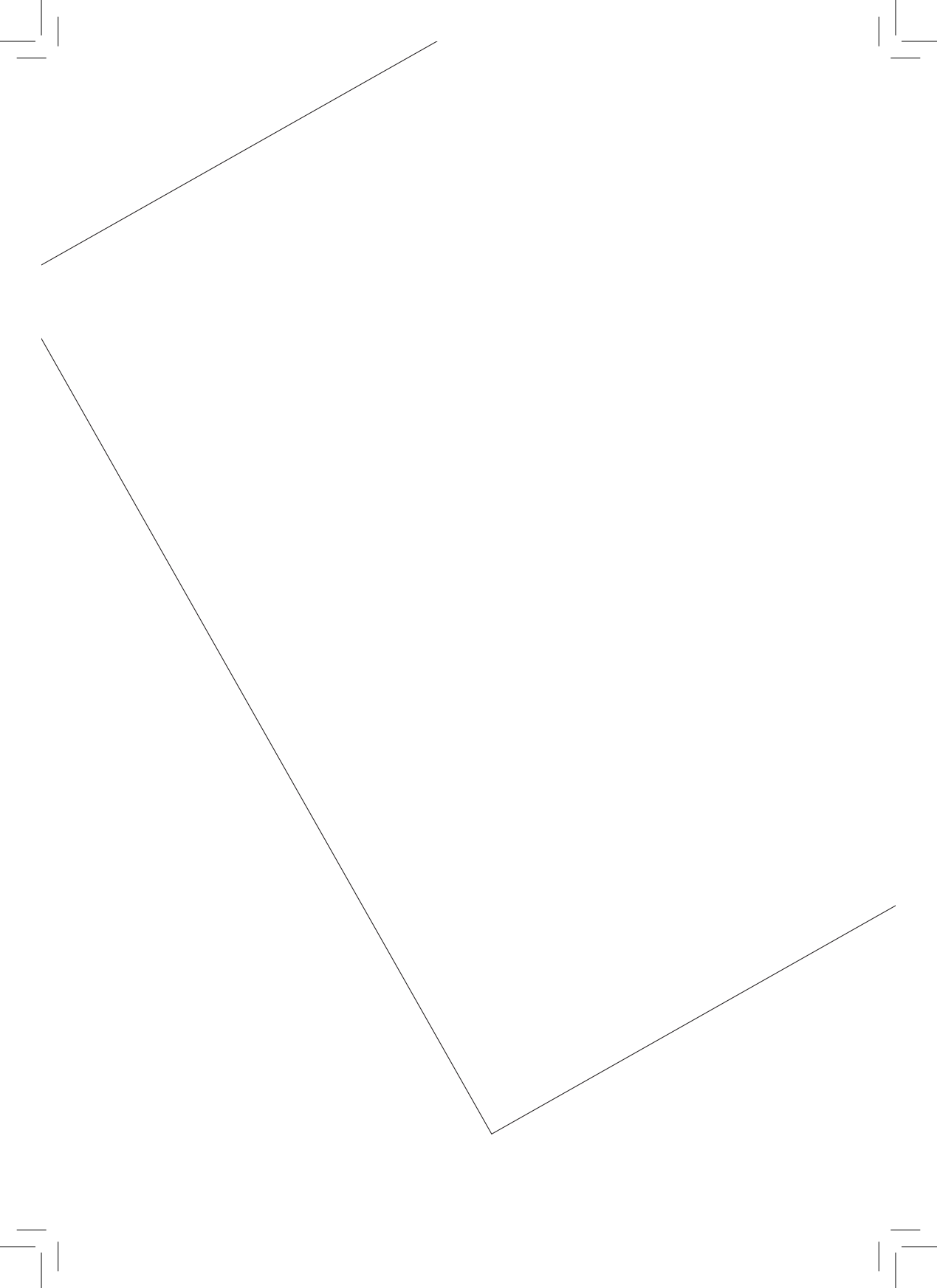


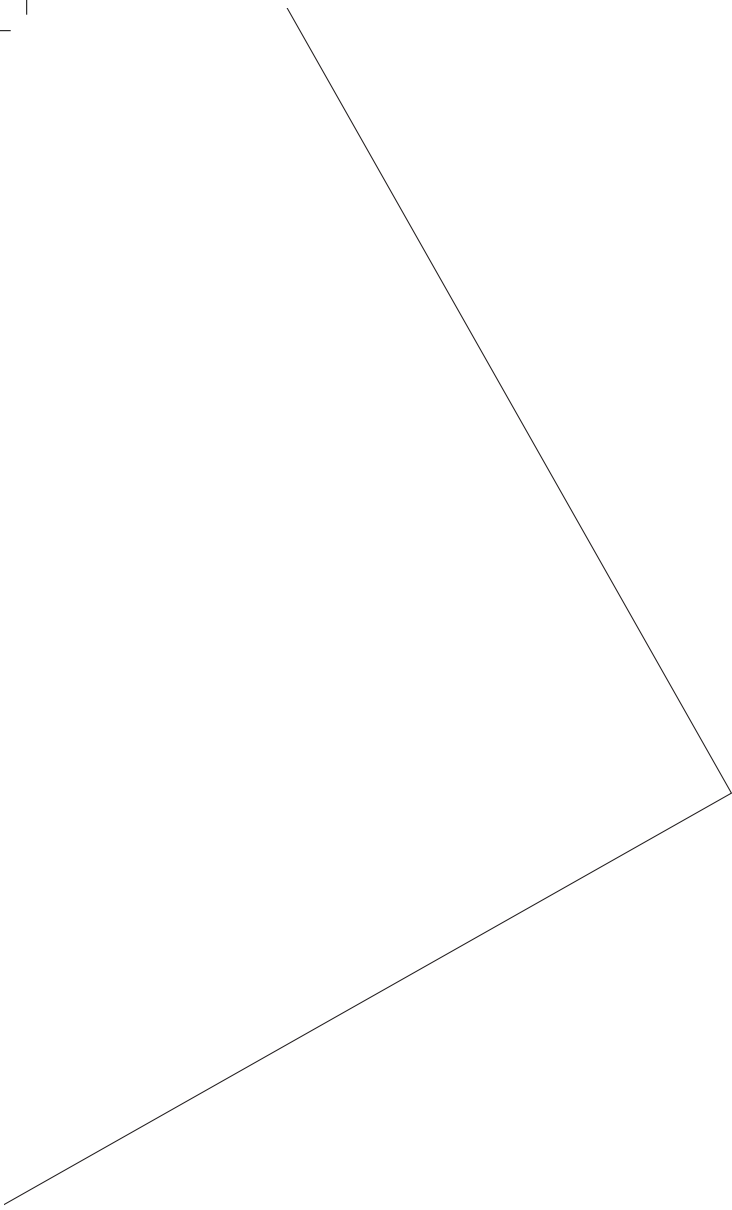
HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

and 8 more excerpts from Swedish
contemporary playwrights



SWEDISH
PERFORMING
ARTS COALITION





Scensverige / Swedish Performing Arts Coalition (SPAC) is an NGO with members representing the performing arts sector; the institutions, the independent artists and organizations, the universities, the employers organization and the union.

Our main objective is to facilitate and promote the development of the performing arts as well as support international collaborations and the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

The Swedish Performing Arts Coalition is supported by the Swedish Arts Council, and collaborates with the Swedish Institute, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, the City of Stockholm, among others.

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Photo: Cim Ek

ADEL DARWISH

Adel Darwish (born 1993) was a student at the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg. He previously studied at The Institute of Film and Theatre in Aleppo, Syria. In 2016 he staged *Three Question Marks* at Skara Skolscen, with directorial assistance from Eva Andréasson.

In 2017, Adel awarded in *Shanghai* at The Göteborg Opera. He also appeared in the feature film *Ghabe*, and has written and performed in a number of short films in Syria and Sweden. In 2019/2020 he starred in Mattias Anderssons *We who got to live our lives again* at Backa Teater and at The Royal Dramatic Theatre.

About *Hierarchy of Needs*

The play premiered at Backa Teater, directed by Mattias Andersson. The production as well as Darwish himself were the topics of a Swedish State Television documentary from 2020, named *When the soul trembles*.

Hierarchy of Needs is a play written in the midst of a brutal and chaotic time marked by war and lines drawn between people. The play is about a guy who wants to put on a play with his friends. He's on a stage in one country and his friends are on stage in a different country, one where war rages. They're in the same setting, "the theater", yet in different locations. The guy tries to write the play by exploring the room and tries to contact his friends by way of a digital screen. When he does make contact with them, reality begins to disintegrate. He's at the theater to meet an actress and tell her about the play he wants to put on, which he also wants her to take part in.

The text is immediate, poetic, and disconcerting. It swings between reality and fantasy in three different dimensions of time. What has happened, and what will happen? Who is alive, who is dead? Are the present and the past always at hand in the future? Which human needs are in fact relative, and which are universal?

Hierarchy of Needs (2019)

By Adel Darwish

Duration: 80 minutes

Cast: 2-8 actors, as well as 6-8 actors appearing digitally

(SWEDISH ACTRESS sits down on the floor and ADEL moves to sit on the chair. But the plant is on the chair.)

ADEL (speaking to the plant)

May I sit here?

SWEDISH ACTRESS (assuming the role of the plant and responding to Adel's question instead)

If I say no, then you can't sit down, right? Hahaha

ADEL

Why are you wilting? I should water you. Yes, of course you need water.

(He waters the plant)

SWEDISH ACTRESS (hysterically)

No! Anything but water! Anything but water! You torment me when you pour water on me. Listen to me! Ever since I was created I have drunk nothing but water. Why? Why am I doomed to only drink?

I'm hungry. Where is my mouth? I'm tired of routines. I want to eat something, anything. I can eat shit/garbage.

Oh, God, why didn't you give me a mouth?
Do you hear me, you evil bastard? Stop it! I can't hear myself.
Stop, please, please, no, no!! (She faints).

Adel can't hear any of this. He just keeps watering and smiling. A song that fits the situation comes on the radio. He dances as he waters the plant. He stops when the actress faints and then he sits down on the chair to write.

AUDIENCE (the audience is played by actors. They talk about the plant) It died, it's alive, it's dying, it's alive.

AUDIENCE 1
It's dying.

AUDIENCE 2
No, it's alive.

AUDIENCE 3
No, can't you see? It's dead.

AUDIENCE 4
Excuse me! I think you're the one who can't see. It's alive.

AUDIENCE 3
If you think about it the right way, you can see it's dead as a doornail.

