

Dia Art Foundation

Judith Malina and Filip Marinovich

Readings in Contemporary Poetry

Thursday, September 13, 2012, 6:30 pm

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Filip Marinovich is a poet and a playwright. He is the author of *Zero Readership* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2008) and *And If You Don't Go Crazy I'll Meet You Here Tomorrow* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011). He wrote and directed the plays *Skin Around the Earth*, *Throne Room Snow*, and *The Karma Bookshop* for his theatre company Comet Party. His work has appeared in *Aufgabe*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *EOAGH*, *Lungfull*, *Revolutionesque*, and *6x6*. He lives in New York City.

He is a double Virgo with a Pisces moon born on September 19th, 1975 in Pittsburgh, PA. He went to boarding school at Brooks School in North Andover, MA, and to college at Columbia and grad school at Columbia School of the Arts. He has a BA in English and an MFA in Poetry. He studied poetry with Kenneth Koch and Ron Padgett at Columbia, and has lived in Yugoslavia, New England, California, France, Greece. He has worked as a teacher at Columbia School of the Arts, The Poetry Project at St Mark's Church, taught a poetry workshop for Occupy Wall Street at Harvard last winter, and as librarian for Occupy Wall Street at Zuccotti Park last fall.

Zero Readership: An Epic (2008) comes with notations that track the geo-political transformation of Belgrade from Yugoslavia to Serbia and Montenegro to Serbia.

So this poetry has, partially, a journalistic function. It intends to show, via poetry, the settings of a particular, war-torn, part of the nearby landscape. It simultaneously presents the voice of a young person, beginning his journey in the world, and in the world of poetry.

four black suitcases against the china cupboard.
what did she pack them for? "We're going! — "

— from "Extended Family Voices"

It takes nerve to subtitle one's first collection "an epic," but coming, as it does, on the heels of the main title, "zero readership," it is both a challenge and a prediction. This life, like all lives, will be epic. The poetry knows that, and Marinovich is confident enough, and is sufficiently prepared, poetically speaking, to take on that challenge, which is the challenge of all artists at all times. "Now it's me," as Ted Berrigan reminded history.

Long lines in Marinovich's poetry like prose tell the story of the emotion, carrying the narrator from one place to another. Medium lines like song lyrics feel the music of the times registered as specific person speaking. Short lines like baubles go into magic of incantation.

History is interwoven with the daily, interjection, the history of a family, interwoven with the history of a culture, a continent.

But there is another level, too, which is the level of the play of language, which shoots occasionally to the surface:

In the crazy love-affair this poet has with the present, we are invited along on the ride, and are happy to go there, even though he doesn't yet know where that journey leads. The excitement of the trip is enough. As he puts it,

You want to make love in Kandahar
with the bombs coming down.

— from "October 2001"

I welcome you to the exciting world of Filip Marinovich.

Judith Malina

Judith Malina was born in Kiel, Germany, in 1926, the daughter of a rabbi and an actress who gave up her career to raise a family. Judith always imagined herself an actress, and not long after the family moved to New York in 1929, she began performing in benefit programs for Jews suffering under the Nazis, understanding at an early age the link between art and politics. In 1945, she became the pupil of Erwin Piscator at the New School for Social Research, where he created the Dramatic Workshop. It was in that workshop that Malina realized she would want to direct as well as act. With life partner Julian Beck, Judith co-founded the Living Theatre in 1947. For over 60 years, The Living Theatre has challenged pre-conceptions of the role of art, beginning with the political plays of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and continuing, in the late 1960s and on, to break completely the boundaries between play and audience, drama and reality, art and life, always in the name of liberation from oppression and absolute freedom of expression.

In addition to her revolutionary theater work, Malina has appeared in such films as *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *The Addams Family* (1991) and *Household Saints* (1993). Her many awards include a Guggenheim fellowship (1985), the 2008 Artistic Achievement Award from the New York Innovative Theatre Awards, and the 2009 Edwin Booth Award from the Doctoral Theatre Students Association of the City University of New York.

She is the author of books of essays, diaries, and poems, including *Paradise Now* (with Julian Beck, Vintage Books, 1971), *The Enormous Despair, Diaries 1968-69* (Random House, 1972) *The Diaries Of Judith Malina: 1947-1957* (Grove Press, 1984), *Poems Of A Wandering Jewess* (Handshake Editions, 1982), *Love & Politics* (Black & Red, 2001) and *The Piscator Notebook* (Routledge, 2012). In addition, her Brazilian diary, which recounts the arrest and imprisonment of the Living Theatre for two months in 1971, was published in Brazil in 2008 by DOPS, the Department of Political and Social Order, which originally imprisoned them and is now a public archive with a mission to reveal atrocities committed in its name.

Judith Malina's poems come from a variety of traditions, from the Old Testament, and maybe older, to the most current version of street language. Keeping it real above all, but real to the heart, and to the humanistic achievements that have lighted our way throughout the centuries. In other words, her art is an art of tradition, where tradition includes the imperative of re-invention. She also believes in the inherent possible goodness of all people, calling for dialogue with the perceived enemy. Her poems express all of that in language that is continually testing itself, its limits of precision coming into focus through her mastery.

Her relationships, and friendships, are touchstones in the poetry:

*...You said that human wisdom
leapt beyond the bounds of
mere mentality. I denied
nothing. Your behests
like any monarch's
can never be withstood.*

— from "Conversation With Julian"

Also central is the awareness of social context.

Malina develops a tradition of poets outside mainstream power structures. Responding to William Blake's "Infant Joy," for instance, from his Songs Of Innocence, Malina finds a reason to continue:

*I said to Joy,
What is your meaning,
Since we are doomed to death
& every end is sad?*

*Joy answered me:
My name is Death's Delay,
So I embraced her
& I bade her stay.*

— from "Two Songs"

We observe Malina's play with language as delight, but also, always, as awareness, and revelation of injustice.

And, with time, too, there is pure human awareness of the fact that, as she writes, "Nothing is permanent."

Ocasionaly, she comments on the art of writing itself.

In the end, there is always more to be done, more to be acted, or enacted.

*On my back I bear my burden,
But my body though saddened*

*Has not been defeated.
I feel myself inexorable.
As I demand the seemingly impossible*

My feet are firmly planted on the ground.

— from “The Roundness Of My Back”

Fortunately, for us, Judith has always had her feet firmly planted on the ground. Please join me in welcoming her to Dia.