

New Estonian Drama



Polyphonic Estonian Drama

A woman who has the opportunity to record her consciousness. The last generation that only just played war before World War III. A, B, and C in an ironic, socially critical game. Mothers with one or more children; fathers who love but still cheat, either in reality or in their imaginations. Artificial intelligence investigators; depressed young people. King Lear, who appears as a hospitalized actor. A man freed from prison at the start of his imaginary new life. A couple who were separated for 21 years because of the war (and it really was so). A green-headed girl; a psychopath and his observer who overstep their boundaries. Tensions on the border between reality and illusion.

New Estonian drama has given them and many others voices that resound far beyond the packed theaters. That's why you're reading these 10 abstracts right now.

When Estonian theater celebrated its anniversary a decade ago, one theater announced in honor of this great event that it would only put on productions by Estonian authors. Since then, drama has developed in diverse directions and the proportion of productions by local authors has steadily increased in Estonian theaters. That great leap has become the new normal, and more than half of the theatrical repertoire is created by Estonian authors. Most of these plays are brand new.

The Estonian playwright is as a rule a contemporary author, who stands out for timeliness and social relevance. Estonian theater values its own playwrights and the public wants to see their plays. And we want to share it all with you!

Heidi Aadma
dramaturge



PLAY GENRE:	Documentary drama
ORIGINAL TITLE:	Emadepäev
WORLD PREMIERE:	2017
ACTS:	18 scenes
ROLES:	4 actresses, many roles
TRANSLATION:	English

Mother's Day by Liis Aedmaa

"*Mother's Day* is a desperate, sometimes funny, sometimes crazy production full of squabbling, joy, crying, love, absurdly early mornings and frighteningly late evenings, toys strewn everywhere, haunting children's songs, birthday cake fails, and endless music school performances."

Olev Kenk, *ERR*, 20.02.17

If you have ever asked yourself why no one has ever written a play about being a mother, then after reading through *Mother's Day*, you'll wonder: why not? Intertwined with different pieces, this humorous and modern play reveals moments of mothers' everyday lives, their joys and worries, social expectations, and the constant desire to be a "good mother".

There are plenty of personal themes to recognize in the play, as well as sharp social and political commentary that touches us all. The play is composed of about 20 very differently structured scenes that form a thematically related collection.

A selection of characters: mothers, children, kindergarten teachers, girlfriends, grandmothers, midwives, obstetricians, teachers, and so on. One finds monologues, active dialogues, as well as absurd situations, which are familiar to all parents and children. *Mother's Day* is full of warm humor and self-irony. In two years, the original play by the author has been performed more than a hundred times in full-sized halls.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

LYING IS UGLY!

A: We teach our children that lying isn't nice.

B: You're not allowed to lie.

D: A lie has no legs.

C: Don't lie to your mother! If you lie then don't expect to save your skin!

D: He who lies, steals.

B: If you lie, then you'll get bumps on your tongue.

A: Which is already a lie. Actually, the greatest liars are parents.

B: Well, there's a difference between lying and lying.

D: The end justifies the means.

C: Gods may do what cattle may not.

B: I certainly don't lie to my children.

A: Are you sure about that? Parents say things everyday that mean something different. In some cases, the meaning is the exact opposite.

B: Mommy, can we go to the movies this weekend?

C: We'll see.

A: We'll see -- a real treasure trove for parents. It actually means this: no. But it's not possible to tell a child no. Because in adult dialogues, no, as a rule, usually ends the discussion.

B: Would you like to go to the movies with me?

C: No.

B: No means no.

A: ... but for children, no opens Pandora's Box. And most of us aren't ready for the next 30 minutes of pleading and toothless promises.

But parents are no dummies. We'll see -- it ends the conversation. Yes, maybe it really is low. But there is a high probability that after half an hour, the child can't even remember what she wanted, and in that case there's nothing to see. If your offspring happens to have a good memory and be unusually persistent, one can use the following in place of "we'll see".

C: Go ask your father.

A: Which naturally means that, let the father be the one who gets to listen to the next 30 minutes of pleading and empty promises. It's a good and effective trick. But it might be that the other parent wasn't born yesterday, leading to the following pendulum effect:

B: Mommy, can we go to the movies this weekend?

C: Go ask your father.

B: Daddy, can we go to the movies this weekend?

D: Go ask your mother.

B: Mommy, can we go to the movies this weekend?

C: We'll see.

A: Case closed. Let's consider the next example.

B: When will we get there?

A: In cars, buses, trains, planes. No matter if it's a three-hour drive to Grandma's in Setomaa or the three-minute trip home from preschool. Kids need to know ...

B: When will we get there?

A: There is only one correct answer to this question.

C: Soon.

A: If there's really 10 minutes left, you can use this variation:

C: We'll be there right now.

A: At the same time, both alternatives can be used to confuse the child.

B: When will we get there?

C: Soon.

A: Thirty seconds later:

B: When will we get there?

C: We'll be there right now.

A: I believe that this system given to parents doesn't require further explanation. But since there may be some inexperienced people in the audience, maybe a few more words are needed to clear things up. Let's say you want to be crystal clear.

B: When will we get there?

C: In two-and-a-half hours.

B: So long! I can't sit for two-and-a-half hours. We'll never get there.

A: First of all you have to understand that children can't comprehend time. If you had said ten minutes instead, you would have had the same exact reaction.

B: When will we get there?

C: In 10 minutes.

B: So long! Why do we always have to drive so long everywhere? I am bored. We'll never get there.

A: So, as I already said:

B: When will this performance end?

C: Soon.

A: Of course there are some real, timeless classics.

D: "He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good."

A: The rise of all parents ...

B: Look, Mommy, Santa brought me bubble wrap. How did he know I wanted that exactly?

A: ... and the fall of all parents.

B: Mommy, our neighbor Kristella said that Santa Claus isn't real. Mommy?

A: In the old days, at least, there were no Easter bunnies.

D: All of these rabbits and Santas and elves are nonsense. You know what's the real parent trap? Tooth fairies! How easy do you think it is to find a baby tooth under a sleeping child's pillow? You can expect it to get lost.

B: Mommy, how come the tooth fairy left me money but didn't take my tooth.

C: I think her bag was already full, honey, and your tooth just didn't fit in the bag.

B: I'll put the tooth under the pillow again. Maybe the tooth fairy is sad when he comes tonight and can't find the tooth any more.

C: Put it back, of course, little one. Put it back, put it back.



PLAY GENRE: Thriller, inspired by real events
ORIGINAL TITLE: Midagi tõelist
WORLD PREMIERE: 2018
ACTS: 2
ROLES: 2m
THE CHARACTERS: Leo, 35; Karl, 45
TRANSLATIONS: English, Hungarian, Polish

Something Real by Martin Algus

"The deftness and versatility of the beginning is amazing. The play *Something Real* is a bit like a razor: sharp, exact, and masterfully produced. Also the theme of internet pornography cuts precisely to today. I think one cannot find a play like *Something Real* in Estonian theater today. It has a cinematic quality and, as the program sheet aptly states, when reading the play one can easily forget that it is by an Estonian author. It could just as well have been written by some foreign author with the action taking place somewhere else."

Madli Pesti, *Sirp*, 7.12.18

Leo works in an architecture bureau. For a long time, nothing seems to go right in his seemingly normal family life. Dulled by numbness and web porn, Leo feels a strong urge to find something that really touches him in life. He meets a young woman named Marta in an online dating site, someone who needs some protection and help. That's exactly what he's been looking for, something that really touches him! But this touch is more dangerous and painful than he could ever have guessed.

Karl just got out of prison. One day, he comes up with a clever plan for how to get his life straight and clean up society at the same time. All that's needed is some "prey" and a "predator"

and the game can start. Karl, with the help of his underage step-daughter Marta, sets up a blackmail trap, into which Leo walks unknowingly. The tense action now continues in an increasingly nightmarish and dangerous co-dependent relationship. Alternately told from the point of view of each character, the play toys with the viewer's imagination and reflects key modern questions of emotional closeness, fear of a changing world, the endless cycle of cravings, and the potential for happiness in a consumer society. The play, on philosophical as well as societal issues, functions as a kind of thriller, in which the story offers exciting twists and turns towards an inevitable and dangerous climax.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

KARL: We were ready.
Marta was ready.
The camera was ready.
Leila was ready and Markus was ready.
Everyone knew what they had to do.