AUDIENCE 2
Show me the evidence!

AUDIENCE 1
Does God exist?

AUDIENCE 2
Of course.

AUDIENCE 1

Show me the evidence!

AUDIENCE 4

Look, we can say it died and we can say it's alive. If we consider it from a philosophical standpoint, we can see it's dead, but in reality it's alive.

AUDIENCE 3

And, like, which one is most powerful? Reality or philosophy?

AUDIENCE 5

God is most powerful.

AUDIENCE 6

Just because there's no evidence, that doesn't mean the issue is settled. Maybe we can find evidence tomorrow for whether the plant is dead or alive.

AUDIENCE 7

Maybe we can find evidence in ten years too.

AUDIENCE 8

Why do I feel like we're doing *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose? That was the same situation. Twelve jurors arguing about a boy's trial. Was the boy a murderer or not?

AUDIENCE 2

Exactly! They were looking for evidence. Evidence is the most powerful.

AUDIENCE 8

Incidentally, the play ended with the twelve angry men deciding that the boy was not the murderer. But in reality he was.

AUDIENCE 2

Show me the evidence that he was the murderer!

AUDIENCE 1

Does God exist?

AUDIENCE 2

Of course.

AUDIENCE 1

Show me the evidence.

AUDIENCE 5

The boy was the murderer.

AUDIENCE 4

The plant is alive.

AUDIENCE (actors)

It's dead. He was the murderer. The plant is alive. He isn't the murderer.

Suddenly ADEL makes contact. The audience falls silent. The actors in Syria pop up on the screen. They're at a theater in Syria talking about something. They don't realize they're onscreen. ADEL sits at the table, writing. The Swedish actress sits still on the floor, and the audience looks at them. The Syrian actors are speaking in Arabic and there are subtitles on the screen.

SYRIAN ACTOR 1

I expect that when I turn on the tap, the water will flow.

SYRIAN ACTOR 2

There is no water, darling.

SYRIAN ACTOR 4

Come on! The water was turned off a month ago, so of course there is water.

SYRIAN ACTOR 3

It's impossible for the water to come out now. Electricity and water at the same time? It's practically a miracle, hahaha.

SYRIAN ACTOR 1

If we consider it from a philosophical standpoint?

SYRIAN ACTOR 5

How can we consider anything from a philosophical standpoint when this is a material debate? There is nothing philosophical about it.

SYRIAN ACTOR 1

Ok!

SYRIAN ACTOR 2

There is no water, darling!

SYRIAN ACTOR 1

There's water now.

SYRIAN ACTOR 3

No, there isn't.

SYRIAN ACTOR 4

Yes, sure there is.

SYRIAN ACTOR 5

Show me the evidence!

AUDIENCE 1 (interrupting in Swedish)

Does God exist?

Silence. The Syrian actors now realize they're live, so they approach the camera and see Adel, the Swedish actress, and the audience. ADEL stares at his friends. SWEDISH ACTRESS gets up and looks at the Syrian actors.

The Audience, Adel, and the Swedish actress always speak Swedish, even to the Syrian actors

SWEDISH ACTRESS

Who are they?

ADEL (surprised)

My friends! Am I dreaming? (he shouts) Hello, friends! Can you hear me?
Hi, here I am.

SWEDISH ACTRESS

Do they understand Swedish?

ADEL

No!

SWEDISH ACTRESS

Then why are you speaking Swedish to them?

ADEL

Because the audience has to understand, right?

SYRIAN ACTOR 2 (speaking Swedish)

What about us?

SWEDISH ACTRESS (to the Syrian actors)

Do you understand Swedish?

SYRIAN ACTOR 1 (in Swedish)

No!

SWEDISH ACTOR

If you don't understand Swedish, how can you answer my question?

SYRIAN ACTOR 1 (speaking Arabic without subtitles)

Adel! Tell her we've been rehearsing for two months, so we know what you're talking about.

ADEL (translating into Swedish)

They say they've been rehearsing for two months. So they know what we're talking about.

AUDIENCE 4

So you know how this play ends?

SYRIAN ACTOR 3 (laughing)

Yes!

AUDIENCE 1

Ok, listen to me. Is the plant dead?

SYRIAN ACTOR 3
(laughter)

AUDIENCE 8

Who are you?

SYRIAN ACTOR 4 (a brief silence. Speaking Arabic with Swedish subtitles)

We're actors without a theater.

SYRIAN ACTOR 2

Without a life.

SYRIAN ACTOR 5
Without a homeland.

SYRIAN ACTOR 3 (laughing)
Without water.

SYRIAN ACTOR 1 (cheerfully)
The water is on!

Everyone is overjoyed and runs to see. The Syria set is empty but the camera keeps filming.

SWEDISH ACTRESS
What's going on?

ADEL (embarrassed)
The water is running now.

ANOTHER SCENE

Adel and the Swedish actress speak to Adel's friends through a digital screen.

SWEDISH ACTRESS
Are you live?

ADEL
Yeah, of course!

SYRIAN ACTOR 2 (in Arabic)
Nope. We're not live. We recorded this video two months ago.

ADEL (translating)
They're not live. They recorded the video two months ago.

AUDIENCE 1 and AUDIENCE 2

What???

AUDIENCE 2

You're not alive?

SYRIAN ACTORS 3 and 4 (laughing, in Swedish)

Nope.

SYRIAN ACTOR 4 (in Arabic)

You know the internet doesn't work very well here, so we had to prerecord the video.

ADEL (translating)

They say the internet doesn't work very well there, so they had to prerecord the video.

SYRIAN ACTOR 3

(prolonged laughter)

SWEDISH ACTRESS (tentatively)

Why are you laughing so much?

SYRIAN ACTOR 3

One time my dad was reading me a book at bedtime. I smiled and closed my eyes. My brain took me to another world. I traveled there without a passport, without a visa, without borders. I floated wherever the story took me. I smiled and then the reader and the book were murdered with a gunshot. I looked at the killer and I was still smiling from the shock. I looked at my dad. He was dead and smiling.

Then I looked at the killer again and laughed out loud. I was scared and I panicked. My brain couldn't comprehend what was happening. So my brain decided to laugh out loud.

The adrenaline in my body revolted. The killer laughed with me and said: the girl went crazy. I don't need to kill her, and then he went away. If my dad hadn't been smiling, I wouldn't be here performing in a play in front of the audience whose story was in that book.





Foto: Petronelle Halvorsen

PAULA STENSTRÖM ÖHMAN

Paula Stenström Öhman (born 1972) is a playwright, director and artistic director of Lumor, an acclaimed Stockholm based performing arts company profiled as one of Sweden's most interesting producers of contemporary drama. Stenström Öhman has also written and/or directed for The National Royal Dramatic Theatre, The City Theatres of Stockholm and Gothenburg, Sweden's National Touring Theatre and her plays have been translated to English, German, Finnish and Russian.

Some of her most renowned plays are: *Materia* (2013), *People Respect Me Now* (2015), *Ocean* (2018) and *Ambulance* (2021); all selected to SPACs Swedish Biennial of Performing Arts. *People Respect Me Now* was selected as Sweden's entry for New Nordic Drama 2016 by the Swedish Performing Arts Coalition and has been staged in Finland, Germany, Russia and the US. *Ambulance* was selected to Heidelberger Stückemarkt 2023. Her most recent plays are *Lost Lake* (Stockholm City Theatre 2023) and *My Inferno* (Strindbergs's Intimate Theatre 2023).

About *Ocean*

Ocean is a dark, existential, comedic play that explores the longing for and fear of intimacy, through three generations. It's about love, solidarity, and connections. Inherited trauma and narcissism. Porn, violence, sex, addiction, and sadism. It's about what intimacy truly means. Is it vital? Or can it be lethal?

It all starts with sex and violence. We meet six teenagers, their parents, and the "grandmothers" who live in a senior collective. The threads that make up the fabric of the narrative move through an inherited family trauma with roots in fascism and the Holocaust. Two parents have an affair. One girl is in the hospital. A teacher cries. A boy's attempt to become close warps into a sadistic game. A survivor and grandmother begins to tell her story for the first time. Time, in *Ocean*, is broken, and the text oscillates between various appeals and levels of narration. On the surface, it is similar to a documentary reality, but it is constructed according to a particular lyrical logic that depends on the audience's ability to weave the fragments into a complete story.

As the text alternates between direct addresses and acted scenes where the actors move seamlessly in and out of roles, it creates a world in which the audience is invited into the game of theatre and reality is invited onto the stage. Water — the subconscious — flows through the play. An abyss opens in everyday spaces, posing complex questions about our era.

Ocean (2018)

By Paula Stenström Öhman

Duration: Two acts, approximately 3 hours, including one intermission

Cast size: 21. At least 5 actors.

OVERTURE

Violence, sex.

1A. BREAKUP AT THE RESTAURANT

A neighborhood pub by the sea. Close up Tom and Iben, both middle-aged, who are sitting at a table in silence. Her eyes are shiny; he is sympathetic. A lone man, Steven, is sitting with his back to them a few tables away.

IBEN

Tom?

TOM

Iben, are you all right?

IBEN

It felt ...I thought...

Tom shushes her soothingly, putting a finger on her mouth

IBEN

Is there someone else?

TOM

No! No, there's only you. This is hard for me too, but if we break it off now I can survive this.

IBEN

But Tom, you're the one who

TOM/ (to himself)

Yes I can...

(Tom buries his face in his hands. Is he pretending to cry?)

I'm feeling so guilty here

IBEN

No, please, you don't need to, I...

TOM/

for Daniella's sake. (looking up) Aren't you? What about your family? Oh my god, Becki... for fuck sake Iben, the girls are in the same class.

IBEN

But what about us?

TOM

Mother is getting worse, too.

IBEN

Is your mother sick? You never mentioned that.

TOM

No, it's pretty serious, there's a lot going on right now... Becki would never forgive me, and what will they say at school? After all, I'm on the parental night patrol, imagine all that talk, everyone would hate me...

IBEN

Why would they hate you?

TOM

...and Daniella, she'd never survive this happening again.

IBEN

Again?

TOM

What?

IBEN

You said: this happening again.

TOM

No, Iben, I didn't.

IBEN

But I heard you, loud and clear.

TOM

Maybe that's what you thought you heard, babe, is that where you're at? (He strokes her, or the like, til she gives in)

I'm so glad we cleared this up. So. How about a hug? (They're just about to hug when Tom's phone rings.) Hi, I'm just finishing up here. (shushing Iben). It's Daniella. (into the phone) Just calm down, what's going on? Which hospital?! I'll be right there. (to Iben) It's Becki! (pats Iben's shoulder, hurries out) THIS IS FOR REAL!

