

YOUR DIGITAL PROGRAM / TEXT ONLY VERSION

The Sheep Song

FC Bergman

Toneelhuis

Thu 16 – Sun 19 Mar / Dunstan Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre

Duration: 1hr 30mins, no interval

Warnings: Contains sexual references, depictions of violence, nudity and smoking on stage.

THIS DIGITAL PROGRAM INCLUDES

Credits

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Credits

Production **FC Bergman, Toneelhuis**

By **Jonas Vermeulen, Stef Aerts, Joé Agemans, Thomas Verstraeten, Marie Vinck, Matteo Simoni**

With **Stef Aerts, Bart Hollanders, Titus De Voogdt, Marie Vinck, Matteo Simoni, Yorrith De Bakker**

Lighting Design **Ken Hioco**

Sound Design **Senjan Janssen**

Costume Design **Joëlle Meerbergen**

Music **Frederik Leroux-Roels**

Coproduction: Holland Festival, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa

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About the Show

By **Erwin Jans**

With *The Sheep Song*, FC Bergman is again delving into an animal fable. They did so before with *Van den vos* (2013), based on the well-known medieval tale of Reynard the Fox. But whereas *Van den vos* was a radically updated and humanised version of the original story, the protagonist of *The Sheep Song* remains an animal, more precisely, a sheep. The animal fable is a centuries-old genre, starting with Aesop, the Greek poet from the 6th century BC, and continuing on through the 17th century French writer Jean de la Fontaine to the contemporary fables of Toon Tellegen. Animal fables are, of course, stories about people, about their desires and strivings, their weaknesses and strengths. A moral is therefore always just around the corner.

The Sheep Song is not a fable in the literal sense. It is a visual story without words, an epic solely for the eye. It explicitly is in keeping with the tradition of the animal fable, but also is a variation on it. Whereas in the classic animal fable the animal stands for man, the sheep in *The Sheep Song* literally takes man as its model. The power of the fable lies in the simplicity of its narrative and the richness of its meanings. *The Sheep Song* goes for both. The story of metamorphosis is simple but opens onto unexpected depths. The power of archetypes. FC Bergman's story takes place at the boundary between animal and human. It is a fable about a sheep that becomes human. A sheep that sheds its innocence, leaves its herd and its pastoral environment and thus becomes the lost sheep. But there is no shepherd to go in search of it. Not in this story.

A wealth of mythology and symbolism surrounds the figure of the sheep. It stands for purity, innocence and vulnerability, but also for naiveté, passivity and herd behaviour. The sheep evokes an idyllic, pastoral and pre-industrial world of peace and tranquillity, but it is also the sacrificial animal par excellence. Christianity brings together many of these meanings and associations in the figure of Christ as the Lamb of God, the symbol of ultimate sacrifice and redemption. God is dead, our churches are emptying, man is lost, but art will save religious iconography. FC Bergman takes full advantage of this religious visual culture and lets the history of Western art pass in review on the treadmill, particularly the tension between the two-dimensionality of the Middle Ages and the perspective of the Renaissance. This is a crucial link not only in art history, but also in man's worldview and self-perception: for the first time, man discovers that he can also exist apart from God.

What does the sheep that becomes human say about us, who are already human? What does it mean to become 'more human'? With that question, the image of the superhuman quickly comes to mind. Or the humanoid. Is the person who wants to be more human the ultimate modern human? And what would that mean? The 'humanisation' of the sheep means that it immediately is thrown out of paradise, out of the pastoral, the idyll, the flock, and loses its innocence. At the end of the fable, when the herd rejects him, the lonely humanised sheep discovers that there is no going back. The sheep is no longer recognised as a sheep, for now it stinks of its humanness. The modern age moves in one direction. Irrevocably.

What does this say about us? Perhaps something about our perpetual desire to be other than what we are? And thus always bound to live in a state of alienation? Nietzsche described man as a rope stretched between an animal and an angel over an abyss. This in-between position of modern man is our tragedy. Nowhere at home. Always on the move. Never in harmony with ourselves. The sheep gets no further than a half-human, half-animal state of being. His quest for humanity becomes a Way of the Cross. A quest full of suffering, exclusion, humiliation and pain. Ecce homo.

