

New Estonian Drama



News from Estonian dramaturgy

You are now holding a booklet of new Estonian drama. The chosen plays were written and translated into various languages between 2017 and 2024, and confirm that the gallery of authors writing for Estonian theatre is wide and diverse.

Here, playwrights and screenwriters Piret Jaaks and Martin Algus present their latest plays. Both have previously won several prizes at the Estonian Theatre Agency's playwriting competitions. Now they're looking into recent history as they follow the state's and its citizens' road to freedom. The same search for freedom and liberation is shown through the eyes of two young boys in a joint creation by the director Diana Leesalu and the writer-clergyman Kaarel B. Väljamäe. The historian and novelist Tiit Aleksejev travels further back in time, bringing together and juxtaposing faith, love, missions, religions, and different worldviews.

Katariina Libe's text, which won the main prize in the 2021 playwriting competition, was inspired by the author's career in journalism. The stories she came across as a journalist invited her to write about being a woman and becoming a mother, and about relationships between women.

We are also glad to present Heneliis Notton's existential youth drama and a family story by Mart Aas, depicting an anonymous district with blocks of flats where two young characters merge into one. Director and dramaturg Ivar Põllu takes his characters to an apartment in a block of flats as well, where the complex relationship between a woman and a man develops from mundane to mysterious. The poetical side of drama is represented by

dramaturgs and directors Urmas Vadi and Paavo Piik. While the former fuses the poetry and the absurdity of Soviet-era life into a play, the latter draws inspiration from contemporary identity searches and thefts.

Playwright Priit Põldma works as an author and director, both alone and in collaboration. In the drama based on Andrus Kasemaa's novel, he plays out scenes from the past with aging ladies, while the documentary drama based on interviews with Mari-Liis Lill and Aare Pilv explores loneliness.

In his most recent play, written in 2024, playwright Mehis Pihla has looked into the money laundering scandals in Europe. It's a fast-paced and incisive insight into the world of the very rich, but also a critique of the system and its handlers, as well as a generalisation of humanity always on the hunt for better.

Heidi Aadma
dramaturge

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PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Kaksindus
PUBLISHED: 2022
SCENES: 34
ROLES: 1f, 4m
AWARDS: Second prize at the Estonian Theatre Agency's
2021 New Drama Competition
TRANSLATIONS: English, Latvian

Duality by Mart Aas

“Very soon it becomes evident that the boys have not always been “in duality”. As children they lived with an artistic mother and a musical father who wielded fantasy as an alternative to an often unpleasant reality. “Look, Boy, there are two trains running in parallel. One carries everyday life: bills, building materials, the shopping ... all of that ... And the other is ... the train of imagination. On which mom and I ... and your art teachers ... invite you to travel.”

Maara Parhomenko, Värške Rõhk, 29.06.2023

“Duality” is a story about solitude and dreams unfolding on the 13th floor of a Soviet-era apartment building.

The play’s protagonists Boy 1 and Boy 2 - twins or the two sides of a single boy - reside in their own world, on the border between real life and the imaginary. The storyline emerges slowly, shifting between past and present, offering us scenes from their childhood and of their parents. For this is as much Mom and Dad’s story - an account of a generation who turned to escapism to find a way out of ordinary life.

The play’s dreamlike atmosphere is enchanting and sensitive topics are handled with a playful, verging on absurd, sense of humour, that makes reading it effortless and enjoyable. The text is suited for the stage, radio and screen: its short scenes and witty dialogue provide the material for a wide variety of approaches.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

7. (The past)

MOMMY: We really do have a precious little boy.

DADDY: Indeed. A little more time ... and he’ll be independent.

MOMMY: Yeah. It has to happen someday – that much is clear.

DADDY: ... When he goes outside ... And can’t get back in again. Because the door’s locked.

MOMMY: And he starts his own family. Makes his own nest.

DADDY: Because he has no other choice. The door’s just locked.

8. (The present)

BOY 2: It’s Christmas. Christmas-tree season. I’m standing here on the balcony of my two-room apartment on the 13th floor of a high-rise apartment building in Tallinn’s Õismäe district.

BOY 1: I’m a little drunk, I’ll be honest, and I’m thinking – pretty common around Christmastime, right? – I’m thinking about what actually is ... And what isn’t.

BOY 2: I’m drafting a summary for some reason. Even though I’m still young.

BOY 1: Independence, at last. Independence! Through trials and tribulations. But independence.

BOY 2: I’ll manage. Everything’s going fine. Things have started flowing nicely.

BOY 1: At least here, on the balcony of a high-rise apartment in Õismäe, a little drunk, that sure seems to be the case.

BOY 2: And everything really is fine. I love life. After all that. Life with our parents. Which wasn’t exactly a cakewalk.

BOY 1: If I haven’t just imagined all this, of course. Not even my parents. I wouldn’t be surprised.

Imagination ... Fantasy ...
Or however you want to put it.

PLAY GENRE: historical drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Liivimaa reekviem
PUBLISHED: 2020
ACTS: 2
ROLES: 1f, 8m + the Figures (*The actors who play the monks can also play the Brothers of the Sword. The Livonian Lady can also play the Goddess.*)
TRANSLATIONS: Hungarian, French

Livonian Requiem by Tiit Aleksejev

“The play is a multifaceted work with considerable stage potential, even if it may seem too “literary” on a first reading. The love story of a Livonian woman and a secretive crusader has coalesced into a traditionally dramatic yet poetic form. /.../ The daily context of the era is conveyed in a delicate, understated manner, allowing the play’s metaphors and the particular language of the characters to flourish.”

Riina Oruaas, Postimees, 8.03.2023

The 13th Century. Christendom seeks to conquer Livonia. A Brother of the Order, recently arrived from the Holy Land, is looking to redeem his sins and vindicate his life when he meets a Livonian Lady. As a result of their meeting, the two attempt to convert each other to first one's, then the other's faith, before they finally realise that love transcends everything else. But by then it is already too late, heads and nations are set to fall.

“Livonian Requiem” presents a choice - faith or love. According to the author, the play does not question the core truths of any religion, but tells the story of two souls who went against their religion and prior convictions in the name of love. “Livonian Requiem” is a philosophical state-of-mind drama whose message reaches the viewer-reader in successive waves. The ideas of the play are carried by monologues which do not describe events as much as investigate the work's fundamental concern - “Who does truth belong to?” - in depth and through multiple characters, social positions and religious perspectives.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

PROLOGUE

/.../

LIVONIAN LADY: They came so quietly ... with quiet words they whispered in our ears ... how much they love us, how they wish the best for us ... And they seemed so innocent, so harmless ... muttering to themselves, gasping and whimpering ... And their crucified ... a scrawny man on two wooden beams ... Look, they whisper, look at that, look closely, he is the ruler of the world ... he is lov ... *(Pause.)* I don't want to utter the word. *(Flings the belt over the branch.)* They need our land. But they know that should they seize it by force, we shall resist. They want us to give our own land away! In good faith. And they say: our faith is good! Accept it! Accept our god ... *(Gulps. Pause.)* “Accept” means “give it away” to them. That's what it means!

/.../

ACT 2, Scene 9

(Forest. Road. A war party on horseback. Cross flags. The light goes on. Brother of the Order and the Abbot. A labyrinth. A model church.)

ABBOT: What you report on the customs of the pagans is astonishing! It leaves me dumbfounded! Speechless. I lack the words, you speak. I listen.

BROTHER *(disregarding the irony)*: It's not about their customs. It is what they believe.

ABBOT: How do you know what they believe? What they truly believe?

BROTHER: I know it. I have ... seen it.

ABBOT: Their faith? What was it like? *(Pause.)* What precisely did you see? *(Pause.)* You have seen the Livonians' rites. Which were different than you envisaged. That is all.

BROTHER: Their faith is mercy. Like ours. But they have something more.

ABBOT: Mercy does not need anything more. But do tell me. What is it?

BROTHER: Earth.

ABBOT *(looks down at his feet)*: Earth as in ...

BROTHER: Yes.

ABBOT: The earthly realm is not of much significance. At least that is how I understand the teaching of Christ. What matters is above.

(Points to the sky.)

BROTHER: The Livonians have united the two.

ABBOT: How is that possible?

BROTHER: I don't know.

ABBOT: Do you have someone amongst the Livonians? *(Pause.)* Of course you do, I've been informed. You have someone who is young and beautiful and who bares herself in front of you, and you feel that you have entered Eden. *(Pause.)* And it appears as if you have found God and light and insight and faith and whatnot. Whereas you have merely found another being. Who is, for that matter, very different from you. And to her you are an invader. Someone who is ravaging her Eden. *(Pause.)* You believe that you understand this woman. And she believes that she understands you. In truth, you are two lost souls. Both ensnared in your passions and yearnings. You don't grasp what this woman really wants.

BROTHER: And you do?

ABBOT: She wants power. Over you ... and the Livonians. She is a ... priestess. If that's the correct term. I am not sure the feminine form is grammatically accurate.


BROTHER: I don't believe you.

ABBOT: You can believe me or not, there are greater forces at work here. There's news from the north. We have defeated the Estonians in battle. The heavenly ruler rejoices. But an earthly ruler has fallen ...

BROTHER: Who? The Master?

ABBOT: Kaupo.

(Pause.)