IBEN (cursing a blue streak in Danish)

YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE!!! GOD DAMN YOU, MAN

*Iben sits down, crying. A server serves her wine.
When Iben looks up around, Steven, the lonely man at the restaurant, is facing her.*

STEVEN
Hi...

Iben looks down, momentarily confused, then back up at Steven again, this time with a flirtatious smile.

IBEN
Hi there

SERVER (to the audience)
Welcome, welcome to the Ocean.

Server exits.

2. BECKI & CATFISH PART 1. SOMETHING YOU NEVER WANT TO FORGET

We see only Becki, a slightly odd, shy fourteen-year-old girl. She is chatting with an anonymous new friend online. The responses are projected as text, or in some other fashion, with no name attached. (Later on, we'll find out it's Firus, a boy in Becky's class).

BECKI
A memory? That's tough!

CATFISH
Something you never want to forget, anything.

BECKI

Okay, when I got to go down to the ocean with my grandma at night, when I was little, and she was like oh, I don't know we just stood there and looked at it. Not the most exciting memory, I guess.

CATFISH

No, it sounds nice.

BECKI

It's so weird, even though we don't know each other it feels like I can tell you anything.

CATFISH

Same here.

BECKI

I've like never talked about my grandma with anyone before. No one at school would even care. The Holocaust, like, what's that?

CATFISH

I know. There are so many stupid idiots everywhere.

BECKI

For real.

CATFISH

I just hope you don't think I'm one of them?

BECKI

No...no I don't. She was sick for a long time afterwards, her stomach was messed up because they were starving in the camps, and her legs, but she was lucky to survive, they took most women and children right away.

CATFISH

Shit. (That's awful.)

BECKI

Then they got put on a bus to a little fishing village, and she met Grandpa, and they had my dad. She took off a bunch of times when Dad was little, no one knew where she was.

They thought she had gone back home, that she missed it, but she never talked about it, or about the war, not with anyone. But there are a thousand things that remind her: burning leaves and candles, you know, when you blow them out? The weird thing is that the smell makes Dad and me gag too. And she's super anxious. I was at the co-op where she lives the other day, and I was sitting by her bed, telling her this weird little story, about some turtles and an underwater world, one she used to tell to Dad, and then he told it to me, you know — and suddenly she was so quiet. At first I thought she was dead, but she was just sleeping, even then she shooked, wait, is that right?

CATFISH

She was shaking, I get it.

BECKI

I'm all: "shooked."

CATFISH

She was having a nightmare.

BECKI

Dad says it was like living with an iron box that could explode at any moment, when he was little. I'm like: oh, you mean just like at our house, well

CATFISH

I know: "Everyone should be happy!"

BECKI

But no one is. No one talks about it.

CATFISH

Exactly! You should come over to my place sometime.

BECKI

Too bad you live like six thousand miles away I'm sorry, I keep babbling.

CATFISH

I think it's interesting. It's like we're getting to know each other for real now... Hello Becki? Are you still there?

BECKI

I just got this totally unreal feeling, like you only exist in my head.

CATFISH

No, I exist.

BECKI

Okay.

Becki exits.

3. FIRUS WORRIES

Firus, a 14 year old boy, enters. He is worried, addresses the audience directly.

FIRUS

Hi. Is something wrong? I mean, I was just wondering, since you're here. Because, you're not from the police, are you? I mean, I didn't think you were, I just thought maybe you knew something? No, okay.

Firus exits.



Photo: Sara P Borgström

ALEJANDRO LEIVA WENGER

Alejandro Leiva Wenger (born 1976) made his debut as an author in 2001 with the short-story collection *Till vår ära* (*In Our Honor*). His first play *Författarna* (*The Authors*; 2013, Unga Klara), about art, fiction and representation, was selected as Sweden's entry for New Nordic Drama 2014 by the Swedish Performing Arts Coalition and was SPAs contribution for the New European Drama Festival in S:t Petersburg. Since then, Leiva Wenger has written several successful plays for theatres such as Kulturhuset/Stadsteatern, Malmö Stadsteater, Folkteatern in Gothenburg and Ung Scen/Öst.

Blending dark existential themes with the farcical, he's plays have been awarded the Henning Mankell Scholarship (2016), the Karin Boye literary prize (2021), the Swedish Ibsen Society's Ibsen Prize (2021) and the Heidelberg Stückemarkt International Playwright prize (2023). His latest play *Pappas födelsedag* (*Dad's birthday*) opened at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in October 2023 to great acclaim by critics and audiences alike.

About Memorial

One day, Jon is paid a visit by Minna, who introduces herself as the mother of Jon's old high school friend Sackarias. She tells him that Sackarias has just died tragically, and she asks Jon to come to a memorial service the family is holding. Jon is thoroughly confused: he has no memory of Sackarias and no idea who Minna is, but how can you say this to a grieving mother? To be polite, he decides to attend.

At the memorial service, Jon meets a family already battling the memory of their son. Through a series of misunderstandings, everything ends up in the hands of Jon, who, in his capacity of close friend, is expected to fill in the memory gaps. But how honest can Jon be when so many hinges on his words?

Memorial is a dark comedy and a thriller about memory, forgetting, and the necessity of lies.

Memorial (2016)

By Alejandro Leiva Wenger

Duration: 100 minutes

Cast: 6

SCENE 2

At the front door. Jon opens the door. There stands Minna. They look at each other for a moment.

JON

Hello?

MINNA

Why, hello, Jon.

JON (brief pause, slightly alarmed)

Hello.

MINNA

Don't you recognize me?

JON (squinting)

Uh

MINNA

I'm sure we met a time or two

JON
You mean we

MINNA
Minna. Minna Sandberg? (Pause.) Sackarias's mom?

JON (uncertain)
Right, hold on

MINNA
Sackarias from Stefan High School?

JON
Oh, high school, sure

MINNA
Do you recognize me now? (Pause. Jon opens his mouth.)
Have I changed, do you think?

JON
N-not much, I don't think, no...

MINNA
How have you been?

JON
Oh, you know, can't complain, it's going...

MINNA
That it is.

JON
Right. - And how, I mean, what?

MINNA

Well, I You and Sackarias were so close back then. When you were sixteen, seventeen. And Sackarias, did you keep in touch after high school, by the way?

JON

Uh, I don't think so

MINNA

No, no. Do you still play tennis?

JON

Tennis? (Surprised, laughing) No, it's been ages.

MINNA

But you still paint?

JON (pause)

N-not like I used to, I guess, but

MINNA

You were so talented. Sackarias was such a fan of your paintings. And he wasn't an easy customer when it came to colors and so forth.

JON

No.

MINNA

And your dog, how is -I'm sorry, maybe he's not?

JON

You mean Blixten?

MINNA

Oh, that was his name!

JON
No, Blixten, he

MINNA
Right

JON
That was a long time ago now.

MINNA
But you still play guitar?

JON (Smiling and nodding)
I take it out now and then

MINNA
You two played together so often.

JON
Did we? I mean, yeah, I guess some of us there

MINNA
Oh, I remember. And Sackarias said you sang like, like that guy, what's his name

JON
Johnny Cash? (chuckling, flattered) Right, yeah, he was kind of my idol back then.

MINNA
Jon, I was going to call first, but it's so hard to talk about this on the phone. I wanted to see you. The fact is, Sackarias, he died. We lost him a week ago, and...(she stops. She looks at him.)

JON (Pause. He's shocked.)

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm—my condolences. I'm, I, I—

JON (Pause. He's shocked.)

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm—my condolences. I'm, I, I—

MINNA

Thank you. You don't have to say anything.

JON

B-but, but how, how?

MINNA

Well, it was in Norway. He, he fell. From The Pulpit in...well. He did.

JON

Whoa...so he was...

MINNA

Yes. He slipped and fell. That's all. Simple as that. (Pause. She sighs.)
And now, we, his family, we've planned a little memorial service on Sunday. Just something simple, for us to gather, those of us who were closest to him. And we'd really like you come, Jon. It's important to me, to us all.

JON

I see, of course, it, it...

MINNA

I know how much you meant to Sackarias. You know, he never stopped thinking of you.

JON

No?

MINNA

I don't know if he called you last summer?

JON

Last summer...

MINNA

He said he was going to.





Photo: Ola Kjelbye

ÅSA LINDHOLM

Åsa Lindholm (born 1975) is a playwright, dramaturg, director, and performer. Educated at the University College of Film, Radio, Television, and Theatre in Stockholm, she is currently a dramaturg at Kulturhuset Stadsteatern (Stockholm City Theatre). She has previously worked as a dramaturg at Gothenburg City Theatre and Uppsala City Theatre, as well as an artistic director at Teater Tribunalen.

Lindholm has written and/or directed for Stockholm City Theatre, Gothenburg City Theatre, Unga Klara, The Royal Dramatic Theatre, among others. Her plays have been translated into several languages. She has also worked with performance art in personal projects at Teater Tribunalen and with the Danish performance artist SIGNA.

She received the Ikaros Prize in 2006 for the radio production *Ett perfekt liv* (*A Perfect Life*), was nominated for the Nordisk Dramatikerpris in 2010 for her play *Omflickorkundedöda* (*If girls could kill*), and received the Henning Mankell Scholarship in 2017 and the Swedish Ibsen Society Prize in 2020. A production of her play *Snubben låttar på sitt hjärta* (*The dude opens up*) was selected for SPACs Swedish Biennial for Performing Arts 2019.

About *If girls could kill*

If girls could kill is a horror comedy for teens and young adults.

Reality is chafing at Tam, Mary Lou, and Anna, three childhood friends. They're young adults now, but a dark secret from their childhood keeps them from stepping into the future. Like ticking time-bombs, they try to hold themselves and their relationships together, but the darkness is seeping in from all directions, through old children's rhymes and fairy-tale creatures, and soon it's impossible to tell fantasy from reality.

Tam cries all the time, but she doesn't know why, and her young son Svante seems to be depressed. Mary Lou is called Wood Nymph, but feels like a blank sheet of paper that anyone can write on. Anna calls herself Fat Girl and has isolated herself out of self-hatred ever since her autobiographical debut novel became a success, even as everyone expects a brilliant follow-up. A girlfriend with anger issues and a self-absorbed guy from a blind date become triggers for an explosive atmosphere.

