

Orlando, a Monologue, a Stain

Country: Croatia

Category: Drama

Title: Orlando, monolog, mrlja

Company: Croatian Radiotelevision/Croatian Radio Drama Department

Author: Goran Ferčec

Producer: Katja Šimunić

Director: Dario Harjaček

Sound Designer: Srđan Nogić

Other key personnel: Mateo Videk, Jelena Miholjević, Maro Market (composer)

Length: 35:28

SUMMARY:

This Orlando of ours probably comes from a Renaissance stain (or perhaps even from a more distant period), but surely must he/she be a sibling of Virginia Woolf's Orlando. And he, she, our Orlando is cogitative, and sentient, and estranged, and gender fluid. His, her, their monologue is dual, but not at all binary, this monologue is like a conceptual *pas de deux*, a contemporary vertigo for two, or, more precisely a labyrinthine motion around the main topic of this Orlando of ours which is – the time. A sadistic time that always manages to pass off chaos as a condition for progress.

Goran Ferčec "Orlando, a Monologue, a Stain"

00:00

ANNOUNCER: Goran Ferčec "Orlando, a Monologue, a Stain"

Music.

00:31

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): ... not my time... this time is not my time... this time... this time... is not my time... this time is not my time...

MALE VOICE: Now that I finally speak, out loud, to myself, all my "I" aliases, of which there may be more than two thousand, they become aware of separation, so after a hundred years of not speaking I no longer know who is actually speaking, after a hundred years of inarticulateness and silence that I shall of course undoubtedly return to together with all my aliases, when this is over, although I don't know which comes first, is the inarticulateness the result of silence or the silence of inarticulateness, but now that I am finally speaking, perhaps it should be said loud and clear, right here and now (*whispering*:) this time is not my time...

MALE VOICE (*whispering*): ...this time is not my time...this time is not my time...

MALE VOICE: ...and try not to sound like a teenager raging at the vanity of Sunday, but to sound like a roaring lion or a writer who drives away the believers with his tongue or like an actor or actress, a speaking body who embodies Orlando who, in turn, after five hundred years of English disease of love for nature and sentences about to the beautiful skies and the misty autumn, must finally state, this time is not my time.

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): ...this time is not my time... this time is not my time... this time is not my time... this time is not my time...

MALE VOICE: ...this time is not my time...

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): ...my... (*singing*) What kind of time is that?

02:16 *Music*.

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering, singing*): Whose time is it? Whose time is it?

02:25

MALE VOICE: I turn it upside down, twist it like a sock.

FEMALE VOICE (*singing*): What kind of time is that? Whose time is it? What kind of time is that? Whose time is it?

MALE VOICE: My today... My today...

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): My today is synchronous...

MALE VOICE: My today is synchronous.

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): ...and the whole time is my present day.

MALE VOICE: I see it arranged in a timeline that resembles a hook, twisted, coiled, like the letter Y at the beginning of the word Yesterday. I can draw it. Today at the top of yesterday, which is easy to get impaled on, get hooked on time, on the pretense of transience.

FEMALE VOICE (*singing*): Whose time is it?

MALE VOICE: I look at my time caught on a hook like a worm or an earthworm, and due to the specific shape of the hook, which, in order to be effective, wants to draw its end close to its beginning, I see everything at any given moment.

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): And all the time is today.

MALE VOICE: I see the present day, I see yesterday and that void in between which could easily resemble the future, or which calls itself the future, like the sea, the void between the beginning and end of the hook.

What kind of time is that?

Whose time is it?

FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*): All the time is today. All the time is today.

MALE VOICE: So tame and supple. But in reality, mean. I twist the time like a sock. Twisting is the only one of only a few meaningful actions in the overall choreography of life. There are also climbing, walking, and maybe hugging at some other times.

I agree to speak only on the condition that if I twist the time, I also twist myself, if the time changes, then I change too. I can't be the same (man). I can't be the same (woman). But in constant change. Otherwise speaking makes no sense.

FEMALE VOICE (*singing*): What kind of time is that? Whose time is it?

05:56 *Music.*

06:55

MALE VOICE:

This is not rage, this is a song in a high frequency that wants to burst the fragile constructs of time. Bipolar at times. Lost at times. Wise at times. When it is done, no manuscript will be left behind as evidence. It will be captured in the memory. Memory is the most effective way of resistance.

FEMALE VOICE:

Like from the deck of a ship or from a lighthouse, I see the other side, any given moment in time, and myself in time, and I tell myself, somehow you should preserve that timelessness or temporality, but protect it from becoming a myth, something recognizable that could easily become a story.

