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Take good care of this! This is my entire life!

based on Charlotte Salomon: *Life? Or theatre?*

Solo arranged and performed by Joanne Gläsel

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"... And she saw herself confronted by the question as to whether to take her own life or do something madly out of the ordinary ... she saw with open eyes, dreamed wide awake, all the beauty around her, saw the ocean, felt the sun and knew: She would have to disappear from the surface of humanity for a while and sacrifice everything - to create her world from the depths ..."

Charlotte Salomon: *Life? Or Theatre?*

Jewish painter Charlotte Salomon was born in Berlin in 1917 and murdered in Auschwitz in 1943. Two years before her death, threatened by the Nazis even in her exile in southern France, she learnt of a series of suicides in her family. Fear and despair gave her the strength to do "something madly out of the ordinary": Having retired to a hotel, she painted, wrote and rendered **her life as a play of 769 gouaches. *Life? Or Theatre?*** is a universal work of art in a radically new language of images transcending their time.

Based on Salomon's work, **Joanne Gläsel** has created a sensual, theatrical, passionate solo performance. Her play is set in a hotel on the Côte d'Azur between 1940 and 1942. The actress recreates Salomon's creative process in painting, singing, and narrative. She escorts the audience through Charlotte Salomon's work, acting as her representative while at the same time playing the parts of the characters portrayed in the gouaches. By turns we see her in the roles of male and female, old and young characters.

Projections of the gouaches are part of the stage on which the actress moves. She plays within the images, becoming "an image within an image", and expanding the work of art into three-dimensional space. The audience witnesses a human being coming to terms with her individual fate by artistic means.

Take good care of this! This is my entire life! premiered in September 2007 at the **Jewish Museum Berlin** and was performed there as part of the programme accompanying the exhibition "Life? Or Theatre?" from 16 August to 25 November 2007.

Why this play?

Joanne Gläsel about *Take good care of this! This is my entire life!*

I was particularly intrigued by two aspects of the Charlotte Salomon "material": In "Life? Or Theatre?", Salomon has documented a turn in her life that she coped with artistically in a very specific way. If she wanted to survive, she had no choice in this period but to face the question about her own identity, "Who am I?". This in turn is a prerequisite for asking about the identity of the other: "Who are you?" In other words, I can develop an understanding for other people only if I know and am capable of perceiving myself. Daberlohn says: "You need to have gone inside yourself before you can go beyond yourself."

Charlotte Salomon has given a highly personal answer to these fundamental questions of humanity. At the same time, through the universal language of art, her answer can be understood immediately by anybody. The tragedy in her biography is that her emergence was followed only by a very short period of bloom, as the 20th century marred her life in the most brutal way imaginable. She has survived only through her work, with all her perseverance and honesty, her love of life, and her creative courage that I would like to convey in my play.

The team:

Overall responsibility, concept, script, performance: Joanne Gläsel
Director: Soogi Kang
Stage design and costumes: Sonja Kloevekorn
Lighting concept: Rainer Grönhagen
Lighting and projections: Ludwig Laudan

Producer: Joanne Gläsel
Producer's assistant: Jan Wissel
Director's assistant: Sabine Müller
Lighting intern: Iwona Nadolna
Makeup: Cornelia Wentzel
Costumes: Martina Minette Dreier
Video cut: Chan Sook Choi
Photography: Wolfgang Hilse

The play is performed in German. A simultaneous translations to English, or English subtitles can be provided.
Length of performance: 90 minutes.

Produced by Joanne Gläsel in cooperation with the Jewish Museum Berlin with special support from the Charlotte Salomon Foundation © and the Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam.
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Curriculum vitae:



© Photo: Nadja Klier

Joanne Gläsel was born in the Ruhr Area. In 1981, she enrolled at Hanover's College for Music and Theatre, from which she graduated as an actress in 1985. She has been a permanent ensemble member at Münster's Municipal Theatre, Oldenburg's State Theatre, Dresden's State Theatre and the Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin. She has participated in projects with Andrea Breth, Luc Bondy, and Robert Wilson. Since 2000, she has been working freelance on stage and on the radio, as well as in film and television productions. In 2002, she was nominated for the Publikums Bambi award in the category most popular female TV detective. In 1994 and 2004, she developed her first solo theatre performances as well as several staged readings, including *The Thinking Heart - the Diaries of the Dutch Jewess Etty Hillesum 1941 - 1943* and - commissioned by the House of the Wannsee-Conference - *The Woman at his Side - Men's Careers and Women's Entanglement in National Socialism*, which she is still performing.