If girls could kill (2009)

By Åsa Lindholm

Duration: 90 minutes

Cast: 7

AT THE HOSPITAL

A hospital. Deserted. Silent. A nurse dashes through the room, a splashing bucket in her hand. We can hear her emptying the bucket, and we see her dash back. Silence. Then, in the distance, we hear a female voice speaking uninterrupted. The voice comes closer until we see TAM enter, followed by the nurse with the bucket. TAM's clothes are drenched and she is pressing a towel to her eyes.

TAM

No, like I said, I really have no idea, I mean, I don't even feel all that sad. You know? I mean, the tears just keep coming, it has to be some sort of disease, right? What did the doctor say? I mean, you cry because you're sad, like, you can feel it in your stomach. But I don't feel anything, in your heart, right, people say it's like your heart hurts when you cry. But, I mean, the tears have just been coming, for what — two hours. Just tears for two hours, people think I'm nuts, you know? They think there's been some huge tragedy, don't they, what do you think?

NURSE

Would you like to take a seat, maybe? The doctor will be here soon.

TAM

I'm actually a little stressed out—

NURSE

Please take a seat.

TAM

My son, Svante. I mean, he's not here, right—

NURSE

Oh? No, your son?

TAM

I took a taxi here. Thought it would be too hard on him, so I came by myself, but now I'm wondering how long this is going to take.

NURSE

How old is he?

TAM

Three—

NURSE

Three years old?

TAM

It's no big deal, as long as I get home before Teletubbies is over.

The nurse wrings out Tam's towel

TAM

The tape is two hours long. So as long as I make it home before it's over, I promise, he won't even notice I'm gone.

NURSE

Well, but—he loves them, those Teletubbies. You know, there's a green one and a yellow one and a red one and one is, what is it, purple—the gay one. No, I'm sorry, but that's the one people think is gay. I don't think he is, exactly, what, is it because he's purple or something? Awful. He should be able to be whatever color he wants and all. Anyway, it doesn't matter, not like it would be harmful anyway. I can do other stuff while he watches it, which is nice. Maybe it's not great for him to watch it all day, but most of the time he doesn't. Not that it hasn't happened, I guess, but only once in a while. Too bad it can't restart automatically when it's over, that would have been a handy function for a videotape, wouldn't it?

NURSE

Yes, no, maybe—

TAM

What? Did I say something wrong?

NURSE

Maybe we should call someone—

TAM

Call someone?

NURSE

Yes, if he's by himself—

TAM

No, he's not by himself. I told you that.

NURSE

You did? Oh.

TAM

Yeah, I told you—he's with the Teletubbies.

TAM

I haven't been on my own for very long, and I probably won't be for very long either. It's like, just temporary, if you know what I mean.

NURSE

Sure.

TAM

The purple one, he used to have a purse, so cute, right? But then they took it away. Ha, now I'm laughing even though I'm crying. Sick, huh? Oh, I'm getting tired of this. What will the doctor do, do you think? Block off my tear ducts? Can they do that? No, there's no way, that must be dangerous. Now there's only thirty minutes left. Of the video, I mean.

NURSE

Don't you have anyone who could go over there?

TAM

Sure, of course. I can ask someone to go over there, I sure can.

NURSE

Would you like to borrow the phone?

TAM

No. He'll be fine.

The nurse wrings out the towel

TAM

How much water can there be in your body? Isn't this dangerous?

NURSE

Yes—

TAM

I don't know why this is happening. I mean, I'm crying, fine. But I'm not sad. You keep treating me like I'm sad, but I'm really not. For a little while I thought I was, but now I feel like, no, I'm not sad at all here.

NURSE

Okay.

TAM

You know how I said temporarily before. I just said that, I don't know why.

NURSE

Okay. It's fine. Maybe you should have some more water.

TAM

Yeah, maybe that will help.

NURSE

Let's hope so. Then I suppose I'll have to call someone.

TAM

What do you mean?

NURSE

Well, if you don't want to call someone and ask them to take care of your son, I suppose I'll have to do it.

TAM

No, that's not necessary!

NURSE

It's fine, we're used to this sort of situation.

TAM

Look, it's stopping!

NURSE

No it isn't!

TAM

But it's slowed down a lot, that's for sure.

NURSE

Do you want me to ask someone to go to your house and pick up your son?

TAM

No!

NURSE

You're not feeling very well at all right now, and the important thing is that you let us help you.

TAM

You think there's something wrong with my mind!

NURSE

No, where did you get that from?

TAM

Okay. I'll call someone. Can I call someone?

NURSE

Absolutely. Let me check if the office over here is free.

*She walks away. As soon as she's gone, Tam takes off.
The nurse returns.*

NURSE

No, wait — Hello! Where did you go? Please come back!

She picks up the bucket and dashes out.



JONAS HASSEN KHEMIRI

Jonas Hassen Khemiri (born 1978) is the author of six novels, seven plays, and one collection of plays, essays, and short stories. His work has been translated into more than thirty languages. He received the Village Voice Obie Award for his first play, *Invasion!*, which was also selected for SPACs Swedish Biennial for Performing Arts.

As an author Khemiri was awarded the August Prize in 2015, Sweden's highest literary honor for the novel *Everything I Don't Remember*. In 2017 he became the first Swedish writer to have a short story published in *The New Yorker* and in 2020, he was awarded for the National Book Award for *The Family Clause* published by FSG the same year.

Khemiris' new novel *The sisters* was recently published in Sweden (2023) and has already received a lot of praise. Today Jonas Hassen Khemiri lives in New York and teaches at NYU.

About \approx [*almost equal to*]

What is a person worth? How does the liberal idea that everyone is of equal worth function in reality? And how can you be sure that you've gotten enough entertainment value out of your theater ticket?

This play revolves around Martina, who is from a well-off family but works in a corner store and dreams of organic farms; history of economics lecturer Mani, who struggles to be the man Martina wants and to avoid following in his father's footsteps; Andrej, who applies for job after job after job; Freja, who has just been fired; and Peter, who is homeless. All of them are at battle with the market-economy thinking that threatens to permeate every aspect of our lives.

It's like getting a lesson in economics from the best, and funniest, teacher at school. It is tender and human and a punch to the gut. This is education times entertainment at its very best.

≈ [*almost equal to*] (2014)

By Jonas Hassen Khemiri

Duration: 2 hours, 30 minutes, including intermission

TIME

The present.

SETTING

Here.

Cast: 4-20

MANI (man, 35)

CASPARUS VAN HOUTEN (old man)

ANDREJ (man, 25)

PETER (man, 30)

LIQUOR STORE EMPLOYEE (woman, 50)

SILVANA (woman, 60, ANDREJ'S mom)

IVAN (boy, 13, ANDREJ'S little brother)

EMPLOYMENT AGENCY LADY (older woman)

EMPLOYMENT AGENCY MAN (older man)

JOB APPLICATION (a piece of paper)

THE EMPLOYERS (men/women)

LAURA LORENZO (woman, 20)

MARTINA (woman, 35)

MARTINA 2 (woman, 35)

CUSTOMER 1, 2, 3

THE JOB COACH (woman, 45)

ANGELIKA (voice)

THE REVEREND (man/woman)

THE INTERMISSION SPEAKER (a man/woman with strong arms)

FREJA (woman, 60)

"Go now, little paper, around the world, and destroy the tyranny of money such that gold, silver, and precious gems may one day cease to be the idols and tyrants of our world!"

August Nordenskiöld (1789)

ACT I

This act takes place in ANDREJ'S memories of the period when he was unemployed. We follow his struggle to find a way into the economic system.

SCENE 2: ANDREJ (1)

PETER stands center stage, ANDREJ and SILVANA enter.

PETER

I'm sorry to bother you, but . . . my name is Peter and I am homeless and I have a little problem. I just found out that my sister has been involved in a car accident.

ANDREJ snorts.

PETER

She was run over, she's in the hospital, and she is in serious but stable condition, I just talked to her and she's probably going to be okay, but...

ANDREJ

Don't believe him.

PETER

It would really be awfully kind if someone could help me out with a little bit of money so I can travel down there and visit her. It doesn't have to be much, just a dollar or two. Or maybe a five?

ANDREJ

He says that all the time.

PETER

Maybe someone has some loose change in their pocket?
Or their purse? No one? Just a few cents? So I can travel down there
and visit my sister? A dollar or two or maybe a five?

ANDREJ

"A dollar or two or maybe a five?"

PETER

She was run over. She was on her way home from work. Someone
shoved her into the street. I need money for a train ticket. I just want to
travel down there and visit her. No one? Oh. Well, thanks anyway, have
a nice evening.

ANDREJ approaches the audience.

ANDREJ

It started last fall.

PETER

Hi. I'm sorry to bother you, but . . .

ANDREJ

I was on my way home, I was going up the escalator, I passed through
the turnstiles, and there . . .

PETER

My name is Peter.

ANDREJ

There he was.

PETER

And I'm homeless.

ANDREJ

He had blond hair, tattoos on his hand, and piercings in his face.

PETER

I am in need of a little money for food and shelter.

ANDREJ

After that I saw him every day. When I was on my way to my night class, when I was buying food, when I was picking up my little brother from some friend's house.

IVAN enters.

PETER

Hi, my name is Peter and I'm homeless.

ANDREJ

And it didn't take long before I caught on that this dude, he was a fucking pro.

PETER

Hi, my name is Peter.

ANDREJ

Nothing about his behavior was left to chance.

PETER

Hi, my name is Peter and I'm homeless.

ANDREJ

In the daytime he stood between the flower shop and the bakery so that his stench would be masked by the scent of flowers and fresh buns.

In the evenings, when there weren't as many people around, he stood further down the tunnel and held open the door for people who were trying to make it to the bus.

PETER

Here you go. Have a nice evening.

ANDREJ

And on payday he always stood over by the ATM.

PETER

Hi, my name is Peter. A little help for the homeless?

ANDREJ: Or; a little help for a bogus homeless dude who knows exactly how to cheat his way to as much cash as possible? And every day, that same goddamn mantra.

PETER

Hi, my name is Peter.

ANDREJ

Yeah, we know.

PETER

Hi, my name is Peter and I live on the streets.

ANDREJ

No, you don't.

PETER

A dollar or two, or maybe a five?

ANDREJ

Okay! That's enough! (to the audience) I was the only one who saw through him. Sure, maybe he smelled bad and had scars on his arms, but at the same time . . .

PETER

A few cents for a warm meal?

ANDREJ

He had a cell phone.

PETER

A little help so I don't have to sleep out in the rain tonight?

ANDREJ

No, for real. A seriously flashy phone. And every time he got a call he would walk off a little ways so people wouldn't notice.

PETER

Maybe a five?