And the only truth, the greatest truth is that you should run away from the story because it always gets repeated, stays always the same throughout the time, it'd rather keep a person unchanged, stuck in just one time in just one possibility.

MALE VOICE:

A story loves the time. A story in alliance with time, it's a cursed virus. It is passed from generation to generation as a bad gene. When something is told twice, it is already infected with myth. One should avoid the story in order to avoid the habit of life of being obedient and of being repetitive. Therefore, it is necessary to twist and run away.

And in order to escape the place and the time, and it can be done, one must kick down the established chronology of centuries, decades, years, weeks, multiplied by height, width, and depth. Features that fit into one bad sentence with too many commas. They need to be

set up with inflection. Leap years. Distortion. Everything uneven. Everything with no direction.

The whole jungle which triggers more fear than curiosity.

FEMALE VOICE:

Time and place of action. A pointless question asked for generations. Posed to adults for generations on a timeline as flat as the horizon of a flat plate lying on the backs of four elephants, drawn on a wall of a school without the possibility of correction, without curvature, on a timeline where everything is equally valuable and useful and where each era and each millennium and each century have its exact place and its exact and unquestionable meaning and its inevitable victims. A blunt subordination to the linearity by which the centuries go from left to right. And every century on that boring plane is closed and finished and marked and there is no way to enter it.

MALE VOICE:

And every century after another is interpreted as a great progress towards the idea that we don't jump at each other's throats, that we don't kill each other with logorrhea, that we don't buy into myths, but that hasn't been the case for a long time, it's never been that way.

Because, in fact, every plus or minus a hundred years, the man goes wild, starts drooling for a great story, and the sadistic character of time always manages to pass off chaos as a condition for progress.

10:18 Music.

10:40

MALE VOICE:

A century is in no way made to human ... (*Laughing, male voice and female voice*)

Music.

MALE VOICE:

A century is in no way made to human measure, it is nothing but a hoax, a construct much too long for the period for a body to last.

FEMALE VOICE:

Made for a period of time that is not human.

MALE VOICE:

Too big a library to read.

FEMALE VOICE:

Every life is too short for a century, and yet, it still claims it and still wants to please it.

MALE VOICE:

We cater to the century like a dog to its owner.

FEMALE VOICE:

We let it guide us and at the same time plan to tame it.

MALE VOICE:

We cajole it, the wonderful century of ours, the terrible century of ours, our century of progress, our century of doom.

FEMALE VOICE:

We massage its shoulders to please him.

MALE VOICE:

We indulge its violent temper in the hope that it won't slap us.

FEMALE VOICE:

And then it slaps us.

MALE VOICE:

And another slap follows.

FEMALE VOICE:

A hundred years of slaps.

MALE VOICE:

Because it is holding us hostage.

FEMALE VOICE:

Because we don't dare to look beyond it, to learn to count beyond one hundred.

MALE VOICE:

You, our dear century.

FEMALE VOICE:

Smack. Slap.

MALE VOICE:

The century is a hoax. That's why we need to outsmart it.

MALE VOICE:

Just step out of it.

FEMALE VOICE:

Break its number one and then two zeros like a spine.

MALE VOICE:

It should be tricked into everything that one lifetime can trick it into.

FEMALE VOICE:

Tricked into laziness.

MALE VOICE:

Tricked into oblivion after quite the bender.

FEMALE VOICE:

Into long walks from continent to continent.

MALE VOICE:

Into singing revolutionary songs. A lot of fucking indoor and outdoor.

FEMALE VOICE:

Sleeping during the day. Decadence at night.

MALE VOICE:

Owning a castle. Into willingness to lose the castle or have the people take it over.

FEMALE VOICE:

Writing with a wooden pencil.

MALE VOICE:

Starting things with no intention of completing them.

FEMALE VOICE:

Tricked into guillotine instead of a bicycle.

MALE VOICE:

Tricked into a virus and travelling with nothing but a rucksack on its back.

FEMALE VOICE:

Fare-dodging in public transport.

MALE VOICE:

Overthrowing the government.

FEMALE VOICE:

One should be stubborn.

MALE VOICE:

Not write the name on the apartment door.

FEMALE VOICE:

Hide the address.

MALE VOICE:

Turn off satellite navigation.

FEMALE VOICE:

Climb an oak tree before you realize you're afraid of heights.

MALE VOICE:

Feed other people's cats.

FEMALE VOICE:

Always ask for higher fees.

MALE VOICE:

Repeat that social class is like plastic, an environmental and existential problem that will be our undoing.