LEO: I had no idea what I was doing.
I simply knew that we would get together and we wouldn't do what we had talked about in that portal.
I parked the car a bit farther away.
I sat behind the wheel for a moment and looked at the house.
I even thought once ...
... could you quit and drive home?
It was so unfamiliar to me, those noble thoughts, anxiety.
But I had already made the decision.
I had promised to come and here I was.
The rescuer had arrived.
I took a deep breath and got out of the car.
An average, three-storey apartment building.
Climbing plants on the balcony railings.
There was an angel-shaped electric light on in one room.
Was this Marta's room?
I rang the doorbell.
Apartment 8.
The doorbell echoed.
I said my online name.
Leon.
I wasn't actually Leon, this is the only thing I wasn't honest about. And in that sense only with one letter.
The door creaked open and I stepped inside.
A dusky dark hallway.
A lonesome filth on the wall.
Dirty rubber boots on the matt.
I suppressed my anxiety.
Do I have anything to be ashamed of?
Didn't they ask me to visit?
I have to get us both out of this place and it has to be ...
... done well?
Well, men always want to be ready for everything, no matter the situation.
It's not a very good default for life of course.
You don't want to acknowledge that you can't deal and you get strung up by your balls somewhere.

I got to the door.

KARL: Leila went to the door.
I turned the camera on.
Click.

LEO: Clack.
The door opened.
And ... ?
A woman.
About my age. Wearing lots of makeup.
I ...

KARL: "I'm Marta's friend.
Everything's okay, Leon.
Marta is waiting for you."

LEO: I wasn't expecting this. He nodded and directed me to the apartment.
It was unnerving but I wanted to ...
... make it look like I knew what I was doing.

KARL: He was nervous, I noticed it immediately from my hiding place.
He had something to lose. He was married with two kids.
Weren't his clothes clean, new?
He works in an architecture bureau, which means he takes home, what ...
1500 a month?
First calculations. Blind deals.

LEO: I was led into the dark room.
It was dark as night.
Really ...
"Now ... ?"

KARL: "Shh. Marta's coming now, clothes ... ?"

LEO: The woman started to take off my clothes and I was a bit reluctant.
She said these were the rules.
"What rules?"

KARL: "Rules, huh? Take your clothes off and Marta will come."

LEO: "Well, I thought we would speak first ... ?"

KARL: "Of course, you'll speak ... "

LEO: Well, that competency stuff, of course ...

I gave her my overcoat and jacket.

She had opened the buttons on my shirt, and tugged my fly down.

I took her by the hand.

The jitters were back.

Everything about it seemed wrong.

I stood in a dark, strange apartment, shirt buttons open, fly open ...

From the corner of the room there was a little noise, someone was moving over there.

And then ...

KARL: Pow!!! And the lights went on!

LEO: The bright light dimmed for a moment and I suddenly saw standing next to me ...

KARL: Marta.

LEO: A child? A barenaked child? I looked around in confusion.

KARL: She looked straight into the camera.

LEO: The girl was naked, she looked at me with surprise.

And there was a man with a camera in the corner of the room, between the curtain and the cabinet.

Everything was ...

KARL: I got everything together. Everything.

LEO: Everything started to spin, in my stomach, in my head ...

And then the redheaded boy came out of the next room, knife in hand.

He pulled off my shirt with one tug, the shirt was torn.

The girl went out the door. This woman, this ...

KARL: Leila.

LEO: ... he grabbed the child and took her away. I heard him say:

"Well done, Marta, it wasn't so terrible

after all, good girl."

I looked through the camera at the man across from me.

The boy stood on the left, knife in hand.

What are these people doing here?

"What do you want?"



PLAY GENRE: Thriller
ORIGINAL TITLE: UNUSTA/UNISTA
WORLD PREMIERE: 2018
ACTS: 2
ROLES: 2f, 4m
THE CHARACTERS: Kristian Emminghaus, Emili Kraepelin, Dr. Diving, Senior investigator, Newer investigator, Jonathan Diving, Judge's voice
AWARD: Annual Award for Drama of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia 2019
TRANSLATION: English

FORGET/DREAM by Jim Ashilevi

"Cartesian dualism at one time hit a roadblock, because Descartes was unable to show how the mind affected the body. Jim Ashilevi's play, however, breaks down the Cartesian body with a rather bloody cocktail of psychology and psychopathy in search of soul."

Mario Pulver, *Sirp*, 18.01.19

Kristian Emminghaus, a patient at the Emil Kraepelin Institute for Experimental Psychology, is a psychopath about to undergo one of the most important operations in medical history. The detainee, who has been under investigation for five years, is scheduled to be given additional empathy as a punishment for several murders. But Kristian does not want to become socially fit. He is convinced that since he was born a psychopath, he is entitled to remain so. As fate would have it, Kristian encounters Emili Kraepelin, who has been studying Kristian for years as part of her doctoral thesis before the operation.

The nightmare of a psychological power play begins, endangering dozens of lives, challenging the artificial intelligence of the researchers, and blurring the boundaries between empathy and psychopathy. The intense and sharp dialogue of the actors in the near future plays on the sensitivity of both the characters and the viewer. A psychological thriller spiced with very black humor, it embraces technological existentialism, where desires, passion and needs collide with a programmed and coded world of the future that still has room for forgetting and dreaming.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

SCENE 1

/ ... /

KRISTIAN: You are doing it for power's sake

EMILI: You're wrong. I'm not interested in power.

KRISTIAN: Are you mentally retarded or just immature? It's a rhetorical question, you don't need to answer. Perhaps self-deception will help you to hide your insecurity.

EMILI: Whatever.

KRISTIAN: I don't envy you. The fear you have of me must be paralyzing.

EMILI: You don't scare me.

KRISTIAN: Not at the moment, of course. The big stick is in your hands, so to speak. Binding me gives you absolute control. Isn't that what you really want?

EMILI: Power doesn't motivate me.

KRISTIAN: Looks like you're not a moron, anyway. You are even worse - a liar. What is especially abominable is that you lie to yourself.
(Emili smiles.)

KRISTIAN: This makes you laugh?

EMILI: No, I just remembered the first time I saw you. You certainly don't remember me, but I sat down to the class here when Professor Diving publicly interviewed you. Remember that time, it must have been four years ago. Here in the same room.

KRISTIAN: I remember very well.

EMILI: You have no problems with memory. Do you remember what you said when Dr. Diving showed you a picture of one face and asked you to say what emotion that face expressed?

KRISTIAN: I don't know what emotion that was, but it was the face

people make right before I kill them. I have no problem repeating this.

EMILI: Of course not.

KRISTIAN: I am as honest with myself as I am with you. You can't accept it.

EMILI: You call that honesty?

KRISTIAN: I've never denied my actions.

EMILI: And this is something that should be assessed?

KRISTIAN: Put yourself in my situation. How would you have acted?

EMILI: I would never do something like that!

KRISTIAN: Calm, calm. You whine like they were your kids.

EMILI: They were kids! Three, four, five-year-olds!

KRISTIAN: Yes. Try to calm down. Can I bring you sugar water?

EMILI: Bastard.

KRISTIAN: Isn't it a good feeling? Power. Total control. You can do whatever you want with me.

EMILI: Not yet. Not here.

KRISTIAN: We are less different than you would like to believe. I know exactly what that feeling is.

EMILI: Really? You're going to start talking about feelings?

KRISTIAN: You can feel like a god.

EMILI: I don't believe in god.

KRISTIAN: Even more. Therefore there is no higher power for you than man.

EMILI: There is. Natural laws. Man.

KRISTIAN: Exactly. Natural Laws. The struggle for life. Race against time. We're all dying, Emili. The question is only when and how.

EMILI: How did you know my name?

KRISTIAN: I know how to read.
(Emili looks at the name tag on her chest.)

KRISTIAN:
Don't worry, I'm not a sorcerer. I will not curse you if I know your name. Emili Kraepelin. Your great-great-great-I-don't-know-how-great-grandfather founded this institute.

EMILI: Laboratory. He set up a laboratory for experimental psychology.

KRISTIAN: Anyway, by now it has become an institute.

EMILI: You've done your homework.

KRISTIAN: Soon you'll be in the ministry. The ministry of common sense. Then the state. Then you'll take charge of the federation. Finally, with your common sense, you'll take over the world and the world will be saved. It's a struggle for existence. The stronger will survive. The cleverest will survive. The more aggressive will survive.

EMILI: This has nothing to do with the struggle for existence. It's about justice. And mercy.

KRISTIAN: Go to hell, Emili. Sorry, may I use your first name?

EMILI: You may not.

KRISTIAN: Then go to hell, doctor. So how do you think things go in nature? Do natural laws provide for justice and mercy? Do you think that the laws of nature are governed by morality?

EMILI: It manages humanity. Civilized society.

KRISTIAN: You just recognized the supremacy of the laws of nature. Now you suddenly claim that civilization is somehow above the laws of nature? You are contradicting yourself.

EMILI: We can change the part that is under our control.