PLAY GENRE: musical drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Lõvi
PUBLISHED: 2023
SCENES: 22
ROLES: Numerous. By dividing up roles the play can be staged with five or six actors
AWARDS: Andrus Noormets' audio drama version of "The Lion" was the winner of the Best European Drama Award at the Audio Drama Awards 2022 and was awarded a Special Commendation at the 2021 Prix Europa
TRANSLATIONS: English, Croatian

The Lion by Martin Algu

“The Lion tells a compelling and thought-provoking story about a community’s response to an escaped lion in a city. A host of characters, including the town’s Chief Constable and an Economist, are forced to face the unprecedented crisis. Their differing - often conflicted - responses speak to a nation coming to grips with a new dawn.

This high-octane satire about the restoration of Estonian independence has resonance far beyond Estonia’s national events of 1991, and speaks to collective responses to all manner of global and community crises.”

BBC, Radio 4, 2022

The year is 1993. In a tiny Estonian town, where nothing ever happens, a lion breaks loose. An emergency state akin to a nuclear attack is declared, where hunters, police officers, the town council and the Romani – from whose camp the lion slipped out – all face off against each other. The police seek to do their duty, the hunters are in it for the thrill, the mayor desires glory and the Romani simply want their lion back. The ambitions of different people cannot be linked up to a common goal. Chaos ensues. Meanwhile, how should an ordinary man, on his way to receive his layoff notice, but in whose apartment the same lion has covertly settled, make it through all this?

Martin Algu's "The Lion" doesn't only touch on the restoration of Estonia's independence, but turns a satirical lens on the tumult intrinsic to all societies, wittily portraying the strengths and shortcomings of everyone involved, with a humaneness that tends to go missing during times of crisis.

"The Lion" is Martin Algu's dramatisation of the same-titled story from his short story collection "Hinterland".

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

Scene 10

NARRATOR: Just then, Mayor Haan arrived at the police department's crisis center and was attempting to take control.

COMMISSIONER VIIRSO: I'm telling you: this crisis must remain in law enforcement's jurisdiction!

MAYOR HAAN: No, this is an administrative crisis, not a crime. Pets, and particularly stray animals, are town business. Therefore, the police must yield to the mayor's office and not vice-versa.

(A photographer takes a flash photo of the mayor.)

COMMISSIONER VIIRSOO: It's impossible to argue with the likes of you!

MAYOR HAAN: We need to play out the risk scenarios first and foremost, Viirsoo! We must do a risk analysis!

COMMISSIONER VIIRSOO: A what-analysis?

MAYOR HAAN: Life as we know it has ground to a halt! You just focus on tracking down the animal while we start figuring out how to support the community, get food to those who need assistance, deliver prescriptions, provide mental healthcare!

(The photographer's flash pops with a musical accentuation.)

COMMISSIONER VIIRSOO: What do you mean, food?! We're talking about a couple hours, tops. A lion's no grasshopper. We'll find it!

MAYOR HAAN: But what if you don't? It's been on the prowl for hours already, so where is it?

(Everyone turns their head to look at Constable Pärnlīn, who shrugs.)

MAYOR HAAN: That's just what I mean – we need to do a risk analysis! This situation could drag on for days and the most vulnerable of us

will be kicking the bucket if we can't manage to feed them.

(Commissioner Viirsoo huffs angrily and makes a dismissive gesture.)

BEAT COP 1: The Romani suggested that we use fresh meat to try to coax the lion back to its cage.

BEAT COP 2: We'd need to kill a few livestock and haul them out to the traveling zoo.

COMMISSIONER VIIRSOO: That's got to be a ruse, doesn't it?

MAYOR HAAN: Why do you immediately assume that? It's actually quite logical. We'll get in contact with the slaughterhouse and find something for them!

BEAT COP 1: The Romani also need a couple hundred liters of diesel so the caravan can travel on safely.

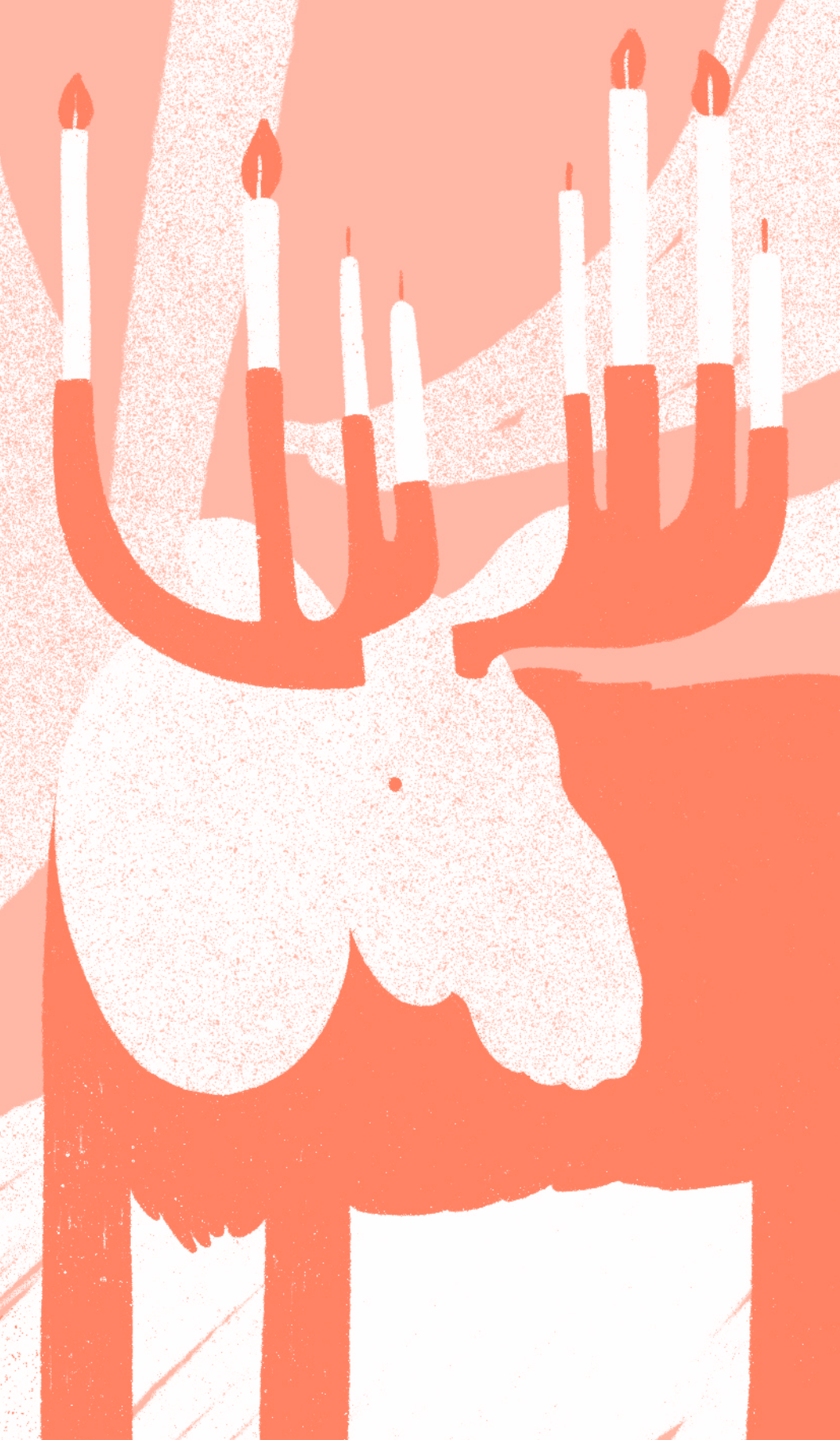
BEAT COP 2: And alcohol as a disinfectant!

COMMISSIONER VIIRSOO: For disinfecting what?

BEAT COP 2: That part was unclear.

MAYOR HAAN: Good Lord – just give them what they need and get moving!

(The flash pops and music plays.)



PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Siideriitujad
PUBLISHED: 2021
SCENES: 18
ROLES: 4f, 4m
AWARDS: Grand Prize at the Estonian Theatre Agency's 2019
New Drama Competition
PREMIERE: 21 November 2020 at Ugala theatre, directed by
Andres Noormets
TRANSLATION: English

Rites of Passage by Piret Jaaks

“The story, in itself, is simple. Somewhat broken city dwellers uproot and move to the countryside, where differently broken locals await. Can rural life cure the broken urbanites? It might. And the broken city folk may unwittingly repair the broken country folk - just by exposing how broken they themselves are.

People will readily watch performances that skew their familiar circumstances but rarely provide a way out of them. Does Piret Jaaks have a way out to spare? Up to a point. It remains an open question if there is another way out than faith, illusion and fairy tale, or if our imagination can inspire a new truth and reprieve from life's pressures. The door to one's emergency exit clearly lies within oneself. But reaching it might not be simple.”

Peeter Sauter, Sirp, 29.01.2021

The poetic story of “Rites of Passage” is set in a coastal rural area, whose inhabitants strive to overcome personal traumas and break free from life’s vicious cycles. Askur and his wife have arrived here in the hope of salvaging their relationship and possibly even their lives. Before long Woman comes face to face with a white moose, a mystical spirit animal. After the encounter, her life force starts to replenish and Woman can finally set herself apart from her husband and return to others the support and kindness that she has been afforded.

