



direction, text, music
GABRIELE DI FRANCO

production
LOD MUZIEKTHEATER

CREDITS

LOD

muziektheater

direction, text, music
GABRIELE DI FRANCO

narrator and bassoon
MARCELLO GIANNANDREA

singer - soprano
APHRODITE PATOULIDOU

vibraphone and glockenspiel
PIERRE HURTY

jazz drums set
DANIEL JONKERS
jazz double bass
FILIPE CAPORALI

jazz guitar
GABRIELE DI FRANCO

production
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Vlaanderen
verbeelding werkt



LULELA

LUI, LEI, L'ALTRO
HE, SHE, THE OTHER

LULELA is a multi-layered jazz concert
performed by 6 musicians on stage
with a story that enfolds differently during each performance.

When the protagonist is at a crossroads,
his path is determined
by the decisive power of the audience:
who He will be and what He could have been,
is defined by the public.

The audience navigates through 19 different storylines
of which only 2 are revealed
during each performance,
resulting in a 1 hour and 30 minutes
interactive music theatre concert

INTRODUCTION

A CONVERSATION WITH GABRIELE DI FRANCO ON LULELA

BY KOEN HAAGDORENS

For *Lulela*, Gabriele di Franco wrote a multilayered story into an evenly multilayered musical composition. At the beginning of the performance, the protagonist appears on scene as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. As in a game, the audience functions as identity-builder of the main character throughout the performance. Once the first level of the performance is reached, the performance starts to question itself. We live in a world striving for unity – also unity in identity – and Lulela tries to resist this urge for unification. How far do we go in defining each other's identity? And how much does this impact our own?

Lulela proves the categories we use in daily life to be fluid. The title '*Lulela*' refers to the Italian 'lui', 'lei' and 'l'altro' – or 'he', 'she' and 'the other' as components of a hybrid identity. At the same time, the performance investigates how the performer, the protagonist and the audience become one identity.

CONCEPT

Two observations lie at the basis of *Lulela*.

One. "As a performing artist, you are very aware of the fact that every concert or performance is unique and stands on its own. It can never be simply translated. Not even in the case of an exact copy. Because time has passed, and musicians and audience have changed." Gabriele di Franco talks about how Lulela originated in the research about the relation between music and time. To experience music, is to experience time. "We live moment to moment. You can never experience a piece of music in just one flash of time. You are always captured in the here and now. To be able to experience a composition in its entirety, you have to rely on your own memory and imagination." *Lulela* opens up the possibility to enhance the imagination of the audience, to stimulate their curiosity towards things they didn't think of before.

Two. "After every concert, the musicians and I gather to discuss how we felt about the audience that night. Whether we felt a connection with them. The audience has a big impact on a concert or performance, a lot more than they think. As a kind of subconscious power that hangs over the entire performance. Exactly this power is at the basis of *Lulela*, because the audience is literally in control over the course of the evening." This activates the curiosity of the audience and is to be traced back to di Franco's personal reflection on music and time (One). "By giving the audience the opportunity to decide, you raise the awareness that the performance might have been completely different the night before, and will be completely different tomorrow."

The result is a trip. Navigating through the story, the audience starts to realise that the performance

could have been something completely different on the basis of their choices. What sets out as a linear story that quickly becomes a complex exploration. Whereas the audience decides upon the lifecycle of the protagonist at the beginning of the story, the border between audience and protagonist begins to fade during the course of the performance. Eventually, both come together for only a brief moment of time. A world of endless opportunities and alternatives reveals itself. In *Lulela*, the audience is invited to let go of control and to be open to questions, to insecurity, to the unexpected.

