**CORONALDO**

Following the Great Crash of 1929, my great-grandfather had to shut down his travelling wooden theatre. My father told us about it so often: the stories about my great-grandfather, who dreamt about theatre while going to work in a factory every day, and the war that signalled the permanent end of the long and impressive theatre caravan.

Yet I still forgot that this is genuinely possible.

I often wondered whether I was working well enough. Sometimes I lay awake for hours wondering whether people would continue wanting to see us. Whether I would always be able to be myself. Whether my emotions and longing for beauty could always be compatible with what the audience wanted.

But always with the idea in mind that there will always be an audience somewhere in the world to share our performances with.

I have never for a moment thought that the day would come when it was no longer permitted to put on a performance anywhere in the world.

It completely shatters my proud, childish illusions. It undermines the whole meaning of my existence. Because I am nothing more than a clown, and without an audience I have no significance. And yet it’s still good for something.

Good for putting things into perspective.

Good for seeing that culture and nature have to remain in balance. That a tree is just as beautiful as the finest actor or dancer.

Corona-time is time.

A time that gives us time. Time to come to a standstill. Time to give up. Time to die a little… and it’s allowed.

My son Pepijn and I are continuing to create and rehearse our new production, *Sono io?*, which would normally have had its premiere during Theater op de Markt in Hasselt this summer.

The characters of the two clowns are now in part shaped by the Corona era. After all, there’s something Beckettian about it; a father and son alone, with no outside help, trying something which tomorrow may no longer have any point.

It will be recognisable: waiting for the arrival of someone with good news that will restore colour and meaning to everything.

Until then there is time… and time also creates chaos, simply because it can.

It doesn’t have to be finished tomorrow. We can deviate, dream, give free rein to our most childish irresponsibility. We don’t have to be cautious. It’s only a rehearsal. It doesn’t have to be rounded off immediately. And perhaps it may never even have to be finished (what happens then?). But it is through having all this time and wandering around in childish dreams that the greatest dream of all occurs, when a voice calls out: “The audience is coming in!”.

It seems like a dream. And all at once that no longer sounds so poetical. It’s a reality.

But fortunately we don’t dream alone.

When I read reactions to Circus Ronaldo’s photos and posts on Facebook, I feel the audience’s ever-increasing longing.

A longing for profound laughter, and a comforting recognition. A desire to experience the way we laugh at the same things together, with lots of other people.

The longing to experience old rituals.

And these, surely, are precisely the main elements of circus (Ronaldo)?

We are looking forward tremendously to letting the young performers in *Swing* loose on the audience again, to finally letting *Cinema Malfait* leave on tour, to setting a new date for the premiere of *Sono io?*, and to rounding off the year with a series of warm Christmas nights in *Circus Ronaldo’s Wonderful Christmas*.

But it is unfortunately extremely hard to guess how things will turn out over the next few months, let alone the next three years.

And will the Corona virus change the shape of circus forever?

Fortunately, I remember from the ancestors’ stories that circus has always reinvented itself and has always been able to adapt to changing times.

In addition to the time spent creating the new production (which may be charged with nostalgia, obstinacy and melancholy) and as well as the intensive quest for financial solutions to ensure the continued existence of Circus Ronaldo, we are also thinking in creative and practical terms about how we can continue to perform safely in the post-Corona era.

It would be great to collect all our ideas together as forerunners (those who mark out the way for the general public to follow later) together with you, and to think of possibilities and alternatives for creating anew the magic of a performance in a way that feels safe.

That is what we are very much looking forward to in the weeks to come.

Because there will be a greater need than ever for bridge-builders who link together what is past and what is to come with a healing beauty.

Danny Ronaldo

5 May 2020