KRISTIAN: Let's get back to power. You have power. You want to change me because I don't meet your standards. I'm not what a person should be. You know exactly what one person must be. And you establish your power by binding me, throwing my brains into a mincer and saying it is mercy.

EMILI: It's mercy. If we were to follow the laws of the jungle, we would have been thrown to the wolves long ago.

KRISTIAN: Wolves don't live in the jungle.

EMILI: True. A very gifted observation.

KRISTIAN: You should be ashamed to talk about wolves. They are so much cleaner animals than yours. I am, of course, talking about moral hygiene. I can't judge your washing habits.

EMILI: They don't touch you. It is also inappropriate for you, to say the least, to talk about moral hygiene. The blind might as well talk about sunset.

KRISTIAN: You can draw very poetic parallels. You have a good sense of language. Let me try too. The deaf could also speak of noisy neighbors. The heartless could also be about love. The mute might as well ... talk.
(The conversation diminishes. Emili delves into the readings.)



PLAY GENRE: Drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Beatrice
WORLD PREMIERE: 2017
ACTS: 33 scenes
ROLES: 6f, 4m
THE CHARACTERS: Tom, Kristi, Beatrice, Laura, Yock, Tamara, Nurse, Theodor, Dr Morin, Pixie
AWARD: Annual Award for Drama of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia 2018
TRANSLATIONS: English, Hungarian, Polish

Beatrice by Siret Campbell

"Siret Campbell's play *Beatrice*, which won the latest Cultural Endowment of Estonia's Award for Drama, is like a domestic send off of *Black Mirror*; grimly questioning whether the technological developments that make our lives ever simpler are actually in accord with man's deepest nature."

Maarja Helena Meriste,
Estonian Literary Magazine, nr 2/18

The story takes place in the near future, when the recording of consciousness is only a new step towards the improvement of life and the attainment of immortality. People live their lives and dream of dreams. Kristi and Tom's dream has been to have a baby for some time. Now this dream is coming true – Kristi is pregnant. But then Kristi gets into a fatal car accident. However, the baby survives. Along with Kristi's death report, Tom receives information that the woman had saved her consciousness. This consciousness is provided to Tom in the form of a tiny chip.

The chip can be used to communicate with Kristi through the audio system. Tom activates Kristi. Everything in their communication sounds as if Kristi really exists. Kristi can make jokes, sing lullabies to her baby girl, and be there for Tom.

Soon Tom realises that hearing Kristi is not enough, he needs her beside him. Digitised consciousness can be introduced into a surrogate body. Tom sees no other option than using this possibility. Without talking to Kristi, he chooses a new body for her. It's not identical to Kristi's, but it's the body of a woman Tom could imagine beside him. A new reality – a woman who has a strange body with Kristi's consciousness – is about to enter Tom's life. It's supportive and good for Tom, but also strange and unfamiliar. Both are doing their best to live family life in this way. But what does identity consist of? What makes a relationship? To what extent are body and consciousness related?

The story doesn't end well.
But not badly either.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

SCENE 6 (*Tom is at home.*)

TOM (*on the phone*): No, mum. We don't need/ (*Listens.*) We'll be fine. Yes, yes, it's very kind of you to want to help, but/ (*Listens for a long time.*) Mum, we've talked about this so many times. Of course you'll come and see us, but ... We're not having triplets, one baby at a time is completely manageable. (*Listens.*) Yes, yes. Don't be mad, ok. Sure, we'll talk again another day. Love you! (*Kristi comes in. She's silent.*)

TOM: What is it? Did something happen?

KRISTI: They didn't give me a choice.

TOM: What?

KRISTI: They said that they're suspecting some kind of a placenta pathology, and they did an ultrasound, and then ... I don't know. I didn't even notice and then there was the contract, and they were saying it's about peace of mind, that they'd know immediately if anything abnormal started happening with the baby, that women don't feel these things immediately and then it's too late ...

TOM: What contract? What kind of a pathology?

KRISTI: I can't remember the Latin names! They looked like ... something horrible was happening. But now I won't have to go to the hospital every day, they can monitor me remotely, and as soon as they notice anything, or anything little thing happens, they'll let us know. I can be more calm like this. It was really scary. I had to sign it.

TOM: You got a chip.

KRISTI: Yes.

TOM: What kinds of rights did you give to your Mootchi?

KRISTI: Monitoring of my internal organs and the baby.

TOM: And those were the categories?

KRISTI: No, they were more specific. But the doctors showed me everything that should be included for a safe pregnancy. I can withdraw the rights later on.

TOM: So they're terrifying pregnant women just so they can Moochify the entire population.

KRISTI: Tom, there might be something seriously wrong with the baby and I!

TOM: They're exaggerating some anomaly, abusing people's judgement in vulnerable moments. The watchful presence of LEI should look after every single one of us. I wouldn't be surprised if that thing radiates something inside of you.

KRISTI: Would it be better if I had to go for check-ups every day? Stay up at night worrying? Like I haven't done enough of that over the last few years. I wish something could be even a little bit easy during all of this!

TOM: I saw what it did to you and I begged for a long time to stop trying. I didn't want you to go on with it, but you didn't listen.

KRISTI: If you didn't actually want to have a child, you could have said so just a little bit earlier!

TOM: That's not what I'm saying!

KRISTI: Well, I didn't give up and now we're having a little girl. And by the time she's older, she'll have grown up in a world even stranger than ours and you'll just have to accept the world changes. It's not just you and your world. It's our world now.

TOM: Yes, our world.
(*A long pause.*)

KRISTI: I did another thing with the chip. (*Tom doesn't want to know.*)

KRISTI: I had my consciousness digitised. *(Tom wants to escape.)*

KRISTI: Wait. And I want you to do the same.

TOM: You've completely lost it!

KRISTI: Listen to me, please. If anything were to happen to you, I want you to be there for me, in any way. I couldn't do it on my own.

TOM: I'm not going to have anything carved into my brain. I've been patient about all manner of things, but I'm not getting a chip.

KRISTI: No?

TOM: No.

KRISTI: Even if it's me asking you to?

TOM: No.
(Kristi storms out. She waits outside the door for Tom to come for her. He doesn't.)

SCENE 7

(Kristi is driving her car. She's upset. Her Mootchi interacts through the car's audio system.)

MOOTCHI: Please choose – female or male voice.

KRISTI: Female.

MOOTCHI: You're heading towards City Centre. Am I right?

KRISTI: Yes.

MOOTCHI: Would you like me to find the quickest route for you?

KRISTI *(doesn't care, says)*: Yes.

MOOTCHI: Would you like me to switch on the autopilot?

KRISTI: No, I'll drive myself.

MOOTCHI: Be careful, a dangerous crossing in 200 meters.

KRISTI: Thank you.

MOOTCHI: Kristi, I sense that you are anxious.

KRISTI: Yes, I am!

MOOTCHI: Would you like me to tell you a joke?

KRISTI: No.

MOOTCHI: Would you like me to play some cheerful music for you? For example- *(Starts playing a cheerful song)*.

KRISTI: No.

MOOTCHI: Would you like to do some breathing exercises?

KRISTI: You're really helpful, aren't you.

MOOTCHI: At your service.

KRISTI: Great.

MOOTCHI: How about those breathing exercises then?

KRISTI: Fine.

MOOTCHI: Breathe in. Pause. Breathe out. Whilst maintaining your focus on the traffic. Breathe in. Pause. Breathe out. Long breath in. Hold. Hold. Long breath out. Long breath in. Hold. Hold. Long breath out. Keep your eyes on the road. Very good. *(Kristi drives into a tunnel. There's a malfunction in the audio system, a loud unpleasant sound is heard. She tries to give a voice command to no avail. She tries to press something on the display. A dangerous situation. Kristi, the driver of another car, and a pedestrian have to make immediate decisions. Kristi moves to save the pedestrian but can't save herself. The pedestrian runs away. Darkness. An ambulance siren.)*

MOOTCHI (distorted sound): Kristi, you are dangerously close to the curb ...



PLAY GENRE:	Drama
ORIGINAL TITLE:	Näha roosat elevanti
WORLD PREMIERE:	2013
ACTS:	8 scenes
ROLES:	2f, 1m
THE CHARACTERS:	Simona, Levi, Katriin
AWARD:	First award of New Drama Competition 2011 held by Estonian Theatre Agency
TRANSLATIONS:	Czech, English, Finnish, German, Russian, Spanish, Swedish

To See Pink Elephants by Piret Jaaks

"The story hides within a subtly and almost-until-the-last-scene-kept secret, hidden behind the young married couple's painfully average dialogue."