ANDREJ

Honestly: what kind of homeless dude has a phone like that? And sure, he had a shopping cart full of returnable bottles, but guess what was hidden underneath? Just guess. A guitar case. With a guitar in it.

PETER (well-mannered)

No, okay then. Well, thank you anyway, have a nice trip.

ANDREJ

And plus, there was something wrong with his voice.

PETER (even more well-mannered)

No, okay then. Well, thank you anyway, have a nice trip.

ANDREJ

Instead of slurring his words and cursing, he talked like . . . sort of like this, with his voice up high. Kinda like an actor.

PETER (even more well-mannered)

No, okay then. Well, thank you anyway, my dear sir. Do have a pleasant day.

ANDREJ

That's exactly how he talked. But I was the only one who saw through him. Everyone else just drowned him in ones and fives and one time I saw an old lady give him a ten just because he had made up some lie about how he needed the money to go visit his sister.

PETER

Oh, thank you so much. This will go straight to my travel funds. She will be so happy.

ANDREJ

That's exactly what he said.

PETER

SOOOO happy.

PETER exits.

ANDREJ

Sure. Like he had a "sister" who had been "run over." It was so obvious that he was lying, and I promised myself I would never be like him. I was going to finish my night class, learn the system, and get myself a job with a huge salary, Christmas bonus, beautiful secretary, and flashy company car. But of course I would keep helping out my mom with the rent so she would never again have to sit up at night with her calculator, worrying about the next power bill.

SILVANA, ANDREJ'S mom, enters.

SILVANA

But you have to watch out for Mamona.

ANDREJ

What did you say, Mom?

SILVANA

Mamona. Don't let Mamona get her sharp claws into you.

ANDREJ

No worries.

SILVANA

Because what would happen then? What will happen if Mamona gets into your head?

ANDREJ

I would start to see the world through Mamona's eyes.

SILVANA

And your hands?

ANDREJ

They would become Mamona's.

SILVANA

And your thoughts?

ANDREJ

They would become Mamona's.

SILVANA

And soon you can't do your friends a favor without asking for money and you can't help your own mother without sending an invoice and your pupils turn into tiny little black dollar signs.

ANDREJ

Don't worry.

SILVANA

Your morals will turn into a balance sheet.

ANDREJ

No problem, I'm not going to . . .

SILVANA

Your family will turn into inheritances.

ANDREJ

Okay! I get it! I'll watch out for Mamona. I won't end up like Dad.

I will stay myself and I won't think only of money.

SILVANA

Good. That's all I ask.

SILVANA exits.

ANDREJ (to the audience)

I will not buy an apartment where the elevator opens directly into the front hall and there's a sound system that knows when I arrive home and turns itself on and there will not be a TV in the kitchen and the bedroom will not have a real walk-in closet, the kind with a light that comes on as soon as you open the door, with rows and rows of shiny, polished shoes and soft ties on special hooks and jackets that still have price tags on them and brand-name shirts sorted by color on wooden hangers. I will keep cutting my own hair and I will never order an entrée without checking the price first. Just a plain old job. That was my plan. But nothing went as planned.





Photo: Malena Engström

CHRISTINA OUZOUNIDIS

Christina Ouzounidis (born 1969) is a playwright and director. Some of her most renowned plays are *Heterofil (Heterophily, 2008)*, *Vit, rik, fri (White, Rich, Free, 2010)*, *Lagarna (The Laws, 2010)* and *Spår av Antigone (Traces of Antigone, 2015)*. *Heterophily* and *The Laws* have both been selected to SPACs Swedish Biennial of Performing Arts. Her works often refer to the mythical world of Greek drama. The idea of language as both an opportunity and an abyss plays a powerful role in her work. Her plays have been translated into French, English, German, Greek, Turkish and Mandarin – among other languages.

For a number of years she was one of the driving forces behind the independent theater company Teatr Weimar in Malmö. Since then she has had positions as a playwright and a director for smaller independent companies as well as bigger institutions such as the City Theatres of Stockholm and Gothenburg, Radio Sweden, and the Royal Opera.

Ouzounidis studied playwriting at Malmö Theatre Academy, where she has also been teaching. In 2016 she completed a doctoral degree in artistic research from the same institution. She is also an author, and has published several books.

About *Fleeing Creatures*

Like many of Ouzounidis's plays, *Fleeing Creatures* is to some extent a play with voices, but the lines are strongly driven by (speech) acts and highly concrete attempts. One important driving force for the speakers is portraying one's true self to oneself as well as to the world outside. The play takes place in some sort of borderland, in a timeless but real state of waiting, a space where nature — trees, roots, insects and the wild earth — are mirrored in an expectant but impotent humanity.

One recurrent theme throughout the text is a state of anticipation that has to do with an imperative, and perhaps with the difference between the final phase and an awakening. Nature is at times a threat, and at times a source of comfort and incredible strength, with its own intents that can be comparable to those of the Greek gods.

Fleeing Creatures (2016)

By Christina Ouzounidis

Duration 90 minutes

Cast size 3

Time

The time when the play is performed. A "before" or an "after."

Setting

The setting where the play is performed. A "border of," on one side or the other. A slash (/) marks where the next voice begins to speak.

L

The messenger has already spoken.

S

The judgement has come down.

E

Yet we see no results. No gods have shown themselves.

L

No flying horses, dragging the drowned from the seas.

S

No ark.

L

No ocean floor laid bare.

E

No ruins. (short pause) Not here.

S

No new culture spreading out and taking over. The same view as usual, from this window. A road. Streetlights. The same old Arbor Vitae in the garden.

E

Where are the winged? Where are the artful and the enterprising?

L

Where are the golden-shod, the invisible, and the lightning-bearers? Where are the demigods and the humans who have been transformed into animals? Where are the centaurs?

S

Where are the songs? The boats? All the baskets full of golden grain?

E

Where are the oxen and the swans? Where are the braying asses?

L

Where are the tortoises who win against all odds?

S

Where is the rain of gold?

E

Where are the cries, the whine of arrows, and the howls of animals being transformed back into humans?

L

Where are the Amazons?

S

Where is the blood from Medusa's head?

E

Where are all the beings that stir beyond our gaze, that transform us without our noticing? That reside in our bodies, that have taken over our longing and that make our eyes gleam like dampened fur?

L

Not a single star.

S

Not a single fish, not a loaf of bread, not a bottle of wine.

E

Do you hear?

S

Nothing.

L

Nothing, only silence.

S

It's turning now. It must, it / must turn.

L

It's / turning.

E

It's turning, it must turn.

S

Isn't that a new sound? That howling. Like a tone. From the fan in a some sort of appliance.

L

Tomorrow we will move. We must leave this place, become new.

S

Tomorrow we will move.

E

An appliance? In the forest?

L

I didn't even notice that I was about to land. I didn't even notice.

S

This is no forest. We are right in the middle of a planned community of weekend homes.

E

But — the tracks in the snow? The scat on the lawn?
All the cherries, eaten up?

L

That tree ought to be pruned, it has completely taken over.

S

Nothing can grow in this abundance.

L

Is it really nice to have such a lumpy lawn? Maybe it is.

E

Soon all those roots will burst the stone wall.

S

We're leaving this place no matter what. We really are.
Even if it means we fall asleep here.

L

This advocating for lines of flight is merely a fresh attempt to carve a line that can endure to the very end as it was written, that avoids being subsumed, becoming part of another pattern or becoming a nearly invisible path on that map.

What are you doing here? Where do you belong? Why don't you just lie down and die? I ask myself this time and again. Why all of that struggle, the unfulfilled battle? You call it a wave, but for it to be called a wave it must eventually flatten out, subside among the rocks, make way for new waves.

Not just grow and deny.

E

No wings can help in these waves. The monster still rules all. Perhaps the petrification didn't take. I remember making an attempt, I do remember that. I think I know that. I think so. I think I remember that. I'm totally sure.

L

Who will decipher all this?

S

No need.

E

This technical savvy, how do I get away from it? I feel too savvy for my own good. There's no release in it. Just one long, methodical honing.

L

I'm afraid I'm about to wake far too late. That everything will be gone when I stick my head out the window, that the forest won't feel like a space anymore. That she will have grown tired of this humdrum sleeping, of the meticulousness of my anxiety. All this so-called determination reaches no farther than to my numb fingers.

S

I can't hear the sound of my own yelp.

E

I don't feel all that artful. And the shiny scales are scattered like fallen sequins.

S

Yes, that's new. It's a new kind of humming. The night doesn't lie, the palpitations when I sit up in the dawn light.

E

Something in my body has changed.

L

Soon you won't notice it. Soon you will have grown accustomed.

E

Soon you won't hear it. Soon it will be no more unnatural than the dying flies on the windowsill.





Photo: Irmelie Krekin

SARA STRIDSBERG

Sara Stridsberg (born 1972) is one of Sweden's most established authors and playwrights. Her breakthrough came in 2006, with the novel *Drömfakulteten* (*The Faculty of Dreams*), which was awarded the Nordic Council Literature Prize and nominated for the prestigious Man Booker International Prize when it was released in England and the United States in 2019. Today her novels have been translated into 25 different languages. Her latest novel, *Antarctica of Love* (2021) was published in England och USA 2022.

Sara Stridsberg's plays have been presented on the great stages of Sweden, and also abroad; these include, among others: *Medealand*, *Dissekering av ett snöfall* (*Dissection of a Snowfall*), *American Hotel*, and *Konsten att falla* (*The Art of Falling*). The new run of *Dissection d'une chute de neige* (*Dissection of a Snowfall*), directed by Christophe Rauck, will open at the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers's (France) in January 2024, and tour during spring.

Stridsberg has received the Selma Lagerlöf Prize, the Swedish Radio Novel Prize, the Dobloug Prize, and De Nios Winter Prize, among many others, and her books have been nominated for the August Prize five times. She has also translated works for theater by Sarah Kane, Sam Sheppard, and Sarah Ruhl, among others. Her play *Sårad Ängel* (*Wounded Angel*) was produced at the Royal Dramatic Theatre and Stockholm City Theatre in 2021 and her latest play *Svindel* (*Vertigo*) is set to have its world premiere at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in the spring of 2024.

About Medealand

The refugee Medea, who has left everything behind for love, finds herself in a psychiatric unit as she awaits deportation from her husband's homeland. From the bottom of the world, she turns to the country's king for permission to stay, and as she waits for Jason to come back to her she becomes increasingly frightened for herself. Next to her is her dead mother, and soon also her dead children, as well as a goddess who plays the role of psychiatrist and who is, in the end, the one to push her over the edge.

