

ENSEMBLE WAKS – SOFIA’S TRAVELS

Inge Mandos – vocalist, recitative

Hans-Christian Jaenicke – violin

Klemens Kaatz – piano, acordeon

The Soviet-Yiddish music ethnologist Sofia Magid (1892-1954) knew that she had very little time left to preserve the declining Yiddish music culture from being forgotten. Equipped with phonographs and the corresponding wax cylinders, she set out on her adventurous travels and archived the voices of Yiddish singers.

Sofia’s fascinating personality has inspired the Waks ensemble. The songs she collected in the Shtetl of Wolhynia (northern Ukraine and southern Belarus), which were marked by civil war, pogroms, and hunger, are full of intensity and have a depressing relevance. WAKS has reconstructed and musically traced four of these journeys based on the wax cylinders that can be precisely assigned in terms of time and topography. WAK’s own compositions, modern song arrangements, original phonograph recordings in harmony with the voice of today’s singer, and recitations from Sofia’s fictional diary are interwoven into an exciting and multi-layered concert program. Multimedia elements such as video projections or recorded sounds complement the project with a sensual and dramatic effect and bring the voices from a bygone world to the stage.