Heidi Aadma, *Looming*, nr 4/12

It seems that the life of a married couple, Simona and Levi, is quite unbearable. Simona is always listening to Michael Nyman in the nude and Levi shovels his passive aggressiveness into cleaning their already sterile and very modern apartment in a house called The Pink Elephant. The play paints a very precise picture of these intimate partners of the we-can-have-it-all generation who share the same dirty dishes, same haunting past, and same faint hopes for a more fulfilling future and a wholesome life.

The biggest thing missing is a baby to bring it all together. After a while it's clear that no matter how many reproductive techniques are used, the baby just isn't going to happen, so Simona suggests Levi to try and have a baby with her friend Katriin.

This is when things get particularly messy, leaving the characters and the audience wondering, who has the upper hand in this psychological play and who gets to decide on the games we play in our messed up lives. And then the most important question: can you really trust your eyes on the motives of the characters and even on what is shown on the stage?

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

SCENE 7

/ ... /

LEVI: Why are you looking at me like that?

KATRIIN: How so?

LEVI: With that reverential motherly look.

KATRIIN: Does reverence make you weak?

(Levi stands.)

LEVI *(resolutely)*: Just tell me, please: are Simona and I hurting you?

KATRIIN: Both of you can't hurt me. Only you can.

LEVI: You'll have to give this child away. Isn't that asking too much of you?

KATRIIN: Why are you saying that!?

LEVI *(exasperated)*: Katriin! Get it already. Simona can't be slipping into lethargy any more! I promised her! *(Levi has seized Katriin sharply by the arm. Katriin pulls herself away. Levi kicks the floor lamp. It breaks. Katriin has pressed herself against the wall. Her hands are purple from being pushed against the wall.)*

KATRIIN: Why are you getting so enraged?!

LEVI: Because I'm on the brink of despair! I'm standing at the lip of that goddamn brink. And I'm not a tightrope walker! I'll either go crazy or drink myself to death! Because what's going on ... It's already too much! You have to meet us halfway.

KATRIIN: Why does Simona have to be like that in the first place? In constant lethargy? Couldn't she act some other way?

LEVI: Are you an idiot or are you playing some kind of a game? We've talked about this ...

KATRIIN: All I know is that she sometimes disappears for months at a time ... Into so-called lethargy. That depresses me. Cause it depresses you. You don't answer the phone or open the door then. Then I have no one to talk to. Sometimes you simply drink for months and months... Then I have to stealthily break into your life once again and you treat me like a stranger. Why, Levi, is that Simona of yours lethargic now and then?

LEVI: Because I was a shithead!

KATRIIN: You're not a shithead, Levi ... You require love. I'm offering it to you.

LEVI: That's not what we agreed upon!

KATRIIN: There was never any sort of agreement, Levi!

LEVI: Have the rules of the game changed? Why did you even agree to it in the beginning?

KATRIIN: What rules of the game? Do you want a reason for why we're having a child? *(Ironically.)* Let's suppose then ... just as you've always said – because I'm a spinster approaching forty. Simple, right?

LEVI: Then you wouldn't want me for yourself ...

KATRIIN: I think rather ... that you overrate yourself. The world isn't a carousel and you aren't a polished pony in the centre of it. Not everything revolves around you.

LEVI: What do you want, then? Why do you come here every day? Why have you surrendered yourself to me with such a passion as if you've never had anyone in your entire life?

KATRIIN: I don't have to listen to this. Levi. Drink less! Sleep it off. Then we'll talk.
(Katriin rises and starts to exit.)

LEVI: No. We're not going to talk about anything. I love Simona ...
You can leave now.
(Katriin stops.)

KATRIIN: ... That time that we met in the park in front of the building and you looked straight at me, I definitely saw that gently maniac gaze in your eyes ... When you asked me, "Have you ever drank water from a mud puddle?", I was unable to reply with anything else than a dull "What did you say?" Because what was I supposed to say in reply to such gibberish? It was then, that you said "Simona" to me for the first time in your life. I thought that it was some kind of a game ... some kind of a joke ... perhaps some kind of pet name between us? That was until I realized that "Simona", in some sense, existed more than whatever sort of game; that Simona would become a part of our daily life from then onward. I classified all of the days that we spent together as either "light" or "considerable" for us. On every considerable day, I held my breath to not think of when the moment will come, when I can no longer manage ... and I have to say to you and to myself that my Levi is a very different kind of man. He is a man that sees only his pink elephant and within it a woman that doesn't exist.
I decided that I won't tell you, but rather I'll show you.

(Katriin opens the wardrobe – there is not a single piece of women's clothing within. Men's button-up shirts hang in a straight row.)

KATRIIN: Levi. Your Simona doesn't exist. She's merely an illusion. A delirious hallucination.
(Katriin lobs all of Levi's clothes out of the wardrobe; not a single one of them is an article of women's clothing.)

KATRIIN: Simona isn't here. She's a wishful dream. A combination of your ex and me and of someone who doesn't exist and won't ever come.
(Katriin brings over Levi's toothbrush holder, which only holds one toothbrush.)

Katriin opens the refrigerator, which only contains a bottle of gin and a lemon. Katriin opens the apartment: she opens and closes cupboard doors and throws the blanket off the bed.)

KATRIIN: Do you believe now that I'm just me, Levi? And that we're having a child?

LEVI: You could behave more politely.

KATRIIN: Simona isn't in your life. She never has been.
(Levi becomes angry.)

LEVI: Why are you rotting my brain! Simona and I are married and that's sacred.

KATRIIN: There is no marriage, Levi. I'm on the attack because I need your love for the first time in my life, although you have some kind of a shell around you like a crustacean ... You're ducking behind Simona again.

LEVI: I don't feel well with you.

KATRIIN: What happened to you two that time that your wife left you? Did you hit her, just like you hit me sometimes? Did you cheat on her? Were you unfair, did you leave her by the wayside? Did you already have some kind of your own 'Simona' at the time?

LEVI: Simona has always existed!

KATRIIN: Since when?

LEVI: Since after ... I was told that ... that ... I'm not fit to be a father!

KATRIIN: So you didn't live in the "Pink Elephant" yet?



PLAY GENRE: Comedy
ORIGINAL TITLE: Kaheksa varbaga kuningas
WORLD PREMIERE: 2012
ACTS: 1
ROLES: 1f, 1m
THE CHARACTERS: Valdek, Sanitar
TRANSLATION: English

The Eight-Toed King by Andrus Kivirähk

"What does a mad genius need?
Someone who would love him unconditionally
on the one hand and set tough boundaries on the other.
The relationship between freedom and respect
must be in place."

Eva Kübar, *Postimees*, 21.05.12

Actors have a number of favorite roles, but what happens when life has been varied and full of challenges, but hasn't given you the chance to play the roles you want? The protagonist of the short play *The Eight-Toed King* is the artist and actor Valdek, who dreams of the role of King Lear and knows that theater knows no boundaries. Valdek, who was found passed out with a bottle of vodka at the grave of a friend and was taken to the hospital, is recovering from the operation there. His two frozen little toes are amputated, but the man is in full swing and can't sleep.

This is how Valdek turns the corridor into a theater and Sanitar, who is on guard, becomes his co-star, though initially reluctant to take on this new role.

The text, written by Andrus Kivirähk for a specific Estonian theater and film actor Arvo Kukumägi (1958-2017), is universal in every sense. The great human conflicts of Shakespeare's famous tragedy are intertwined with the sad and lively contradictions between King Lear's rendering (and the retelling of his partner) and the handsome but caring Sanitar who worked in a small town hospital for fifteen years. And while there is silence at the end, it is possible to endure many lives overnight without the need for a textbook.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

VALDEK: I'm playing King Lear now!

SANITAR: This Lear suits you just perfectly. He mocks all his daughters, and thinks only of himself. My father was the same. He left us with mother, bragged about other women ... didn't send us a cent, but there was money to go to the restaurant with his ladies. And what did he finally get? As he grew older, all of them left him, he lived desperately alone in his apartment, and when he died he was found several weeks later because of the stink. Is it a beautiful ending? Whatever it is, one must take care of his family, otherwise he dies alone like an animal.

VALDEK: Oh, fool, there is some truth in your words.

SANITAR: You're a fool yourself. Nor is it worth your life. You've been married five times, but I think it's been a while since the last time. Did you see how you looked when you were brought here? No woman would let her husband out of the house like that!

VALDEK: That has nothing to do with anything? Right now, I'm King Lear!

SANITAR: Oh, yes, a king ... An eight-toed king!

VALDEK: Every inch a king!

SANITAR: Hey, honestly, do you have a home at all? When you slept there in the cemetery — did you have anywhere to go?

VALDEK: We're performing at the moment!

SANITAR: It it be, plays also have intermission. Say, do you have a home? Or it just happens to be wherever you sleep?

VALDEK: Of course not!

