

BEHOLD

Nicki Jackowska <http://nickijackowska.co.uk>

<http://www.ilankelman.org/menard/ behold.pdf>

BEHOLD

Kraków, 2005

**It is not that I found
a poster advertising Lorca and
didn't tell, or a plaque for the home
of the communist party, and did**

**Nor discovered my tarnished
aristocracy that yet steers
a course across cobblestones**

**It is not that I did the acceptable
thing and gained the museum in
a crumbling step or two, then fled
from its hush into the barb and shrug
of that square I can't get away from**

**It is not that I lost my
way and the potholes caught
me greedy for filling in**

**Nor that a knowing
that comes from beneath
guided the flight**

**Nor is it nosing upstairs for
Christmas decorations in high summer
or counting baubles in place of men**

**It is not that american voices
took no notice preferring**

their mobile phones

**and the small polish couple
on the sofa behind engaged
with me from the back bone**

**It is not that nothing was said all
day except to a waitress and the green
cloth she laid to serve my
norwegian fish reminds me of envy**

**It is not that the streets stopped
inviting and I needed another
pair of shoes to open them up**

**though not with laces missing
and different sizes
according to where they fell**

**Nor that I cried only once
in the place
where rivers would not be enough**

**It is not that the great glass tanks
of tangled hair held also
perfect plaits, a whole head taken**

**nor the tiny clothes of infants
deceiving us with silence**

**It is not that the daily ration
was laid awesome out, feastless
under a glass cover**

**nor that I shone my torch to
track one floating spear of matter
whose name is forgotten**

**Nor the reduction, the
scales, the bone poking through**

**It is not that the tongue
is out, the gruel too thin**

**nor that words perish
in the backwoods, the bud,
his lower spine**

**If this be a man his tongue
cannot lap or utter**

**It is not that he is yet dog
but falls in between**

**Nor that I haven't
any good thing to say**

**nor clue, nor good
companion on the way**

**though we walk in the form of
obeisance to this darker than,
and the most warped corners
of our souls are beaten**

It is not that we are beyond

utterance or intelligence or stutter

**nor that the birds still shrill
here among poplars and birch**

**It is a kingdom of negatives
this, not to be taken**

**Nor that the print is not close
enough woven, just that to fall
through the stolen is no requiem**

**where notes cleave too tight
as flesh that is bright and molten
nor that your arm in mine isn't hooked as kin**

BEHOLD, The Old Market Theatre, Brighton: June 27, 2015

Tributes, Responses and Reviews

Nicki Jackowska's magnum opus BEHOLD, a poem written in observance of the catastrophic events and ghastly traces of the Holocaust, celebrates the power of the human spirit that moves forward.

In June 2015, for the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the European Concentration Camps, Nicki curated an evening of spoken word, dance and music centred around her poem BEHOLD at The Old Market in Brighton. Nicki approached Lou Beckerman, Alison Curtis-Jones, Caroline Pick, Mick Sands, Merlin and Polina Shepherd, Robert White and Hagit Yakira to respond to her powerful writing. The resulting evening was a many-faceted exploration of the continuing impact of the Holocaust. This ranged from a re-staging of the historical Laban work Green Clowns, originally choreographed in 1928, to the robust and jubilant music of Polina and Merlin Shepherd, to the revelations of Caroline Pick's very personal *Home Movie*, to the vulnerable intimacy of Nicki's spoken poem, also sung hauntingly, in part, by Lou Beckerman. As an evening, the impact resonated as reminder of the resilience and power of individuals. It is about not forgetting, and in not forgetting we remain sentient of other continuing and unspeakable atrocities that persist through our modern age.

Kate Gowar, Director, The Nightingale Theatre

PERFORMANCE: 'BEHOLD'

27th JUNE 2015 AT THE OLD MARKET THEATRE, BRIGHTON.

Produced and directed by Nicki Jackowska, this evening of events to commemorate the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, was both moving and celebratory. Introduced by her seminal poem, 'Behold', there followed a series of stunning professional performance contributions which illustrated a profound and sensitive commitment to the theme of the evening.

The dynamics of the programme were beautifully balanced: haunting songs, Irish folk and Klezmer music were interspersed with the drama of two modern dance productions. A superb short film stood as a central pivot to function as a red thread to the theme of the show.

A simple black box setting contained the intensity of the production.

Audience reception was unanimous in its acclaim. This is a very special and unique production which pays serious tribute to this year of the liberation of the camps - an evening of the highest quality of theatre which should be repeated in other venues before 2015 is ended.

Anna Carlisle MBE

‘Behold’ is based on the title poem of Nicki Jackowska’s latest collection from Enitharmon Press. The poem vividly evokes the history of the Holocaust. Jackowska’s writing has a visionary quality which spun the silk that wove itself around ‘Behold’, devised and directed by Nicki and presented by the Nightingale Theatre on Saturday 27th June at the Old Market, Brighton.

The evening fuelled the mind with the powerful words of the poetry which opened the evening, whilst invigorating the imagination of the audience with what followed. An extended sequence of song, images, sounds and movement drawn from the poem’s themes.

It is a rare event when the spoken word, music and dance come together in such a unique programme and the result was a powerful and substantial evening that held

the attention throughout and continued to haunt the imagination.

Nicki Jackowska is an extremely talented writer. Here she returns to her early theatrical training to create a tightly woven tapestry of the work of artists chosen for their quality, experience and their ability to interact. As a result of Nicki's long history, her acute sense of what is needed, her devotion to detail, timing, staging and sequence, we were present at an event that goes far beyond any defining genre.