FORM

Lulela is built up in three different parts. At the entrance of the concert hall, the audience is given a device that enables them to communicate one of two options: a or b. The instruments on stage are set up similar to the beginning of a regular concert. Above the stage hangs a projector screen. The musicians enter the stage. The audience is welcomed in English by Marcello – the narrator of the evening. He explains to the audience that they will be requested to make a decision every once in a while that steers the performance in one direction or another. After this brief introduction, the music starts. Marcello starts to speak in Italian and - as a prologue - starts to introduce the protagonist in *Lulela*. The audience can follow the translation on the projector screen as he speaks. Gabriele: “Not much is happening in this prologue, there is no action, the protagonist simply meditates on the question ‘who he really is’, until he discovers something and two different options arise on the spot. The audience is asked to choose one of them, which puts the protagonist’s life back in motion. The next chapter begins. And again, at the end of this chapter, two new options arise, and so on. In the end, the prologue can lead to 19 different endings, of which the audience only gets to hear one.” So far for part one of *Lulela*.

“The projector screen reads: END. But it is not the end. A new version of the prologue appears, with the same two options as the first time around. Yet this time, the other option is chosen, the choice of the minority who did not get heard the first time. Again we navigate from chapter to chapter, enfolding a completely different story around the same protagonist. This time, the manner of deciding between the two options is different: we no longer follow the choice of the majority, instead the audience is asked personal questions: “Are you in love?”, “Would you like to be someone else?”. These questions are also reflected in the story of the protagonist. Depending on the answer the audience gives, the one who gets to decide on the course of the story is chosen. This time the majority gets the word, and the story continues. Until the end – a different one from the first time - is reached for the second time.” So far for part two.

Part three closes the performance. The musicians play the composition a third time, but again a different version from the two previous ones. The audience is no longer asked to vote. In this third cycle, more questions are posed, similar to the ones asked to the audience before. Are these questions pointed towards the audience? Or do we hear the inner thoughts of the protagonist? This line, that has become blurry throughout the first two parts, now completely dissolves: audience and protagonist come together. It seems to be the beginning of a new story and a new composition. Gabriele: “The music will sound very calming at this point. A musical phrase people will want to sing along to. In major, but with elements in minor. Melancholy that eventually fades into a relaxed kind of breathing. Yet movement is still noticeable. As if it can go on infinitely. I want the audience

to imagine a door, through which you can enter again and again into the story, which triggers self-reflection. Because there is no real ending.”

ENSEMBLE

“*Lulela* is performed by a mixed ensemble”, says Gabriele. “The sound is a mix between jazz and classical music.” He writes his composition for an orchestra of six musicians, who all play a diverse and versatile part in the performance. “A jazz drum, because it holds a lot of possibilities: grooves, colours, different timbres. A double bass, that I will use as a jazz instrument as well as a classical instrument. Also a jazz guitar that combines acoustic and electronic sounds, which opens up the possibility for a more electronic sound through the pedals. Additionally, I wanted an instrument that is as melodic as accompanying: the vibraphone. This gives me a wide range of opportunities: the vibraphone has a hybrid function, being that it is also a percussion instrument.” The singing is done by two other musicians. The story itself is told by one of them: “A friend of mine, who is also a real good bassoonist, is a gifted storyteller. He will not sing. He tells the story, while staying close to the rhythm of the music. The one moment he narrates, the other he plays the bassoon. His character brings together the text and the music. Next to him stands a singer, a soprano. She is, like the vibraphonist, the percussionist and the bassoonist, classically schooled, but strong in jazz and improvisation. She brings together these both worlds. *Lulela*’s composition is therefore very diverse: from extremely ‘composed’ to very free. For some parts of the music score, I don’t give any directions. Maybe just an indication about the mood. These become moments of free improvisation for the musicians.”

Lulela is composed of different layers, exploring different moods and emotions, from which the audience only gets to hear two. Gabriele: “The different endings all result in different feelings: melancholy, loneliness, failure, sadness, pride, ... and from all of these feelings the opposite feelings as well.”

BIOGRAPHY

GABRIELE DI FRANCO



Gabriele di Franco, born in Italy and currently residing in Brussels is an Italian **arranger, composer, and guitarist**. He has spent a long stretch of his life as a professional musician; performing, recording and collaborating with many artists coming from all over the world.

Composing music at a very young age influenced by **jazz** and **world music**, Gabriele quickly gets a grasp of these different concepts and interprets them in his own way. This path brought him to lead his own band **BIJA**, that has been awarded the price “Band Revelation of the year 2012”. That same year Bija was also finalist at the “Tiberio Nicola Award 12” and at the “Jimmy Wood Award”.

