



*Elena Krasteva, programata.bg, 26.06.2008*

## **ALEXANDER MORFOV: TO RUSSIA AND BACK**



*When you've been long missing from your country you always come back with the hope that during those months something has maybe changed. That the state and the people are changed as if with a magic wand, that some miracle has happened. But then you return and see everything as it was, even worse. You wish to shout in pain and say out loud what you think.*

*What do I have to be afraid of? What can they take away from me? People who are afraid have a business, they are into some deep and intricate affairs. They keep their mouths shut because they will immediately be sanctioned by those who ensure their gain. I was sanctioned some time ago*

*because I opposed a scheme for taking away the National Theatre – they wanted to sell it in pieces.*

*“Alexander Morfov receives prize in Russia” – variations of this title have been the most common news that we have been reading in the past few years, even more often than theatre criticism on his latest shows. The reason is prosaic – the man who made the audience return to Bulgarian theatres does not work in Bulgaria anymore. After a conflict with the deceased Minister of culture – Bozhidar Abrashev, and an argument with the present one – the actor Stefan Danailov, Morfov went to Russia. His shows “Dom Juan” after Moliere at the St. Petersburg’s theatre “Komissarzhevskaya” and “Eclipse” (after Ken Kesey’s “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest”) at the Moscow theatre “Lenkom”, brought to the Bulgarian director a collection of the most prestigious theatre awards in Russia - “The Golden Mask”, “The Golden Soffit”, “Chrystal Turandot”. But Morfov visits occasionally. Because of his family – his wife Renny Vrangova and their two daughters Neda and Sara, and, luckily, sometimes to stage as well – some new production at the National Theatre. As a result four years ago the incredible “Exiles” were born on the stage of the National, and two years ago we experienced “Dom Juan”’s love and rebellion. Now we are about to see “Baal” and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” to be presented in Sofia for a whole week and then – in Varna, Bourgas and Plovdiv. Currently Morfov is still actively working in Russian and between two rehearsals we managed to ask him a few questions about fears, freedom and theatre – we received firm and honest answers.*

### **Is Russia giving you more freedom, mr. Morfov?**

Freedom is a matter of internal understanding, it’s not connected with any country or power. I’m free wherever I am.

### **When you returned last year you held a speech at the Askeer ceremony – you took the liberty to voice problems, kept silent until then, and blew the spirtis. Why did your voice remain lonely?**

I’ve always tried to speak of problems that no one else in the society dares to speak about. I’m very surprised that people remain silent about the obvious truth. You even feel pain. It’s maybe because I’m just returning from a foreign country. When you’ve been long missing from your country you always come back with the hope that during those months something has maybe changed. That the state and the people are changed as if with a magic wand, that some miracle has happened. But then you return and see everything as it was, even worse. You wish to shout in pain and say out loud what you think. That’s the normal thing. I figure it’s an impulse of any normal man, especially under the current circumstances.

### **Maybe silence is actually fear...**

Why be silent? What do I have to be afraid of? What can they take away from me? People who are afraid have a business, they are into some deep and intricate affairs. They keep their mouths shut because they will immediately be sanctioned by those who ensure their gain. I was sanctioned

some time ago because I opposed a scheme for taking away the National Theatre – they wanted to sell it in pieces. But who can forbid me to be myself? If they take my production off the repertory I would simply go somewhere else and stage my shows. Speaking of freedom – and that’s the reason I feel equally free in Bulgarian and in Russia – I don’t belong to any of those business clans.

### **How much did it cost you, this freedom?**

Emotional and internal suffering from not being able to be with my closest people during that time. I am separated from the people and the country I love. At least, what’s left from it. Otherwise, freedom doesn’t cost anything more than that. In the past few years it seems that my returns to Bulgaria have been more painful than they have been joyful.

### **Why is that?**

Pain is to see how this beautiful country is being destroyed. Pain is to realise the process is now irreversable. Decay, theft, inhumanity and lack of moral – those are unstoppable. There are still some small areas in the mountains where you can hide and forget all of this – enjoy nature, feel happy again for belonging to nature.

### **You are here to present two of your productions staged at the “Komissarzhevskaya” theatre in St. Petersburg. How do those productions change you?**

I don’t know if they’ve changed me. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” bears some similarities to the version I staged at the National Theatre years ago. I kept some of the hints and quotations on purpose because it felt really bad to have this show taken off the repertory back then. As for “Baal” – Brecht’s text, it was a huge provocation for me. You start thinking of all those rock stars and people – endlessly talented and endlessly misfortunate who are unable to withstand the burden of fame. Starting from Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain. Dozens of genius rock musicians, artists... That’s why I did this rock production – a rehearsal of a rock band. The actors reached a highly professional level.

### **What’s the antidote for world fame?**

I don’t know. Maybe there is no need of an antidote, maybe you should simply set yourself on fire and burn till the end of it. As a matter of fact, we are experiencing more pain from all those antidotes we take to keep ourselves away from getting burned. In this stylised mode we keep living our half-lives. We become imitations of truth. You should burn till the end and maybe for some people death is the only escape.

### **Can such a production be done here or is it too expensive?**

It’s not expensive. This is not a rock opera, we are not expressing our feelings with the means of music, it’s simply a rehearsal of a rock band. Of course, it can be done in Bulgaria. We’ve had this idea for a long time, me and Hristo Mutafchiev, gathering actors who can play different

instruments well. We even had some conversations with Stefan Valdobrev about staging a Shakespearean rock production. I still haven't quit this idea, maybe we'll make it happen if I come back for a longer period of time.

**What's your latest midsummer night's dream, literally?**

My latest dreams are a bit troublesome and I really don't feel like revealing them. In about 20 days I have a premiere of Durrenmatt's "The Visit". I always get neurotic before premiere and start having nightmares.