On stage, the stations of the medieval theatre are represented by a conveyor belt that runs from right to left, and on which the characters walk in the opposite direction. This gives the belt, which symbolizes linear time, a paradoxical quality. The characters walk on a belt moving opposite to them, so that they keep walking in place. Those who stand still are carried back to the past. Those who want to go forward have to stand their ground and resist the opposing forces. The scenography of *The Sheep Song* is determined by these two opposing, mutually cancelling movements, resulting in eternal stasis. In this sense, the treadmill in *The Sheep Song* might tell the same story as the camera in *300 el x 50 el x 30 el* with its circular movement around the village: an eternal and tragic return of the same. A change that cannot be completed because there is no longer a clear direction.

As for the question of the 'why' behind the desire to be human, we get no answer. Is it a decision? A personal decision made out of free will? Or the result of a nameless urge? The inevitable result of being born into the world? Is the desire for transformation and metamorphosis what typifies man? And in particular the modern 'more-than-man', who has made the crossing of boundaries his identity (which, paradoxically, is ever-receding). How much do we have in our own hands? Man is what he continually wants to become. With the death of God, the horizon has been erased as well. All possibilities are open. Like a Faust or a Frankenstein, modern man perpetually experiments on himself. To do so, he even makes a pact with the devil in the guises of technique and technology. But is this a proof of his freedom and autonomy? Or exactly the opposite: his participation in a rat race, towards his own downfall and that of his planet? Man is no longer lost somewhere between an animal and an angel, but between an animal and a robot, between urges and mechanism. But his loneliness is none the less for that.

About FC Bergman

Four artists make up the FC Bergman theatre collective: **Stef Aerts**, **Joé Agemans**, **Thomas Verstraeten** and **Marie Vinck**. With their sensational site-specific productions, they made a splash the moment the company was founded back in 2008 (then still with Bart Hollanders and Matteo Simoni). In 2013, FC Bergman came under the wing of Toneelhuis. The thread running through FC Bergman's work is the tragedy of the little guy struggling to branch out and broaden his horizons. This is often reflected in enormous stage sets and installations to which the actors endeavour to measure up. The scenography is the 'beast that has to be tamed', the show a composition of images.

After scooping up the Young Theatre Prize for their exuberant adaptation of *The Homecoming* at Theater aan Zee (TAZ) in 2009, the following year they stunned the Dutch-language theatre world with their masterly *Walking along the Champs Elysées with a tortoise so as to have a better look at the world, but it is difficult to drink tea on an ice floe if everyone is drunk*. Premiered in the Old Exchange in Antwerp, the show's total abandon, baroque poetry and sheer scale could not fail to attract attention. It was selected for the Nederlands Theater Festival.

In 2011, FC Bergman knocked on Toneelhuis' door for the first time. In the space of just a few weeks, the collective created *300 el x 50 el x 30 el* for the Antwerpse Kleppers. Though it had seemed an impossible challenge, the collective managed to get the entire Bourlaschouwburg team on board and together they

built a complete village on the stage. A tracking camera covering the whole village projected onto a large screen what was happening inside the houses, allowing the audience to peer into the rooms occupied by a number of prominent guest actors and eighty extras. *300 el x 50 el x 30 el* is still on the repertoire today (with a run in New York in autumn 2022).

Made outdoors in the port of Antwerp, the wordless and poetic *Terminator Trilogy* (2012) toured internationally. With the music theatre show *Of the Fox* (2013) - the collective's first creation as permanent Toneelhuis-makers - FC Bergman came back indoors and paid tribute to the Bourlaschouwburg, turning the stalls into a swimming pool. This was followed by another scriptless site-specific show, *The Land of Nod* (2015). The production made it to the Festival d'Avignon and will be performed at the Biennale di Venezia in the summer of 2023. *JR* (2018), a radical adaptation of William Gaddis' eponymous cult novel, was also staged outside the theatre walls. FC Bergman constructed a gigantic, four-storey-high tower; the audience sat on all four sides of it and followed the simultaneous narratives direct and via a camera. This production also centred on the lonely struggle between man and his fate.

The Sheep Song (2021) was a game-changer: for the first time FC Bergman used the theatre as it is intended, i.e. without radically altering it. *The Sheep Song* is a wordless production about a creature no longer satisfied with its lot. The production was selected for the TheaterFestival 2022, and is now travelling to the 2023 Adelaide Festival in Australia. The members of FC Bergman also participate individually in other theatre productions, television projects, films and exhibitions, working independently of the collective and of Toneelhuis.