The play has a surprisingly light way of approaching decidedly heavy subjects - loss of a child, death, domestic violence - while never downplaying their seriousness. “Rites of Passage” cares about the reader and viewer. Despite its air of mystery, the text is not opaque, but opens up scene by scene, and the sparse Northern dialogue is balanced by long and illustrative monologues.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

9.

/.../

(Silence. Askur looks away.)

ASKUR: You don't have to say anything. Silence is good, too. It's all good. As long as you're satisfied.

WOMAN: I'm going to tell you a story.

ASKUR: You don't have to.

WOMAN: A man went fishing at sea for a very long time. His wife was left to care for their home alone. After several months, she started to believe he'd been lost at sea.

ASKUR: Listen, don't.

WOMAN: One day, a moose came to the woman and said: your husband has been away for a long time – I will be your husband. The woman consented. The moose spent the days in the forest but came home at night. They lived this way for a year and had a child. The woman worried about what would happen if her husband returned home and asked whose child it was. The moose told her: if your husband returns, you must tell him that you have me now and you're going to leave him to live with me in the forest. For do not forget – he doesn't love you. What kind of a man can love his life but be away for so long? One day, the man finally returned home. The woman considered what the moose had told her, but she said to the man: look, my dear husband – this is our child. The man was overjoyed and decided to stay home for good. At night, the moose came to the woman and said: you have to tell your husband that you are going to leave him and live in the woods with me. The woman went inside and wanted to say those words to her husband, but she didn't have the courage. She was afraid it'd be cold and dark in the forest and that the man would be angry. So, they lived that way for a while until . . .

ASKUR: Was that one of the stories you told him?

WOMAN: Yes.

ASKUR: Why that one?

WOMAN: I don't know. I told him all kinds of folk tales. He listened.

ASKUR: Can't we just be normal again?

WOMAN: How does that work?

ASKUR: We're you and me and everything's fine.

WOMAN: I bought candles.

(Pause.)

ASKUR: I'm tired.

WOMAN: I figured since it's November, the month of souls. I figured I'd light them.

ASKUR: I'm going to bed. I'll be going out again tonight.

WOMAN: When will you come back?

ASKUR: I don't know. I'm just going to bed now. I don't know, do you understand?!

WOMAN: Would you dance with me?

ASKUR: What?

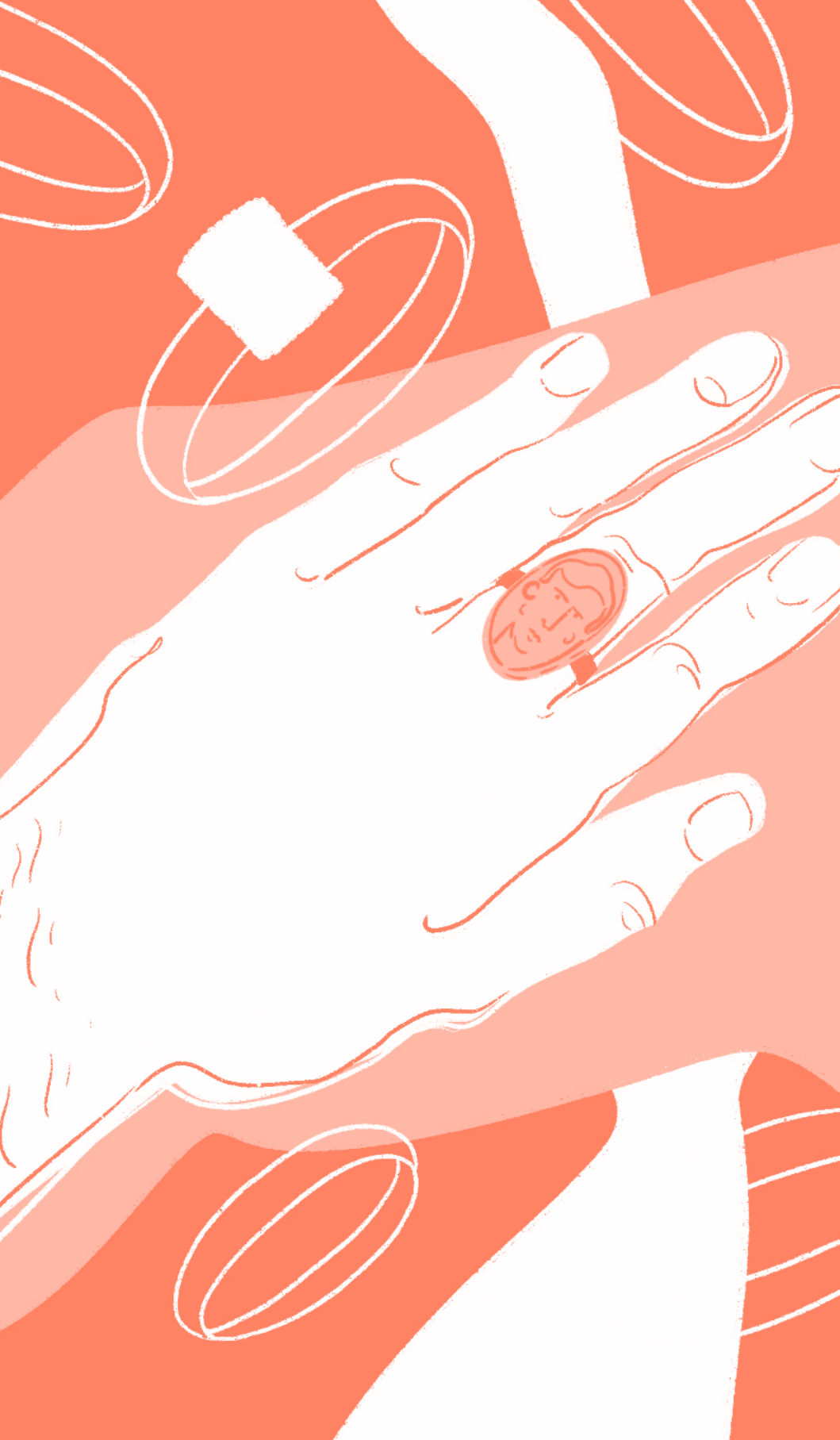
WOMAN: Dance with me? Right now, even? I'll put on music.

ASKUR: Ugh ... Go somewhere else, do something. Stop hanging around here!

WOMAN: Do you still love me?

(A long pause ensues.)

ASKUR: I'm going to bed.

An illustration in shades of orange and white. It shows several hands, some holding rings. One hand holds a ring with a square stone, another holds a ring with a circular stone. The style is sketchy and expressive.

PLAY GENRE: tragicomedy
ORIGINAL TITLE: Leskede kadunud maailm
SCENES: 13
ROLES: 6f, 1m
PREMIERE: 23 February 2021 at Ugala theatre, directed by Ringo Ramul
TRANSLATION: Hungarian

The Lost World of Widows by Andrus Kasemaa & Priit Põldma

“It takes a while for the viewer (likewise Boy) to perceive a pattern in the colourful quartet of widows’ benignly irritating freak show, and to begin to decipher the subtle hidden structure of Põldma’s play. In fact, each of the tasks assigned to him mark different stages in his initiation into adulthood. Boy has to progressively prove himself as a brother, husband, son and father. To fulfil each social role a symbolic ritual has to be performed, which collectively test the youth’s empathy, tolerance, generosity, forgiveness, responsibility, ingenuity and... musicality. All this to demonstrate that - no matter how silly or calcified the values of past generations appear today - the primal bond between generations is the only means to guarantee a community’s survival.”

Sven Karja, Sirp, 19.03.2021

“The Lost World of Widows” is inhabited by seemingly comical ladies who have hired Boy to carry out their assigned tasks over the course of a week. The week passes. Contrary to expectations, Boy does not clean the widows’ rooms or mend their broken objects, but instead serves as a loving son, a deceased husband, a missing brother, a principled father.

The play glides imperceptibly from realistic and comedic to mystical and tragic, as the ladies themselves gain more and more layers. Their wishes are peculiar yet wholly understandable. The widows expect Boy to be someone who they never had in their lives. For Boy, granting the widows’ wishes is a step towards becoming a grown-up. It stays unclear till the end whether the ladies are real or departed, waiting for someone to complete what they had left half-done.

Priit Põldma’s play is based on Andrus Kasemaa’s eponymous novel, which was published in 2012. However, it isn’t considered a dramatisation, because the characters, setting and plot are markedly different. It is an original work inspired by the environment of Andrus Kasemaa’s novel.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

MONDAY. NIGHT. (Scene 2)

/---/

JOHANNA: Anette, just make sure you don’t fall behind! Eha, you can enunciate more clearly! What’s the thing that beats? Not your dress, not your vest, but your chest! Raimond, what you did was almost a miracle! No, it was a miracle!

ANETTE: But Uudsemäe Jass looked through my window tonight.

EHA: Uudsemäe Jass? How?

ANETTE: Like this! Looked inside!

JOHANNA: Uudsemäe Jass is dead!

ANETTE: Uudsemäe Jass looked through my window tonight.

ADELHEID: Anette, don’t you remember how they pulled Jass’ body out of the water?

ANETTE: No.

ADELHEID: You must remember his funeral? They were shooting jackdaws next to the cemetery road, so the horses got frightened, bolted, the casket fell off, shattered, Jass’ corpse lay on the field, face in the mud, splinters in his eye. Remember, Nete? *(Anette vehemently shakes her head.)* The same night when the lightning split open the great pine, on the beach.

