Note from the director

My work is about the power of stories to manipulate reality and the deconstruction of language. Drawing on literary strategies and techniques, I create theatre pieces that explore the influence of storytelling on our perception of reality and the role of literature for critical thinking. I'm interested in how our timeless desire for narratives is exploited and how popular communication channels use fiction to influence our consumption; of goods, of values, and of the self.

I compose my theatre pieces through principles of text assemblage, they are fundamentally triggered by the digital hypertext, by the reading and interpretative strategies of a contemporary audience, keen on fragmentation. I believe I'm creating a unique genre in Flemish contemporary text theatre, with pieces that are socially critical, aesthetically bold, and that possess the intertextuality of postmodern literary works.

Throughout my trajectory, I've combined literary elements with popular culture formats, which I believe allow us to look at a certain reality in a way that we recognise it. Subverting popular formats becomes then a strategy of lowering the threshold. The exercise is to present the deceptive elements of that very same reality with more acute criticism. Due to my lifelong collaboration with composer Pablo Casella, my theatrical compositions always reinforce the musical aspects of these formats.

My creative process involves choosing a clear format combination, which creates specific writing constraints. For example, S*hort of Lying* (2018) subverted the TEDTalk lecture-performance format with a fictional biographic narrative addressing the theme of media manipulation. *Killjoy Quiz* (2020) blended multiple-choice tests with speculative fiction, employing a television quiz format, with a live band and dynamic scenography, to critique the violence of language. *Ferox Tempus* (2022) delved into video game narratives (adventure, maze, horror) to create a dystopian plot about the ecological crisis, with a soundtrack built from manipulated 'found footage' (audio files). My latest work, *Elektra Unbound* (2024), dissects the exploitation of suffering on online platforms. It utilises a multi-format approach, with an audition functioning as the main frame structured around a talent show's logic. The narrative unfolds through TikTok's swiping mechanic, interspersed with fragmented narratives demanding fast audience interpretation and selection. Additionally, the core elements of tragedy guide stylistic choices. The reimagined *tragic chorus* as text projection acts as both the classical narrator and the voice of the algorithm, accompanied by a synchronised musical and typographic composition.

Each of my pieces explores the figure of the 'unreliable narrator', a literary term used to describe the behaviour of characters who suffer from some sort of mental instability; whose knowledge, perception or ethics have been seriously compromised. In previous pieces; the insomniac, the disillusioned activist, the survivor, the mental patient, the authoritative theatre director, the drug addict, the filthy rich, the beauty-obsessed, the indifferent.

In *Trouble Score* (2025), Pablo Casella and I continue investigating unreliable narration and the narrative impact of communication formats on the audience's experience. Here we explore the discourse of 'the traumatised' in a self-made pop concert ritual. This theatrical concert, based on a family scandal, explores a myriad of fragmented stories with multiple narrators and perspectives, leaving the question 'what really happened?' unanswered.

Luanda Casella