

## A puppet show by Great Small Works inspired by the Modicut Yiddish Puppet Theater Baltimore, MD - March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Theater Project proudly presents *Muntergang and Other Cheerful Downfalls*, a puppet show inspired by the Modicut Yiddish Puppet Theater, from New York City's **Great Small Works**, May 3 - 6.

Created in collaboration with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, *Muntergang* is based on the lives and work of Zuni Maud and Yosl Cutler, two radical hand-puppeteers from the early 20th century. *Muntergang* is a bilingual show (Yiddish and English) using a range of puppet techniques, including hand puppets, rod puppets, projections, panoramic scrolls, handmade lighting instruments, flat cut-outs and live actors, with an original music score performed live.



Created and performed by Great Small Works company members John Bell, Trudi Cohen, Stephen Kaplin, Jenny Romaine and Roberto Rossi, with musicians Jessica Lurie and Hannah Temple and puppeteer Sam Wilson. Lights: Meredith Holch.

### About the Production



Founded by artists Zuni Maud and Yosl Cutler in New York in 1925, Modicut was the first Yiddish puppet theater, and one of the most unique and innovative cultural phenomena to hit the flourishing and diverse Yiddish stage. Created by two artists who met working as cartoonists in the Yiddish press, the troupe brought folklore and expressionistic style to high art venues, and fun and satire to working class audiences in the radical art-making milieu of Lower East Side NYC life.

YIVO Institute, with its strong interest in contemporary applications of the historic materials housed in its extensive archives, has been Great Small Works' collaborating partner in this project. An article about Modicut, researched in the collection of Modicut manuscripts and puppets at YIVO and written by Dr. Edward Portnoy, Academic Advisor at YIVO, provided the historical background on which this show is based.

For the past two decades, with Jenny Romaine as its culture-making scholar guide, Great Small Works has contributed to a contemporary reinvention of Yiddish Performance.

"We are fascinated to work with archival materials as we seek to understand the past on its own terms and in its own languages, and as we discover examples of other ways of being and structuring art practices. Yosl Cutler and Zuni Maud were two artists whose work

in 1920's New York City has many parallels to our work today. Our investigation of their Modicut Puppet Theater is a collage in real time--an amalgam of Yiddish newspaper articles, program notes, theater reviews, poetry and essays, drawings and prints by Maud and Cutler, cartoons, film images, heretofore un-translated Yiddish hand-puppet scripts, Hasidic narratives, erotic fantasy, a little bit of enticing horror, and unsentimental political commentary-helping us explore our own social moment and our identities within it."

*Muntergang* presents historical information about Modicut-the team's background, their political concerns, etc.-and then uses this information to provoke new questions about contemporary life in America, and ask important questions about the way we live our lives today!

### About Great Small Works

GREAT SMALL WORKS was founded in 1995 by a collective of six artists, all veterans of Bread and Puppet Theater, to keep theater at the heart of social life. The company draws on folk, puppet, avant-garde and popular theater traditions to address contemporary issues. Great Small Works performs in theaters, schools, parks, libraries, museums, prisons, street corners, and other public spaces, producing work on many scales, from gigantic outdoor spectacles with scores of volunteers to miniature shows in living rooms.



In curated festivals, cabarets and soirees, Great Small Works collaborates with artists from varied traditions, provides performance opportunities for artists in diverse genres, and engages the participation of young artists in the process of finding their own voices. In community-based pageants and parades, the company works with groups of students, activists and artists to address issues of common concern. On any scale, Great Small Works productions seek to renew, cultivate and strengthen the spirits of their audiences, promoting theater as a model for participating in democracy.

Its members are: John Bell, Trudi Cohen, Stephen Kaplin, Jenny Romaine, Roberto Rossi and Mark Sussman.

Great Small Works received a Village Voice OBIE Award (1997), two UNIMA-USA Citations for Excellence (1997 and 2008), and the Puppeteers of America's Jim Henson Award for innovation in puppetry (2005).

*Muntergang and Other Cheerful Downfalls* will be presented at Theater Project, 45 West Preston Street, Baltimore, May 3 – 6, 2018.

Shows are Thursday and Friday at 8:00 PM, Saturday at 3pm & 8pm, and Sunday at 3pm.

Tickets are \$25 for general admission, \$20 for seniors, artists, and military, and \$15 for students, and can be purchased [here](#) or by calling the Box Office, at 410-752-8558.

Ticket link: <https://theatreproject.ticketspice.com/muntergang-and-other-cheerful-downfalls>