

Created in collaboration with the dancers Anand Bolder, Andrea Muelas Blanco, Arika Yamada, Camille Prieux, Girish Kumar Rachappa, Harrison Elliott, Ida "Inxi" Holmlund, Johanna Tengan, Johanna Willig-Rosenstein, Lilian Steiner, Mohamed "Shika" Saleh, Noam Segal, Panos Paraschou, Thamiris Carvalho, Vincent Van der Plas  
and the apprentices Ida Hebsgaard Mogensen och Ida Osten.

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Concept, Choreography and

Artistic Direction — Ligia Lewis

Light Design — Joseph Wegmann

Costume — Sadak

Sound Design — George Lewis Jr aka  
Twin Shadow

Music Composition — Anton Kats

Scenography — Ligia Lewis, Pia Gyll

Choreographic assistant — Corey Scott Gilbert

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Production: Cullberg

Co-production: Tanz im August / HAU Hebbel am Ufer, PACT Zollverein

Photo: Moritz Freudenberg

Duration: 75 minutes, no intermission

World premiere: 28 Aug 2025, Tanz im August, HAU, Berlin

Swedish premiere: 11 Sep 2025, Kulturhuset Stadsteatern, Stockholm

In collaboration with Kulturhuset Stadsteatern

Dear audience,

Welcome to *Some Thing Folk* by Ligia Lewis, in collaboration with Cullberg!

In my work as Artistic Director, I seek collaborations that create a meaningful dialogue between an invited artist's vision and the company's identity – collaborations that surprise us, expand our perspectives, and lead us into new artistic terrain.

I was drawn to Ligia Lewis's work because of the urgency embedded in her artistic practice. Her unwavering engagement with pressing political questions and social critique, her exploration of how history is carried in the body, and her ability to imagine alternative futures through performance.

I invited her to work with Cullberg because she is an artist deeply committed to developing a bodily language that resists convention – a language that challenges the dancer's personal archive, learned movement patterns, and the inherited norms of dance itself.

I was curious about the friction and resonance that might emerge when her singular choreographic language encountered the collective intelligence of the company. What would it mean to build a work from this place of mutual unknowing? What kinds of bodies, stories, and futures might begin to take shape?

Historically, some folk have mattered more than others – not just in terms of whose stories are told and by whom, but how these stories are shaped and passed down.

In *Some Thing Folk*, past, present, and future meet. Ligia Lewis acknowledges history while refusing to be defined by it. She challenges the dominant narratives that shape how we see the world, ourselves, and others, searching, questioning, and imagining another kind of folk. A folk that exists in the now, in flux, resisting simplification.

*Some Thing Folk* is a choreographic landscape that unfolds – a figurative and imaginative world in motion. It asks us to consider how we construct who we are, what we are, and how we move through the world.

Kristine Slettevold,  
Artistic Director, Cullberg

This is a written conversation between Ligia Lewis and Mlondi Zondi, a South African writer based in Los Angeles.

*What about this moment in time makes the exploration of the Volk/folk pertinent to your thinking and making?*

At this particular moment in history, a moment of concentrated attention on social /political movements as well as the respective violent political pushback, I observe a reactionary “nativist” return mixed with multicultural nostalgia. What I mean by that is that on the conservative end, far right groups are returning to a sanitized national mythos, and on the more liberal end, I witness a cultural return to some nativist fantasy of what it means to be “othered”, expressed through shallow celebrations of difference without the bite of critique.

I wanted to work on this idea of “folk” not as fixed or exotic, but always in flux: an emergent, evolving collective shaped by internal difference and attentive to the violence of the present.

*Can you talk about the thinking companions you consulted and creative works or stories/tales that you assembled in the development of this work?*

My thinking has been incredibly influenced by two theorists – Zakiyyah Iman Jackson and Elizabeth Povinelli:

Jackson’s trenchant critique of the category of the human from Enlightenment theory as a life form embedded in anti blackness and Elizabeth Povenelli’s critique of late liberal capitalism as a planetary catastrophe from the perspectives of indigenous (as well as black) folks, were both incredibly useful in not getting lost in the romance of transcending structural violence. However, I was moved by their respective notions of “the more than and less than human” – concepts that don’t evade Europe’s colonial exploits or genocidal destruction, but confronts them through creativity.

