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*Interview by Liga Ruseniece, nra.lv, 20.09.2017*

**ALEXANDER MORFOV, DIRECTOR:**

**WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY THAT IS SLOWLY DESTROYING ITSELF**



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*“Before each premiere there is always the crisis when I think that nothing is working out right, nothing could ever be, I feel standing on the edge of an abyss and can’t find the right solution... And suddenly an idea comes, a thought, a blast... You have the feeling that someone is helping you. Of course, you need to have done your job before that, to have created the concept, given it a good thinking. But concepts don’t create productions. Before each premiere I know that a miracle is awaiting me... When I’m looking for my guardian angel.”*

**Tonight *Dailes* theatre is opening its new season with the tragicomedy “The Celebration” by the Bulgarian stage director Alexander Morfov after Thomas Vinterberg’s text based on the film with the same title (“Festen”, 1998). The director has already staged twice at *Dailes* and has won the appreciation of the critics – “Finita la Comedia!” and “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest”. “The Celebration” is about a 60-year jubilee of the head of a large family; children, relatives and friends are among the guests and, as the traditions calls, a toast is raised. This is the exact moment when the genie comes out of the bottle. For his work Alexander Morfov admits: “This production is a metaphor about our modern society – a sick society governed by sick people. A hopeless situation, with no exit.” After his work in Riga, he is going to Moscow to stage “Decameron” and to focus on “purely human tragedies and pleasures that we take from living.”**

**D. R. On one hand, relations between children and parents are a universal topic that is always discussable, but on the other, today it seems more important, or even, fashionable to talk about anything else but sexual abuse of children in the family. Why did You choose this material?**

**A. M.** This text is a metaphor about the contemporary elite and the contemporary society. If we look at it at a larger scale we can say a lot. We all know that there are secrets kept away from public although the people are aware – hidden links between corporations and mafia. They are never revealed to the whole community. I believe that what is going on today is a horrifying game between society and governing elites – everyone knows something monstrous is happening but probably due to inertia we still keep living our lives as before. It is strange, people often comfort themselves with the idea that it could have been worse. That’s why they keep electing the same idiots, same cretins and even criminals. Unfortunately, it’s a meat grinder – no one has escaped sound and safe from it as the machine has grinded them into a rotting pile of meat. Those who dare to speak the truth are being destroyed or are destroying themselves by closing within their own shell. I have many honest friends who entered politics but shortly left this environment, never returning to it again. This process has humiliated them, it has even destroyed them.

**In an interview two years ago You said that in each production there is a character that you identify with. Which is this character now?**

I cannot identify myself with any of the these, somehow in this production I am all of them. This production burdens the soul. You find yourself in some creative schizophrenia which is getting a bit scary as the creative process comes to an end but the schizophrenia stays. I am able to understand all of the characters, I let their motives and emotions run through me. I used to be able to easily identify myself with the good or the bad, but there is so much from both here as each is depraved in his own way. In this production they are all sick, they are all lepers. It’s a metaphor about our modern society – a sick society governed by sick people. A hopeless situation, with no exit.

**And yet, there must be an exit.**

There must be. It’s romantic, naïve and pathetic – the key is love. And that’s not bad at all, is it?

**In the production the only sister in a family of four children has recently died. You also lost a sister and a brother in Your teenage years.**

Yes, and I remember well this feeling – confusion, blaming the parents, blaming the society.

I am convinced that if one has a number of innate monstrosities, he will manifest them finding himself in a society with sick morals or, even, with no morals. Morals disappear when one starts feeling more important than another, when it’s permissible to use the “lower-grade” person, to

manipulate him and to “abuse” him in all manners, unpunished at that. When you are doing this and realise there are no consequences whatsoever, you start growing various desires and intentions. That’s the beginning of dictatorship, or fascism. It’s the moment of dropping all bans which have preserved the society through ages and which are even found in Christianity forcing people to fear and obey God’s commandments. Modern democracy allows and tolerates everything, never judges anything.

I don’t know where the truth lies but I admit that the opposition between modern democracy and Islam, and now the conflict between the two, is based on morals. The contemporary western society has completely lost its morals, it has traded them for profit and unlimited liberties – everything is allowed, there are no ethical or human limitations. We live in a society that is destroying itself, one which is nearing its own end. The only important thing for most of the people today is being cool and having money, nothing more. Yes, it’s the beginning of the end. I mean no bad, but it is. Some say that it is just the end of an era and not the end of the humanity, that a new world is coming but I’m sceptical about this. Because I’m here and now and I can see how this huge energy is building up into something terrifying.

**There are two options – men either carry this by nature, or have been programmed.**

A man is an incomplete creation, that is so. There is this basic rule – human efforts always follow the path of least resistance. Men would pick the fastest lane, the easiest one, the most favourable one. Our society finds this normal while it shouldn’t. People have forgotten qualities such as honesty, respect, etc., those are now “empty”, although our ancestors found them important. The whole European literature from past centuries... Oh well, I’m talking nonsense already...