ANETTE: Uudsemäe Jass looked through my window tonight.

JOHANNA: He couldn’t have looked through your window ...

ANETTE: You think I’m lying?

ADELHEID: Of course he looked, of course. Here, a biscuit!

ANETTE: Keep your biscuit to yourself! Uudsemäe Jass looked through my window!

ADELHEID: Before death you start dreaming of how the departed come for you.

ANETTE: I didn’t dream! I was awake!

JOHANNA: Was or wasn’t, let’s rehearse now.

ANETTE *(to Boy)*: Do you believe I was awake?

BOY: I do.

ANETTE: Look! He believes!

JOHANNA: Excellent! Second verse, two-two-three, three-two-three!

(The music resumes. Spinster climbs in through the window, stares at Boy.)

JOHANNA: What are you looking for? Lost something? Begone!

(Spinster is about to leave, but turns to Boy at the last second. Eha screams. Spinster runs off. Eha returns to the song: If you want to hate me, then hate me... The others follow along)

ANETTE *(interrupts)*: And last week tall black men came to my bed one night. They examined my body. I was really quiet, didn’t move an inch. They thought I was asleep. But I saw everything!

JOHANNA: Let’s take it from the second verse. And try to listen more to everyone else! Raimond, you’re very precise and attentive, thank you!

ANETTE *(points at Boy)*: Him! He was one of them.

EHA: What?

ANETTE: Yes! He was!

JOHANNA: Raimond arrived today!

ANETTE: He was at my place last week!

EHA: Anette! Don’t scare our guest away!

ANETTE: He was here! He is fate!

JOHANNA: Two-two-three, three-two-three!

(In the distance a cuckoo calls.)



PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Kriipsud uksepiidal
SCENES: 23
ROLES: 2m
PREMIERE: 22 April 2017 at Tallinn City Theatre,
directed by Diana Leesalu
TRANSLATIONS: French, Russian

*Notches on
the Door Frame*
Diana Leesalu &
Kaarel B. Väljamäe

“Two millennial authors describe their generation’s entry into adulthood in the transitional period between the end of the Soviet era and the restoration of Estonia’s independence, capturing the multitude of opportunities it opened up almost overnight, but also the identity crises and burnouts it too often gave rise to.”

Madis Kolk, Postimees, 2.05.2017

Do you recall what you got for your fifth birthday? Or when you first started thinking about the girls in your class? At what moment did you grow up?

“Notches on the Door Frame” is a striking and tender story about the coming of age of twin brothers Mihkel and Markus.

As the play consists solely of the brothers’ recollections, it carefully portrays how children of different ages perceive the world and what they consider meaningful. With the passing of years, bedtime stories and toy trains are replaced by brash escapades and street brawls, where the stakes are high and consequences real.

The time period of the boys’ childhood plays a momentous role here. The breakthrough years of the 1980’s and 90’s were permeated by violence and disappearances, robberies and alcoholism. Using that as a backdrop, “Notches on the Door Frame” recounts the story of a whole generation, highlighting the impact of historical events on the wider society.

The character arcs are gripping, and although the play is mostly narratory in form, the characters develop significantly throughout and the text enables the actors to imaginatively manoeuvre on the thin line between narration and embodiment.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

Scene 6 – MISCHIEF

/.../

MARKUS: One day we went to the shop. Mom gave us money and told us what to buy.

MIHKEL: She didn’t exactly trust us, but didn’t have much of a choice either.

MARKUS: We forgot the shopping list straight away, of course, because the shop is quite an intimidating place. The store clerk is a local party member, so you sense right at the door that things aren’t quite right. It’d have been better if you didn’t come.

MIHKEL: And we can’t speak Russian. That’s a mistake. So we politely say “Hello” in Estonian. She responds in Russian. And asks us something. In Russian. We fall silent, firmly and in Estonian. She turns more insistent and Russian. But we only know one word in Russian. Morozhenoye. So we take that. And get a lot of it for the money we’ve been given. A whole bagful. It’s almost bursting.

MARKUS: So we tried to make do. I don’t know how many I ate. A personal best in any case. I felt nauseous, but couldn’t bear to throw up. I like ice cream in all other circumstances. Loads of it was left over, too. We hid it in the hallway, behind a cupboard. Couldn’t bring ourselves to chuck it away. Maybe they’d be happy to get ice cream. When mom arrived home, the hallway was dripping.


MIHKEL: We were in our room, hiding.

MARKUS: That’s just about the worst feeling in the world, when the door is pushed open and mom arrives home. If you’ve messed something up. You hear her sizing up the situation already at the door, sighing or shouting or even worse.

MIHKEL: Though she shouldn’t really be so startled every time. At some point she could just get used to it. Stuff happens. Something is sure to be dripping somewhere.

MARKUS: Mom entered our room and just stared at us. She had already done the

shouting. Internally. She looked at us in bafflement. “No, there is no money left. But there is ice cream left.” So mom made us shakes. That’s even more frightening, when you’ve got into trouble and instead of a punishment you get a milkshake. So silly. It tastes amazing and you nearly forget what happened. Then you look at mom and feel sick again. Can’t really vomit, for sure, although at that moment, it would be the most logical thing to do.



PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Võrsed
PUBLISHED: 2022
SCENES: 32
ROLES: 3f, 4m
AWARDS: Grand Prize at the Estonian Theatre Agency's 2021
New Drama Competition
PREMIERE: 22 October 2022 at Theatre Vanemuine, directed by Tiit Palu
TRANSLATIONS: English

Sprouts by Katariina Libe

“The triumph of “Sprouts” was sealed by the modern problems it gives voice to. The story of Paula, a career woman on the cusp of her forties, encompasses the themes of assisted reproduction and sexual minorities, with the main line of tension centering on our relation to the natural.”

Pille-Riin Purje, Postimees, 3.11.2022

Up till now, Paula has never wanted to have a child. But when her girlfriend leaves her to start a family with another man, it makes Paula reconsider many of her earlier beliefs.

“Sprouts” is a contemporary psychological story, which takes on the mental, physiological and existential issues involved with bearing a child. The play consists of brief cinematic scenes, the pervading metaphor being the growth of things, since plants, trees and children all begin life as seeds. But what becomes of a woman who isn’t meant to be a gardener?

Paula’s self-questioning is reflected by the couples around her - a key topic proves to be the shifts in personal relationships that occur when having a child. The social isolation of a lone woman amidst endless parental discussions is more precarious the further she withdraws into herself. And Paula as a character is no ray of sunshine either - her coldness, bordering on hostility, turns her into a complex and thought-provoking protagonist, whose behaviour does not lend itself to open-and-shut judgments.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

Scene 6 – MISCHIEF

ELIIS: We’ve decided to name him Albert. I thought ... you might want to know. Tanel’s still pushing for Ferdinand, but I think it sounds too foreign. Albert’s our compromise.

PAULA: Uh-huh.

(Silence.)

ELIIS: I think my grandma’s antique tea set is in your topmost kitchen cupboard, but I’m really in no hurry to get it. You can keep the rest of the dishes. Only the wine glasses are important to me, even though it’s going to be a while before I can ... So long as I just get all the baby stuff as soon as possible.

PAULA: Mm-hm.

ELIIS: We’ve already got his room all set up, though he’ll sleep in our bed at first.

PAULA: Uh-huh.

(Silence.)

ELIIS: I honestly could have just gone to pick this stuff up myself.

PAULA: And I could’ve gone alone, too. Do you even remember where we put everything?

ELIIS: The stroller’s in the garage and the other things are in the bedroom closet. And I’m the one who put them there. I did everything, bought everything, put everything away, planned everything. I. Not we.

PAULA *(getting irritated)*:

Yeah, yeah. Do I have to listen to this the whole fucking way to the cabin? Me, me, me. Our whole relationship, it was just you, you, you, and I never contributed anything. Minus the fact that I designed the cabin and built it with my own money and you just relaxed the whole time I mowed the lawn, fixed the pipes, and put out snail repellent.

ELIIS: What are you talking about?! I did the whole garden! You never lifted a finger to make it look nice! You know, maybe it’s a good

thing that we’re stuck in a car together for an hour so we can finally get this stuff off our chests.

PAULA: And why should that be a good thing?

ELIIS: Paula, do you honestly think you’ve done nothing wrong this whole time?

PAULA: I told you right at the beginning that I never wanted kids. You knew that from the start of our relationship.

ELIIS: But you agreed to it in the end.

PAULA: I had no choice. I told you that I support you. But I never promised to only ever buy blue teddy bears if it was a boy.


ELIIS: Don’t even start! This has nothing to do with that toy and you know it very well.

PAULA: Yeah, it’s about Tanel’s dick that I unfortunately don’t have.

ELIIS: How can you be so crude?! You know what I think? I think this relationship was over long before I got pregnant. I wouldn’t have slept with Tanel if I’d felt like this was normal.

PAULA: Slept with? Oh, so now you’re calling it sleeping? Last time, you talked about it being fertilization! Artificial insemination, which you didn’t do at a clinic like people normally do because you wanted to save money!

