



Vitsche e.V.
Bildung & Kultur
Skalitzer Str. 80
10997 Berlin
Website: [https://vitsche.org/de/
board@vitsche.org](https://vitsche.org/de/board@vitsche.org)

Hebbel-Theater Berlin Gesellschaft mbH
HAU Hebbel am Ufer
Stresemannstr. 29
10963 Berlin

Berlin, 29th of October 2025

Subject: An Open Letter to the Management and Leadership of HAU Hebbel am Ufer, concerning the series of performances “Museum of Uncounted Voices” by Marina Davydova (2–11 November 2025)

We, the Berlin-based NGO **Vitsche e.V.**, whose mission is to counteract Russian propaganda and amplify Ukrainian voices across Europe, write to express our deep concern regarding the return of the performances “*Museum of Uncounted Voices*” by **Marina Davydova** at HAU Hebbel am Ufer, scheduled for **2–11 November 2025**.

As an organisation representing Ukrainian allies living and working in Berlin’s cultural and political spheres, we are committed to supporting artistic freedom and open discourse. In this matter, we strongly value HAU Hebbel am Ufer’s legacy as a progressive theatre that offers opportunities to artists who cannot realise their projects in their own countries due to political or economic repression, and that works with respect needed to ensure its projects do not retraumatise or devalue anyone. Such an approach is crucial in a moment when authoritarian forces are regaining visibility and power, including within Germany’s public sphere.

However, we believe that cultural institutions bear an ethical responsibility for the narratives and particular works of art they choose to host, particularly in times of violent conflicts, such as the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine.

Marina Davydova, a long-time figure of the Russian theatrical establishment, presents herself as a liberal exile, while reproducing the very logic that underpins Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Platforming such narratives, especially those emerging from cultural elites in Russia, risks reproducing imperial frames and blurring the distinction between aggressor and victim, coloniser and colonised. On top of that, it actually reinforces the absurd justification of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.



In this respect, we believe that the play “*Museum of Uncounted Voices*” is not an act of a sophisticated reassertion of Russian exceptionalism disguised as irony and self-victimisation. Without proper contextualisation, such framing becomes dangerous, misleading and insensitive for the groups directly affected by Russian aggression today.

Not Handling Complexity Ends Up Reinforcing Propaganda

Davydova constructs her stage as a pseudo-museum of “Russian greatness.” The opening episode presents scenes of imperial ecstasy intertwined with mainstream Russian propaganda claims, where, among many falsified “facts,” the annexation of Ukrainian territories such as Kherson and Crimea is described as a “voluntary joining.” Today such statements in public completely ignore the fact that they are traumatising and triggering without accurately formulated context. For example Davydova herself has remarked that some audience members reacted with alarm to such statements, recognising them not as satire but as reinforcement of Russian territorial claims: “When the actor says: ‘Kherson, Sevastopol, beautiful Odesa — these are our cities,’ a woman — I assume Ukrainian — stood up and screamed that this is horrible, that one must not say these are Russian cities, taking it literally.” (Interview with Radio Svoboda, 31 May 2023) Instead of acknowledging the dramaturgical responsibility for such misreadings, Davydova chose to dismiss these reactions as a failure of audience understanding, implying that those who criticise the portrayal simply lack the sophistication to comprehend the irony. This condescension toward the audience, especially those whose lands and lives are directly impacted, reveals an underlying hierarchy in which Davydova’s “risky artistic provocation” is treated as inherently legitimate, while the lived experiences of the directly affected are dismissed as irrational or overly emotional.

Appropriation of Colonised Voices

In the following scenes, the director assumes the authority to speak *on behalf* of five nations historically oppressed by the Russian and Soviet regimes — **Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan**. She fabricates fictional dialogues among these nations, portraying them as quarrelling over “who suffered more,” as if their histories of violence, genocide, and colonisation were interchangeable. Davydova further underscores this by staging a “short opera” in which all characters sing, “*We are the victims, we are the main victims,*” reducing the anti-colonial struggles of these nations to a caricature of competitive victimhood.

The performance provides no evidence of research, consultation, or engagement with the communities whose histories it claims the authority to retell. It is quite worrying for us to see that in your anti-colonial Institution such a colonial approach is finding its stage. Instead, their perspectives are refracted solely through Davydova’s own interpretive framework — one shaped by a cultural position historically aligned with Russian narratives. In this structure, national



identities marked by imperial subjugation are flattened into stereotypes, and their experiences become instruments for a theatrical concept rather than the subjects of meaningful representation. The result is a reproduction of a familiar hierarchy: a Russian-coded worldview remains central, while the experiences and histories of formerly dominated nations are seconded to a narrative constructed elsewhere.

In political and documentary theatre, representation practices demand responsibility: centring marginalised voices without collaboration, consent, or contextual accuracy is not neutrality but a continuation of the very generalising and identity-erasing structures the artwork claims to interrogate, which in case of Russia often follows with the armed invasion.

We urge **HAU Hebbel am Ufer** to critically reflect on the implications of giving the space in their house to this production without contextual framing.

We call on HAU Hebbel am Ufer to refrain from presenting this production in its current form and to commit to curatorial practices that do not legitimise imperial narratives, but instead centre informed, responsible representation.

We write this letter not to silence but to demand responsibility, to remind that neutrality is a form of complicity in times of rising authoritarian threats and brutal war. We stand for artistic dialogue that is ethically grounded and historically aware, not for the normalisation of imperial trauma narratives or the reproduction of harmful power structures on stage.

We invite HAU Hebbel am Ufer to enter into an open conversation with representatives of the affected communities in Berlin to ensure that the stage remains a space for justice, not for distortion.

With respect,
VITSCHÉ e.V.

Yelizaveta Mamon
Core Member and Project Manager
e.mamon@vitsche.org