FEMALE VOICE:

Walk between cities.

MALE VOICE:

Avoid Europe.

FEMALE VOICE:

Leave too large tips in the coffee shop. Steal books that will not be read.

MALE VOICE:

Not consent to marriage. Deny fidelity. Deny everything that could resemble blackmail.

FEMALE VOICE:

Leave the parents' house as soon as possible.

MALE VOICE:

Rape your own mother and kill your own father.

FEMALE VOICE:

Or kill the mother and rape the father. Symbolically.

MALE VOICE:

Burn the inheritance. Verbatim. Get drunk with wine.

FEMALE VOICE:

Listen to music that was left unfinished.

MALE VOICE:

Write down the names of lovers on the facade.

FEMALE VOICE:

Not accept the truth as an undeniable category, or even worse, a moral category.

MALE VOICE:

Keep the truth away from art.

FEMALE VOICE:

Always carry domino tiles with you.

MALE VOICE:

Write down dreams. Avoid the city center.

FEMALE VOICE:

Claim that art is the most important thing in the world.

MALE VOICE:

Grow pineapples on a tree.

FEMALE VOICE:

Learn to tell the time by the position of the Sun and the Moon. Read Brecht. Quote Marx and Spinoza.

MALE VOICE:

Finally bring the God to his end.

FEMALE VOICE:

Make a mistake when naming your own gender.

MALE VOICE:

Abolish the terrifying sadism that the word destiny carries. No longer trapped by destiny.

FEMALE VOICE:

Stare into people's faces. Enter the toilet of the gender you are not marked with while drunk and look at yourself in the mirror.

Go out into the night like someone else.

Your rough gestures which have become gentle. Purposeful movements that have become purposeless. Talk about the body as something good.

MALE VOICE:

Send someone a dick pic.

FEMALE VOICE:

Start a conversation with a stranger.

MALE VOICE:

Understand the essential bond between trees, birds, and man, but not become a prophet or an educator. Never say (after realizing what it is that the century expected me to be and what it still expects), never say: I think the spirit of this century has finally taken me and broken me.

FEMALE VOICE:

The century should be tricked into experience which it will not be able to usurp, tricked into knowledge which it will not be able to exercise, capitalize, sell, resell, turn into gold. Disappear and reappear in places where no one expects me. Ask a million questions. Sink several vessels for the transport of goods. Buy only with cash. Or steal.

MALE VOICE AND FEMALE VOICE:

It should... It should... It should... It should...

Music.

MALE VOICE AND FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*):

It should... It should... It should... It should...

15:40 Music.

16:07

FEMALE VOICE:

Every century should open the windows and let the fresh air in so that the draft can unclutter the stale cabinet of wonders, scatter the deck of tarot cards of the Gypsy Rustem El Sadi, knock over the quill ink, blow away the crinoline like a balloon, and peel off the exotic wallpaper with Moorish head profiles and tropical birds from the walls of three hundred and sixtyfive rooms, salons, apartments, corridors where Queen Elizabeth, Russian Princess Sasha, the starving poet Nick Green, whose talking about himself prevents him from getting a proper meal, Norwegian whippets and aggressive mastiffs who don't like poets, a Romanian archduchess who, when she feels like it, lifts her dress, crouches down and pees in the yard, an unnamed Turkish lover who fires rockets into the night, the invisible ladies of chastity and purity, but not modesty, who follow the squeezed thighs of Queen Victoria, Shelmerdine, whose hair, and ships are just waiting for a favorable wind, sneak around. All the dead because of whom no one can breathe anymore.

The century's pets.

The kind of people who get crossed out in the first reading nowadays. With a red pen.

The century should finally be rendered speechless like Madame du Deffand after talking incessantly for fifty years.

Or...

Or made turn into what it will turn into anyway, a painting.

One single painting.

The one that takes your breath away.

18:45

One music stops, another starts.

19:00

FEMALE VOICE:

(Short laugh.) What kind of painting is it which silences the chatter of the century, that forces it to summarize, to renounce its class love for the chosen ones, to break the middle-class blues of comfortable living, to look back and take a look at the crap it leaves behind. Ahem... If I try to describe it, ahem, it doesn't resemble anything, it doesn't compare to anything. Ah, I come closer. It could be a gentle English landscape, but it isn't.

Another step closer.

Ahem, It could be the Bosphorus on a foggy morning, but it isn't.

It could be a Norwegian glacier during the winter solstice.

Ahem, I take a step.

Or the mouth of two rivers at dusk viewed with an oligarchic gaze from above. But it isn't.

Or the foam around Cape Horn. I take a step.