ELIIS: You know what? Go to hell! It’s been years since I felt so cared for and listened to as I did when Tanel and I were planning all of this. We talked about things for hours – how we’d raise him, what his room would be like, where we’d travel with him, what school he’d go to. And that was even before the “fertilization”. On top of that ... I wouldn’t even call it that. Not sleeping with, sex, or even fertilization. The first time we, well ... for us, it meant summoning the baby’s soul! I haven’t told you until now because I thought you wouldn’t understand!



PLAY GENRE: documentary play
ORIGINAL TITLE: Ma võiksin sulguda päkklikoorde
SCENES: 13
ROLES: 6f, 5m
PREMIERE: 19 March 2022 at Vaba Lava, directed by Priit Põldma
TRANSLATIONS: Hungarian, English

I Could Be Bounded in a Nutshell

by Mari-Liis Lill, Aare Pilv
& Priit Põldma

“Lill and Põldma have collected interviews that cover sweepingly diverse experiences of solitude. You can be alone in solitary confinement or at sea, you can travel alone and have strangers open their door to you; you can bear a child alone, yet never be alone in nature or with God. The text is not bleak, however, as it also gives a say to people who want and choose to be alone, letting one reflect on the border where solitude crosses into loneliness.

It suggests that the greatest peril is ultimately located internally - that's where the battle within recurs. The work does not aim to provide answers, rather mediate different experiences, which the viewer-listener can relate to in their own particular way.”

Madli Pesti, Sirp, 8.04.2022

“I Could Be Bounded in a Nutshell” is a documentary play that examines loneliness. Eleven outwardly different people - with different worldviews, families, economic classes and professions - share their personal histories. What connects them is solitude. The play proceeds across the overlaps in their life paths: the characters describe their childhoods, when they first realised they were lonely, when they matured, when they yearned away, and so on.

Some of them enjoy their solitude, some feel imprisoned, some have lost their caretaker at a very young age, some are afraid of solitude, others have made peace with it. The spectrum of people on stage spans from youth to elderly, wealthy to impoverished.

The play is based on real-life interviews and the stage text is verbatim. Thematic verses, personal ads and passages-allusions to “Hamlet” are interspersed between the interviews. “I Could Be Bounded in a Nutshell” has a therapeutic and devastating impact, in unison, as a documentary and poetic exploration of loneliness and solitude.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

XI – KARIN AND RAILI

KARIN

I was born in seventy-three and when I was one year old, I was paralyzed by polio, though it'd officially been eradicated. The doctors even asked my mother not to register it. I was in the hospital a lot, alone, crying, and they told me not to cry, enough already, shut up. So, I did. On the surface, I was a nice, happy kid, but inside, I was extremely distraught. One leg was left six centimeters shorter than the other. They extended it when I was nine, but accidentally sliced a nerve in the process and my tendon no longer worked. I moved slower, was overweight, and my mother told me: “You’re as plump as a haystack.” I know she meant well, but still. She was afraid I wouldn’t be able to get by on my own in life. I spent my whole youth proving that I could manage fantastically on my own. My mother loved me but didn’t like me. It happens.

I read a lot, and also a lot of the wrong books. Jane Eyre, the Brontë sisters, Jane Austen, and all that by the age of ten or twelve. Books that should be banned for children. It gave me a romantic notion of the way that life should be: you’ll be knocked head-over-heels by a tremendous emotion; you won’t be able to sleep, won’t be able to eat. That emotion never came.

Now, I know I’m just too controlling to allow any emotion to overpower my mind. I wanted a picture-perfect family, but at the same time felt like I didn’t deserve one. No one knocked on my door and said: Hi, Karin – it’s you I’ve been looking for.

When I was 36, I seriously considered just getting knocked up by somebody. At least then I’d have a kid to raise. But I thought that would be selfish; not fair for the child. And I’d be deceiving the man involved in it, too. How could I look my child in the eyes and tell them I didn’t know who their father is? So, I let that dream go. It was a release.

Then, I figured out I simply wanted to have someone in my life. Not a person to cohabit with, but someone ... And they didn’t have

to be the love of my life. Just somebody it was nice to be with. I was over forty when I started deliberately seeking a partner. As a project. Online. I met seventeen different guys. One thing that I noticed ... Couples. They don’t talk. Men don’t know how to talk to their wives, much less about what they expect from sex. And that’s when they go looking for a mistress.

Now, I have a boyfriend. We’ve been together for eight years. He has another family, to be fair. A wife and kid. We set down very clear rules. I’m not a mistress. I’m not somebody he comes to see whenever he’s in the mood. Once a week, he needs to make time for me. And I may never hint that he should ever leave his family for me.

Some people comment that if I had a kid, then there’d be somebody to come visit and care for me when I’m old. There are zero guarantees that children will help you get by in your old age. Kids and grandkids are great, no doubt. But placing all your hopes in them ... I won’t be disappointed. Everything will work out just fine for me – I’ll have nobody to be disappointed in. I used to be afraid of becoming an old spinster. But here I am, an old spinster, and I’m incredibly satisfied with my life. I’m wonderful company for myself. For me, being alone ... a rocking chair, a fire, a book. It’s cozy.

PLAY GENRE: youth play
ORIGINAL TITLE: Emesis
PUBLISHED: 2022
SCENES: 35
ROLES: 3f, 3m
AWARDS: Special mention at the Estonian Theatre Agency's 2021
New Drama Competition
TRANSLATION: English

Emesis by Heneliis Notton

“One of the most distinctive texts of the competition was “Emesis” by Heneliis Notton, a fragmented yet comprehensive story about a young person’s internal struggles, traumatic experiences and strive for independence. When “Emesis” reaches the stage, it could also develop into a meaningful theatrical work for victims of sexual violence.”

Varja Arola, Sirp, 19.11.2021

Sabi's parents abandoned their daughter when she was 14. Five years later, Sabi lives by herself at her parents' place - throws parties, experiments with drugs, listens to music, hosts her friends and, once a week, Rein, a friend of her father's, who is keeping an eye on her. Sabi's home is also where the play is set.

"Emesis" propels the reader into the world of 18-19-year-old high-schoolers with an unsparing honesty. The language of the play, as well as its fractured everyday images and confessional memories, all emit a pain which has for years been covered up by parties and rationalisations.

Like a physical reaction - vomiting, which "Emesis" denotes - problems like sexual abuse, dependency and traumas suddenly begin to cascade. The form of the play disintegrates as well - postdramatic ruptures and repetitions begin to mirror the trauma-induced confusion and turmoil of the protagonist's sense of reality.

The play calls forth a silent scream for help - why do young people keep floundering in this mess and why does nobody prevent it?

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

28

(Sabi is in the dark basement. The water is up to her hips. Her dress floats on the surface. A somewhat muscular, middle-aged man pulls up his pants and zips the fly.)

— Fuck, this whole scene again ...

— Should I lock the door behind me?

— Why does it keep coming back to me all the time ... over and over again. And then again. That water ...

— What water?

— It's cold

— Close the window

— can't reach

(Sabi strains to reach the window and manages to close it. The man sinks beneath the water. Bright bathroom lighting. Sabi is fully clothed in the bathtub. Water starts spilling over the edge. Leenu enters and quickly turns off the taps.)

— Sabi! Hellooo! What're you doing?

— Huh

— Did you submit your application?

— Where

— To the university. In Tartu

— I can't right now

— Sabi, today's the deadline

— Oh, I forgot ...

— Sabi ...

— Hold on, I'll be right there. I've just got to find my ID card to verify and submit it

(Sabi pulls her way out of the bathtub and wrings her hair out, her long baggy jeans sliding across the floor. Leenu tries to support her.)

— Makes no difference ...

— It'll take five minutes, just wait, please

— Have you even looked into the minimum requirements? Or what you'll study?

