

THREE MILE ISLAND

**The Meteorological Setting Of The 'TMI-2'
Nuclear Accident On 28 March 1979**



a multimedia staged concert

upon written and videorecorded contributions by Ignaz Vergeiner
collected by Karl Hoffmann

Music: Andrea Molino
Texts and Dramaturgy: Guido Barbieri
in collaboration with Karl Hoffmann, Oscar Pizzo and Andrea Molino

World Premiere: Karlsruhe, ZKM, March 28, 2012
Italian Premiere: Rome, Teatro India, May 21, 2012

(Stand: 12.7.2011)

On the basis of present scientific knowledge, the radiation doses received by the general population as a result of exposure to the radioactivity released during the accident were so small that there will be no detectable additional cases of cancer, developmental abnormalities, or genetic ill-health as a consequence of the accident at TMI.

The major health effect of the accident appears to have been on the mental health of the people living in the region of Three Mile Island and of the workers at TMI.

Kemeny Commission:

Report Of The President's Commission On The Accident At Three Mile Island, 1979

We stayed in the house. It was blue. You couldn't see anything or nothing. And we were scared. Everything was blue. Everywhere was blue. Couldn't see the buildings or anything. It was just heavy blue all that time. We closed up our doors. We stuffed rags underneath the door so this wouldn't come in. But I think it was all the way in.

Marie Holowka, Zion's View, 1986, in "Three Mile Island: The People's Testament" by Aileen M. Smith

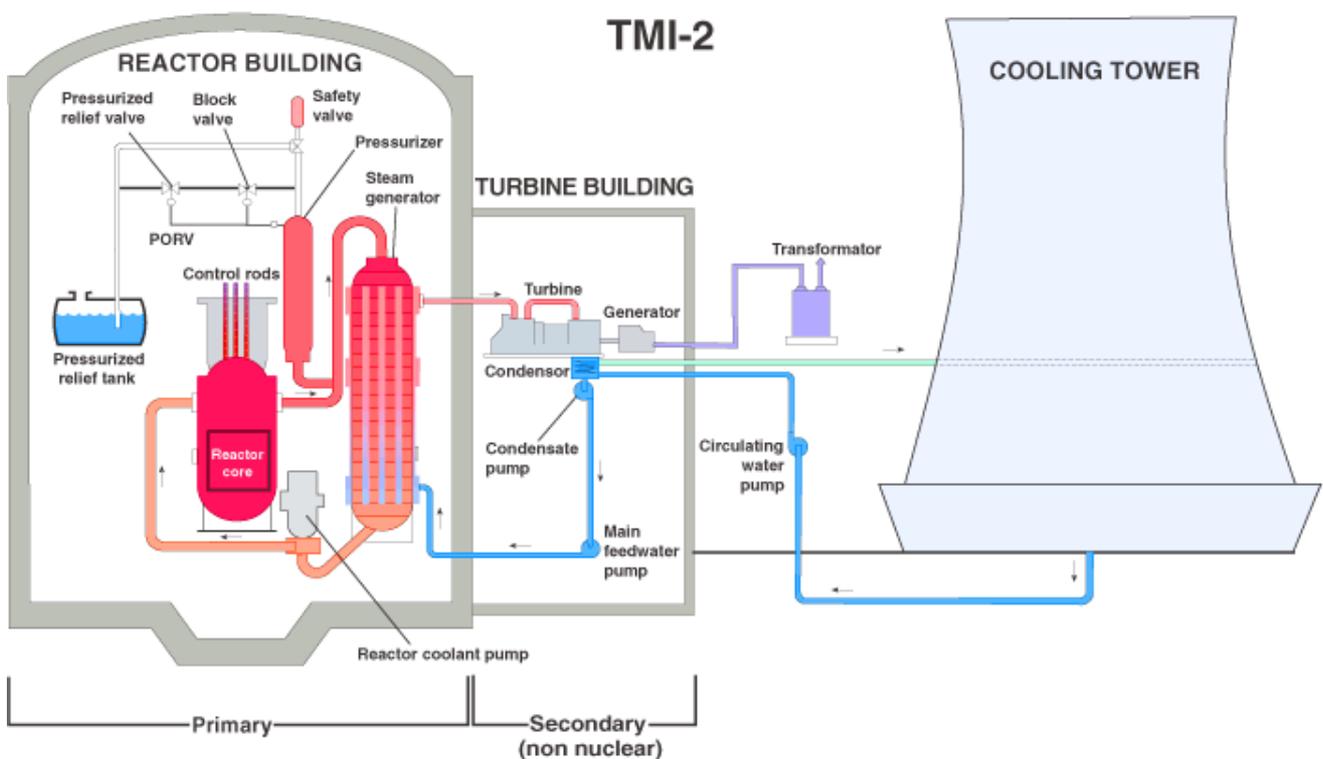
Die besten Dokumente sind die Menschen, die Strahlenschäden davongetragen haben, die später Krebs bekommen haben. Und diese ganze, man kann sagen „biologische Evidenz“ – also nicht physikalische Messgeräte, sondern Menschen und Tiere als lebende Messgeräte für Strahlen und Strahlenschäden, die war offiziell nicht vorhanden, sie wurde nicht anerkannt.

The most convincing 'documents' are the radiation victims who later developed cancer. The so-called 'biological evidence' - not physical measuring instruments but people and animals that acted as 'living measuring instruments' for radiation and damage caused by radiation - that officially didn't exist and weren't recognised.