Ahem, maybe it's just paper that someone has spilled some ink on, and the stain turned the paper gray and created a

geographical map of the new world. *(Short laugh.)* I come closer.

Maybe it is an oil slick offshore. Maybe it's the whale at rest. Maybe it's a pine forest.

I take a step.

Maybe the wallpaper in the salon is patterned with densely intertwined plants that grow only in colonies. Ahem, maybe it's the cracked asphalt. Or a scribble on the wall that is impossible to read. One more step.

Maybe it's... Maybe it's... Maybe it's the bark of Orlando's oak. My next step gets me close enough to make all possible readings of the painting disappear and there remains only what the painting is, a simple stain that is nothing but a stain. Nothing but a stain.

I address the century with arrogance, with disdain for its limitations (now it is getting kind of personal), without cajoling I tell the century to give me a hint, a clue how to read the painting in the year 2020, which I want to turn it into by force.

Silence.

The century remains silent. Retaliates for pranks.

I take another step which brings me quite close to the painting and shows me that every stain in the stain in the stain in the stain, in its tiniest detail, becomes one face.

Faces, visible only when a person gets so close that he sees nothing around him but the surface of the painting, when he erases all the surrounding world. Unknown faces that make me stand still and think of all that I was or could have been, all of them (men) or all of them (women) or all of those who are constantly used and exploited by the vile centuries, without actually being offered anything.

Exploited.

The prostitute Neli, a marathon runner whose heart gives out at the finish line, a homeless man after an earthquake, a boy with painted nails riding a bicycle on a deserted street in a provincial town in the quiet afternoon, a dog on a chain in the back yard, a forgotten child, an illiterate folk poet, a butcher who cries, an actress forever playing the supporting roles, a Chinese man building a bridge, the one feeding pigeons because there is no one else to feed, a Roma tribe from the Balkans, a day laborer harvesting peas, a writer who accepts the fate of belonging to a small language, a school bus driver who has no children of his own,

a refugee who constantly gets across borders and who, after being sent back, gets across again and gets across again and crushes the century like a lump of wet salt.

A century of faces that do not speak but move, play pranks, work, get across, and while moving turn that stain that was not discernible at the beginning into a storm, a wave, an avalanche that sweeps away everything in its path.

24:30 Music.

24:54

MALE VOICE:

And nothing is as it was before. The walls are sweating. The century is crumbling. And it wasn't even halfway there. I have nothing to do with it, although I constantly try to undermine it, hollow it out, plow it with my writing. I create language traps. I call him out in sentences. I'm copying that painting I have reduced it to, and the painting keeps struggling against the description, as it struggles against the sight. I'm trying to describe that painting just like she, Orlando, tries to describe herself, but it doesn't work, because it's constantly changing, so that writing turns into erasing and into repeating of always the same sentences, with always the same silence between them.

A year for a sentence. That makes a good balance. If only the unhealthy ambition that has over the centuries turned writing into a tangled hair that is impossible to tame could be contained. Translated into our time, one sentence per second. Writing sentence over sentence, because writing is nothing but rewriting and writing one sentence over another. Mostly other people's sentences, already written, already printed, already signed, already copied by someone who copied them from someone, who copied them from someone. The fact that they sound as if they were written and spoken for the first time is only because the one who reads is a creature prone to forgetfulness.

Because people are sickly forgetful.

Nobody remembers anything except paintings, so I turn the painting I turn into a text into a painting again.

The writing turns into a stain.

The text is a stain.

And only as a stain is it a source of some sense.

26:43 Music.

27:00

MALE VOICE AND FEMALE VOICE (*whispering*):

I sharpen my pencils every day just to spread the stain.

From the paper to the table, from the table to the walls, from the walls to the floors, from the floors to myself, from myself to other bodies.

I establish a daily routine, by following the example of Beckett's pleasure of solitude and escape from people that he probably (perhaps unconsciously) inherited from Orlando.

I fill the hours with writing just to prove the existence of the stain.

This very stain. A text that is impossible to finish. A manuscript which resists to be written. And it will stay that way. Because copying can go on forever. Take as much as it wants and from whom it wants.

Virginia Woolf, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Elfriede Jelinek, Daša Drndić, Michael Stipe are copied here. And some others that were copied from the unconscious and who, although nameless, contribute to the stain growing.

I sharpen my pencils and it doesn't occur to me to compare them to spears.

Comparison to machines which copy, repeat, and produce doubt it is far more logical.

A stain as a residue of the pervasive doubt produced by writing.

A stain as chaos.

