

DRAMATURGI DISKUSION MED MAXIM:

Circus already to start with, is so much more than theatre or dance. I think that what we don't need at least is the parasites from the theatre to come and tell us what we should do. I think that basically, the people from the more established art forms, they very often have a very xxxx view on circus: "We are the originals, they are the culture, so we eat with fingers and maybe our food will be better if they give us the fork and the knife, which could be the dramaturgy or meaning. It's not enough to present your technique, your technique needs to represent something else, we need to add something on top or behind to make it more".

I do not believe in this, I believe conventional theatre is already totally dead, it smells like an old corpse, trying to provide tools that have no meaning any more. To us, for me, it's so offensive; I think it's one of the biggest offences I could see. In my company for example we perform and then a theatre person come and say: - yeah aaah, it was very interesting, very nice, but the dramaturgy was.. Then I say: - what do you mean dramaturgy, there is no dramaturgy, there is no drama written there.

For me, the whole idea of insisting on the presence of drama, or the writing of writing, which that means, is just idiotic. It really winds me up. In my work I don't have dramaturgy, I don't use dramaturgy. I think for me... To come and talk to me about dramaturgy is like... I never use that word. You know, there are feminists who never use the word history, because its HIStory, they prefer HERstory. For me it's like that. I think it's a colonialist thing for someone to come from the "elite culture" to me as the original from circus and speak about dramaturgy, that I need that. I know I don't. My work is certainly richer than the conventional theatre based on some cardboard scenery and pretending to be something that you are not. I think what happened in the medieval times, when we were all in the market place, when we were all jugglers, telling stories, playing music, dancing around, juggling... then some jugglers were more into playing the lute or telling a story. They found the possibility to write down what they do, to "textualize". So you had a script for your play, you had notes for your music, and of course that was supported by the people in power. Like the church was very happy because they could control the music in the church, exactly how it affects the emotions of the people. It's a power game. So it was very useful for them to have the notation for the music. Just like for conventional drama, to have the script, while commedia dell'arte, more improvised, was kind of left outside, because you couldn't really control what they said about the people in power. And I think that was why we were left with the gypsies, in the street, travelling around with the tent and the caravans.

Those art forms that were able, and started to "textualize" and conceptualize, and intellectualize themselves, could kind of take the power position. And our craft maybe didn't evolve as much, it stayed on the level of a simple act. I show you my act and my act is the walk on the wire or the act of juggling. So then what happens later, when some of the other art forms are putting their head a little bit too deep inside their own rectum and they start to look at the life of circus, they come there with an attitude like: "Look, I have tools you really need, you need dramaturgy, you need characters, you need this and that." And I'm not so

sure that it is like that. I think that what we have is something that is real, that is really really in life, that touches the six senses. Then obviously there is another thing which is about the suppression of the mind and the body, starting from Descartes, and the whole idea that mind supersedes the body, so obviously even if dance notates itself down and is kind of “textualized”, it still has a body moving, that thinking is not the same as with theatre or music, so obviously dance is lower. That’s why it gets less money in society. So what dance does, it starts to conceptualize itself, it starts to talk about research and we need to... It goes somewhere I think it’s maybe ... It obviously loses something. The sheer joy of moving is kind of disguised behind these words. And that’s something that the dance is now offering the circus. And I’m not sure if that’s so.. Well, in terms of cultural politics, we need to fight the same fight. We need to pretend that we are more clever than that. To get more money. So for that reason that fight is understandable. But then from the point of view of an artist, Is that really relevant to me? No, it’s not. I don’t think so.

Tilde: And that’s the pain with this in a way. I felt that shit, am I destroying the thing I’ve been fighting for?