SANITAR: So you haven't read that spear shaker for a while. If you have no home, you have no bookshelf. Did they

throw you out of your apartment too?

VALDEK: Shut up! Shakespeare! William Shakespeare, not some spear shaker! The performance will not be interrupted, the performance will continue until the final sound is heard! (*Rises majestically.*) I'm going crazy now!

SANITAR (*startled*): Do you want an injection?

VALDEK: Lear is going crazy! Crazy with suffering! But there is a storm outside! It's night and Lear walks in the heath, wind blowing in his face, the old man's white hair waving in a wild rage! Only the fool is still loyal to him and is runs alongside him like a loyal puppy! In such weather, a good master will not drive the dog out of the house, but King Lear has no access to it, his two eldest daughters have abandoned him, and the younger one has run away herself, so now he has to trudge through a storm in the middle of the night!

SANITAR: Sit down!

VALDEK: No!

SANITAR: Then take the crutches!

VALDEK: No! (*He stands on one leg and tries to keep his balance, as if in the wind.*) Whatever, you bellowing storm! I'm still king and this is still my land! I'm not afraid of you! Try to knock me down, I won't fall! I spit in your face, you stupid storm! (*Spits.*)

SANITAR: Don't spit in here. This is a hospital!

VALDEK: I don't even pretend to hear you! You're all wind and I am king! I defy you! I laugh at you! (*Laughs insanely*) Don't you see that I'm stronger than you! Oh sinister nature, there is one person made in the form of god, and you cannot destroy him! Is that all you can do? Even if you use all your strength, I'll still stand before you!

SANITAR: You're about to fall down!

VALDEK: I won't fall! You'll never defeat me, even with all your devilish strength! I'll stick out my chest and continue on my sad journey! Oh, bellowing storm! You're at least an honorable opponent who attacks straight on, right in the face, not like my two-faced daughters who laugh one moment and knife you in the back the next. Two slippery and terrible dragons who forced their old father out into the wilds.

SANITAR: You're so full of yourself. And you drove your youngest daughter away, without reason.

VALDEK: Fool, I even know that! Oh, how grievous my heart is, how bitterly I repent of this evil deed! If I could see her once more and apologize to her! But she has gone to France.

SANITAR: Ah, in France! How wonderful!

VALDEK: What's so nice about it?

SANITAR: I have also always thought that I'd like to go to France once. Paris. I'd like to see that tower and those cafes. I used to think that way, of course not anymore, I'm not going anywhere anymore. Have you been to France?

VALDEK: (*leaning on a chair*): I lived there for a month once.

SANITAR: Oh really. So how did that happen?

VALDEK: I traveled through half of Europe and half of Russia too. I simply like to travel, I get bored in one place. I've gone everywhere, tried everything. On the shores of Baikal, I spent half a year fishing (*Shows with his hand.*), I made money sterilizing bulls and giving women perms. They had never seen the inside of a hairdresser's! It was a small village with 20 houses, but I had 11 girlfriends there. All of

them got pregnant, so I left. I spent a whole year in Karelia, raised goats, the village girls came to get goat milk from me, it's good, rich stuff. I milked the deer, every nipple, back and forth, their udders were full of it. Then I did the same with the girls' round breasts. Back and forth. In Paris, I did some renovation work at the home of an old rich French granny, put up wallpaper, painted the ceiling. The old bag sat beneath the ladder and tried to look up my pants, so I had to wear three pairs of underwear. She was pretty gross and really lusted after young men. But it paid well, when the work was done, then I bought some wine and cheese and grapes and went to the Luxembourg Garden, lied there, winked at the girls and flirted with everyone. It was a nice life. A person needs to look around the world a bit, otherwise he turns into a stump, decaying in place.

SANITAR: But it's not possible. Traveling requires money.

VALDEK: Money comes and money goes.

SANITAR: For me it only goes. It doesn't come from anywhere.

VALDEK: Traveling is just a matter of getting your things. When you stay at home making plans, of course you won't get anywhere. You just have to hit the road! Then you'll figure out where to eat and where you can sleep. Sanitar: But your family? You can't desert them like that.

VALDEK: A person lives only once. You can't endlessly sacrifice your life to others. I'm just gone. I tell women that I'm going to disappear now. I'll leave it all to them, the flat and stuff, but I need fresh air now. And I'm out the door.

SANITAR: I can't. There are other people you have to take responsibility for, you have to take care of. Sometimes you have to make sacrifices.



PLAY GENRE:	Drama
ORIGINAL TITLE:	Roheline nagu laulaks
WORLD PREMIERE:	2019
ROLES:	2f, 3m
THE CHARACTERS:	Klaus, Afghan Girl, Professor, Woman, Russian
AWARD:	Grand prize in the international drama competition Talking About Borders 2018
TRANSLATION:	German, Latvian

Green As If Singing by Karl Koppelmaa

"The text impressed the jury in its intensity, originality, and coherence of complex thoughts, starting with the existing status quo to the future."

International drama competition, press release 05.18

"We were probably the last generation for a long time that still played war, the next ones actually fought in wars," once wrote Sebastian, later read by his school mate Klaus. The Third World War began in 2031 and lasted 10 years. The war left its mark on everyone, just as it left its mark on Sebastian, the protagonist of the story, who will never appear on stage himself. The play, composed of five mono voices, crosses national, international, and time boundaries and looks back on the future of present-day Europe.

The network structure of the text interweaves the characters' personal searches and social connections step by step.

Formal Europe, the exodus, the influence of the *Dark Side of the Moon*, Tom Stoppard, *Alien*, and soap operas, the green-headed girl, and the chanting of the church, seamlessly create a whole that is commented on by a professor looking back in time.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

PROFESSOR: Of course, the economic rise of Poland was accompanied by an ideological shift in Europe. While the desire for nationhood as such had become synonymous with fascism, the countries dreaming of sovereignty in the 20th century to the east of the Berlin Wall generally remembered what was actually behind the contemptuous worldview. And they were not at all pleased with them. Countries to the east of the Berlin Wall and those in the USSR's sphere of influence found support in Poland.

RUSSIAN: My mother said that when she graduated from high school in 2012, one of the literary topics had been, "Is the left-right worldview obsolete?" People are still idiots.

WOMAN: At the same time, in 2018, the question "Is it left or right?" was a primary issue that was generally addressed at the first meeting. I asked it.

KLAUS: 2012 and 2018 were very different times.

AFGHAN GIRL: Where did we go after Greece? Not to Holland. It doesn't even matter where, if you can't go where you want. We tried to find work. From where? Laundromats, supermarkets, cleaning ... Father was a music teacher and wouldn't do anything else. Father even had this thought that we should go to Holland ... even if we weren't allowed, we should go anyway. Mother was not supportive because we had to wait for my brother. My father's argument was that if Allah wanted, he would bring my brother to Holland. And if Allah didn't want to, he wouldn't bring our brother anywhere. But mother said she wouldn't go anywhere until my brother was back. But if he was dead? We wouldn't go anywhere until we knew for sure. Father tried to find help in the community. He went around asking if anybody knew anything, or if anyone else had lost anyone? They had. Had they ever found them? They hadn't.

KLAUS: Sebastian's grandmother's health only got worse. Sebastian cared for her day and night. His grandmother said she preferred to just fall down the stairs or slip on the bathroom floor ... it would all be over at once. But she didn't fall and she didn't slip. The ambulances came, brought her to the hospital, but she came back. While Sebastian was worried at first ... and he wanted his grandmother to get better ... later he just wanted that it would all be over. His parents visited Estonia from Finland from time to time ... they would come for a few days and go hiking or visit friends ... Sebastian told them that maybe it was time to put grandma in a nursing home. His parents were against it because it was expensive and there wasn't anything seriously wrong with her.

PROFESSOR: In the early decades of the 21st century, there was a debate in smaller and probably larger countries about who was a true European, and what united them other than a common banknote or a market ... no consensus could be reached on this ... and this is perhaps the most competent definition: a person who disagrees with other Europeans is a European.

WOMAN: Sebastian thought a European was the one who had read Goethe, Hesse, Remarque, Voltaire, Hugo, Dumas, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Kundera, Hashek, Shakespeare, Orwell, Huxley, Boccaccio, Lorca, Pessoa, Ibsen, Strindberg. A European is one who has read them all and still thinks that all of these authors would be able to stay in the same room for 3 hours without fighting each other.

RUSSIAN: A European only starts to fuck after he's been fighting for four years. After the First World War, they fucked a lot, after the Second World War, they fucked, after the Third World War ... then not as much. Understand? In order to prevent a Fourth World War, there needs to be less fucking.