© Photo: Dietmar Lenz

Soogi Kang was born in Po Hang, South Korea. After studying pottery she went on to do modern drama at the Seoul Drama Centre. Further training followed in traditional Korean mask dancing (BongSanTalchum) with Master Kim Yu Kyung (acting, dancing, percussion, singing) as well as in Pansori (traditional Korean ballad singing). She has acted as a member of various ensembles in Seoul. Since 1986, she has been living in Berlin, where she is currently working as an actress, dancer, choreographer, and director. She undertook further training in theatre studies at the College of Arts in Berlin. She also works as a co-director, choreographer, director and actress for the international company, Theatre Salpuri, in Berlin.



© Photo: Alexa Kreissel

Sonja Kloevekorn was born in Hamburg in 1972. After concluding her studies in art and stage design at Hamburg's School of Fine Arts, she has worked as a freelance assistant stage designer in New York, Zurich, Lucerne, Hamburg, and Essen. From 2000 to 2002, she was employed as an assistant stage designer at the Hanover Theatre and the Hanover State Opera. In 2002, she returned to working freelance with, among others, Johann Kresnik (*Antigone*, Hanover Theatre) and Daniel Karasek (*Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*, *Das weite Land*, *Faust. Der Tragödie erster Teil.*, *Don Carlos*; *Vorher/Nachher*, Theatre Kiel). Sonja Kloevekorn lives in Berlin with her husband and two children.

Press:

Neue Presse Hannover, 15 October 2007:

"... She kept painting to flee from the madness that had driven so many members of her family to take their own lives. Within but two years, the German Jewess Charlotte Salomon created more than 1,300 gouaches. Having escaped from suicide she was murdered in Auschwitz in 1943 -- a gruesome piece of German history that many learnt about for the first time two years ago at the exhibition "Life? Or Theatre?", at the Sprengel Museum. Actress Joanne Gläsel, from Berlin created the solo performance *Take good care of this! This is my entire life!*, based on Charlotte Salomon's life, which can be seen at the Theater an der Glocksee this week ... Gläsel plays all parts convincingly and full of respect. Projections of Salomon's pictures create a singular atmosphere. They show a family trying to find shelter within itself in times of madness, it's naive attempts at continuing to live a normal life until, finally, it is too late ... Impressive: Joanne Gläsel in her solo performance as the painter Charlotte ..."

Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 October 2007:

"... When the audience enters the small hall, Gläsel is sitting on the illuminated stage, with her back to the theatregoers. The play starts in 1913, for years before Salomon's birth. It tells the story of a family shaped by losses and by the pressures of exile and exclusion. Charlotte's mother takes her own life and breaks her promise: 'When I'm in Heaven and have been transformed into an angel I will return and tell you about everything.' ... Over the years, this actress has made many contributions to contemporary attempts at coming to terms with issues related to National Socialism, in particular from a specifically female angle."

Nicole Schilawa

Astrid Schmetterling, Goldsmiths College, London, author of: *Charlotte Salomon 1917 - 1943, Bilder eines Lebens*, (Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag):

"... Joanne Gläsel wonderfully captures Charlotte Salomon's tone, the ironic, playful, unsentimental narrative style that predominates even in moments when the audience is taken right to the abyss of despair ..."