— Let's see if I can get in at all

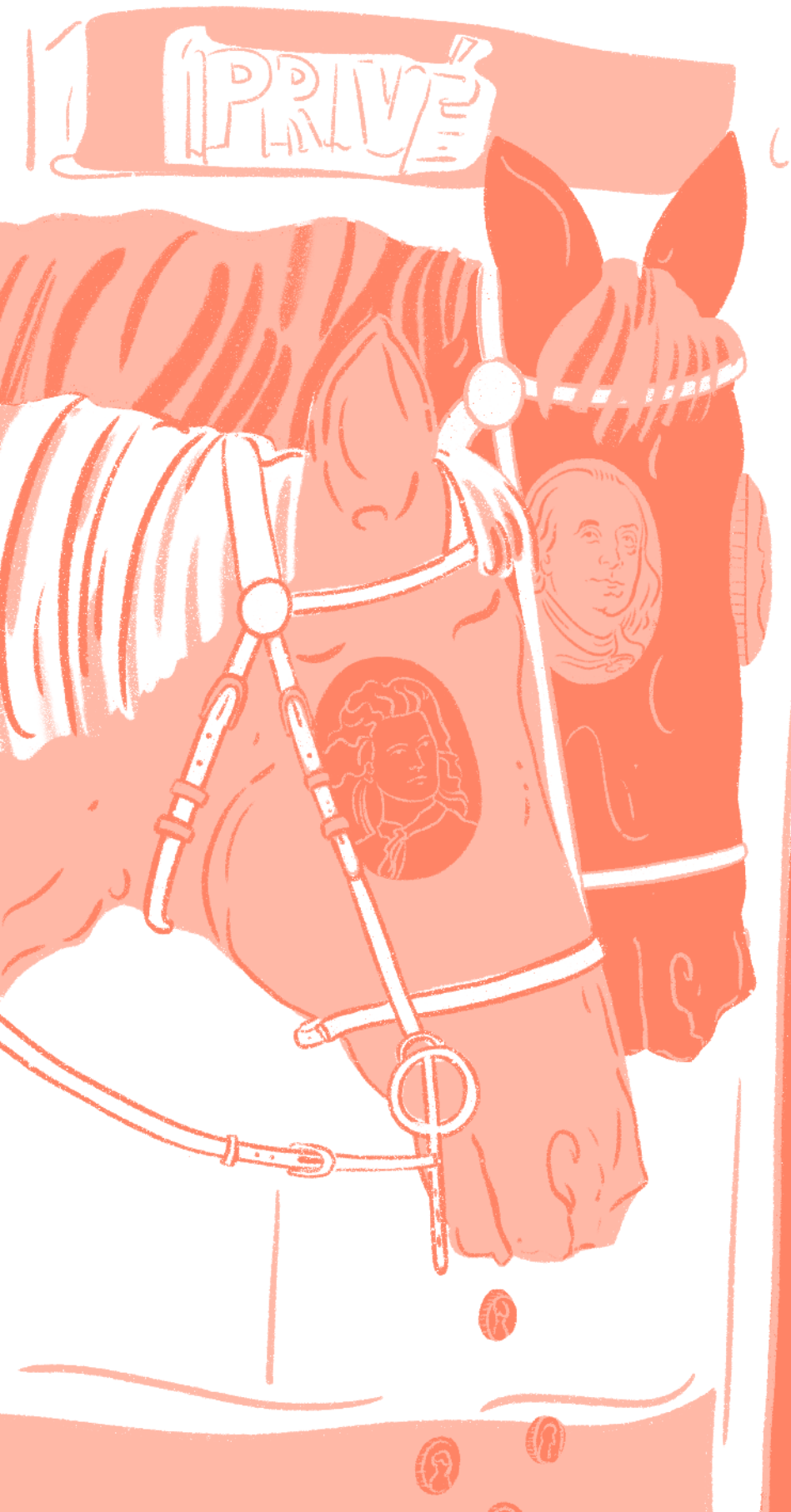
— And if you can't?

— ...

— You were just "toying" with the idea again, weren't you?

— I'm waiting and seeing, like always

— I dunno. I don't know what to say anymore.



PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Rahamaa
PUBLISHED: 2024
ACTS: 2
ROLES: 7f, 9m + many other roles
PREMIERE: 6 June 2024 at Estonian Drama Theatre in the Tartu
Comb Factory, directed by Hendrik Toompere jr
TRANSLATION: English

Business As Usual by Mehis Pihla

“The author of the story, Mehis Pihla, who has been working on the subject for two years, has done an exceptionally great job, the result of which is a multi-layered play of almost epic proportions, upon which a highly professional and effective visual, spatial and sonic whole is built. /.../ “Business as Usual” is a play that deserves to be staged outside Estonia as well, because its multilayered nature offers various possibilities for interpretation outside Estonia.”

Hedi-Liis Toome, Edasi.org, 12.06.2024

“Business As Usual” is a gripping narrative inspired by the money laundering scandals that rocked Estonian banking.

At its core, the story revolves around a young man from the Tartu suburb of Annelinn. Through connections, he lands a job in the foreign banking department of a prestigious capital bank. The department’s primary clientele comprises Eastern Bloc oligarchs. Business thrives, with the services of the Scandinavian bank branch being as secure as “swissarskaya”, as secretive as an “offshornaya” account, and as close as “petersburskaya”.

As the number of clients and turnover skyrockets, the protagonist finds himself entangled in a world where he must navigate encounters with oligarchs, prostitutes, and security guards. Adventures unfold in luxurious ski resorts across Europe and the vast expanse of Russia. This tale is seasoned with dark humour, portraying a reality where cash isn’t carried in briefcases but in suitcases with wheels.

The play provides a unique glimpse into a world accessible only to the super-rich, shedding light on how money laundering has influenced the politics of Western countries for decades. It delves into the complexities of giving up money of shadowy origins. Based on meticulously researched documentary materials from press publications and extensive interviews, “Business as Usual” offers a compelling exploration of a global issue that continues to shape our society.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

Scene X

ARTUR: I got down to work. You can’t imagine how much money is in the offshore world. As much as the economies of England, France, and Russia combined. We’re talking about trillions, annually. We never had to advertise once. Clients found us on their own. New clients, constantly: in Austria, Switzerland, Moscow, St. Petersburg. Villa after villa. Party after Party. Booze, booze, booze. My personal clients’ turnover doubled every week, as did my own bank account.

(A vision of the following scene: Artur is in the Stockmann department store. Sales assistants dress him in a brand-new suit and a fancy watch, smarten up his hairdo, put black patent shoes on his feet, give him cufflinks, etc.)

DANIL: Journalist Anna Politskovaya was shot in Moscow. She criticized Putin and revealed the atrocities of the Chechen War. The world’s in shock.

ANYA: They’re talking about sanctions.

ARTUR: What’ll that mean for us?

OLIVER: More clients, because they’ll have to get their money out of Russia!

ARTUR: New brands came into my life, too. Range Rover, Michael Kors, Luis Vuitton, Patek Philippe.

ANYA: Alexander Litvinenko was poisoned in London. A former FSB worker who claimed that Putin himself ordered the bombing of apartment buildings to justify invading Chechnya. Polonium. The world’s in shock.

OLIVER: Shit! We need to hire more people!

ARTUR: One night, Danil and I rented horses and rode them to the door of Club Prive.

DANIL: What do you mean, why? Why the hell not?!

ANYA: Journalist Natalya Estemirova, who wrote about crimes committed by the Russian Army, was robbed, stabbed, and finally, shot. The world’s in shock.

OLIVER: There are so many transfers that I don’t even have time to meet clients anymore.

DANIL: You know what this scheme’s called? Win-win-no shit. I win, the bank wins, and the client has so much money that he doesn’t give a shit so long as it’s moving.

(Artur is dressed and ready. He’s approached by his childhood friend Jaanus, who’s dressed exactly the same: suit, shoes, expensive glasses, etc.)

JAANUS: Well, look at you!

ARTUR: Jaanus. Look at yourself.

JAANUS: I see things are going well with the Danes.

ARTUR: Doesn’t look any worse there with the Swedes.

JAANUS: I’m a business loan manager. I know everything about Estonia’s business elite!

ARTUR: I’ve got Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian businessmen.

JAANUS: I grant loans for at least 100 million a year. At least. That makes a yearly bonus of 100 grand alone. In euros. Plus a salary of 3,000 per month. And that’s just the beginning. The bank pays me a quarterly bonus and Stockmann’s shares jump every time, can you believe it!?

ARTUR: I called a real-estate office. “Give me an apartment on the top floor of the city’s tallest building,” I say. And I got one on Maakri Street.

JAANUS: This is the life, Artur! This is the life!

ARTUR: That’s not exactly how our meeting went. We bumped into each other at Stockmann’s gourmet counter. But the feeling was ecstatic.

(We’re now suddenly at the gourmet counter in Stockmann. The refrigerator hums.)

ARTUR: Sure wasn’t a selection like this back in Annelinn.

JAANUS: Could never have even have dreamed of it. Oysters.


ARTUR: Rack of lamb.

JAANUS: Roast beef.

SELLER: Alright, and for you?

ARTUR: Give me half a kilo of the birthday salad and two chicken Kyiv, please.

JAANUS: I’ll take what he’s having, while you’re at it.



PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Üle oma varju
SCENES: 19
ROLES: Many, four actors
AWARDS: The Cultural Endowment of Estonia's 2023 Annual Prize for Original Dramaturgy
PREMIERE: 16 April 2022, Ugala theatre, directed by Ringo Ramul
TRANSLATION: English

Out of Your Depth by Paavo Piik

“A lie’s short legs seem to grow longer and longer. Nonetheless, by deftly and cleverly weaving together three real-life cases, Piik’s play confirms that a lie - however long its legs - still doesn’t let a person escape their own shadow. Is this tragic or comical, fair or unjust? Each of the three stories offers a distinct answer, with equally contrasting levels of sympathy.”

Pille-Riin Purje, Sirp, 3.06.2022

“Out of Your Depth” moves along three lines, along three characters whose lies have acquired a life of their own, whose personal realities have become detached from everyone else’s. A student who can’t bring himself to tell his family that he is no longer enrolled at university; a journalist who interviews cultural luminaries until it is revealed that he has fabricated all the interviews himself, a notorious 16th century peasant who returns from the army assuming the life of another man. The liars have to keep their alter egos alive by concocting more elaborate lies and inventing further alter egos, until the burden becomes too heavy to bear or the lie falls apart. Piik brings the philosophical question of truth into real life and, in a Pirandellian manner, calls real life itself into question. At the same time, the text is not a contemplative reading play, but a high-tension drama packed with striking role-changes and gear shifts.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

10

/.../

JOURNALIST: In your books you describe how the people of today are irretrievably alienated from each other – do you see any antidote to this?

HOUELLEBECQ: You’re asking me for solutions? Ask Soros; he’s spreading that anti-human ideology that makes everybody a commodity.

JOURNALIST: Mr. Soros, a great pleasure that you’ve agreed to give me an interview here in Region Two ...