In 2023, FC Bergman was awarded the prestigious Silver Lion for Theatre at the Biennale di Venezia in recognition of its entire body of work: "FC Bergman flirts with the limits of the feasible, creating apocalyptic modern tales, often without words but with a surprising plastic force and evocative power, thus homing in on Man torn between his existential desire to go beyond his limits and the fear of change." FC Bergman is currently working with Toneelhuis on an audio-visual installation for Gaasbeek Castle relating to the Marquise Arconati Visconti.

In May 2022, FC Bergman assumed the artistic direction of Toneelhuis, together with Olympique Dramatique, Lisaboa Houbrechts, Gorges Ocloo and Benjamin Abel Meirhaeghe.

Taming the Wild Beast

An interview with FC Bergman

"Our performances are wild beasts that need to be tamed," say Stef Aerts, Joé Agemans, Thomas Verstraeten, and Marie Vinck, the actors, artists, and makers who make up the relatively young Belgian theatre collective FC Bergman. Indeed, their larger-than-life productions consist of ambitious scenographic installations in which visual voluptuousness gifts stories of ever struggling and stumbling human beings. In this interview, we ask them about their inspirations, their creative processes, and their work as a collective in an increasingly individualised theatre landscape.

The four members and theatre scholars Hanne Roofthoof and Edith Cassiers meet at a time when, because of the SARS-Covid-19 pandemic, all the theatre houses are closed. Nonetheless, behind the closed doors of Toneelhuis, the Antwerp municipal theatre that FC Bergman is affiliated to, something is stirring on stage. FC Bergman presented their new performance, *The Sheep Song*, there a few days before this interview – not to a public audience, but rather to a handful of staff members.

How did the first performance of *The Sheep Song* go?

We have long thought that the audience doesn't matter that much to us. By premiering *The Sheep Song* in front of about five people in the theatre, we were suddenly struck by the impact of the lack of an audience. An audience creates the feeling of a collective experience. It is the happening, the tension of whether or not something is going to happen that you experience together. The near total absence of an audience created a very depressed feeling. You are confronted with the fact that you make a performance for the sake of communication. When there is no audience, that communication is left vacant - it's a dead thing. You want to communicate in the most direct way, not through chat rooms or other means of digital theatre. You want the gasps; you want the laughs. As much as you can create many things with film, you cannot have that.

In theory, you could communicate with an audience of just one person in a room but a small audience didn't work with *The Sheep Song*. Maybe our images are too big to show them to so few people. Maybe just 'ordinary' isn't good enough for our performance. Maybe our work requires a two-way dialogue. The narration and dialogue you have with the audience is a conversation you have with society. You want to interact with a society.

What does a creative process look like for you? Are there constants in such a creative process?

Our creative process is always different with each project, but there is a basic pattern. This pattern applies to the performances that do not originate from a text. The few performances that did originate from text, such as *JR* (2018), *Van den vos (Van den vos (About Reynard the Fox); 2013)*, and our opera *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (2018) were made differently.

Most of our (modest) oeuvre, however, is textless. We usually start from an idea, a few dramaturgical thoughts. At first this is not a conclusive dramaturgical idea, but rather an idea of what we want to talk about. Usually by then there is a book, an image, or an idea around which thoughts are formulated. We ask ourselves why this appeals to us and why we want to talk about it. A first idea for the form that the performance might take usually follows fairly quickly. This conceptual form will transform and evolve over time and will set the rest of the process in motion.

We often describe our performances as wild beasts that need to be tamed. Every performance is a beast that we run after: a beast that actually wants to tell its own story, that sends us further and deeper into its belly.

Through the sheer size and complex construction of your monumental sets, the audience is invited to reflect on the boundaries of the stage, of the theatre hall, and thus of the theatrical arts in general. Is this theatre? How is this theatre? The (im)possibilities of the theatrical experience are augmented. Is this a conscious choice or does it flow organically from the form of your performances?

We always try to build our sets so that the audience automatically participates in the form and therefore in the narrative. Like the characters, the audience needs to find ways to relate to the sometimes-intimidating spaces. This became especially clear with the tower that we built for *JR*. The basic idea of *JR* is that people lose themselves in an excess of communication, an excess of information. The audience found themselves in the same situation, as they were only able to see one side of the tower. They couldn't see from all sides at once. Thus, they received only a small piece of all the information that was there to see. We tried to create the same experience for the audience as for the characters, in an almost physical way. This is something we hope to make our main characters and audience share: a sense of being lost, a futile attempt to sustain and secure yourself in a too large space. Without becoming participatory theatre, the audience becomes part of the performance.