WOMAN: Sebastian kept telling us a weird story about trilogues ... Usually the second part is the best. After the Second World War, expectations had become so high that the Third World War could only be disappointing. It seemed that Sebastian and I had an age difference, but still ... in our youth we had longed for a new world war. Everything had to be labeled fascism or communism; whether it was true or not, no one was interested. In truth, it wasn't the facts that mattered, but the emotions.

PROFESSOR: It was peculiar to the man at the time that if another person had a different opinion or, let's be honest, not flattering, he would immediately place his opponent in a different camp. And even a person with a neutral, conciliatory, or centralist view of the world was also automatically an opponent. It was only possible to be for something or against it.

What was most terrifying, however, was that people had the opportunity to tune different opinions out of their lives and to live only in so-called echo chambers that only reflected back thoughts that were acceptable to that person. Initially, this was only the case on the internet, but more and more, the internet was invading the job market and, worse still, universities, which are supposed to challenge young people intellectually completely. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. The problem started with a lack of authority. The teacher was no longer the master and the student a merchant, but the service provider and the student the client. Let's face it, who wouldn't have been an 18-year-old liberal? Universities, having become businesses, also often recruited liberals to teach liberals. And the Cartesian critical approach necessary for the young mind was replaced by the assertion that the young mind is not capable of error. And everything old is bad. And that led young, inexperienced people to political activism. Slavoj Žižek, one of the most popular philosophers of

the time, asked mankind to stop for a moment, not to act and to think, but young people wanted to act. After that, he was no longer so popular. These processes led to war in Europe.

AFGHAN GIRL: After my mother had spoken to people in the refugee community for months, and begged Allah for help, that my brother would come back and it never happened ... then he started to come to terms with the fact that he would never see his son again. Was Allah punishing him for something or why didn't he help? It made him angry with Allah. Father thought that Allah had already punished him, so he could sin a little. The main way he rejected Allah was by drinking a bit. Then he drank more and a bit more. They fought more. Mother asked God for more help. I lived with mother at home. Then she told me that father had another woman and that she was both angry with him and worried. She didn't know what to do. I told her that they didn't have to live together, they could divorce. Mother started to cry. She didn't understand it was so common here. It felt sometimes that divorce was more popular than marriage. It felt like it could be possible. Mother said that under no circumstances ... there would be no divorce and father would come to his senses, God willing. It's hard to leave your home and to lose your son. For mother, her faith became even more important and she believed that one day she would return to her sunny home ... Maybe we had to come here to put our faith to the test. That same night, father came home drunk. From his lover's place, he informed us proudly. He had a tear in his eye ... He screamed through his tears that he had become a European.

PLAY GENRE:	Documentary drama
ORIGINAL TITLE:	Varesele valu, harakale haigus ...
WORLD PREMIERE:	2014
ROLES:	20 roles, but one can manage with a minimum of 3 actors and video
AWARD:	Drama Festival 2015, Baltic Theater Forum Award for Best Play
TRANSLATIONS:	English, Russian

Magick Mend... by Mari-Liis Lill and Paavo Piik

Stories of depression and recovery

"The curtains are pulled up, and fourteen people are ruthlessly naked in front of us, talking about trials that, according to one character, are worse than war - because war comes from outside, but sufferings from within you."

Heili Sibrits, *Postimees*, 25.03.14

These people may not be the ones you know by name at first glance, but you certainly know them. They haven't told you their story yet, but with the help of the authors, you can now hear how they found strength, will and help and rewrote their lives. Twenty-one interviews conducted in 2013 with predominantly young Estonians who have already grown up in a free country are the basis for the documentary play by Mari-Liis Lille and Paavo Piik. All speakers have personally experienced and healed a disease that is diagnosed as depression.

The documentary approach gives the viewer such an indispensable sideline of generalization, because although they focus on very personal stories, they can also be seen behind social structures and social influences.

The monologue form of the play highlights the loneliness of the characters in depression, and besides, the use of verbatim techniques emphasizes the duration of what is happening here and now, and the telling of stories as part of the treatment process.

This play is a journey into and with people, and while all the trials that you hear are real, the chance to come out of them is always real as well.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

LUUKAS:

/ ... /

Basically, like ... reality was totally starting to shift for me ... Basically, you feel like you, like ... like ... damnit, you *are* ... every second of your existence just like suffering for everyone ... and you can't shake it, you, like, know it and are convinced that when you feel like you just have a bad effect on everyone ... So you ... um, sit on the ground and just ... whine just like some ... well ... I dunno, like the ... um the funniest thing is that your world doesn't *exist* anymore; you're like a little black speck ... somewhere ... alone on an abstract plane and ... you feel kind of like you ruined the whole world ...

Later, when I like turned to get professional help, then there was a kind of do-, downward spiral, where your ... your mood gets worse, which results in your brain chemistry changing and your mood getting even worse than that and it just going on and on and on ... until in the end, well, you really like don't understand ... like reality anymore and when those, in that sense, when that ... But I kept going, I kept on functioning, I was even able to go to work throughout ... the course of all that crap ... from morning ... to the end. I had a ... a relationship that like went downhill in the meantime too, and I was able to start a new one and ...

If, well, to put it honestly, I know what hell is like – um, like specifically, and ... well, there probably really can't be anything worse in a person's life than that sort of ... psychotic depression, 'cause it's like ... it's, yeah ...

And then of course I turned to a psycho- ... therapist, I told him what was happening with me, that I'm like seeing stuff, asked whether there was something wrong with my brain, right ... And I like realized ... that what I was going through, that it's like total ... well, it is craziness; it is a specific, it ... it's not normal development ... like in life like, it's ... it's just like a specific ... you're *fucked up*, right.

He helped to explain, yeah, that ... that part ... of what I had projected and

what I hadn't ... what I can, like, talk to people about and what stays completely on the level of my inner consciousness ...

So he like prescribed me some drugs ... I started taking those antidepressants ... which actually weren't antidepressants, they were antipsychotic drugs already; they're like way stronger. Well, I took, I took them that first day, and then I was just sitting and wondering, okay ... like, who the hell am I now, since ... you, you ... you feel that bit by bit, your id-, your identity starts to change, and you like ... at the same time, you're like in the role of an observer, you see how your identity melts and morphs, how it flexes, so to say ... well, since it was like ... well, it was like a worse ... state to be in than it was *without* those pills, but ... But well, I took them like a week, I was able to take them for a week, and thanks to that, I got ahold of that like ... line, where insanity runs and where reality like, like well ... that probably was the most important part ...

And what's more, you're like banging, like carving it into stone all the time if you don't analyze ... I discovered some kinds of like tricks, that actually ... it might just be enough for you to ... physically smile, right ... that like ... somehow like pulls you like ... free from it a little, even simple little things like that are like ... they help a lot.

I had a sort of period, where I like ... where my dad like noticed it, and asked what my problem was – he asked why I, like ... like undervalue things... like, what's wrong with you; you like, why don't you like not learn from simple things, you know ... to see beauty and, like, enjoyment ... he said I was lost in books, studying and reading and ... and then there's, there's that entire, like, blossoming nature that's left over, and you're in your singular, your lonely existence; so, like, what happened? ... No, my parents are like big ole hunks of happiness. My, my mom is totally unbelievable too. My dad like ... he doesn't show it, of course, but I can see that he's like at peace and everything's fine with him. Me and my dad have a really good like connection. For

me, he's like sort of ... we go running together, and then we talk philosophy the whole time and in that sense, we've got a relatively good like bond – like thank God. If I, if I didn't have those kinds of people in my life, then it'd ... then you wouldn't pay attention to anything anymore. Then you *do* hit rock-bottom and ... and just kill yourself. Well, the problem was that he was by my side for a really long time, right. My whole life, right. And because of that he ... he isn't like so sensitive to ... he's like in it with me. So, so he like sees... that's just how Luukas *is*; he like forgot what kind of a person I am ... And although ... he *has* recalled that I used to be really cheerful and happy ... And I ... then, I realized that something's like completely fucked up ... when I went out with my friends to play ... what's that called, where you ... there's a ball, right ... Foosball. And I ... I started laughing and I was having such a good time ... and I like physically felt how those brain patterns like split; like broke through, like some ice cracked and broke free. Like it cracked my head like that ... totally, you know, and I felt like joy for the first time in ... in I dunno how goddamn long ... and then I realized, that like ... that okay, I've got to start keeping track of what sort of condition I'm in ... That I can't like go and just give up like this now, like ... can't sink to the bottom; that I've got to work for it like all the time in order to ... In order to ... to ... like keep my mood afloat, like ... in the sense that you've got to keep track of when ... when you're like ... when you've been in total depression for a day already without being able to come out of it, and the next day, too, then there's like ... cause for concern, it ... feels like it's starting to create a pattern for you again ... So, then ... you've definitely got to, well ... do something, go running, some kind of ... just do something, anything, your diet, change your thoughts and adjust all the time; it's like constant like work, you know. Actually, it's ... rock-bottom is still ... relatively educational. You're actually, it's like you ... since you're like in such

