



**Marc Pantus, baritone | Merlijn Runia, mezzo-soprano | Jan Willem Baljet, baritone**  
**Shintaro Kawahara, piano | Sebastiaan van Halsema, cello**  
**Emi Ohi Resnick, violin | Krijn ter Braak, voice actor | Olga Zuiderhoek, voice actor**  
**Eva Buchmann, director | Ben Hurkmans, dramaturge**  
**Mirjam Grote Gansey, set designer | Jorine van Beek, costume designer**  
**Ruth Becker, director assistent | Jeannette Elsenburg, production**







Westerbork, June 1944. That morning, yet another transport train had departed eastwards. Family and friends were gone. But when the evening came, it was time for entertainment: time for cabaret. At these variety shows, Camp Commandant SS Obersturmführer Albert Gemmeker would always be seated in the front row. That evening's entertainment was *Ludmilla* or *Corpses on the Conveyor Belt*, a parody opera by Erich Ziegler (music) and Willy Rosen (libretto). On the stage was Gruppe Bühne, led by Max Ehrlich - a company comprised of the best actors and singers of the era.

A script and piano score for *Ludmilla* were discovered in the estate of pianist and writer Ida Simons (1911-1960). The piece was performed in June 1944, during the camp's last variety show. Usually these evening shows would be comprised of sketches and cabaret numbers, most of which have been lost without trace. But this time the production was more ambitious: a parody opera. The players needed the score and the libretto to learn their parts.

But how do you bring a performance recorded in a piano score and libretto back to life, 75 years after it was staged? And more importantly: how do you do justice to the circumstances in which the players sang and performed, and the audience laughed and empathized? How liberating is laughter when you are terrified and when you have been completely stripped of your human dignity?

Director Eva Buchmann, playwright Ben Hurkmans and pianist Marcel Worms worked together to weave memories of Westerbork into the performance. These memories were drawn from, amongst others, the work of journalist Philip Mechanicus (1889-1944) and ETTY HILLESUM (1914-1943), both of whom were transported from Westerbork to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.

In May 2019, the production was staged 13 times in Amsterdam and in Westerbork. In 2020 - 75 years after the liberation - there was a livestream of the production. In 2021 we will stage it again. Hopefully in the near future it will be performed in Germany, Poland and in the US too. The audiences and the press were extremely moved by this exceptional and important production and we would like to give more people the opportunity to experience it.

*"The seemingly upbeat tone of the whole production made an indelible impression. Particularly because people realized that music can bring the dead back to life, even if only for a short while."*

- Wenneke Savenije, De Nieuwe Muze

*"This production of Ludmilla is a gripping experience."* - Max Arian, Theaterkrant

*"This production gets under your skin and stays there. You laugh, even though you don't want to and don't dare to. That's because of the strong, beautifully performed and humorous music (for each corpse, Ziegler refers to Saint-Saëns' dying swan) and because of the powerful singing and acting of the three leads. But it's mainly because of the absurd fact that prisoners who were facing death put on and attended productions like this."*

- Job van Schaik, Dagblad van het Noorden (5 stars)

*"The production was earth-shatteringly good, up to and including the heartbreaking finale: the significant absence of the musicians and actors. There was vitriol there right from the start. At first it was masked somewhat by the bright, cheerful tone. But ultimately it became the poison that caused the deaths of the final four characters. It's a production and an achievement that really deserves more than 13 performances. It ought to become a proud tradition."*

- Mieke Tillema, audience member

*"The production of Ludmilla is theater at its most beautiful, horrifying and best. Look it up and go and see it, while you still can."* - Erik van Muiswinkel, audience member

*"You can't get any more authentic than this,"* - audience member

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