One of Nicki's colleagues was heard to call *Behold* '...the creation of a new art-form.'

The 'Behold' programme brought together singers, dancers, musicians and a filmmaker. These commissions created a seamless narrative which became a unique theatrical event. Further, the ensemble was so integrated, with just one day's rehearsal, that they evolved into a

performing company. I trust that this courageous and perfectly formed event will be repeated. It deserves the reception it received on its first night.

Judy Ironside MBE

An extremely powerful ensemble of I have to say wonderful pieces. Of these for me, the Laban clowns and the playing of Merlin and Polina Shepherd were extremely poignant, nearly unbearable. But then everyone else achieved a very high standard too. I loved all the dances, the film -- I still remember -- the singing. The strange thing was the evening defied that warning that if you mix all the colours together they will turn into brown. They remained their own perfect colour.

Caroline Hume, Playwright

Nicki Jackowska is the author of seven collections of poetry, four novels, and a book on using language, *Write for Life*. A trained actress and dancer, she has performed her work over many decades, often in collaboration. Since working with composer Charlotte Bray for Aldeburgh, she has returned to her theatrical roots, *Behold* being her most ambitious project to date.

About this evening's performance:

"I've been told I've created a new art-form from a single poem. Revisiting *Behold*, along with other artists' responses to it – the poem has grown and different aspects have come to the fore. This event has been created in collaboration with the artists who now form a company, something I had no idea would happen. *Under The Influence* has provided an opportunity to consolidate a long-term ambition – the transmutation of my text into embodiment, vocal and instrumental sound, image, etc. The project has evolved into a seamless whole, including unforeseen collaborations, an integrated ensemble." **Nicki Jackowska, June 2015**

Nicki Jackowska would like to thank: Nils Burwitz, Dan Gretton, Caroline Hume, Margaret Sharp and Marcus West for quality of attention, depth and extent of dialogue, comfort and challenge. To the Nightingale and the entire company for travelling so closely and for their incredible commitment.

The Nightingale would like to say a special thanks to The Old Market and their staff for continued support in hosting this event.



The Nightingale presents Under The Influence at The Old Market with

NICKI JACKOWSKA: BEHOLD

This evening's event is created and choreographed by poet, novelist, performer and playwright **Nicki Jackowska**. The evening has its genesis in the desire to contribute to the 2015 anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. Nicki's poem *Behold* evokes the Holocaust and provides the text for the evening. The assembled company has responded with new work, either to the words of the poem, to the issues it confronts, or to wider associations such as loss of identity, confinement, genocide. Importantly, the event also celebrates courage and the remarkable resilience of the human spirit to survive and restore.

We kindly ask that the audience not applaud until the end of the evening. Any interval between acts will be part of the evening's narrative, the event being a continuous story and not a number of separate presentations. Thank you.

The estimated running time for tonight's event is 2 hours. Please note there is no interval.

The Nightingale is pleased to present *Behold* as the latest edition of *Under The Influence*, an initiative that invites artists to explore the themes that have inspired and affected them over the course of their careers. Previous artists have included Wendy Houston and Graham Miller.

The Nightingale are supported by funding from:



BEHOLD PROGRAMME

Behold

Read in full by Nicki Jackowska

And Rivers would not be Enough

Set and sung by Lou Beckerman

Air Hunger

Dance duet choreographed by Hagit Yakira

Armenia to Ireland

Robert White on pipes with Irish singer Mick Sands

Home Movie

A film by Caroline Pick

The Kaddish

Sung in Hebrew by Lou Beckerman

Not That I Haven't Any Good Thing

Set and sung by Polina Shepherd

Green Clowns

A work by Rudolf Laban recreated by Alison Curtis-Jones

Klezmer

A set by Merlin and Polina Shepherd

Behold / Keili Keili

An improvisation by Nicki Jackowska & Lou Beckerman

Programme Consultants: **Anna Carlisle** MBE and
Judy Ironside MBE

Lou Beckerman's influences include classical, jazz, folk, world music, and evocative songs in Hebrew. She has worked for TV and radio, recorded two acclaimed albums and was awarded a Churchill Fellowship for her work with music in therapeutic settings.

Hagit Yakira is an award-winning choreographer, who has toured the UK, Europe, Scandinavia and Israel with her own company. She also creates many commissioned works. *Air Hunger* is performed by two dancers, their intimacy evoking themes of deprivation, loss, struggle and union.

Robert White – Armenian Duduk, Irish pipes. His work has taken him from feature film soundtracks including Robin Hood, Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit, to appearances and compositions with The National Theatre, The Royal Shakespeare Company and all The London Orchestras.

Mick Sands is a musician, RSC theatre composer, and collaborator with Peter Hall (Tantalus). An EMMY award nominee, his singing and flute-playing is rooted in his Irish background. Tonight Mick will sing a slow air, *Were you at the Rock* and a lament, *Give Me Your Hand*.

Caroline Pick is an artist, filmmaker and former BBC commissioner, whose new film *Home Movie* explores immigration and dislocation through boxes of her father's home movies shot in 1930s Czechoslovakia & 1950s Britain.

Polina Shepherd is a world-class Klezmer singer and pianist, writing her own music and song. She leads choirs, including the Russian Choir of Brighton & Hove and the London Yiddish Choir. Together, she and Merlin work worldwide.

Merlin Shepherd plays clarinet, and is one of the world's leading players of the Jewish instrumental folk music Klezmer. Tonight Merlin will be performing with Polina Shepherd, Robert White and Mick Sands.