

Good evening,

My name is Oscar. I'm a researcher in Queer Studies at the Centre for Gender Research at Uppsala University.

I am here to introduce tonight's musical act.

One of the reasons that I have been given this honor, is that my research explores queer representation, specifically through the lens of what I call *queer waiting*.

And queer waiting is a crucial concept in our time, not only because we're in the middle of this year's Pride, but also because queer people across the world face various challenges today.

The concept of queer waiting explains the many ways with which queer lives are shaped by, for example, waiting to come out; waiting to be seen for who we truly are; waiting for our families to accept us; waiting for safety, recognition, legal rights, and a future worth living.

Tonight, though, I want to emphasize something that has become increasingly important to me through that research: what kind of queer community are we building while we wait—and should we be waiting at all?

One of the greatest strengths of the LGBTQIA+ community is that we have never been *one* thing that fits neatly into a mere acronym. We come from every race, religion, language, culture, and social class. Some of us are disabled. Some are migrants or refugees. Some have lived openly for decades; others are still waiting for the courage to take their first step.

Let me be perfectly clear: Our differences are not a weakness. They are our superpower.

Because at a time when conformity is once again being celebrated, when ideas about who belongs and who doesn't are gaining traction, our very existence offers a better vision of the world.

We remind people that humanity has always been diverse. Because queerness has never been about sameness. It has always been about broadening one's horizon.

This means that Pride cannot be a place where only certain queer experiences are visible. If our movement truly believes in liberation, then liberation must belong to everyone.

This means that trans lives are not a side issue. Neither are queer people of color. Or refugees, migrants, disabled queers, religious minorities, and Indigenous queer people.

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In the epilogue of my forthcoming book, I argue that although queer history is full of waiting, it is also full of people who refused to wait.

During the AIDS crisis, we refused to wait for governments to save us and created our own “communities of care.” Activists like ACT UP, trans activists, lesbian feminists, queer migrants, and generations of people throughout history – whose names have been forgotten – all remind us that progress has never arrived simply because time passed.

Progress arrives when people organize, protest, and care for one another.

Today, many of us once again find ourselves waiting—with anxiety—for rights to be restricted, for books to be banned, for healthcare to disappear or for radicalized haters to harm – even kill – us, as we’ve seen in the dreadful event at Berlin Pride last week. My research has taught me that in this political climate, we must refuse to wait for our rights to disappear.

This means learning from previous generations of queer activists. It means understanding that the future is not something that simply arrives. It is something we build together.

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As I mentioned earlier, for much of my career as a researcher I have studied representation. Representation matters because it shapes what futures people can imagine for themselves. If you never see yourself reflected, it becomes much harder to believe that you belong.

That is why spaces like the theatre matter.

Stages, however, are never neutral.

Who gets to stand in the spotlight, whose stories are told, whose voices are heard, and whose lives are considered worthy of being portrayed all shape how we imagine society itself.

Representation is not simply about visibility. It is about *possibility*.

That is why *Stolt scenkonst* is so important.

The arts – specifically queer arts – allow us to imagine different futures.

The arts remind us that another world is possible.

I want to underline, though, that as a white, cisgender gay man, whose politics, however, are deeply queer, I am very conscious of my own privilege. For a long time—before I truly woke up—I simply did not notice, or frankly care enough about, the lack of diversity within many of the queer spaces I inhabited.

I thought representation was enough because I saw *myself* represented. I no longer believe that. I now strive to amplify voices and stories that too often remain on the margins, even within our own community.

Which is why I am genuinely proud to introduce tonight's musical act: a band whose music we still hear far too rarely during mainstream Pride festivals.

I believe – as do *Stolt scenkonst* and this theatre, Ö2 – that Pride should sound like the full diversity of the queer community. So tonight, let us celebrate queer plurality.

Let us celebrate music that crosses borders, languages, and cultures. Let us welcome the sounds of the Arabic-speaking world into this venue—not as an exotic addition to this year's Pride, but as an essential part of what queer culture already is.

Please give a huge welcome to Habib Albi!