Photos:



© Photos: Wolfgang Hilse

Charlotte Salomon: Biography



© Photo: Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam

Charlotte Salomon, born in Berlin on 16 April 1917, lost her mother when she was nine. Four years later her father, surgeon Dr Albert Salomon, remarried; his wife was the well-known singer Paula Lindberg. The Salomons were assimilated Jews. Charlotte grew up in a cultured, upper-middle-class environment, strongly influenced by her stepmother's art. Among the friends and acquaintances of the family were the likes of Wilhelm Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Max Liebermann, Albert Schweitzer, Clara Zetkin and Albert Einstein. Alfred Wolfsohn, her stepmother's singing instructor, became a very important figure to Charlotte and supported her artistic endeavours. From 1933 onwards the family became exposed to the fury of the Nazis. Charlotte left grammar school, received drawing lessons, and managed to enrol at the School of Fine Arts in Berlin. A prize she won for her work was withdrawn when the school realised she was Jewish, and she had to leave.

In January 1939, Charlotte emigrated and went to live near Nice on the Côte d'Azur with her grandparents, Ludwig Grunwald and Marianne Grunwald-Benda. When war broke out in September 1939, her grandmother committed suicide. From her grandfather, Charlotte learnt that her mother and all family members on her mother's side had also taken their own lives, and that she was the final link in that chain.

"... My life began when my grandmother wanted to take her own life, when I was told that my mother had also killed herself like her entire family, when I was told that I was the sole survivor, and when I felt the same disposition, the inclination to despair and death deep down inside ..."

Charlotte Salomon: *Life? Or Theatre?*

In 1940, Charlotte and her grandfather were temporarily interned at the Gurs detention camp in the Pyrenees. Under the pressure of inner and outer circumstances, Charlotte began to paint her life. *Life? Or Theatre?* was created in only 18 months. She handed it over to a friend, a doctor, saying: "Take good care of this! This is my entire life!"

“... The war raged on, and I was sitting by the sea, looking deep into the hearts of men. I was my mother, my grandmother, all the characters who appear in my play, and I was myself. I learnt to walk all paths and became myself ...”

Charlotte Salomon: *Life? Or Theatre?*

On 21 September 1943, five-months-pregnant Charlotte Salomon and her husband, Alexander Nagler, were deported to Auschwitz by the Gestapo and killed there.

Life? Or Theatre?

A story in pictures by Charlotte Salomon



© Photo: Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam

Life? Or Theatre? is a work full of stylistic ruptures and radical new imagery transcending its time. A sequence of 769 gouaches fuses narrative texts and pictures into a history of the Kann family. Charlotte Salomon chose the pictures from a total 1,300 that she painted as an émigrée in a French hotel room. She divided the collection into prologue, main narrative, epilogue, acts and scenes. The pictures, in their transparent tones modelled on Goethe's theory of colour, are daring, Expressionist, sometimes shrill, sometimes delicate, and they borrow from the composition techniques of modern film: shifts from full shots to close-ups and flashbacks.

Charlotte Kann, the protagonist, bears a strong resemblance to the artist. She tells the story of the lives of her grandparents and parents, as well as her own, from the beginning of the 20th century in Berlin up to her emigration in 1939. The main characters besides Charlotte are her stepmother, Paulinka Bimbam (Paula Salomon-Lindberg), and her répétiteur, Amadeus Daberlohn (Alfred Wolfsohn), between whom a love triangle develops.

A colourful panorama of the 1920s unfolds. The *Tricolor Singespiel* (this is Salomon's subtitle) shows the work to be a libretto for an operatic piece of music. The musical repertoire is highly diverse, including arias from operas and operettas, as well as folk songs and popular songs of the time. Like in a revue, there are dialogues, music, Bible passages, proverbs, and numerous quotations from literature.

Extract:

"... Amadeus Daberlohn, prophet of songs, enters to the tune of the *Toreador's Song* from *Carmen*.

'Toreador, on guard! Toreador, Toreador!'

...

DABERLOHN:

I've had enough of life again.

Where, oh where, has my strength flown?

Oh how this draught my soul refreshes

When down my throat the liquid gushes.

On the intoxicating flow

that, I too, so gladly know!

Torment myself the lifelong day -

If at least the strain would pay.

But no one, none, believes in me -

Just I - oh what a parody!

...

And now you see me a poor fool

As wise as when I entered school!

I'm sure I've had too much to drink.

Now I must go. Past midnight I have stayed.

I shall succeed. My singer will be made.