Ignaz Vergeiner, videointerview with Karl Hoffmann



The nuclear accident that took place in Three Mile Island 30 years ago has largely been forgotten. Only a few people remember what really happened on the morning of the 28th March 1979 when one of the reactors in the nuclear power plant began to heat up because of a faulty cooling system. A few hours later the temperature reached 2650 degrees, just 150 degrees less than the fusion point for uranium. When uranium melts an explosion occurs without fail, turning a nuclear accident into an apocalyptic catastrophe. Between 5 in the morning and 8 in the evening a powerful radioactive cloud reached the houses, the villages, the stables and the fields around Harrisburg. It caused the death of cattle, destroyed the harvest and left thousands of people contaminated. Many would fall ill in later years and die a premature death. A tragedy that has been kept out of the limelight, a conspiracy of silence.

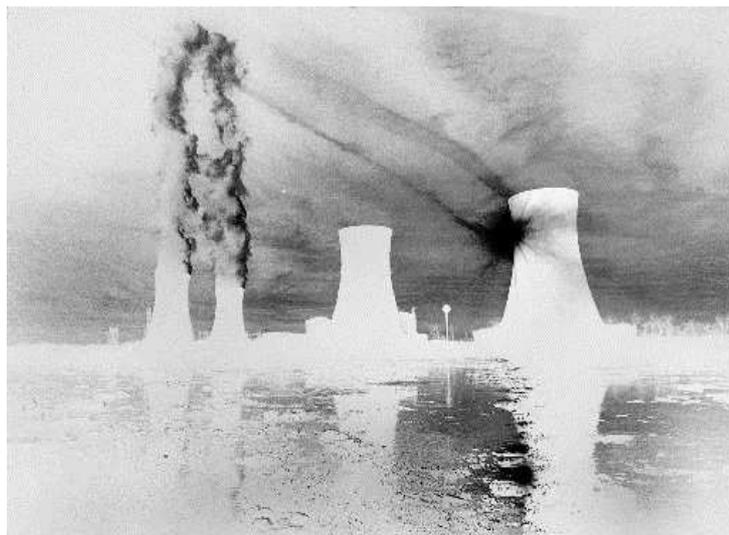


Over the past 30 years many journalists have investigated this affair and many documentaries and information campaigns have tried to shed light onto it. One of the key figures in this battle for justice was Ignaz Vergeiner, an Austrian meteorologist commissioned by the families of the nuclear accident victims to write a scientific report about the pollution levels that had been reached in the surroundings of Three Mile Island after the accident. Vergeiner's research, conducted on location, leaves no doubt. In the first 24 crucial hours the radioactive cloud travelled much further than the data released by the authorities admitted. Also, the polluted area was 5 times bigger than the official reports stated. The damage to people, objects and the environment was serious and irreversible.



No lawsuit, no criminal court or judge has ever brought the guilty party to justice and only Vergeiner's precious document highlights the seriousness of the accident. Unfortunately his premature death put a halt to his efforts to identify and to denounce the people that are responsible. However, in the weeks before he passed away, the scientist revealed the details of his American adventure in a 7 hour filmed interview with his friend Karl Hoffmann. The play, inspired by this existential parabola, focuses on the solitary scientist that, equipped only with his measuring instruments, fights a fierce battle against the powerful establishment that has hidden the truth for many years.

Most of the data that Vergeiner collected refer to wind speed, low and high air pressure, the movement of air currents, to numbers that try to fix the lightness, the volatile quality and the transparency of air on paper. The same air, apparently innocent and invisible, has brought death, destruction and sorrow to the idyllic peace of Three Mile Island. For that reason 'air' will be the key protagonist in this theatre production. Images of Harrisburg before and after the accident will be projected onto floating screens. Reactors, maps, documents, diagrams, calculations, landscapes, measuring instruments, circuits, conducting wires, pipes, cables etc. will be on show. An interactive intermedial installation - the "Cloud" -, designed by a creative team of the Centre for Arts And Media in Karlsruhe and of the Media Arts department of the Zurich University of the Arts, will react in real time with the live performers and provide documentary style, factual information: the voice and face of Vergeiner, the testimonies of the survivors and the interviews with family members of the nuclear accident victims filmed on location. Those audiovisual materials are continuously counterpointed by the Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart; the narration is reinforced and underlined by an extremely varied vocal texture. The instrumental part, performed by the Klangforum Wien, is also organically involved in this dialogue and with the help of amplified percussions, wind and string instruments adds meaning, lightness and expression to the element 'air'.



Today Vergeiner's scientific and 'political' heritage has been passed on to his son, also a meteorologist and environmentalist. In the play he will pronounce the last words on stage.

Instrumentation:

Solo Vocalist / Speaker

Vocal Ensemble (7 voices): Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart



Instrumental Ensemble (12 instrumentalists): Klangforum Wien

klangforum Wien



featuring
Ignaz Vergeiner (video)
and Johannes Vergeiner

Live electronics
Live video

a co-production of ZKM - Centre for Arts and Media, Karlsruhe, Accademia Filarmonica Romana and Istituzione Universitaria dei Concerti (IUC), Rome in collaboration with Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) - Media Arts, Klangforum Wien, Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart, Teatro di Roma



with the support of **GREENPEACE** Italia

RAI Trade music publisher, Rome



duration: 75' ca.