Medealand (2009)

By Sara Stridsberg

Medealand (2009)

By Sara Stridsberg

Duration: 75 minutes

Cast: 7

Scene 16

Medea is sitting on the floor. The Goddess enters. Dressed as for mourning. Medea looks up and follows her with her gaze.

MEDEA

I have nothing to say.

The Goddess turns to the audience and pays no attention to Medea.

THE GODDESS

A mother killed her two children. Afterwards she walked into the sea, her dress full of stones. The sky above was in flames. The shore was deserted.

Medea listens in astonishment.

Medea continues to study her. She stands up and moves close to the Goddess as she speaks, listening carefully, reading her lips.

As if she were under hypnosis or standing at the bottom of the sea.
A mother walks into the garden with her sleeping children.
Shards in the wet grass. Her pale feet are bleeding. The trees are
asleep. No birds are singing. She tucks her boys into a soft bed of
earth. She is sure they are asleep, because she has given them soda
and sleeping pills. Their slumber will be long and undisturbed.
No more unhappiness. She places the little boy's hand in the big boy's
hand. She says a prayer. Then she lies on top of the earth and looks at
the sky rushing by above.

MEDEA
Child-killer.

GODDESS
The marriage bed is a grave for women.

MEDEA
Child-killer.

GODDESS
A mother looks in on her children for the last time. The children are
asleep in their bunk bed. The little one still has a pacifier. She tenderly
presses the poison capsules into their mouths. The boys smell like
sleep and sugar. She gently squeezes their jaws on the glass.
The poison explodes across their baby teeth. Death is instantaneous.
She leaves the room. (Pause.) A mother dresses her two sons all in
white. She wraps up a piece of sponge cake for each and tucks it into
their backpacks. Don't forget to eat along the way. The sunny cake is in
the outer compartments. The sun beams down around them.
Their packs are heavy on their thin backs. She kisses their faces one
last time and tells them to go to the forbidden zone. They walk through
the wilderness.

They pass lakes and open fields. The sun burns.
Toothpick legs in their boots. A mother says her final prayer at the
kitchen table. At the roadblock, the backpacks explode.

Medea is still in her hypnotized state.

MEDEA

No.

GODDESS

A mother climbs the mountain with her youngest son. The sky is thick
and the clouds flicker. It takes days to get there on stubby little legs,
but he loves the adventure. At the top of the mountain, he helps her
gather sticks and rotting leaves. She prepares a fire.

Medea falls to her knees, crying.

MEDEA

No. No. No. Please, don't do it. Tell her she must not do it.

No point. She can't hear us anymore. The boy helps her throw kindling
on the fire. His little face is already purple from the heat.

MEDEA

But I'm afraid. I'm so terribly afraid. I can't do it.

GODDESS

She waits for something to stop her. She waits for the gods to step
down from the heavens and spare her and take all the tinder from her
hands. But there is no God. The light dies out. Her soul is burning at
the seams —

MEDEA

No. No. No. Please. Don't do it. Spare me this.

GODDESS

She waits for a sign. A streak of light in the mute sky above. A rent of mercy in this billowing, indifferent blue silk. But God is not there. God will never return. When darkness falls, she lights the fire for the child.

MEDEA

Please. Have mercy on her. Take the fire away from her. Let her be spared the final part. Tell her that this was only a trial, and that she was brave and strong, but now she can stop and go back to her child, or just walk away on her own. Have mercy on her. Tell her—

Silence. Medea moves through the room.

MEDEA

A mother drives onto the highway with her two boys in the back seat. The wilderness spreads out around the car. An Amazon gray as a sow-bug. Why shouldn't we put on our seatbelts, Mama? Because it's fun to ride without a belt, my little dragonfly. We're going far away this time. Where are we going? Crawl on up here, if you want to. You can sit here next to me and help me drive. But isn't that dangerous, Mama? Are you sure, Mama? Isn't it dangerous to be loose in the car? No, my angel, nothing is dangerous anymore. Hey, do you see that tunnel up there? Yes, Mama, I see a mountain rising in the wilderness like a dinosaur. Is that Tyrannosaurus Rex? Sure. Sure. Now close your eyes, my darlings.

Medea closes her eyes.

MEDEA

Now close your eyes, my darlings. Everything is going to be okay, little Tiger. Nothing more can happen to us. Mama will take you into the sweet, soft darkness.

The sweet, breathtaking darkness. They will remember you now.
Medea.

Darkness. Sirens.



Photo

JOHANNA EMANUELSSON

Johanna Emanuelsson (1986) is a playwright, screenwriter and dramaturg. She studied playwriting at the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts (2011-2013) and has over the past decade written for film, theatre, and radio theatre; among other works the play *Älvsborgsbron (I'm Falling)* for Unga Dramaten. She debuted as a screenwriter in 2017 with the feature film *Dröm vidare (Beyond Dreams)*, a film that won the audience choice prize at the Gothenburg Film Festival the same year. In 2018 she received the Henning Mankell Scholarship.

Emanuelsson has written plays for the Uppsala City Theatre, Örebro Länsteater, Riksteatern, among others. She also had a number of works premiere at Teater Tribunalen in Stockholm.

About Shimmering Waters

The class outsiders, Ally and Manisha, have been falsely accused of offing their teacher's beloved guinea pig. They run away to the forest, where they find themselves in a magical fantasy land. Both have lost their fathers and are full of grief. They don't have friends and don't want any, and their interests are rather odd. There beside the mysterious shimmering waters they finally find themselves — and each other. And the grief they have been carrying begins to lift.

Shimmering waters (2016)

By Johanna Emanuelsson

Duration: 50 minutes

Cast: 3

10. SIGYN'S BIOLOGY CLASSROOM

Sigyn von Coffeebreath is standing in her classroom, staring at the homemade wooden castle.

SIGYN VON COFFEEBREATH

Well now, Sigyn, perhaps you should have a cup of coffee, wouldn't that be nice?

Sigyn von Coffeebreath sighs deeply and sits down with her cup of coffee.

SIGYN VON COFFEEBREATH

My dear, beloved Profanum, where could you be?
Where have you gone?

Sigyn von Coffeebreath looks at the class-pet-list, her eyes sad. Suddenly she frowns at the paper, squints, and slowly picks it up, she looks at it for a moment, her fingers running over the words. Surprised at what she sees, she begins to rub at the paper, and then she can see clearly.

SIGYN VON COFFEEBREATH (reading)

Class-pet-duty, September 16: Sussan, Tussan, and Mussan?

What on earth?

Sigyn von Coffeebreath looks nervously around the empty classroom.

SIGYN VON COFFEEBREATH

Oh my, Sigyn. This isn't quite.. I think we may have jumped to some hasty conclusions here. Oh, what have you done now? Chasing off innocent children. No, Sigyn, you have to fix this somehow. You're simply going to have to go look for them, But where?! In the forest, of course! But, ooh, the forest is so big and dark!

11. ALLY'S MESSY ROOM

Solan is sitting in her daughter's messy room, talking on the phone.

SOLAN

She's pale, very pale, almost sort of bluish-white. She's short, has freckles, glasses, red hair, in like a pageboy but with long bangs and the back is cut shorter, she was wearing some ripped jeans, I think, and a Darkthrone T-shirt. What?...Darkthrone? I don't know, I guess it's a brand or something. Right, and then she probably had her rubber gloves and her instruments with her, I think. No, not musical instruments, a pair of rubber gloves and a little tweezers and a Swiss Army Knife. What?!...No, it was her father's!

It's very old, you couldn't use it to hurt a living thing she's interested in biology! She uses it when she's dissecting.

Solan bursts into tears

SOLAN (sniffing)

Yes, I'm still here she doesn't usually do anything like this, her dad died a year ago and ever since she's been awfully closed off somehow. Thanks You. 'll call as soon as you have good news. Thanks, bye for now bye-bye.

Solan bursts into tears again and clasps her hands.

SOLAN

Don't take my daughter away from me too! Please! Please, please, please! Let me keep my daughter, she's all I have.

12. MANISHA'S FREAKY ROOM

Hava is sitting on Manisha's bed, Manisha's mom is in the bed with a blanket over her. Hava is on the phone.

HAVA (sniffing)

Face painted white Yeah? What's wrong with that?! Her face was white and she had Corpse paint What's that?...Seriously? Okay, well, imagine putting on too much mascara and eyeliner and then crying for three days, that's what corpse paint looks like!...I don't know, it's like a style, what do I know?...And also she had a Hannibal mask Yeah, like the serial killer, yeah!...A mask with like nails over the mouth, yes, it's a toy!... No, I'm not shouting No, she's never run away before Our dad died almost two years ago now and ever since she's been awfully closed off somehow, but Okay, you'll call as soon as you hear anything Thanks Bye. Hava strokes her mother.

HAVA

It'll be okay, Mom, she'll come back. I promise. Oh Mama, don't cry I could do your makeup, Mom? If you want. I could turn you into a budget-babe. I can paint your eyes happy. I can hide the dark circles under your eyes so you don't look so tired. I can paint your cheeks perfectly rosy so you look young and fresh, and with beautiful burgundy nails I promise you'll feel more cheerful you'll be a real budget-babe Mom? Hava walks over to a window, opens it, and cries out in despair.

HAVA

Manisha! Manisha! Where are you?!

Manisha! Come back, Manisha!

13. In the Abnormally Large Forest

It's dark in the forest, which looks more like a gigantic room than a gigantic forest. Somewhere in all that gigantic space, Sigyn von Coffeebreath is performing an organized search all by herself, with her arms stretched out to the sides.

SIGYN VON COFFEEBREATH

Attention, attention! Hello! Hello! Hello! I am searching for two people, hello?! I am combing the forest out here, hello! I am searching for two short people, so-called children.

Sigyn von Coffeebreath spots a creepy-crawly and shrieks.

SIGYN VON COFFEEBREATH

Oh my lord! Oh, ew! Oh, it was just a little snail, wonderful creatures. ATTENTION! I am searching for two short people! Hello?!...Hello?!

Sigyn stops, gazing around the abnormally large forest in resignation. Ally and Manisha are somewhere else entirely, on their rocks, pretending they're not freezing. Suddenly they hear someone calling out in the distance.

ALLY

What was that?

MANISHA

Don't know.

ALLY

It sounded super weird.

MANISHA

Maybe it was some animal.

ALLY

No way, that was no animal.

MANISHA

How do you know?

Cause my dad worked with animals!

MANISHA

Like as a farmer?

ALLY

No, he took care of sick animals.

