home.

Still, I am dead worried about my family back home, I follow the news from at least three countries at the same time. And I think the crisis is affecting immigrants and other vulnerable categories of people more than the others. It is like living it twice or three times, at least. This is something I would like to talk about in my work at the Mansions of The Future. I want to create space where people could share their thoughts about it. Knowing there are more people who feel the same means a great deal to me. And it helps a lot in going through these troubled times together.

5. What or who inspires you and your work? Are there specific texts or artists?

I don't want to answer with a cliché but I take a lot of inspiration from daily life and the people I meet. Life beats theatre and all the art in the world in so many ways!

However, I have learned a lot and been influenced by artists like Frida Kahlo, Wassily Kandisky, Joan Miro, Keith Haring, the writings of Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Plath, Janette Winterson, Svetlana Alexievic, the work of Augusto Boal, Marina Abramović, Keith Johnston, Marta Górnicka, Yael Ronen, Rimini Protokoll, Teatr.Doc, Pussy Riot and many others. I look up to dramatic authors like Alina Nelega, Nicoleta Esinencu, Maja Pelević, Helena Tornero, Natalia Vorozhbit...

I am really grateful to artists like Jess Thom and Matilda Ibini, I relate a lot to their work and I would love to work them. I am a big fan of the "Guilty Feminist" podcast and I think everybody should read Sofie Hagen's book "Happy Fat".

I could continue forever, please stop me!