(Sitting behind the third desk is a cranky old man.)

SOROS *(abruptly)*: George.

JOURNALIST: George, I know we don’t have much time; the markets are active around the clock.

(Mr. Soros looks at his watch.)

JOURNALIST: George, tell me, please – does capitalism need to be corrected at some point, or should the market govern itself?

SOROS: Well, for a start, I don’t govern it, so we ought to start with that if some people here have formed that impression for some reason.

HOUELLEBECQ: Of course nobody governs anything and nobody can ever do anything, but in an interesting way some people exploit that.

SOROS: Unlike you, I’ve invested my money in the development of society, not in undermining and destroying it.

DEPARDIEU: Garçon?

(Depardieu indicates that he doesn’t have a drop left in the amphora.)

JOURNALIST: Herr Lindemann, as the leader of the group Rammstein you have continuously played on the boundaries of how much is allowed in public space, how far you can go with provocation. Where would you draw that boundary right now?

(The Journalist turns again to the first desk, where Depardieu was just now.)

LINDEMANN: Till.

JOURNALIST: Pardon?

LINDEMANN: Just call me Till.

JOURNALIST: ... Why?

LINDEMANN: Because that’s my name – Till Lindemann.

JOURNALIST: Ah, yes ... of course!
Till ...

(The Journalist turns back to the third desk, where Soros was just now.)

JOURNALIST: Sir Tom Stoppard we could meet ...

STOPPARD: In some London pub?

JOURNALIST: Or in the corridor of a theatre?

STOPPARD: Or in some classical English garden?

JOURNALIST: Ha-ha, wonderful! Sir Stoppard, you are one of the most successful playwrights on our planet; what sort of advice would you give to a writer starting out?

STOPPARD: Exactly the same as to a playwright. Don’t ever know in advance what will happen when you start writing. Let the text surprise you.

JOURNALIST: Yes, that’s good. Mr. Tarantino, I’m so excited to do an interview with you ...

(The Journalist turns to the second desk, where Houellebecq was just now.)

TARANTINO: Cool, dude, but let’s not beat each other off just yet.

JOURNALIST: Fuck, I don’t suppose I can put that in.

TARANTINO: ... What the fuck?

JOURNALIST: Mr. Tarantino, why are the bad guys always cooler than the good characters?

TARANTINO: Why are the bad guys always cooler than the good characters – I don’t know, that’s a good question, why are the bad guys always cooler? If I had to throw something out there, and it seems to me that’s what you want, isn’t it, for me to throw something out there, then, in my very humble opinion, of course, bad guys already have the conflict inside them that we are looking for in all kinds of drama generally, a good bastard already has such a strong opposition inside him that your average choirboy doesn’t have, playing an angel to please his mother in the Christmas play, you see, that tension inside a proper villain, something that he has to constantly keep in check, because he doesn’t want anyone to understand that he has that tension, that’s the kind of mindfuck that makes the villains mostly cooler than the good guys, doesn’t it?

JOURNALIST: Mhmm.

(Here the journalist has space to improvise some other characters that he can tease with his questions.)



PLAY GENRE: drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Anne lahkub Annelinnast
SCENES: 5
ROLES: 1f, 1m
PREMIERE: 22 February 2020 at Tartu New Theatre, directed by Ivar Põllu
TRANSLATIONS: Latvian, English

Past Continuous by Ivar Põllu

“Põllu’s text hints at the idea that what we look for in our partners are the qualities of people we already know of the same gender. Colleague or brother, father or spouse, a common line runs through them all - people may be more similar than we assume. Or, alternatively, we might just usher in people of a similar kind into our lives. While no one goes searching for the real Oedipus or Elektra in Annelinn, the paths familiar from antique mythology and psychoanalysis are there to be traversed.”

Karin Allik, Postimees, 4.03.2020

Man and Woman are in a room. They share a history. Now they will need to cooperate, even though their relationship has transformed beyond recognition. In place of the leading light the woman used to admire, she sees a downtrodden lonely man, who drinks himself into a stupor in his studio. Yet there is something that still binds them ...

“Past Continuous” is a multilayered, tense relationship drama brimming with surprises and constantly playing with the audience’s perspective. For the majority of the time, the reader is not certain how Woman and Man relate to each other and even as the context clears, much is left up to interpretation. That said, the text never descends into the absurd, but shines as a subtle psychological game in which every move is tethered to a reason. The writing is simultaneously poetic and sharp. Male and female social roles, and their accompanying expectations, are dissected with a remarkable honesty - within the family unit as well as society as a whole.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

1.

/.../

MAN: This is not a proper rehearsal. Rehearsal is when you rehearse. One way and another way. To see which is better. You try. You fail. You screw up completely, but you don’t despair, because humans are prone to error. Error is part of rehearsal. You rehearse to err.

WOMAN: What do you mean by that?

MAN: You have memorized your lines. Very good. Now is when it gets interesting.

WOMAN: It’s not interesting for me. Children are waiting.

MAN: Why are they waiting for you?

WOMAN: What, you don’t have children waiting for you? Why they’re not waiting for you?

MAN: Why like this. Besides, their mother ...

WOMAN: Right now the mother of my children is here, coat on, wondering how the father of your children is ...

MAN: Sweet.

WOMAN: What?

Man: Sweet irony. I like it.

WOMAN: Yes, I almost forgot. Flatters you also.

MAN: But where’s the father of your children? Why is he not up to his fatherly duties, when the mother of his children has an important ... what is this we are doing here?

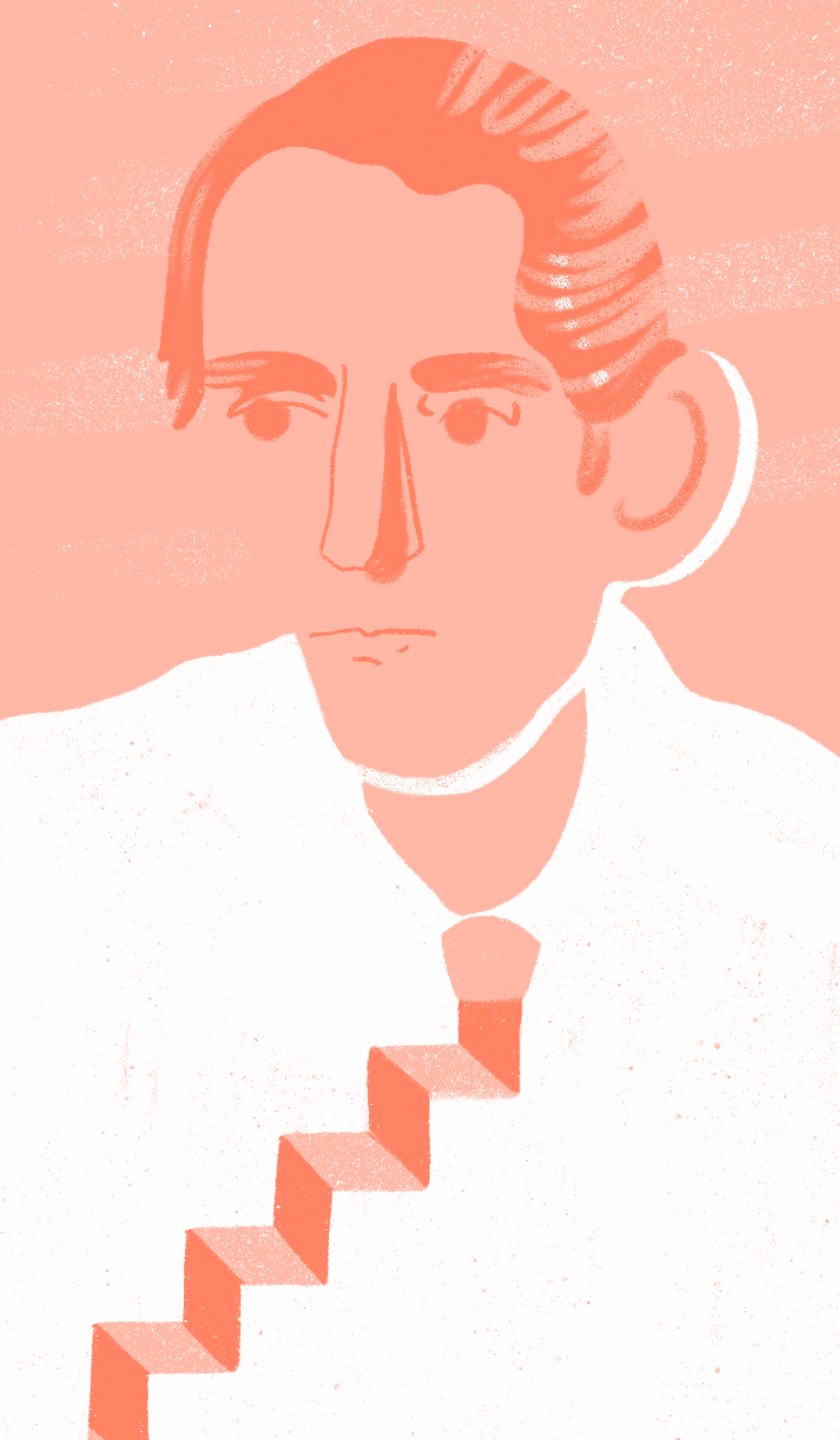
WOMAN: I should have gone already. Now I have missed my bus. Just because of you. Because you wanted it to go through it one more time. If you can’t memorize your lines, use the recording. Rehearse your part. Don’t waste my time. I know mine.