MANISHA

So that's why you're always messing around with those slimy bugs all the time.

ALLY

Shut up!

MANISHA

You shut up!

ALLY

I know what's wrong with you!

MANISHA

I know what's wrong with you!

ALLY

Your problem is, you're a psycho!

MANISHA

If one of us is a psycho here, it's you!

ALLY

Aw, whaddaya mean, you chicken-who-likes-horror nerd?!

MANISHA

Your dad was a psycho, maybe it runs in the family!

ALLY

My dad was not a freaking psycho!

Ally falls silent.

MANISHA

I mean, I was just kidding, Ally. Sorry.

He wasn't psycho/

MANISHA

/sorry/

ALLY

/he drowned/

MANISHA

/he did?

ALLY

Yeah? What's so weird about that?

MANISHA

No, nothing!

ALLY

He died by drowning himself.

MANISHA

He drowned himself?

ALLY

What the hell aren't you getting about this?!/

MANISHA

/mine too!

Ally stops.

ALLY

What?

MANISHA

My dad did too. He didn't drown himself, but he did drown.

MANISHA/ALLY

They never found him. My dad either. So he isn't buried in the ground. What are you doing? Stop copying me. You're copying me. You're copying me. Quit it! He's buried at sea instead. It's not funny anymore!

Ally suddenly spots something.

Look! Look over there! Behind the trees!

MANISHA

What?

ALLY

It's shimmering, or whatever!

MANISHA
Shimmering?

ALLY
Yeah, the moon is reflecting off something and making it shimmer. It must be water that's shimmering!

MANISHA
I don't see any shimmering. You're seeing things! That's, like, a meadow, not water.

ALLY
Come on!

MANISHA
No!

Ally starts walking towards whatever is shimmering.

MANISHA
You're totally psycho!

Manisha reluctantly follows.

MANISHA
Ally, wait up! Ally!





Photo: Riksteatern

MATTIAS BRUNN

Mattias Brunn (born 1976) is a playwright, actor, and director and has been praised by critics and audiences alike for his work on the themes of power structures, masculinity, gender, and sexuality. In 2019 he was awarded the Staffan Göthe Prize, with the following citation: "He is devoted to the scenic portrayal of alienation. He clears its minefields, captivates its paradises – multitalented, cheerful, and brave."

His work includes plays that have been staged at many theaters all over Sweden and abroad. Brunn lives in Stockholm and was one of three artistic directors at Folkteatern Gävleborg. In November 2019 he suffered and survived a severe stroke, and is now slowly recovering, starting a new chapter in his life.

About *Courage*

It's 1980s in Sweden and we're in the midst of the panic in the AIDS era. An infectious disease physician discovers a deadly virus. A priest devotes her life to the infected. A funeral director is one of the first to bury the victims. One of those infected becomes the first to survive the epidemic.

Courage is a drama based on real-world events, the story of four people who stood up in the storm and did what they knew to be the right thing, despite being surrounded by condemnation. The piece sheds a light on the courage of convictions during the AIDS epidemic in Sweden, and the real events and fates that these characters lived through and took part in. A dizzying tale of the value of human life, bravery, and hope.

Courage (2019)

By Mattias Brunn and Mårten Andersson

Duration: 2 hours 20 minutes, including intermission

Cast:

Ulla-Britt

Steve

P.O.

Krister

PROLOGUE/EPILOGUE

(Calm, collected, matter-of-fact)

ULLA-BRITT

I received a letter once from the countryside, I found it in my mailbox. It just said, "Ulla-Britt the AIDS chaplain, Stockholm." It had found its way, despite the lack of address.

STEVE

I don't take much medicine these days, I take three pills a day. One in the morning, two at night.

P.O.

Everything I know about HIV I learned from my patients. After all, we had to look for solutions together. I experienced the sorrow and curiosity of the eighties, the backlash of the early nineties, the joy of successful treatment in the late nineties, and the increasing invisibility in the 2000s.

STEVE

I feel grateful that I got to be part of it. And grief for all of those who didn't make it this far.

P.O.

I just happened to be there when a new illness appeared. Maybe I managed to have some small effect on the course of events, but the illness and the people I encountered affected me a great deal.

KRISTER

The age of AIDS was my university. It sounds horrific to say I think anything positive came out of AIDS, but I was fortunate to work with AIDS as a funeral director, because I learned so much. Standing in the eye of the storm.

ULLA-BRITT

It was the relationships you had when you were standing in that storm. We were like an army.

ULLA-BRITT *with a photograph of Johan. Simple, unadorned*
Johan. Strong, insightful. Unique. A precocious child. Was reading adult literature by the age of eight and read constantly. Lots of science fiction. History. He was very interested in the tomb of the young pharaoh Tutankhamen, and he liked to build it in the sandbox when he was four. I was studying theology when the kids were little, and he would say, "Mom, you look really tired, is there anything I can help you with?" Thoughtful.

Johan studied in Uppsala and was going to become a priest too, his studies went well and he hadn't come out as gay yet. And then he met a guy there, waved it off by saying "we're just friends." But I tried a little, "are you really sure that's all you are?" but I didn't want to pressure him at all. I'd never met many gay people myself, you don't, really, in church. At least none who was officially gay.

But then he came home, sat down next to me, and said, "You're right, we're in a relationship." But I wasn't worried, because Johan was Johan. He must have been twenty-three then.

THE START

STEVE

I was born in Gävle. When I was four we moved to Piteå, Dad worked for the paper industry. Then we moved to Dalsland, and from there to Värmland. I went to secondary school in Karlstad. I really blossomed there. Singing in a dance band, "Värmlands Dansband!" So corny. Later I moved to Gothenburg and start studying theology at the university. But later I started working for the Church of Sweden, too, as a member of the parish staff. And I only lasted there for two and a half years, like, those views of people — the bishop was strongly against female priests, and I felt like, "if only you knew I was gay." So I quit at halftime, so to speak.

P.O.

I studied in Lund and Malmö. And later on I ended up at Roslagstull Hospital. I applied there since I'm interested in international medicine, or "tropical medicine" as it was called at the time. There are a lot of people working on malaria, so I become interested in other tropical diseases, intestinal diseases. Poop is always fun. Especially because no one else thinks so. Around the same time there was an epidemic of hepatitis among homosexual men in Stockholm, and I'm working with my intestinal parasites, so, yeah, I think it's interesting—bacteria and parasites that can be transmitted sexually.

STEVE

Twenty-five years old, and like—what am I supposed to do now? So I started working with kids and teenagers who have physical and cognitive differences, and that sort of laid the groundwork for the activist in me.

P.O.

We always went to the library on a certain day each week, to read the latest issues of medical journals. So I'm standing up at the library, as usual, reading a tiny, tiny journal from the United States, on the first page of this tiny, tiny journal there's an article about an unusual pneumonia found in three different hospitals in Los Angeles — "five cases of pneumocystis carinii pneumonia among previously healthy young men."

When I get a little farther down in the article, it turns out that these five men were in fact homosexual. This is right up my alley. And even now, talking about it, and every time I think about it, I get goosebumps. Because when I'm standing there—it's such a particular feeling, that this is something important, really important, that's going to affect the rest of my life. This illness is what I'm going to devote my life to.

(Pause)

It's late afternoon. I'm about to head home. Then the nurse I work with says, "P.O.—there's a guy out here in the waiting room you need to take a look at." We're the only ones left on the unit. He's sitting there with this big fur coat on, I've never seen him before. Then he comes in. He's slight, emaciated and pale. And sunken cheeks, gray skin. He didn't look that skinny out in the waiting room, because he was wearing that big coat, but when he takes it off I just...

His name is Roar and he has explanations for all of this. He's lost weight because he hasn't had time to eat, he's been working a lot, almost twenty-four hours a day, because they're working on Café Opera, which is going to open soon, and they have to be ready. And it's a lot of work, day and night, basically. He says he's very tired. And then he coughs. And that's because he smokes all the time, so he has explanations for all of it. His fever, though, is hard to explain away. But he's scared, deep down he's scared.

Roar is showing all the signs described from the United States. I've got the picture, of course, I know how they describe it, what it looks like, a pre-AIDS stage, but it's not easy to prove.

There's no sure way to give a diagnosis, so it has to be a "suspected" diagnosis. But after ruling out other things, I feel that this has to be pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, which means he fulfills the designated criteria.

It all lines up. I write, at the end of his file, that this is likely what those in the United States are calling AIDS.

Roar comes back after a few days, and we admit him. He gets sicker and sicker. Various laboratories refuse to handle his samples, because I report that he is presumed to have AIDS, so we never get a confirmed diagnosis for him.

Now this illness is in Sweden. If one person has it, others surely do too. A one hundred percent fatal illness.

Roar dies of pneumonia in September of 1984. He is the first one.

THE ILLNESS

ULLA-BRITT

One winter evening in December, Johan suddenly tells me he's going to have an HIV test. "Just to be safe I'm going to get tested, no, I'm not necessarily infected, but just to be safe. But if I were to die, I would want you to perform at the funeral, Mom." Then I said, joking, I can't do that, you know, because if it comes to that, I want to be a mother and cry, but I will make sure it's a nice funeral.

STEVE

I can't imagine getting tested in Gothenburg, not a chance. So I go to Stockholm and get tested there. It's a Friday. And they want me to stay the weekend, because they'll check on me on Monday and make sure I don't go home and hang myself. And then back home, I need to wait for the results for a week, so I had to head back again next Friday.

ULLA-BRITT

In January 1985, Johan gets the news. I'm the only one he tells, under clergy privilege. One out of four of those infected develops symptoms and dies, they say. And as soon as Johan tells me he's infected, I think, "You're the one out of four, you're going to die." Johan feels the same way.

STEVE

I get the news. (Pause.) Leave the hospital. (Pause.) And I'm totally numb. I go out dancing. Stand there, loud music, throwing back a ton of alcohol. I can't quite take it in. No crying. None of that kind of reaction. Not a single tear. Has something changed in me? Am I going to lose my empathy for others now that something awful has happened to me? How long can I live? There's a ton of stuff I need to buy for my apartment, but am I really supposed to go buy all this if I'm going to die anyway?

ULLA-BRITT

Johan gets sick suddenly, pneumonia, it's around Midsummer. They say you'll survive the first and maybe the second but but the third will kill you. I call his doctor. "Is this pneumocystis carinii that Johan has?" "Yes, it is." "So he has AIDS now?" "Yes, he does."

P.O.