Orlando walks through the chaos like in a dream.

Wisely.

29:15 Silence.

29:19

FEMALE VOICE:

Do I smell something burning here? Kind of like a smoldering rage?

Where does this anger come from and who is it directed at?

At Orlando who is not me?

At centuries which are not mine?

You must never, never say what you think, Orlando tells me, you always have to write as if you were someone else. I guess that's the only way to go through the centuries.

To always say exactly the opposite and to constantly change.

Or change the language.

By twisting. Simple tactics of manipulation and change. So you become elusive (man).

Elusive (woman).

30:24 Music.

30:42

MALE VOICE:

Daily routine of a writer at the end of the world as we know it.

Finally.

When I open my eyes, it's morning again. I have slept for seven days.

Which means that sleep has turned from a rational physical need into an irrational mental need to escape from reality.

Which may be caused by heartbreak, or perhaps a weak erection on the first sex date after a few months of quarantine, or maybe a letter from the publisher saying that the title of the novel should be changed, or maybe poor nutrition or simply the ubiquitous fatigue of the epoch that was intensified in the first quarter of the year and has not since abated.

Fatigue like a fire that no one tries to put out anymore.

After seven days of sleep, some change must have taken place in the ventricles of my brain, for, although I am perfectly rational, more serious and composed than before, I don't seem to recall my past life very well.

The voice that sounds like a threat comes from the local radio.

It talks about the weather. It sums up the number of infected.

I walk to the window. To check if the Great Winter has started. Where there was an oak, there is a cherry tree. I look at the changes in the treetop. On the roof of the low-rise garage someone has thrown a garbage bag, which the crows have torn apart. I open the window. In the life of a writer, this is tantamount to a suicide attempt.

In the kitchen, the cups are covered in grounds. I scoop out a stone-hard coffee grounds from the bottom and put it in my mouth. Chew it.

I never turn off the radio.

On the kitchen table, all the pencils are blunt. No text to be seen. In the mirror I see my body against the light. It could easily pass off as female. It could easily pass off as male.

A pair of the most beautiful legs that have ever carried a writer.

The walls are sweating. Those legs should be paraded around even if the stomach is empty.

I sling the bag over my back. In my bag, I carry centuries. As soon as I step out into the street, the world turns upside down and instead of heading north, I head east. I walk with the conviction and freedom of a flaneur. Obsessed with walking since I was a kid.

The only thing a man has got left today. Nothing more terrible than to find yourself in the present moment. That's not me saying that, but the Zeitgeist.

As soon as I turn into the street, I step onto the pavement of Oxford Street.

And further, at the very next turn, I exit onto Taksim Square.

When I cross it, I find myself in Terazije.

To the right, there is already Avenue Montaigne, and further on, Tahrir Square, from where I enter the bottleneck of Ilica.

I keep going all the way to the Shibuya intersection and proceed along 42nd Street towards Gorky Park.

My mind begins to top like the sea. I translate Orlando's sentence in my head as I cross Alexanderplatz, climb up Buda, and through the streets of Varanasi, along the banks of the Ganges proceed walking westward.

And indeed, it cannot be denied that the people who are most successful masters of the art of living somehow manage to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times that tick simultaneously in every normal human system.

What is it that I taste in my mouth?

The taste of some herbs.

I hear goat bells.

I see mountains.

Turkey?

India?

Persia?

My eyes fill with tears.

34:45

Music stops.

MALE VOICE:

I've decided not to look back anymore.

Silence.

The end.

About the writer:

Goran Ferčec (1978) graduated dramaturgy from the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb (Croatia). He is the author of prose and a significant number of theatrical and radiophonic texts from the area of post-dramatic and contemporary performing arts which have been translated into German, English and Slovene, as well as published and performed in Croatia and abroad. He spent the year 2010 in Vienna as a part of the Milo Dor scholarship. He is the author of the novels: *There Would Not Be Any Miracles Here* (“Ovdje neće biti čuda”, Fraktura, 2011), *The Life of a Working Woman in the Late Twentieth Century* („O životu radnice krajem dvadesetog stoljeća”, Fraktura, 2021).

About the director:

Dario Harjaček (1979) graduated art history and comparative literature at the Faculty of Philosophy as well as theatre direction and radio broadcasting at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb (Croatia). He is the director of a numerous theatre and radiophonic works, and he was awarded for directing the short audio drama “Earthquake” by Janko Polić Kamov (“Potres”, Croatian Radio/Drama Department) the 2nd prize in the Short Forms category at Grand Prix Nova 2020 and the BBC Best European Audio Drama 2021 award.