

# GIANNA FORMICONE

ARTIST PORTFOLIO



[www.giannaformicone.com](http://www.giannaformicone.com)



## ABOUT GIANNA FORMICONE

Gianna Formicone was born in Italy and, in 2006, she completed a Masters degree in foreign languages and a BA in Cultural Management in Modena. After spending a year as an Erasmus student in Germany where she gained experience as an assistant director at a number of theatres in Augsburg, she took a year off to travel in different countries which enriched her from a personal, cultural and linguistic perspective.

In 2012, Gianna directed her first theatre play in the Sensemble Theater in Augsburg: Vater Mutter Geisterbahn by Martin Heckmanns. At the theatre, she directed contemporary plays with a critical perspective on society, such as Oleanna by David Mamet or Kaspar Häuser Meer by Felizia Zeller.

She recently directed "Genannt Gospodin" by Philipp Löhle, an "anti-capitalist" comedy about the (for many people impossible and absurd) possibility of living without money in this society.

Gianna has been working on projects based on songs, poems or short texts written by contemporary writers or 20th Century authors like Bertolt Brecht or Wolfgang Biermann. In 2017, she worked on the theatre project Das Brot des Volkes which involved the participation of teenagers from 16 countries all over the world.

Her international contacts are the result of a number of residencies and international workshops where she was invited, including Toronto Directors Lab North, Los Angeles Directors Lab West, Carrara and Italy IUGTE. The most recent one was with Dario Fo and Jacopo Fo in Umbria/Italy.

In 2019 she created the company performic, through which she develops her own projects combining acting, dance, music, opera and internationality. She is now living and working in Germany, and she is always looking for new challenges. Formicone is open to critiques and new inputs coming from different cultures.

# ABOUT MY WORK

I directed my first play in 2012 in Augsburg. After working for a number of different productions and theatres as a director assistant, I directed my first play, a modern work written by German theatre writer Martin Heckmanns about family issues. The scenography was made of around 60 huge Lego bricks, which I used in different forms and symbols (for example a large wall, a table, a chair, a border). My work as a director is focusing on providing questions, not merely giving answers. I don't want the audience to agree with me, but to question and reflect on they saw and experienced during the show. I direct (and have directed) a number of plays for children, teenagers and adults in various theatres, mostly in Germany, but because I love to bring together acting, dance, music and other art forms, I created my own company, performic, to create performances based on universal themes, combining different performative arts.

## PLAYS AND PERFORMANCES



### **AUF GRENZENSUCHE (LOOKING FOR BORDERS)**

International performance with drama, live music, installations, dance, opera



### **CONTACT(LESS)**

Theater, dance, opera performance 2020



### **ES IST MÖGLICH, JETZT ABER NICHT**

A drama, music and dance project about freedom - 2019



# AUF GRENZENSUCHE - LOOKING FOR BORDERS

by performic



Living in a world where borders seem to play an increasingly important role in every aspect of our lives, I wondered how I could bring this to the stage and give all the artists, the audience and myself the opportunity to confront this theme artistically.

This performance was divided into three main scenes.

The first was dance, drama (with a Romanian actress) and accordion. It focused on boundaries as a barrier that we put up because we are afraid to leave our comfort zone. Being in the comfort zone gives us the illusion of being protected from the new and unknown things we might come into contact with, like meeting new people who speak an unknown language and come from new places. The struggle to get out of the comfort zone brings us to new life scenarios, if we are brave enough to take the distance. The inspiration for this scene was the poem "In limine" by Montale.

In the second scene, the main and only role took us on a life journey of decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of people in our lives and about our own identity. The difficulty of overcoming personal obstacles leads us to create boundaries, which are sometimes only an inconvenient barrier, and throughout life we may decide to free ourselves to be open to new situations. This scene was inspired by several poems by Paul Celan.

The third scene was based on Kafka's short story "The Community" and is about social boundaries. How we create a group, mostly

for no particular reason, and how we exclude people from it, mostly just because we are a group and they are not part of it. The group of this scene was formed by 5 artists (2 actresses, a singer, a musician and a dancer, two of them from Ukraine) and the unwelcome group was formed by a choir of 10 women, also from different places in the world, but living in Augsburg.

This project gave me the opportunity to manage a large group of participants, as I worked with 10 professional female and international artists, with a choir of 10 women, with a group of almost 10-15 people behind the scenes who supported the show in different ways. The show was conceived in such a way that there was no language barrier, because different languages (Italian, Romanian, German and Ukrainian) were spoken, but in a way that could be understood by everyone. The German audience surprisingly felt a kind of border, because they could not understand everything. Spoken language was not the main means of communication in this performance anyway, we communicated through symbols, body language and strong images.

# CONTACT(LESS)

by performic



During the pandemic I've been spending a lot of time on my own. Not seeing anybody for 36 days brought me to reflect about contact. I re-discovered in that time how many different facets and meanings this word has. That's why I decided to create a performance about it. The title already shows the focus I had.

Through 5 stations, I represented this topic through literature, opera, acting and dance. During the pandemic, people were constantly telling us which were the new rules and restrictions; in the same way, in contact(less) a sound gives the artists exactly 10 minutes for acting/dancing/singing. After the first sound, the artists would start with the same sentence "contact received" and ended all together with the next sound after 10 minutes with "contact interrupted".