Two years later Gabriele and Bija released their debut album “BIJA” (Slam production 2014 – UK). He also achieved the podium at “International Fara Jazz Contest 2014” and at “International Jazz Competition of Bucharest 2015” with his trio **MYNAH**, the “Brussels Jazz Marathon 2016” together with his band Rubiks, the 1st prize at “Multiculturita Black Music Contest 2017” and the “Audience Price” at Sibiu Jazz festival 2017 with Bija.

Gabriele graduated in 2014 with a **major in Jazz guitar** (110/110) at the Conservatory of Nino Rota (IT) with an additional year of study at the renowned Musik und Kunst Privatuniversität der Stadt Wien (AUS). After graduating Gabriele moved to Brussels to attend a **Master study in Jazz Composition & Arranging** at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels (KCB). Here he studied with mentors such as Kris Defoort, Lode Mertens, Peter Swinnen, etc. Gabriele graduated cum laude in June 2018. In 2016 Gabriele recorded his second album “INTRO” (Emme Record Label) with MYNAH and spent a long time on his European tour. Since October 2016 Gabriele is working as composer, arranger and conductor for the Bud Powell Jazz Orchestra.

In 2017 Gabriele won the SIAE (Italian Copyright Company) scholarship for authors under 35. In November 2017 he also achieved the podium at the JAZZ COMP GRAZ 2017 as “Second best Composer” with the big band arrangement of his composition “Aspetta”. In February 2018, Gabriele was the sole composer, across all Belgium conservatories, selected to arrange for the live coaching masterclass with Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Jazz Orchestra at Bozar – Brussels. In 2018 he released two albums: In March the album SO FAR, released with the “Gottfried di Franco”, band founded in collaboration with the Austrian saxophonist Stefan Gottfried. And in May of the same year, the album DEDALO from the Bud Powell Jazz Orchestra, (produced by the Ass. Cult. Jazz Bud Powell – IT). In September 2018, among 88 applications worldwide, Gabriele got selected as residency artist for the Bijloke Summer Academy.

Teaching is also one of Gabriele’s passions. Having taught for many years, he encourages his students to see beyond the music. Showing how improvisational knowledge and technique combined with compositional knowledge is a key asset to being a good musician.

In June 2019 Gabriele won the “Elevator Jazz Pitch” presenting his music-theatre project **Lulela**.

ABOUT

LOD MUZIEKTHEATER

LOD *muziektheater* is a Ghent production company for opera and musical theatre, a creative base for performing artists. It undertakes to map out long-term trajectories; with such composers as **Kris Defoort**, **Daan Janssens**, **Dominique Pauwels** and **Thomas Smetryns**, and with the directors **Josse De Pauw**, **Steve Salembier**, **Inne Goris** and **Fabrice Murgia** (for his music theatre productions). In addition, we remain open to those who – always surprisingly, but never by chance – cross our artistic path. Our company is intended to be an overarching platform for these artists, and is meant to offer them the resources to develop their ideas.

It is now almost 30 years since we started creating productions that often turn out to set trends for the contemporary opera and musical theatre scene. The results of these artistic joint ventures are not easy to categorise, and make a lasting impression.

LOD focuses resolutely on what is to come, among other things through our commitment to young talent. We are working on the future of musical theatre through the **European Network of Opera Academies (enoa)**, which provides high-quality workshops for young performing artists and opportunities for lasting exchanges between international opera houses. At the end of the summer we open up our rehearsal rooms to up-and-coming young talent during the **Bijloke Summer Academy**. In collaboration with our neighbours at the Bijloke (KASK & Conservatory, Muziekcentrum De Bijloke and SPECTRA) we select several performing artists who for a month will follow intensive rehearsal periods and workshops on the Bijloke site under the guidance of experienced coaches.

It all started in Ghent, a long time ago, with **Lunch Op Donderdag** (Lunch On Thursday). With a passion for musical theatre. And international collaboration has been one of the foundations of our work since the beginning too. LOD muziektheater, an international production company and place of creation – a view of the world. **Ghent-Made**.

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