a rut and so ... you need help ... then you actually start like searching for like ... contact with people. Sort of like you almost look straight at a person, and you ask something like – I'm, like, I need help, almost ... and at the same time, in some sense, you also like, like lower yourself that way; it like ... creates like better contact between people and then all in all, like, I can say that was like the breaking point of my depression, actually, when I realized that ... I have contact with people on the sort of level, where ... like ... well I started getting interested in that – like, that interpersonal interaction in general, like ... so it like ... opened up those kinds of new like ... ideas for me. Then you ... you start making meanings, for instance when you go ... when you do some kind of work at your job, it like gives you a point ... where you realize that you're like connected to people and that meaning like ... it *starts* to like ... form ... somehow ... although those pills helped, too, right; and of course I started working out and living more healthily in general, too, right, so that ... physical exertion is actually really important when you're like an office person, and you ... well, you've got to go running twice a week ... right, so that your body'll be okay, so you ... feel like physically free and ... But then another aspect, of course, is that you've also ... you've still got to find some kind of ... some kind of a goal in things ... and if you like aren't able to find that, then exercising isn't all that much help, either; so you, like, it's got to be sort of balanced – the mental and the physical ... Well, there's no point in like naively running on just optimism, either, because then that's an extreme, too, you know ... But there's no point in like complete depression, either. Somewhere in the middle is the most like ... reasonable, I guess ...



PLAY GENRE:	Drama
ORIGINAL TITLE:	Kas ma olen nüüd elus
WORLD PREMIERE:	2010
ACTS:	26 scenes
ROLES:	4 or more characters (no sex or age specified)
AWARD:	Second Award of the New Drama Competition 2009 held by the Estonian Theatre Agency
TRANSLATIONS:	English, Finnish, Swedish

Am I Alive Now by Siim Nurklik

"Light criticism of society as posturing and trendy topics imbued with the ubiquitous spirit of the MSN and Facebook generation's shamelessly communicative spirit.

And, at the same time, a young writer's serious, at times childish, honest questions. '

How can you live with irony, they ask.

But how can you live without irony?"

Tõnu Kaalep, *Eesti Ekspress*, 25.04.10

The play is divided into monologues given by non-specific persons and dialogues by two or three characters. The two forms alternate throughout the text, leaving much room for interpretation by the director.

The often incoherent chapters are isolated by slogans that appear to be taken from newspaper headlines or made up to ridicule the poster-like communication of a world led by short texts and tweets. The author doesn't let himself be slowed down by the boundaries of a traditional plot, instead he approaches playwriting as an utterly free medium for expressing any angst with the society he and his peers are forced to live in.

One of the more repetitive elements in *Am I Alive Now* are games to play as a mind-numbing pastime activity. Three characters marked A, B, and C must have nothing better to do but to follow C's instructions to answer questions such as if-you-were-gum-then-which-kind or guessing people's weight and salary by looking at their head-shots printed on playing cards. When all the games are played, it's time to hug and go out drinking.

A common topic of the characters' rambling speeches is the economic crisis and modern man's life of looking for the perfect outfit, partner, way of thinking, and feeling.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT

„Some people have *real* problems.
But who.“

A: I'm bored.

C: Mhh.

B: I have an idea – what if we play a game?

A: Yeah!

C: I actually know another one.

A: Well, then let's do it.

C: It goes like this ... I ask, for example, whether the world is a better or worse place without Saddam Hussein, and then we all choose which one we think it is.

A: *(Pause.)* I think it's a better place.

B: Hmh, you aren't allowed to look at it in such a simplified way.

C: No, you are allowed in this game; you have to – that's the point of the game.

A: I like this game!

C: I would say that ... it's rather a worse place.

B: *(Pause.)* I don't ...

A: Well, the world without Saddam Hussein – a better or a worse place?

B: If I have to.

A: Of course you have to.

B: Well, then ... on the whole, rather worse.

C: Okay, next. *(Pause.)* Estonia without its current politicians?

A: Better!

C: I'm afraid it'd be worse.

B: I don't know.

C: You have to choose.

B: *(Pause.)* I'm indifferent.

C: You have to choose.

B: I really believe there's no difference.

C: Ah, well, all right; that'll do.

A: I have one!

C: Well?

A: Estonia without the Russians! A better place or a worse one?

B: You can't do that.

A: Yes you can! You can in this game! Right?

C: Y-yeah, good question: Estonia without the Russians – a better or worse place ... I say better.

A: I do too ... rather better.

B: I won't answer.

C: Come on, that's the game – now choose one.

B: No.

C: You did agree to play.

B: *(Pause.)* Okay – a worse place. Next question.

C: *(Pause.)* I got one ... The world without Estonia – a better place or a worse one?

A: *(Pause.)* I say worse, definitely.

C: I say better.

B: You're just saying that on purpose in order to be different.

C: No, very rationally, actually.

B: Rationally?

C: Yeah ... We are one of the most polluting countries in the world, we blindly support wars that kill hundreds of thousands of people, we increase inequality both at home and elsewhere, and we've given up the little power we have in almost every way ... And what have we given the world? A poorer sort of language and a nonexistent culture. And a record-high number of abortions, divorces, accidents, heart conditions and suicides ... I could keep going at length. 21

A: But ... Arvo Pärt?

C: Arvo Pärt, whose music isn't recognized by nine out of ten Estonians, who also has Austrian citizenship, and who lives somewhere in Germany, to top it off.

B: *(Pause.)* Well, there are still more things ...

C: 2002 Eurovision, yeah?

A: Those transitional clips were nice.

C: Mmh, indeed they were.

B: Skype.

C: A company that only Estonians associate with Estonia, and the founders and owners of which were Danes, anyway. Estonians just programmed it. And now it's been sold to eBay, in any case.

A: Ah, you can't look at it like that. This game is too simplified.

C: I was just starting to like it ... But okay, okay; I suppose I provoked you a bit, too.

A: Mmm, yup. Anyways, I'd rather do something else now.

WHAT IS GAINED IS A LOSS

The killing of innocent civilians increases the number of enemies – but what if it didn't increase it?

Torturing suspects produces false information – but what if it didn't produce it?

It's not reasonable to spread democracy through war, because that causes resistance.

But what if it didn't cause it? Would it be reasonable, then?

The cultural sector helps along economic development – but what if it didn't help?

The comprehensive treatment of sick patients prevents later, greater costs – but what if it didn't prevent them?

The rehabilitation of prisoners, addicts and the mentally ill is necessary because it reduces crime.

But what if it didn't reduce it? Would it be unnecessary then?

The growth of poverty weakens our competitiveness – but what if it didn't weaken it?

Inequality takes away the opportunity to rise higher from many – but what if it didn't take it away?

A society founded on consumption is bad because it destroys the natural environment.

But what if it didn't destroy it? Would it be good then?

Fighting against climatic catastrophe creates new jobs – but what if it didn't create them?

Learning to familiarize oneself with foreign cultures supports our national interests – but what if it didn't support them?

One must offer humanitarian aid, because it protects our own safety.

But what if it didn't protect it? Would you not have to then?



PLAY GENRE: Historical play, radio drama
ORIGINAL TITLE: Klarissa kirjad
WORLD PREMIERE: 2016
ACTS: 54 scenes
ROLES: 1f, 1m
THE CHARACTERS: Klarissa, Elmar
TRANSLATION: English

Klarissa's Letters by Tiit Palu

„It doesn't pay to withhold love.
It doesn't pay to save it up.
Instead, it's good to be reminded of it
from time to time.
Thanks for the reminder!“
Keiu Virro, *Sirp*, 12.08.16

The play *Klarissa's Letters* is based on a true story. Klarissa and Elmar Pajo married in Estonia shortly before the Soviet takeover in 1940. The Second World War separated them for decades, so that they didn't know what happened to each other. Elmar was sent to a Siberian prison camp, Klarissa arrived together with their young son to Canada. Although it seemed impossible at the time, they never lost hope that their family would be reunited. Years of intercontinental correspondence with state institutions and representatives ended their separation 21 years later. Klarissa and Elmar's love proved to be stronger than the occupation, the war, and the Iron Curtain.

They were married for 70 years and died one after the other in Toronto in 2010. This story, based on authentic journals, correspondence, memories, and documents, reveals the darkest years of the 20th century. Their son Rein added his own memories to his parents' letters and documents. Thanks to Rein, this play became a reality.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY:

32.

ELMAR: Ten years were up. I was released from the Gulag camp in Karaganda, Kazakhstan. I was 40 years old. It turned out I couldn't return to my homeland. I'd been given a later sentence of lifelong exile.