In each station, one female artist in a plexiglass cylinder was paradoxically in intimate contact with the audience. The plexiglas structure was the way of being visible and close to the audience.

The first station tells about contact as a form of love through classical of literature like Oscar Wilde, Dante Alighieri and Sappho. The second station is about contact like a bridge between two dimension and tells about Orfeo and

Euridice with some aries of the Orfeo of Monteverdi. In the third station a red thread guides the actress into a stream of consciousness about the word contact and its meanings. In the fourth one the dancer shows what contact is through the daily life and when contact can become too overwhelming. The last station is about the search for self-awareness and contact with the self through the travelling around the world for discovering that maybe home is the best place for feeling well and in contact with one's self.

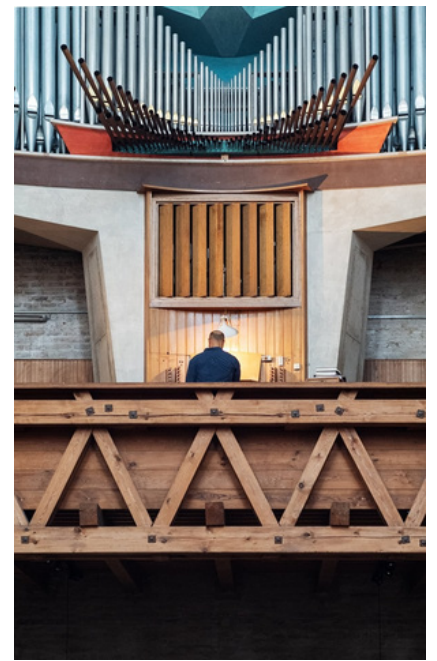
The audience was split in 5 small groups and the artists repeated 5 times their performance in a beautiful garden in the middle of Augsburg. The audience was able to always perceive something coming from the other stations. This wasn't an inconvenience, as it created an atmosphere similar to lockdown, during which the neighbours were getting to know each other and listening to each other, whilst staying in their homes. A kind a contact without contact: contact(less)

# ES IST MÖGLICH, JETZT ABER NICHT



This project was part of the Friedensfestival (the festival of peace) in Augsburg 2019. Four groups of the off theatre in Augsburg decided to put on a theatre walk. I was part of this idea from the very first moment. The festival's motto of this year was "freedom". Each group developed a short scene about this topic and we divided the audience in two groups, that walked through different stops. My scene was in the Barfüsserkirche, which is an evangelical church in the city. It was based on the text of Franz Kafka "Before the law" a short extract of "The trial". The parable is about a man from the country, who wants to gain entrance to 'The Law' through an open doorway. In front of it there is a doorkeeper who says, the entrance is not possible at the present moment. When the man from the country, asks if he can ever go through, he says "it is possible, but not now" (Es ist möglich, jetzt aber nicht). The man waits his entire life for the right moment and focuses on waiting and interacting with the doorkeeper, forgetting about what is actually his aim. When the man is about to die, he asks, why nobody else tried to go through that door, considering that everyone aspires to be part of the law, the doorkeeper answers "No one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it."





Since this parable is for me a metaphor for people seeking and aiming for something bigger but at the same time hiding their failure in achieving it, with giving the fault to others or to the system, I consider this parable an example for people's failure about seeking and aiming for something bigger. Their defeat in achieving it, is hidden giving the fault to others or to the system. This was the path I followed to develop a scene about freedom based on this story and integrating the church with all its spaces.

The man from the country was in my version an actress, playing the role of an employee, who on one side seeks and dreams of freedom (embodied by a Japanese dancer) but on the other side likes and enjoys the security in her life. The interior struggle between trying to achieve freedom and living in a comfort zone with secure financial and social conditions is also supported through the third role in this scene. The doorkeeper is played by the musician who symbolises her alter ego. Walking from the exterior door of the church through the entrance, the sacristy, with looks at the garden, to the chapel to end into the big church with organ, the audience can always see the dancer, because freedom is something reachable for everybody. The biggest problem is that every time when the musician says "it is possible, but not now", the woman accepts almost directly the waiting. Waiting is easier and more comfortable rather than chasing after freedom. That's why at the end, after almost going mad because of this struggle, she decides to give up and to live in her comfort zone without the big dream of freedom, even though it is behind her.

The repetitions in the script, the power of suggestion of the church in all its different places, the power of dance, music and drama together took the audience into a very mystic and introspective journey.



## VIDEOS

AUF GRENZENSUCHE

<https://youtu.be/qnKoBOatdvg>

CONTACT(LESS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlqCoRTXEoE>

KAHNFahrtfestspiele - UND ÜBER UNS IM SCHÖNEN SOMMERHIMMEL...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWJ63qC-zr8&feature=youtu.be>

EINE EINZIGE NACHT

<http://www.sensemble.de/videos/eine-einzige-nacht>

OLEANNA

<https://youtu.be/qnKoBOatdvg>

CONTRABBANDO - CAPOVOLGERE LE GERARCHIE

<https://youtu.be/qnKoBOatdvg>

DAS BROT DES VOLKES

<https://youtu.be/qnKoBOatdvg>

DIE ODYSSEE - ODER WO BEIM ZEUS GEHT'S HIER NACH HAUSE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9QwUBuiPZs>

DIE WANZE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfYcJP\\_7HRY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfYcJP_7HRY)