



Texts from the rehearsal process of Oblivias Obsessions in January 2021

After the rehearsal process in January we wrote down what we thought that the piece was about. A process that took place in Helsinki, Espoo, Düsseldorf, Berlin and Brussels. We want to share the writing with you to give in an insight of where we are.

This early period is a material generating process with the Oblivia methods: Do what you saw and Show and Tell. Weekly we gather together the materials from the different parts of the process in big impros.

Annika, Anski and Timo worked together in the studio in Helsinki and Alice in a studio in Düsseldorf. We warmed up, worked out material and improvised via zoom. The other artists joined for discussions and watched improvisations.

In the last working week we wrote down our thoughts on the performance. Below are each artist's view on what the piece is about.

3.2.2021 What is the piece about

"I see there is quite distinctive material that is captivating and hypnotising, material that is not self explanatory but rather poses questions and asks for relations. Long passage of repetitive movement that slowly shifts and intrigues me, are seemingly one but holds kind of a secret to be other. It is quite easy to sink into, follow the flow, but deeper connections in the thematic level are not made for me. Though the strong characters appearing time to time make me question, who are thee, in which world and relation living in, make me frightened, they are so alien but suddenly I recognise my own mantras in them. This is an intellectual task that I choose to do or not".

"It is about obsessions. About going through time. About time travelling. About dancing through time. About how history is layered in us and a narrative of being in this world is emerging. It is about what we learned in schools, already Romans knew, nothing new under the sun. But it is also about living in today's world. It is escalation. Intensity escalating. I hear the drums.

It is also about a stubborn western heritage, a very western narrative. One on the brink of the west exploding, imploding, crumbling. Naive, thoughtless in its self-importance.

Images of the west.

The time traveller is an avatar, a manifold personality, a vampire, an Orlando, travelling through time from Romans to today. Visiting Roman sensibilities, peasants dancing away in an imagined folk dance. Brughel, Hieronymus Bosch, Shakespeare's Kings and Queens, all these women sidestepped popping up through time. Daddy in his 50' garage on the brink to the 60's. Rock'n roll.

Perhaps we put the light on places, times in history that are turning points when all change. The 50's-60's. Capitol Hill. The decline of the Roman empire. The Elizabethian times, the golden era, when I do not really know what happened. Shakesperae was also traveling through time. We all are doing that, as artists".

"Obsessions is a performance where the Obsessions is at times slightly gone or lurking behind the curtains or still awaiting in the materials to emerge...

It is a strong performance with multiple associations, with more light and lightness than dark and darkness and I feel this is good for the world as it is at the moment. If we can perform the *obsessive* through bright and cheerfully, even distressing but not oppressively exhausting means, we will come up with a great Roman victory (with golden coronals and roses thrown).

Obsessions is about the orchestra and singers we yet don't know – it's about massive sound worlds, airy, clear, abruptly ending melodies, wistful tunes and repetitive noise. It's so beautiful that it aches and it's surrounded by amazing light choices that make the audience just want to stay in the moment and never let the piece end.

It's about extremely strong and refined presence, materials that don't really seem to fit together but somehow manage to make a full dramatic arch with delight and exaggeration, repetition and exhaustion, suspense, threat and resolving”.

“Time travel, traveling through time and places, observing, trying to grasp what obsession is. The romans. Some greeks. Shakespeare. The Americans? What about them? Louis XIV. Paris. Dancing in the 60s, but that's again America.

Maybe times and places mix, dissolve and are stripped naked to what is lying underneath? Hunger for power. Freedom. Trying to gain control. Over the raging mob called the people. How is this control being taken? How do we make this bunch of animals a civilized society? Civilization. Architecture. Buildings. Arts. Songs. Language. Laws. The body is always trying to slip away from these kinds of prisons. Showing it's lust, sticking out its greedy fingers, tongues, toes. Making beautiful sculptures, figurines that we want to place into a garden or put into a museum, so we can remember forever who we were in pictures. Menkinds obsession with itself. The need to be seen in order to know one exists. Have we really taken all measurements to prevent extinction? Or will we end up like the dinosaurs, our bones being exhibited in museums. So sorry, you guys did not make it. Not sorry, this time it was your own mistake.

Shift of perspective: I see rush, agitation, haste, restlessness, fray. No time to let anything strive, unfold, there is just so much to do. We are busy, all the time. Progress, we need to progress. Always a next thing coming up after the other. Then suddenly: endlessness. All the time in the world. Serenity. Floating bodies forming constellations like they have always been there and always will be.

Then BOOM, an explosion. Power to the people. We're rolling back to Rome. Luxus maximus. Let freedom ring. Fucking free. Fucking free. Fucking free”.

“First of all it is an Obsessive process to work with OBLIVIA in any case.

Obsessions about doing DWYS or sometimes also DWYH, passion to keep the ideas growing that came out of creative development.

It is a process of complementing one another and positive confrontation.

The coexistence of the obsessive world—concentrated stillness, coherent mess and systematic explosion—with happiness, sadness, and meanings.

The idea of three scenes building up a net of epochs, with various geographical and political cultural styles, with very symbolic costumes and accessories”.

“As we all know from history as well as from current times, different endeavours and aspirations have intermittently varied in the world and affected the societies and communities we live in. There has been times when great emperors, tsars and caesars have enjoyed the favour and popularity of their people, despite of enslaving some of them. There has been time when tens of thousands of people have followed the command of a king or a monarch, willing to acclaim and honour their ruler.

Of the most imaginative reasons have the emperors used the bureaucracy around them to change the world to fit their aims, dreams, musts and obsessions. At the same time, their people have had their own musts and obsessions to relate to a greater power, to be governed or at least, to belong to a kingdom or realm.

Today is no different. The urge to be ruled, to identify oneself with the great leader, the winner, the black horse, the ambassador of authority, is here again. There are the happy peasants, the enslaved ones, the citizens, social climbers, careerists, middle people, loners and hermits and on the other hand the emperors, both groups obsessed with each other, obsessed with owning their roles, or, on the other hand, giving them up, presenting themselves disjointed from power. All obsessed with being pro, with, against or without. All in a boiling soup of desires”.

“What kind of a sensation does a Roman sculpture have of its own body? What kind of an attitude is hidden in its posture? What was it dreaming of just before it was buried under the burning ashes in Pompei? What kind of sound was it making? What kind of Roman bodies can we dream up? A slave is escaping through the cloaks or maybe it’s just an underground passage full of long forgotten stuff. Must find out! For sure there is something! Something strange and at the same time familiar, something that we dreamed of already when we were children. It’s pleasant to keep diving into ancient times and places dreaming of people and events that are so far away that one can make them to just about anything and they still feel so real. We’re rolling back to Rome, we’re rolling back to Rome, we’re rolling back, we’re rolling back, we’re rolling back to Rome (repeat).”