The anthropologist, David Graeber’s writing helped me forge a process of thinking where ritual, storytelling, and collective embodiment serve more than as folklore nostalgia but serve as communal infrastructures for an emergent sociality. So rituals are less about some magic juju but instead reflect on how talisman, fables, and even tall tales, serve as ways for communities to construct stories and ethos of how to live together.

Choreographically, through the logics of action and activity, everyday rituals appear in this work. Embodied by the dancers as a performative material and affect, the piece explores the stage as a site for a kind of visual narration, already a ritual, already political to reflect on the times.

*Previously, in your work such as minor matter (2016) you questioned celebratory assumptions about collectivity, coming together/gathering, and community. These are terms often associated with the folk/Volk. Which presumptions do you hope those coming to see the piece will rethink about collectivity and individuality?*

The collective as a site of creation, and a source of profound richness, has been disfigured by a Western gaze. Jackson's book, *Becoming Human* also reminds us of that. Individualism is overly represented, articulated and figured in the Western imaginary. In *minor matter*, collectivity is rendered vulnerable by the consideration of black flesh, which is never attended to as individuated. Right now, I'm composing this work in consideration of difference. However by not romanticizing it, or making it an exotic thing, I allow it to exist as a fact of reality. Converging in difference is crucial to the understanding of this piece, and all my pieces, really. But I also want to expose how in the present, even this becomes increasingly fragile.

*The folk, when understood as a style or category of creating and living, is often tethered to notions of the originary, pre-professional, the amateurish, the oral tradition, and sometimes the pastoral: all notions that have to do with rootedness. How does the work approach this commonplace association of the folk with rootedness? When is it generative for the work (beyond extraction) and where do you see or carve a necessary break?*

This is a wonderful question. As you know, my history is tethered to the conditions of diaspora and uprootedness. Also, as my partner has said, humans have feet, not roots. So of course, for me, roots are understood as routes or creative departures and are what I am working with, alongside a political curiosity met with a good dose of antagonism. How do we shake off this condition of some folk mattering more than other folk?

I was far too romantic when I started this project and am now finding what I think this work needs to say.

*- What kind of sound score accompanies the piece and how did you arrive at those decisions?*

I worked with my partner, Anton Kats, on the music, and my twin, George Lewis Jr (Twin Shadow) will mix and master as well as sing over some of the tracks. It was an intuitive process working together. I made a playlist of sound and sonic resonances and he composed out of that. This idea of shifting landscapes guided the process, with some American folk influences and music from other regions of the globe.

*- How do you understand the relationship between choreography, folk, and the Volk? In developing this dance work, what goes into staging the different scales of choreographing (with) the folk, from the group, to the community, to the nation etc.*

I understood that choreography in its more traditional Euro-American usage is an archaic imposition on the body. I have been working on an embodied practice that puts eleven very different bodies in space through a meticulously organized manipulation of time. Hyper constructed and real time investigations are performed through a series of actions (folking/ figuring) and activities (landscaping), so that a visual and musical composition emerges. Every body in space uses their own weight as a guide, however sculpted through an embodied practice I developed where we work on falling together – finding the skin, bone, and blood of ourselves and each other.

With this piece, I also hope to share that the ghosts and goblins, and monsters from our fairytales are really about us – symbols for us to see ourselves, and how we are implicated in the monstrosities of the present, made into monsters whether idly standing by, or directly and indirectly committing harm.

As for “nation”, it’s a trap. We dance to do away with such things.