We look for a hyper-theatricality, for something that goes beyond the boundaries of theatre. This inevitably brings you to the point where you start accentuating those boundaries. We show that this is not enough, that things will have to go further. This is the attempt we make. In a way, we always try to break through the physical boundaries of theatre. Not for the sake of breaking through but to lead or guide the viewer's gaze as far as possible, as if there is always some part of the form that we have not reached or that we cannot show.

Before and after a performance, you are very careful with the information that you give away. Insight into the creative process or sources of inspiration is scarce. Is this a conscious choice?

This comes from a desire to create open works of art, much to the annoyance of communication and PR services. The more information you give to people, the more they come to see the performance from a certain point of view and that's always a shame. As an audience member, you want to be surprised. As an artist, you want to give the responsibility to the audience to read what they want to read. It's incredibly important not to take people by the hand. We want to emancipate the viewer, treat them as sovereign beings. We have made something and worked hard on it but now it is up to the viewer to do something with it, without becoming non-committal. We think it's important that people can decide for themselves what they do with our work, without saying that it doesn't matter what they read in it.

For years, there has been a naïve desire to make something that goes straight to the heart, something that needs very little rational or intellectual filters in order to be understood. We want to communicate with the audience in a very direct way. However, that becomes difficult when, before the performance, you are given a booklet with dramaturgical texts that you have to read. You have to read something when you just want to wait for the performance to start. Then, when you have read it, you start referring back to those texts during the entire performance. Conversely, it's even worse when you get a leaflet afterwards with all the references that were in the performance. You are, as it were, confronted with your own stupidity as an audience member in contrast to the cleverness of the performance.

You start from an idea and arrive at a form. That form will dictate everything, even inspire content. What follows next? How do you go from there?

That's the next step. [Pointing to a mood board full of images as big as the wall] We let ourselves be inspired as broadly as possible. We set some lines but we try not to use too many filters. It is a very intuitive phase.

In that respect, *300 el x 50 el x 30 el* was very interesting. That performance was made over the course of one month, so we didn't have time for filters. It's the only production that we didn't make a mood board for. We had to open ourselves entirely to inspiration and say yes to every idea. Ironically, *300 el x 50 el x 30 el* is one of the most solid performances we have ever made; it is very well put together. The show was nevertheless made without a plan: it was made up and written down in a sort of direct line, built and performed while we were making it up on the fly. All the steps happened at once and were intertwined. Oddly enough, that worked very well.

Now, our creative process follows a certain structure: first there is an idea, then we come up with the form, next we collect pictures, we come up with scenes, create a sequence for those scenes, and finally start rehearsing those scenes. In the beginning, this was certainly not the case. The steps were intertwined for a very long time.

However, during *Van den vos*, we tried to maintain more of a structure, as we were working with external partners and due to the increasing size of the production. The first time a method really seeped into our preparation was with *JR* – a production so big that we needed this structure. But we only became aware of that method during *The Sheep Song*. By consciously implementing this methodology, we were able to create a performance in a very short amount of time. By going through each phase one by one, we became very productive, making it possible to create an ambitious performance within tight time constraints imposed by Corona.

Does such a fixed working method lead to a fixed role division within the collective?

We have come to know each other better and better over the years and have come to trust each other's strengths and weaknesses. That's how our collaboration happens organically. Trust is very important. What is also important is that towards the end, no opinions matter any more. It is the performance itself that dictates what is best. We place ourselves at the service of that performance.

If we have to indicate a division of roles, we can say that Stef is very involved with the form, Thomas is more involved with the dramaturgy and concepts, and Joé has a very technical eye. We work very much together on the visual phase and the development of scenarios. Stef and Marie are very good at directing actors. Lighting is something that Joé and Stef work hard on. Managing large groups, such as extras, is up to Thomas and Marie. Thomas also deals with finances and dossiers or writing texts.

This division of roles has grown organically over the years. If someone encroaches on someone else's territory, it's fine, we'll work it out.