The tangibly difficult thing about it, is how much prejudices there are. Colleagues who feel we shouldn't be dealing with this, that people have only themselves to blame. Those who have exposed others to risk of infection can even legally be subject to indefinite isolation. Men, mostly, and female addicts and people who come from countries in Africa whom some think are purposely infecting innocent Swedish men.

STEVE

Then came the stories of what happens when you tell. Someone lost their job. People lose their homes. Stress and anxiety increase.

ULLA-BRITT

And then I visit Johan at Roslagstull, in the Observation C wing. Many days and long nights are spent there. I spent long periods sleeping on county-hospital sheets, eating only hospital food, watching the trees outside Johan's room change color. And of course I met lots of other young men there, in various stages of the illness.

STEVE

So I move to Stockholm. I just want to do whatever I feel like now. Live life to the max. Lots of people are with me in that way of thinking, of living in the now. Sick people mortgage their condos, take out everything.

ULLA-BRITT

The health services and psychologists are taken by surprise. Until now, the task of psychologists has been to get people to go out and live life. Now, instead, they are supposed to prepare young people for the end of their lives, and there's no advance plan for that. And it turns out that there are no priests who are interested in working with the AIDS patients at Roslagstull and Observation C.

STEVE

I visit a friend at the hospital and after just a few minutes I realize he's developed dementia. That empty gaze, like no one's home. He's maybe thirty-seven. And when you visit the unit and see one of these skeletons in a hospital gown, with an IV, some young kid, emaciated and sick, I think, "Dear God, don't let this happen to me."

ULLA-BRITT

So I go into the smoking room because that's where you make connections, and say I want to be at Roslagstull. As the hospital chaplain. And I get my wish fulfilled, I'm assigned there part-time. I become the chaplain for those infected with HIV, and for those who have AIDS.



Photo: Pierre Björk

DIMEN ABDULLA

Since her debut with *På alla fyra (On All Fours)* in 2014, Dimen Abdulla (born 1984) has been one of Sweden's most promising and interesting playwrights, with plays such as *Revolution* and *Swedish History X*.

Dimen studied at the University College of Film and radio, television and theatre and the Royal Institute of Art, and since graduating she has written for several of the most prestigious institutions in Sweden. Her plays have been performed at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm City Theatre, Unga Klara, and Ung Scen/Öst.

During 2015 she was a in-house playwright at Radio Sweden Drama, and she is currently a playwright for a number of companies as well as working as a dramaturg at Regionteater Väst.

About *Giraffe*

The Giraffe begins with a real-world event: the public slaughter and dissection of a giraffe named Marius at the Copenhagen Zoo a few years ago, an event referenced to by the Danish poet Yahya Hassan. When he spoke of himself in interviews, it was often from the perspective of an exotic animal, put on display for the general public.

Dimen Abdulla here puts this to use in this tale of a young woman named Jaja/Yahya who spends a frantic day searching for a way to anchor herself in the inner circles of Stockholm.

The difference between Marius the giraffe and Jaja is that Jaja voluntarily exposes what she feels inside, allows herself to be dissected. Jaja is dependent upon the value she can derive from her experience with members of the upper-class circles, in which she strives to belong. Everything centres around cultural capital, money and status. The members, in return, are dependent upon Jaja to gain proximity to an authentic life experience, to “genuine” suffering.

The Giraffe (2017)

By Dimen Abdulla

Duration: 60 minutes

Cast:

Jaja

The voice on TV

The journalist actor

Behin

Pier

Malva

The voice on TV speaks in past tense

JAJA and the others speak in present tense

JAJA

they're going to drag you down to their level
those journalists and cultural figures and the middle class and trample
you to death, cannibalize you and your stories until you are all used up

THE VOICE ON TV

It turned out BEHIN was no one, not at all who JAJA thought
JAJA thought BEHIN was someone. But not a traitor

JAJA

A backstabber

THE VOICE ON TV
The air is fresh and cool

JAJA hears her breathing and says nothing

JAJA
I can't stay here

THE VOICE ON TV
she's suffocating
how she can't stand people
how her hands tremble as she inhales the cigarette poison deep into
her lungs she stubs out the cigarette and inside herself she hears a
silent scream but she has no voice no one can hear you

JAJA
no one cares about me

THE VOICE ON TV
JAJA hears her own breaths step by step, with her back to it, on down
the street home stops at the crosswalk and sees the door where PIER
lives

PART 2

The front door of Pier's building

THE VOICE ON TV
JAJA felt a sudden urge to see if the door code still works
this was where she had decided to go, but she passes by. she turns
back to the door after a few hundred meters.

She WAS a mysterious figure, a point in the night. A glowing firefly who prostituted herself for the money and for the fame.

Who lived under the night sky. She takes out a pack of cigarettes, strikes the lighter and stands still as a statue before a shop window.

They couldn't make sense of her

They were curious, interested

They saw something in her and they liked her

She had given her body to them, laid herself bare, told them her sob stories how she lived in a different world about mami and papi, her brother and the cliché of living on welfare

JAJA

to explain to them

JAJA'S affected voice:

how hard it is to survive for regular people there's often no safety net at all

JAJA'S regular voice:

how

regular people don't attain status

instead they took it

through diligence and hard work and they said

you should know it's an accident to be born into a role

in a sheltered existence

to compete with your parents and their achievements

the fear of failure

THE VOICE ON TV

and she felt sympathy for them

as they passed their marble sculptures in the garden sunning by the pool, under a palm

THE VOICE ON TV

they said:

THE VOICE ON TV'S affected voice:

what a little wiggle room there was with these demands

the pressure and the difficulty breathing it was an emotional handicap

JAJA

I was always fascinated by Malva and Pier

They could talk about meaningless things as if they were the most meaningful

A banana could be an endless topic of debate, with decorative intertwining of colonialism

THE VOICE ON TV

JAJA wasn't like them

and they they loved it

and JAJA was given a place in the sun and in her other voice she said, with a certain amount of exaggeration, posing, and affectation

JAJA

I grew up in the real world.

It wasn't easy to deal with.

I don't want anything to do with reality and the world

it seems like nothing but death and darkness ugliness and suffering

why should I go to the sea to the shore

I don't want to be there

my body drowning in its waves

how could anyone want to go to sea when you can go by land

flap your wings and fly

I want to learn from a lion, how to hunt

THE VOICE ON TV

Fascinated by her authenticity, they lapped up her colors with a suction-cup lust the cliché

the confirmation of their world view as she claimed to be

It is also who she is

It is also how she likes to be
they shone spotlights at her most sensitive sides
in other social settings a person would have taken care not to reveal so
much but JAJA did so gladly
she had begun a romance with them
she had felt the sex and their eyes on her
She had been welcomed with fairly open arms into their eight ten-
tacles
they offered MDMA a rolled-up bill
amex silver to divide the powder endless lines
endless nights
it was wonderful too totally totally wonderful
who would want to go home
She was drawn to them
and they to

JAJA

She wanted more
They wanted more

JAJA

Before I thought the middle class was so fucking exciting but not any-
more. Now the upper-class is interesting it seems so exotic
And I think they're all attractive They're also impressed by success
while the middle class is more boring, maybe the middle class is quiet
and withdrawn maybe they just don't have the imagination but I don't
know, maybe I just don't give a shit about them I guess I'm awful jud-
gey
Sometimes I don't mean to judge
Also I think the upper class doesn't give a shit about me
bastards
In fact, they shit all over me
That's the sick part
They shit all over me, so I shouldn't be so interested in them maybe it's
a little sadomasochistic
And that's what I'm drawn to
Because it's so goddamn fucking unfair

I also feel like fuck u all whatever
I think I'll just say screw it
First I just think I'll survive I'm so fucking tired of that
Do you know what money does to you?
It fuckin' handicaps you
It makes you incapable of doing anything for yourself
Do you know how fucking retarded you get when you're so fucking rich
Do you understand how handicapped you are
It's a claustrophobic hell
Consumption is for damn sure the worst
It's such a terrible addiction
The upper class has a different kind of know-how know-how imprinted on
them through breast milk
they sat with the president and skinny-dipped with Palme Imagine!
Skinny-dipping with Palme they do that
They're in the middle of it!
every time I think You know what FUCK IT ALL
I don't mean fuck it all
like hygiene and stuff
But like control over how things should be I had to build up defenses
a method or strategy
or deny the person I became

THE VOICE ON TV

JAJA looks at herself in the reflective surface of the shop window.
She stands there for ages, studying her body, twisting and turning in front
of the mirrorlike window. That.
That thing she does when she's taking on a role:
She warms up. Emotionally preparing herself. Preparing herself to stand
before them. She warms up.

JAJA

I've even started that whole hair-straightening thing Imitating these people
I had nothing in common with I felt like I was being bullied
In their world you're nothing but a freak I'm wearing sweatpants with a

pattern a colorful clown among these people

That I'm allowed in these spaces, in these clown clothes
Everyone adapts by refusing to open their eyes to what's going on
around here
I'm playing someone else
You adapt by playing down what happens in the real world
But even if your eyes are truly open and you dare to look at this drama
it's not out of the question that you'll adapt anyway that you'll accept
that you'll acclimatize to the humiliation
I try to accept the unacceptable so I
I used to practice going to littala
it was a way to move from thought to action Practice
Conversing and appearing urbane acting normal
no being different, no being heard being being whole and pure

THE VOICE ON TV

Alit in the glow of
blood dripping from her nose drip
drip drip
SHE was fucking angry, for the first time in her life she felt murderous JAJA
wanted to hit them
SHE imagined herself pounding and pounding them with her fists how
SHE bit them with her teeth
how SHE kicked them with her feet and hit and hit and hit and hit
Her lust had led her down the wrong track she had flown right into the sun
like Icarus
and had been scorched by the sun
She decided to stop basking in their sun it was the last time

JAJA

that I can bear it

THE VOICE ON TV

that she can bear it that she can stand it

JAJA
that I can stand it

THE VOICE ON TV
and one more time
and one more time and suddenly no more

JAJA
never again

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ADEL DARWISH / *HIERARCHY OF NEEDS*

PAULA STENSTRÖM ÖHMAN / *OCEAN*

ALEJANDRO LEIVA WENGER / *MEMORIAL*

ÅSA LINDHOLM / *IFGIRLS COULD KILL*

JONAS HASSEN KHEMIRI / *ALMOST EQUAL TO*

CHIRSTINA OUZOUNIDIS / *FLEEING CREATURES*

SARA STRIDSBERG / *MEDEALAND*

JOHANNA EMANUELSSON / *SHIMMERING WATERS*

MATTIAS BRUNN / *COURAGE*

DIMEN ABDULLA / *THE GIRAFFE*



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