



The last Word (Les Volontés) 2019

A musical and visual performance by

Olivia Pedroli

In German, Spanish, English and Swedish with surtitles

Compagnie Betacorn
Case postale 2608 CH-2001 Neuchâtel
info@betacorn.com

Administration Mariana Nunes
+41 77 520 31 3
info@mariananunes.ch

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/ Synopsis

The last Word is musical and visual performance in the form of strata: sound archives, original compositions, singing, videos and synthetic voices. Alone on stage Olivia Pedroli draws on her reflections on inheritance, transmission and life choices.

What do we leave behind?
How do we pass on what we have acquired?
How do we choose to be present in our lives and those of others?
What does this tell about ourselves?



With *Les Volontés*, Olivia Pedroli has devised a concerto for ghostly voices. Over the course of successive musical tableaux, a dialogue is established with the absentees of the past and the future: the deceased grandfather, the unborn child, a murdered poet, an intelligence yet to come.

The stage of *Les Volontés* welcomes the concert of these incompatible temporalities, without hierarchies nor precedence. This is why we are not made to follow a linear or gradual story, but rather the wilful path of a record player needle skipping over the grooves, incessantly choosing the tangential.

Technology discreetly extends the musician's mediumistic qualities and intensifies the hauntological metaphors: oscillators, delays, loops, feedbacks and synthesized voices are as many material figures of untimely returns, remanences of the lost, infringements of the future that unsettle the present.

/ Narrative

There is **the Swiss-German grandfather** of the artist who dictates his will using a small tape recorder, which was found in his office after his death. Jurist and family man, he tried, using legal articles and precise punctuation, to list his last wishes in minute detail to avoid any misunderstanding. Combining a certain coldness and an act of love, Olivia Pedroli highlights this recording and what it tells us of an era by preserving its essential elements: structure and family. The rest is only absence.

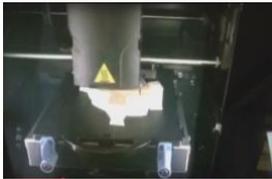
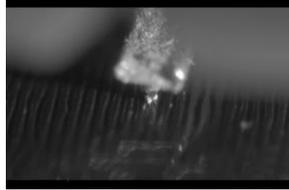
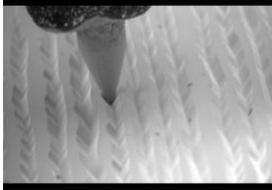
We also hear **the voice of a Spanish train driver from Galicia** stuck in his cab after his train derailed, causing the death of 79 people in July 2013. This conversation between the train control centre and the driver, who knew nothing of the damage he had caused, was immediately broadcast on the news around the world. "Pero somos humanos. Eso es inhumano esta curva." (We are human, this curve is inhuman), repeated many times, sounds like a both morbid and vibrant reminder of the issue of time acceleration and the pressure of machines on humans, but also of the boundary between private and public life.

The text of poet, playwright and composer Federico Garcia Lorca, assassinated in 1938 by the Franco regime, "Juego y teoria del duende" (Play and Theory of the Duende) echoes the situation of the train driver. Lorca considered the "duende," the energy used in flamenco and bullfighting, as the origin of any true, organic and deeply human creative act: *"The duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet.* Lorca, however, warned those who may be attracted by the "angel" or "muse" that *"comes from outside us."* Presented in the form of a radio broadcast, this performance, which is also driven by the spirit of the "duende," remains his last statement. Although Lorca's literary and artistic influence is immense, there is unfortunately no recording of his voice. Only modern technology allows us to recreate it.

Another visionary, **theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking** spoke of the human condition and the preservation of its existence in a unique way. Severely handicapped by a degenerating disease, he talked by means of a computer-generated synthetic. Stephen Hawking warned the scientific world about the dangers of relying too much on artificial intelligence, which he thought would bring about the end of the human race.

We can also hear **the voice of Erland Josephson, lead actor in the film "The Sacrifice," the testamentary work of Andrei Tarkovsky**, which is a reflection on death, the importance of the word and the given word. In a scene that reveals the nature of human beings, who often mean well, the main character tells his mistress of when he worked on the wild garden of his then dying mother. Finally, at her bedside, he looked at the result through the window and wondered where the charm and beauty of nature had gone.

This reminds us of the words of the artist's grandfather sitting for hours in his office, recording his will on his tape recorder. He reappears, "I'm done now but it still must be signed".



/ Rhythm and music

Rhythm plays a major role throughout the play; with repetitive sounds creating a percussive line, but also through moving images recorded in different contexts and continuously looped.

We can see and hear the cassette arrive at its end in the grandfather's tape machine. We also hear the radio signals broadcast by the train control centre. We see the grooves of a vinyl record moving slowly in its trail. In the EPFZ laboratories, we see the construction and activation of a prototype silicone heart made with a 3D printer. We listen to a baby's heartbeat 24 hours before its birth. We can hear the ticking of the clock in the back of Erland Josephson's mistress' bedroom.

The choice of instruments is essential. It follows a shift in time – past, present, future – acoustic piano, analogue synthesizer and computer with all the potential of digital music. The voice of Olivia Pedrolí is present, but without words. It is an echo in the piano, sometimes a cry. Digitized, it becomes a whisper and then finally disappears completely. The compositions counterbalance what is expressed by spoken or silent voices, as if underlining the ambiguities raised by the themes Olivia Pedrolí has chosen.

/ Set design

Designed to be transportable, the set is akin to an installation. A curved screen on a base covers the back of the stage and a tracking rail with a projector follows its shape. The instruments are distributed from stage right to stage left. Both the images and the musician herself move, while time follows its continuous movement.

/ Participants

General design, writing, composition and videos: Olivia Pedroli

Lighting design and control: Stéphane Gattoni

Sound designer, algorithms and sound operation: Robert Torche

Outside perspective: Nicole Seiler

/ Biography

Olivia Pedroli is a singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist from Switzerland. She has released four studio albums, which have enabled her to explore different musical directions, tour extensively in renowned venues and festivals and collaborate with international artists, thereby defining a very personal style. She has also written scores for cinema and the theatre and has created several audio-visual installations. In 2008, she created her own label/artistic company, Betacorn, which oversees all her projects.

More on www.oliviapedroli.com

/ Technical data

Touring team: 3 to 4 people

(1 musician, 1 light-video manager, 1 sound manager, 1 production manager)

Stage width min. : 9 m Min. Depth : 6 m

Height under grill min. : 4.5 m

Grand or half-grand piano



/ Promotional content

Click on the images and links to access the contents

[Teaser I](#), 2:16 (subtitles in EN)



[Teaser II](#), 2:03 (subtitles in EN)



[Captation](#), 53:16 (subtitles in EN)



Website

oliviapedroli.com

Social media

facebook.com/oliviapedroli/

vimeo.com/oliviapedroli

youtube.com/user/oliviapedroli

Libretto

In French, PDF and paper; in english, PDF.

/ Production

Production

Betacorn

Coproductions

Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne

Théâtre Populaire Romand, La Chaux-de-Fonds

Usinesonore, Bienne

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/ Contact

Compagnie Betacorn

P/O Box 2608 CH-2001 Neuchâtel

info@betacorn.com

Administration

Mariana Nunes

+41 77 520 31 31

info@mariananunes.ch

/ Credits

Photo : Guillaume Perret : cover, pages 2 and 5,

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Texts : Olivia Pedroli, Mariana Nunes, Antonin Wiser.