So what I try to make myself into is not the stupid intellectual, but the clever anti-intellectual. That’s my position as a director. I work with circus. But I’m not stuck with the idea of questions like Is there technical skill? Or Is there popcorn? Or Is there a story? I don’t care about that. I just do, and then I try to invite people that would like to be in the project. Not actors, but anybody else is welcome and then I welcome them with open arms. Then we work together and I try to be the director. It happened gradually. I was making performances. In Finland you don’t tour. It used to be like this, you perform a few times and then you have nothing else to do, so why not make another performance. It partly has to do with my people skills, which is not my greatest asset, so it was very difficult for me to invite someone to be on the outside and judge my work and let that happen. I was too insecure to let somebody be on the outside and judge, so I ended up kind of calling myself the director from the stage , so obviously that’s not the greatest idea in the world, so I drifted to be not on the stage, but outside, looking at the others and working with them. So gradually I became just the director. I’d like to think that I have more potential as a director than I ever had as a performer. So I think it’s a good direction for me. /.../

When they have bought the ticket to see the show, they sit down, they are already in, it’s quite difficult for them to leave. So I think that if there is something you want to touch the people with, you need to kind of get them off guard a little bit. If you hook them in immediately, they are: ok, I paid for the ticket, I made a good choice to come here and it’s going to be fun. But if for say, the first 8 minutes, 15 minutes, they start to question, is the director an idiot? That looks kind of scary, that actually looks quite out of control, I’m not sure if this is going to work, they are a bit shaken, and I think after that it’s easier to get under their skin. So I like to start very weak, even I think that Petit Mal has something of this in the beginning. Even in the first five minutes, is this choreographed, is this not choreographed? When they wrestle and all these questions, you don’t quite know how much in control all that is. In some of the more theatrical things that I have done, it’s a more stylistic choice or structural choice, It ends, but there is another scene for five minutes where we transform the image of the stage. Petit Mal had that as well.

Why a fake ending? What's the point?

I don't want to make people feel unpleasant, I don't want to give them that feeling. I'm a regular guy from a regular family and I want to make something that is kind of enjoyable. But if there is something that I believe in that can touch maybe me or somebody else in some way, I think it needs to be kind of off. We have seen so much TV, we have seen so many shows and we know how it works. People can anticipate. And when you follow the natural rhythm, you're only working along the safe rules. So if I feel that it should stop here, it probably needs to go on longer, and the other way around. It needs to have times when it's off, and that's when... I'm much better at making things too long than making them too short, but that's something that I am trying to learn, to make things shorter. And then for the ending, it's over, ah, I understand, now it's over. But it's not over. And then it's going to transform. That's something I use and that's a pattern I have and I quite enjoy it. A performance should be coherent, consistent, have a line... and I kind of made a choice to try to follow another structural idea. It's the idea from Catalogue, because the idea from Catalogue is used as a way of criticising a badly composed performance, especially in France. It was like, oh, it's like a catalogue of different ideas. But a catalogue is wonderful, because like a novel it takes days to read. You don't read a novel in one hour, so that's probably a bad form for a one hour performance. But a catalogue, like Ikea or Claes Ohlsson, that's beautiful. They are loosely connected but it kind of makes sense. So a catalogue is my ideal form for a performance. /.../ What does it mean that I am a circus person, coming from that background to do a theatrical performance, directing? I think it's partly a question for this real and concrete and the six senses. So for example for the next one I'll be working with scientists and artists together and that's not very special, I mean, that's kind of trendy. But lately the topic that I'm working with, I think it brings a whole other level of reality and meaning that wouldn't come from normal theatrical points of view. So I love the feeling when I'm driving a car and I lose control and there's this moment when I'm scared, so obviously I'm a control freak in my life and in my work. And I like to gamble, I like to be more drunk than I should be, I like to lose control of my car, so obviously there's problems somewhere. I'm definitely a control freak. Maybe that's the paradox, maybe that's why I'll never be successful enough. For me what I do is experiential, it's not experimental. That's important to me. But then to be able to do that and to stay alive, I need a lot of control in some other levels and a lot of people really hate that in me. It's really unbearable to work with me. Because I need to know what's happening with the sound, where we are. But I'd like to think that I'm learning to be a better person to work with. Trusting other people. That they have actually studied for five years to do their thing and they probably know what they do.

Is it painful?

No, it actually takes pain away from my life. Not having to worry so much. And I'd like to think that having a child has changed some things in me as well. Of course risk is important. Without that I don't think there is art. But then the risk needs to be controlled. Needs to be reasonable risk, or you won't stay in the business. Without massive luck. Juggling is all about control. You kind of let go, but you need to stay in control. You have to calculate and estimate and be sure that they land in your hands at the right time. A lot of jugglers that I know are really anal and real control freaks. A lot of jugglers are unbearable to be with, probably me included, so there's definitely something there.