Generally speaking, a theatre director is still expected to exist. There is a belief that to harmonise all the elements of a performance, you need an outside eye. And yet, as a collective, you manage to bring ambitious projects together into one unified body of work.

We are fortunate that we all need each other. In the end, there is always a division of roles, which is often the same. However, shortly before the final stage – what you would call the final direction – there we are again as a collective, very much the four of us together. The final decisions, what people consider directing, is always a collective process. Likewise, coming up with something new is collective for us as

well. It's a fun phase, to gather images that go on to become scenes and are placed in a certain order. These two phases are the processes that happen most collectively: coming together for the gathering of images to create a first draft of the performance and then again in the last weeks before the premiere.

Our projects are so large, there is always so much work to do: performing, directing, and building sets... There is so much for everyone to do. Due to the size of such projects, we don't get in each other's way. There is something for everyone to relate to, everyone has his or her own specialty to dive into.

You are a collective of makers, but also a collective of actors. When does it start being about acting? When does your own role in a performance become clear? How and when are roles distributed?

For us, acting is totally unimportant. Although performing is part of the performance, how the roles are distributed is of little importance. We're not that interested in performing personally anymore. In *The Sheep Song* we perform again, but we actually want to perform less and less ourselves. We perform personally because we need people in the images we create.

In thinking about our acting, we have found out that it requires a more specific profile than we initially thought. Because of our common training and our common frame of reference that we have developed over the years, we expect an actor to behave in a certain way in our scenographies. We know what our images should look like, so it's easy to place ourselves in there as well. We don't need much direction, as we know how to relate to the scenography.

However, we notice with guest actors that the acting and 'standing' in our sets that we aim for is not that obvious. Outsiders often have to get used to what we expect of them. On the one hand, we want a sensitivity for the scene you're performing in and, on the other, soberness. This last one is very important but quite difficult for most actors, as they are often used to carrying and pulling the performance, both emotionally and dramaturgically. That is rarely the case in our performances. Our performances are not carried by an actor all the time, which can cause misunderstanding. Either you have to be in function of the set or you need to pull the performance yourself. Our performances are on the borderline. For the most part, it is letting yourself be carried along by the form. There is always a moment in every performance when an actor has to lose against the form, followed by a kind of dramatic catharsis that then has to be performed.

Someone who can be beautiful in the image is not enough. Someone who wants to be too much of a leading character is also problematic. Whenever we work with good actors, we come across a moment of confusion where they don't know whether they should act or not. Our answer always depends on the scene and often sounds like 'not now, but later'. The actors have to know when it's up to them and when it's not. They have to trust that most of the emotional trajectory will be played out by the scenery and not by themselves. And then suddenly they need to go all the way in their acting.

For too long we assumed that this was an obvious thing to do because for a long time we played our performances ourselves. It was an interesting discovery for us that this is actually not that easy for most actors. We lost two of our core members to this [founding members Bart Hollanders and Matteo Simoni]. Matteo and Bart are true players who want to meet each other on stage. They visit us as guest-actors in our performances, which is always very nice. You notice that we speak the same language, that we don't have to discuss anything anymore because they know what our intention is.

The form becomes imperative to determine the content. Have you ever encountered limitations of the form, ideas impossible to implement?

At some point, you always have to adjust your dreams a little bit. Usually this has purely to do with scale.

There are scenes that don't make it, but we have never had to give up on a basic idea. We do always have to go through a kind of wall of resistance. This wall of resistance might have diminished over time, as we have become more mature and reasonable ourselves. We are not fantasists. We want the impossible, sure, but we are still theatre makers and not fools who want to carry out their idea at any cost. We want to play for an audience and ensure that a performance sells and can be performed several times.

In a lot of performances, water is brought to the stage in different ways. Do you consciously use this to test the boundaries of theatre?

The use of water is not a conscious leitmotif. All the same, we do like to include real elements on stage: elements that grind against the boundaries of truth and theatre such as water or fire. We used to include a child and an animal in every performance. We look for unpredictable things, dangerous things, performative things. We're looking for sensations that you can't fake; something that goes beyond the theatrical. An actor who gets soaking wet due to an artificial rain, has still a reality, a viscerality, that you can't avoid. We always aim for the limits of the forms that we use. How can we go beyond the form and enter the realm of the real? It is a performativity that we search.

In a meticulously designed installation where all the radars have to run smoothly, it does add a subversive and almost destructive component.