You know, sometimes I have these apocalyptic visions about what could easily happen tomorrow. Something small and trivial could break this whole enormous system of gain. What would happen, for instance, if all ATMs just froze? Where would you get money? How much does a person have in his wallet compared to what he has in the bank? What if the bank system collapses? Within a few days people will be out in the streets killing each other, because the man turns into a beast trying to save and protect himself and his closest. Just imagine such an apocalypse – this huge, beautiful system with all of its embedded and adjacent technologies is thrown in the air by some accident or by hacker attack, or whatever. A lot of people would have to start learning from zero – how to start a fire, how to find food. But the urban man has no idea how to survive without technology, without electricity... Recently, such “black” fantasies have been following me. That’s dangerous because the system can be blown in the not so distant future, I would even say, in the near future.

History, of course, has taught us that the end of a civilization begins at the highest point of its development.

**Does this mean that people can never live in prosperity?**

It’s getting harder and harder. I think that in such a moment the new person comes, with his new thinking and his new ways of existing. They say there is hope in the new generations, the indigo generation, which is supposed to lead humanity onto the road to its survival. There is a certain logic in this because today it all seems as if moving towards an abyss. Every attempt is doomed. I don’t mean to say that there is a rational and conscious form of resistance, it’s more like on unconscious level. No one can say what is to be.

**Most people never think about that. They go to work in the mornings, spend their evenings in front of the TV, have fun in the weekends. Do we have to think about that?**

Yes, we do. If one doesn't realise what is happening he is allowing himself to another man's invented reality, he becomes a function, while each has the right to decide and live his life for himself. People have the right to know what and how is being done so that they can make decisions for themselves rather than being dependent on another man's will, or in other words – easy to manipulate and control. What “functions” does a man need? Receiving his paycheck, healthy children, entertaining TV shows and with all of this, day after day, he is eventually caught into this meat grinder and turns into a function himself in result. Food on the table, roof over your head, TV shows, children at school... Why would you need anything more than that? You don't. It is more than clear that it's a lie, it's a manipulation which transforms us into mass. A flock of sheep. I've always said that sheep is only good for mincing.

I'm afraid of this process. Corporations that govern the world have one single goal – converting all countries, all people and all nations into a plain, submittable and controllable mass, easy to govern. Of course, there is still hope, having the chance to work with such a phantasm as theatre. It gives us the chance to remind people that they should think, that they are not required to always blindly trust everything they are being offered. Not everything is such pure truth, there are many dirty lies hiding in between there. Theatre, of course, cannot change a person or transform him into a warrior of truth, but it can make him think. And while we are able to think, there is still a chance for a change. People must ask questions and if unable to find rational, reasonable and ethical answers, they must oppose or, at least, express their opinion. When you dare to voice your opinion, you find like-minded people and unite them, you become more responsible to your own future. And you won't allow others to turn you into sheep.

**Is there a point in voicing your opinion then? Even right, you are still on the losing side.**

There is a point in having an opinion. Otherwise you are just a sheep from the flock. Even more – this is actually the last thing we are left – preserving our dignity.

**Unlike previous productions, Bulgaria is missing from the brackets after Your name. Why is that?**

I don't know if it's important. Probably because lately I suffered a lot at the hands of the “state”, this mighty power. These are my personal relations with the government and with the society, and I would not like to identify myself with Bulgaria. I'm a son of my mother and father, that's all.

**Do You live in Bulgaria?**

Occasionally. My wife and two daughters are there. What does it matter if you are Bulgarian, Russian or German?.. Currently I'm working in Latvia, I'm then starting for Russia, Romania, Israel, Sweden... The important thing is what you are leaving behind, people judge you by that. If you are doing good, they don't care of your nationality, but if you are doing bad, they blame the whole nation. I would not like to carry my ancestors with me.

**Is that so?**

Yes. I prefer being independent and free, without the good or the bad that I could employ from my nationality. A man is as significant as he is.

**Did You manage to build Your own team in *Dailies* theatre where You are working for a third time?**

Yes, I feel like I now have “my” actors at *Dailes* with whom I work well and we’ve built a trust between each other. At the same time I’m a bit scared that they trust me so much because I might not be able to live up to their expectations. The director-actor relation is not easily built and it should be carefully balanced, not overdone.

Before each premiere there is always the crisis when I think that nothing is working out right, nothing could ever be, I feel standing on the edge of an abyss and can’t find the right solution... I’m so afraid that nothing will come to place but on the other hand those moods are similar at each premiere and this is somehow comforting. Sometimes my wife, who is an actress, asks me if I had ever had any other premieres at all, because I remember nothing. She comforts me by reminding me of what it was at other premieres, when I even cried as a child.

**How does the solution come?**

Who knows! Suddenly an idea comes, a thought, a blast... You have the feeling that someone is helping you. Of course, you need to have done your job before that, to have created the concept, given it a good thinking. But concepts don’t create productions. Before each premiere I know that a miracle is awaiting me... When I’m looking for my guardian angel.

**Does the guardian angel always come?**

It has, so far. Before a premiere I even have the feeling that it is, so to say, edifying me: what would you do without me, ah?