Ligia Lewis works as an artist, choreographer, dancer, and director. She presents her work on stage, in galleries or museums, through film or exhibition format. Lewis' works are often marked by physical and emotional intensities by which comedy and tragedy collide. Through her work, the performer and audience confront a confluence of processes that disrupt normative conceptions of the body. Her work slides between the familiar and unfamiliar. At the same time, she negotiates the ghostly traces of history, memory, and the un/known. Her expressive concepts form movement, speech, affects, thoughts, relations, and utterances within a highly defined choreographic landscape. Held together by the logic of interdependence, disorder, and play, she creates space(s) for the emergent and the indeterminate while tending to the mundane. In her work, sonic and visual metaphors meet the body, materializing the enigmatic, the poetic, and the dissonant. Lewis's work continues to evoke the nuances of embodiment. For Lewis, choreography is the movement of ideas across bodies meticulously conceived, crafted, and directed— a political act, a writing against the grain of the racial regime of representationalism and (black) erasure.

Some of her recent works include: *A Plot / A Scandal* (2022), *Still Not Still* (2021), *deader than dead* (2020). In Fall 23, Lewis opened her first solo exhibition, *study now steady* at Center for Arts, Research and Alliances (CARA) in NYC (US), which includes the newly commissioned film *A Plot, A Scandal* (2023) departing from the stage work of the same name. A survey of her stage works was presented at HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin, DE) under the title *Complaint, A Lyric* in November 2023, which included the trilogy: *Water Will (in Melody)* (2018), *minor matter* (2016), and *Sorrow Swag* (2014).

She's presented her work in multiple venues across Europe, the US, and abroad, including the MOCA, Los Angeles; HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin; Tanzquartier, Vienna; MCA Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Spazio Griot/Mattatoio, Rome; Mudam Museum, Luxembourg; Wien Modern, Vienna; Kaserne, Basel; Redcat Theater, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; beursschouwburg, Brussels; Kaaitheater, Brussels; Arsenic, Lausanne; High Line Art, New York; Performance Space, New York; OGR Torino; Stedelijk, Amsterdam; TATE Modern, London, and Cordova, Barcelona; and Human Resources Los Angeles, LA. Her work has also been presented at festivals and biennials such as the Short Theater Festival (Prisma artist), Rome; Ruhrtriennale, Bochum, Germany; Tanzplattform, Germany; Spring Festival, Utrecht; Festival Otoño, La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Politik im Freien Theater Festival, Frankfurt; Liverpool Biennial; My Wild Flag, Stockholm; Jaou Tunis; Side Step Festival, Helsinki; Biennale of Moving Images / Centre D'Art Contemporain, Geneva; American Realness, New York; The Donaufestival, Krems, Austria and Julidans, Amsterdam.

Cullberg's ensemble

Anand Bolder

Andrea Muelas Blanco

Camille Prieux (on leave)

Celina Hage

Eleanor Campbell (on leave)

Freddy Houndekindo (on leave)

Girish Kumar Rachappa

Harrison Elliott

Ida Inxi Holmlund

Johanna Tengan

Johanna Willig-Rosenstein

Katie Jacobson (on leave)

Lilian Steiner

Luca Seixas

Lukas Karvelis

Mohamed "Shika" Saleh

Noam Segal

Panos Paraschou

Thamiris Carvalho

Vincent Van der Plas

Guest dancer Some Thing Folk

Arika Yamada

Apprentices

Anton Skaaning Thomsen

Letícia Ferreira

Producer — Emmy Astbury  
Rehearsal director — Agnieszka Sjökvist Dlugoszewska  
Marketing and PR Manager — Hanna Johansson  
Tour Manager — Joel Nenander  
Stage Manager — Johan Hakala  
Head of Sound — Marco Tagliolini  
Head of Costume — Marita Tjärnström  
Head of Light — Alexander Zryd  
Technical Manager — Katti Alm  
Ensemble Manager — Linda Adami  
Operations Manager — Erik Gavelin  
Artistic Director — Kristine Slettevold

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*"Dance is constantly changing, because it is rooted in the times we live in"*  
— Birgit Cullberg

Cullberg is one of Sweden's most well-known international dance companies. We present choreographers from all over the world and produce high quality contemporary dance. By daring to remain in the unknown we aim to challenge, expand and get lost in the possibilities of dance.

Kristine Slettevold is the Artistic Director. Cullberg is part of the Swedish National Touring Theatre, Riksteatern.