Absolutely, that's why we have a dog on stage in our newest performance. It's always exciting whether the dog will stay or run away, whether he will do what he has to do or less or suddenly more. As makers, we consciously build in this tension that - in the best-case scenario - will add something to the performance.

In each project, there are uncalculated factors that can go wrong. It always comes back to the taming of the indomitable beast: a beast that you have created yourself and which you need to keep in check to make sure that it is contained. But that can fail badly and even become dangerous. We all bear the physical marks of that too, especially from our early years.

We hope to preserve that performativity. In our early years, that performativity was very physical but over the years it has faded. The last time was with *The Land of Nod*, which contained a dance piece that we started making together. After two weeks, everyone had shin splints or something similar. We all just passed the age of thirty and came to the realisation that we weren't as invincible as we thought after all.

Is music part of your mood board?

Although we describe our performances as compositions, as they always have a musical element, we actually use music mostly functionally. It is much less directive in the creation of a performance. Music first and foremost needs to be supportive. For example, there is a piece of music that we have wanted to use for quite some time but have not yet used, as it is not dominant enough. On the other hand, we have already created an opera, where music truly is the starting point.

Towards the end, we do need music as reinforcement. When we work with live music, as with Van den vos and *The Sheep Song*, it is never an obvious course. We don't speak the language, we're laymen. At the same time, we have a very well-defined idea of what we despise and that doesn't make it easy... Between us we know exactly what it should be but we cannot put it into words, which makes it difficult to discuss this with musicians or composers.

You mentioned before how you, as founding members of the same collective, speak the same language but that the translation of your intentions to others is often more difficult. Nonetheless, you work together with a wide range of others: guest actors, technicians, composers, etc. How do you deal with this?

We look for words, we try to learn to speak each other's language. Often it is a matter of backtracking, of retracing our steps - we know what we mean but someone else does not necessarily. It is also a matter of including people in our collective, which we find more difficult to do. We do the preparation and ultimately decide. Still, during the period of time that we work together with others, we try to extend our inner group as much as possible to everyone who participates.

When working with large groups, we organise information meetings at regular intervals. We try very hard to communicate as openly as possible about what we are working on. Even with groups of extras, we always provide a presentation on the story, the references, and the underlying dramaturgy of the performance. Thomas always takes his time for this and that pays off. People - be they actors, technicians, or extras - become fully involved when they know what they are getting into and what we are doing. Because our performances are very technical and complex, we expect a lot from actors, the technical crew, the set, and costume designers.

You need to make everyone part of your dream. It remains difficult, as there are always difficult moments when everyone, including ourselves, suddenly don't see it anymore. Therefore, you need to make your dream big enough so that people want to follow you to the end. Sometimes we are shocked that people keep following us. We wonder if our ship is heading in the right direction. But you have to have the courage to draw that card from the beginning. To tell everyone that it will be fantastic, that we'll do it together, and that we'll eventually get there.

Your performances are regularly interpreted as reflections on social trends or concerns or as political statements. How do your performances relate to current events? Do they have a political function?

Our performances are never political statements. We try to avoid to explicitly refer to current affairs. The performances are political by definition because they are about human concerns. We always show a person in a world: a big world that is also governed by that person as well as by others. It is always a larger story that is told through an individual narrative, never a political statement or a metaphor.

The dramaturgical idea that underlies all your performances is the fragile, fearful, floundering human being in an overpowering environment. Little people who try to get home. Is there hope for that struggling human being?

At least there are moments, there is a silver lining.

But our characters often do come crashing down, completely. Optimistic performances do not necessarily make great art. Performances that are moving, touching, as well as hopeful, are rare. It takes great wisdom and sensitivity to make such performances – qualities we may not yet possess. This might be something that we wish for ourselves: that we are able to slowly evolve towards this. Maybe then our performances will become a little less heavy. Although we were initially on a milder course, *The Sheep Song* is again a quite heavy performance.

Tragedy has existed for so long and has had and continues to have such an important function in society. Coming out of the theatre together, hearing the church bells ring: that's something we all need. You have to go through hell together to be able to see the light again. It might not be very hopeful, but we do hope that it will be comforting in the end.

That is the one thing, after all, that we hope to accomplish with our performances. To offer recognition, to bring comfort and catharsis. To know that you are not alone.