For magic there's no need,

I shall get her. She must love me."

Charlotte Salomon: *Life? Or Theatre?*

Technical requirements:

The stage should be at least 6 m x 6 m and 2,50 m high, not counting the platform

1 platform, 3 m x 4 m, 60 cm high (or tiered seating)

4 stage weights (or sandbags)

3 C-clamps

Lighting:

5 wind-up stands with TV spigots

4 aluminium pipes for stands

4 pipe clamps with TV spigots

11 lights w/fresnel lenses (min. 500 W, with gate shutters)

1 DMX-capable dimmer (12 x 2 kW)

1 DMX-capable light desk with scene memory

2 multicore cables (HAN) 10 – 15 m

2 plug boxes; 1x HAN to 6 x Schuko

12 Schuko cables (5 – 15 m)

5 Schuko socket strips (3 outlets each)

Colour filter (No. 079 / 201 / 205 o. 147 / 158)


A simplified light arrangement with 2 - 4 spotlights is possible.

The play can also be performed on an elevated stage and/or with rising rows for spectators on a frontal stage.

The **projector** (with a VGA (D-Sub) line) must be positioned at least **6,20 m away from the stage**. The technician needs to have a **full view of the stage**, and it must be possible **to darken** the room completely.

Take good care of this!
This is my entire life !

Lighting plan

 500 W w/ fresnel lens on wind-up stand

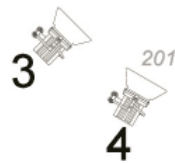
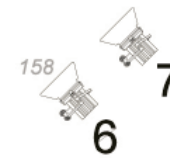
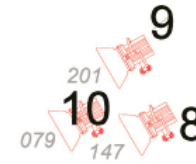
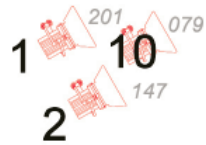
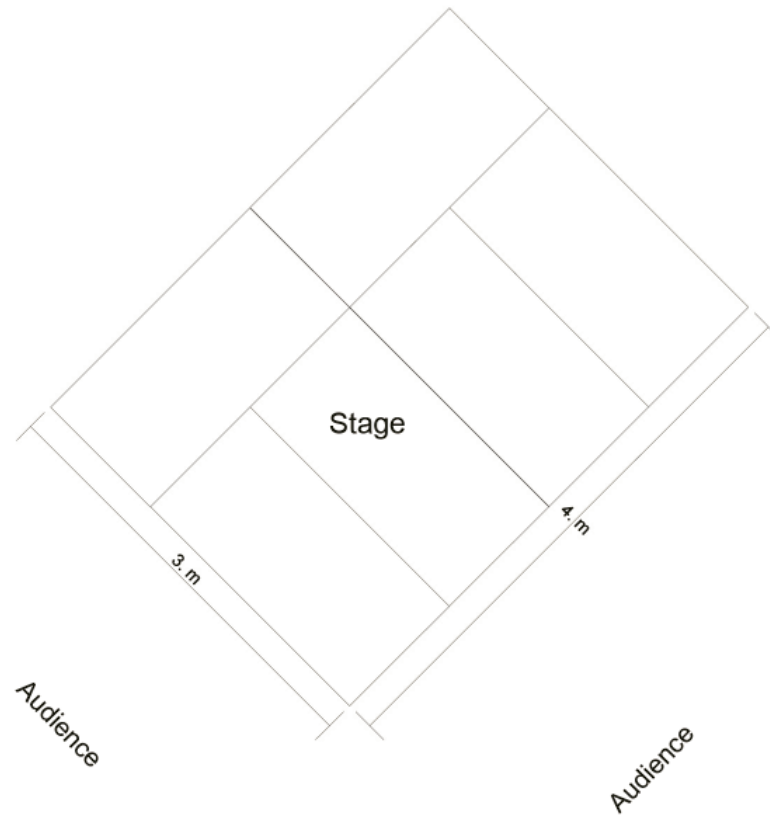
 Side-stage lights

 Video projector
1,500 lumen (ANSI)

 201
Colour filter

 1
Channel

Drafted by Ludwig Laudan
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