MAN: What about your husband?

WOMAN: What husband?

MAN: What do you mean? What do you mean, what husband?

WOMAN: What do I need a husband for? Two temperamental kids are enough. If I had a third one, I would have no time for my own needs. And why would I want to put up with a creature, who instead of spending quality time with his family, polishes presentations with someone in this ... what did you call it?



PLAY GENRE: drama, magical realism
ORIGINAL TITLE: "Sada grammi taevasina"
SCENES: 27
ROLES: 8f, 13m
PREMIERE: 15 April 2023 at Theatre Vanemuine, directed by Urmas Vadi
TRANSLATION: English

100 Grams of Blue Sky by Urmas Vadi

"The Poet lives in a fantasy world. In Alliksaar's imagination, wolves ask to be given an outline of the general plan to increase the number of local deer. To his mind, the quotidian rational life would have destroyed a person, were it not for the realm of fantasies."

Konstantin Kuningas, Raplamaa Sõnumid, 19.04.2023

“100 Grams of Blue Sky” is a play about the life of a Poet. While the prototype for the Poet is the well-known Estonian 20th century poet Artur Alliksaar, it’s not a documentary play. It doesn’t focus on the realistic depiction of Alliksaar’s life events as much as on his inner life and creative impulses – the poetry, which surges out of him and fills the surrounding space. In contrast to the mundane poverty and practicality of everyday life, these exuberant and reality-warping symbols of the poet’s world feel wholly unpredictable. An absurdist stage reality is born, one in which people lack the money to buy food, yet women with incandescent bellies and men with bull’s heads are cruising the streets.

The clash of the poetic and the mundane will certainly present challenges to the director, however, creative, propositional solutions are part of the fabric of the text. Despite the plurality of roles the play can be staged with four actors, each scene serving as a small independent world, which comes to light and disappears. The emotional tone of the text is similarly enigmatic: beneath the comedic surface lies a deeply rooted melancholy, which leaves a tingling sensation in one’s body.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

12. Samurai

(The Poet is sitting and writing on a café’s stoop. He’s approached by a friend who has apparently been imbibing wine inside for several hours already. The Poet notices him, but his writing has full command of his attention, so he doesn’t stop.)

Friend: Won’t let you in, huh?

Poet: No, I greatly prefer sitting here on the stoop over debating with those turnips in there.

(The Poet continues writing while speaking)

Friend: You writing?

Poet: Yes.

Friend: Something everlasting?

Poet: That’ll be tested in the high-pressure chambers of time and life.

Friend: Hey, could you teach me how to write, too?

Poet: I can.

Friend: Then do it.

Poet: It’s like samurai: you are ready when you no longer have any fear; when you have nothing left to lose. You have no job nor family nor home and must pull up your own shadow as a blanket at night. Then, you are free to write. And you must accept that you will never be published or recognized. But it’s natural that if someone becomes a fighter, then they will one day be the victor. And when you are ready, then the moment where joy overcomes pain will arrive. That is the fight that never ends.

Friend: I agree.

Poet: Great. Have a seat.

(The friend sits.)

Friend: I’d like to do something for you, too.

Poet: Yes? What’s that?

Friend: I’ve got this pair of scissors at home, right? Big and razor sharp.

Poet: Uh-huh.

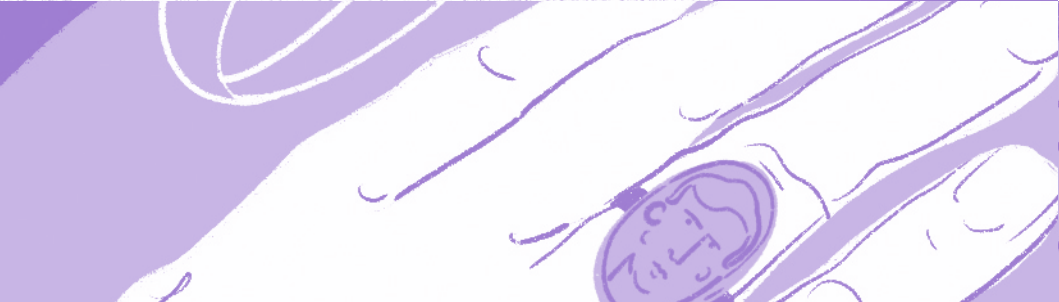
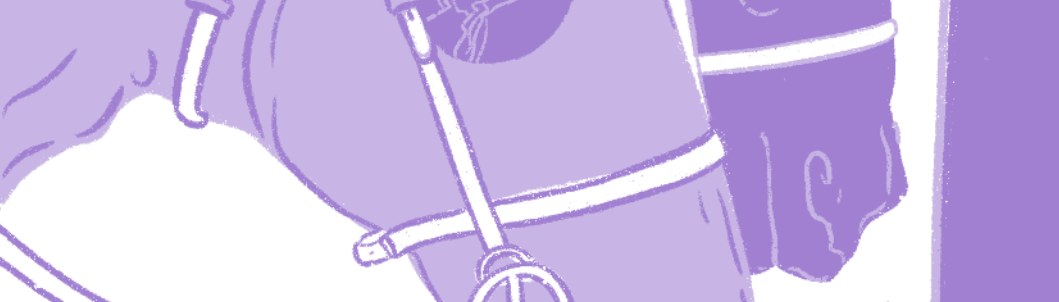
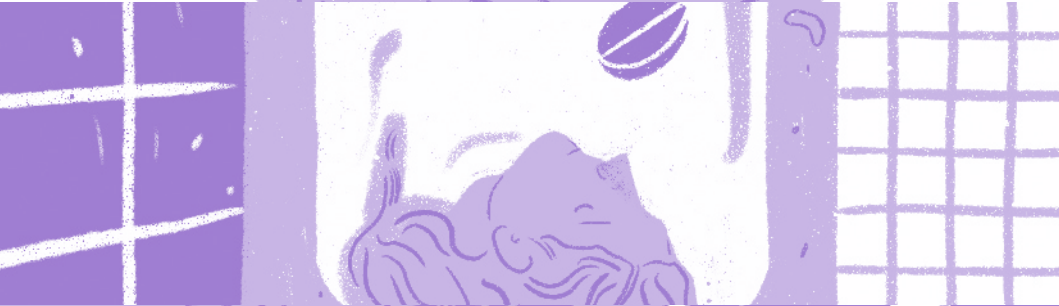
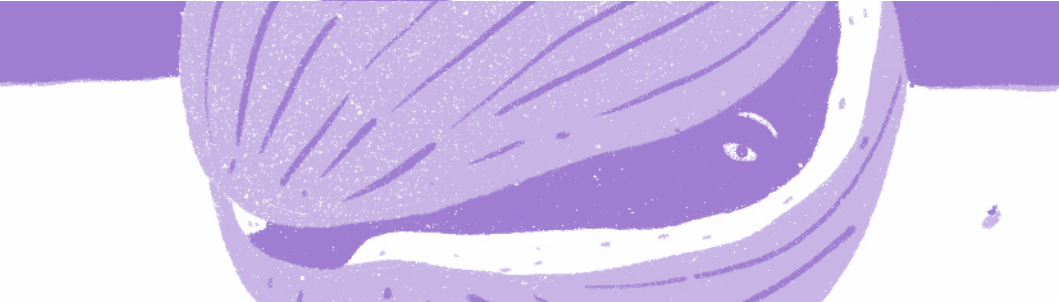
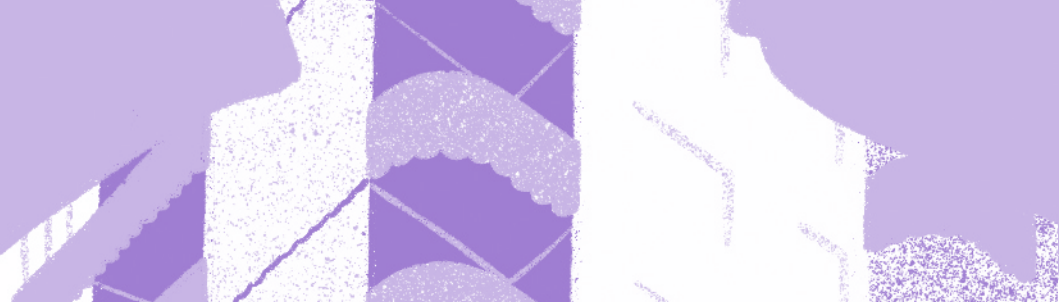
Friend: What if I used them to cut your coat in half so you can make a vest out of it?

Poet: That’ be great.

Friend: And you could use the leftover material to sew extensions onto your pant legs.

Poet: Creation is unending.

Friend: Creation is a song of praise to life!



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Estonian Theatre Agency
www.teater.ee
Address: Uus 5, 10111 Tallinn, Estonia
E-mail: info@teater.ee

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Maarja Moor (Theatre Department at the
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supervised by Siret Campbell) and
Mehis Pihla.

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Siim Nurklik, Christopher Moseley,
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www.kulka.ee/programmes/traducta
Address: Suur-Karja 23, 10148 Tallinn, Estonia
Phone: +372 5855 9483
E-mail: traducta@kulka.ee

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