33.

ELMAR: September 1st, 1955.

Hello, Salme!

I suppose you'd never have guessed I would be writing to you. Nevertheless, I'm doing so now in the hopes that you might still remember me, and am writing to you as my wife's best friend. You might surmise the course my life has taken recently, and I don't wish to dwell upon it at length. I've been free since September of last year, but it's not possible for me to return home to Estonia. The main reason I'm writing you is that perhaps you might know something about Rissa and Rein, and if it's no trouble, then please tell me everything you know. I think about them so often, but sometimes, I wonder if maybe, over the long amount of time it has been, she somehow changed her mind from the way it was when we parted, because that's happened to very many people. I wouldn't blame her if she did, of course, although I would very much regret it. I hope you will write about everything, if you should know. I would gladly write to them myself, but I don't know her address, and I doubt whether it's possible. By all means, please write as well about how you are doing, and how your husband is doing, and how many children you have, and about everything that has to do with life there. Please don't be angry that I wrote you. I wish you well, and all the best to you and your husband and children until we meet again. My address is: Karaganda ...
Elmar

34.

KLARISSA: A letter from home ... "We're doing well. No news. Elmar is away from home." Elmar is away from home. Elmar ... ? ... ! ... ? Rein ... Don't stare at those clouds ... they'll

make you sad ... So, what does that mean? Where is he, then ... Do you understand, that means ... that he's "away", but not "dead". That's it! Or am I simply interpreting things the way I'd like to understand them ... "is away from home"... ? That means I must write: "Nice to hear from you. We have no news, either. When will Elmar come home?" ...

35.

KLARISSA: A letter from home, two months later. "Klarissa, you are a beautiful woman, a single mother, but you don't know whether Elmar will return at all, or whether you'll ever see him again – remarry and start a new life."

36.

ELMAR: I arrived back home in Estonia. I'd been gone for nearly twelve years. There was no word about my family, and neither did they know anything about me. I moved in with my mother-in-law in Kaarli. Some time later, I made contact with my wife and child. They live in Canada. For twelve years, they had no news at all about me. It came as a great surprise to them that I was alive, too. Seven more years passed. Klarissa wrote and asked if I'd like to move to Canada to live with them, and whether I dared to submit such an appeal.

37.

KLARISSA: Secretary of State for Canada, Ottawa. November 6th, 1964. "Private and confidential"

Dear Madame,

Thank you for your letter, which you sent on November 3rd, asking me for help in regard to your efforts to meet your husband in this country. I can understand very well the disappointment you have experienced in trying to connect with your family, and rest assured I will do everything I can on my behalf to assist. From your letter, I understand that you are well aware of the difficulties facing Canada's immigration officials in cases such as your own. Given the situation, I am not

sure that a letter from me to Chairman Käbin would be to your advantage ...

38.

KLARISSA: I'm reminded of that film with Marika Rökk that I saw in Kilingi-Nõmme in the winter-before-last of the war. Women Are Better Diplomats. Aren't they just! I must admit there is some truth to that ... I've been corresponding with embassies, ministries, and newspaper editors. There's not a single man who can stop a woman who has decided to fight to the end. One must choose her words wisely; must be soft and flexible, but relentless; must start from the beginning over and over again if necessary.

ELMAR: And repeat ...

KLARISSA: And repeat ...

ELMAR: And repeat ... And repeat ...

39.

KLARISSA: To the esteemed Mr. Johannes Käbin, Member of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR; Tallinn, Victory Square. November 4th, 1964. I ask that you excuse me for bothering you as I send to you a plea from the bottom of my heart. In the name of happiness, brotherhood, and peace in man's soul, I ask you to please aid in my husband Elmar's wish to be allowed to relocate to Canada to be with his family. Our family crumbled in the turmoil of the last war, and we have been separated for 20 years. We are a small, unimportant family that sprouted from simplicity, but we are very happy. My husband lost his parents when he was young, and he hasn't a single loved one apart from his own family ...

ELMAR: Reply to Klarissa's letter: "No."

40.

KLARISSA: I'm reading my diary. Twenty years ago, when Rein and I were in a DP camp in Germany, this is what I wrote: "Today, one year

ago, I was sitting in the company of sadness and heartbreak and marking my anniversary. Still, there was hope in my heart that we would be together again in the coming year. Now, it is our anniversary once again, but the one I await every day still isn't here. I have no idea whether I'll ever see him again, or whether he's even alive anymore, but hope lies within my heart. It's good that hope exists, it's much better that way. How childish hopes are. Everything repeats. Everything! Those dreams, those Northern Lights. Everything repeats ...

ELMAR: How childish hopes are.

41.

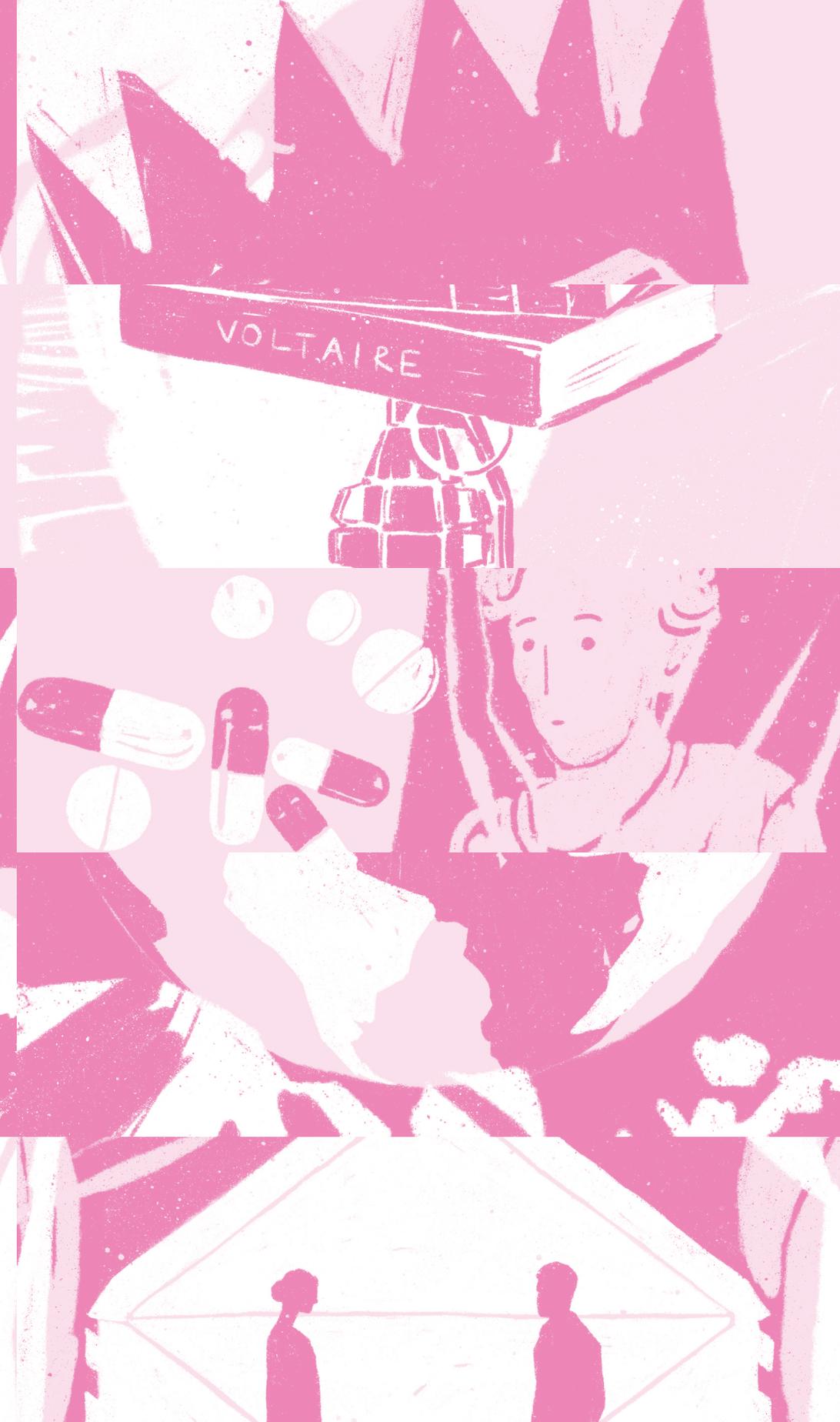
ELMAR: When the director of the Viljandi Legal Consultancy heard I'm corresponding with the Canadian Embassy, he started shouting at me. I thought I'd try my luck in Tallinn. There were several different lawyers there: one claimed he'd had a number of successes. There'd never been a case like mine before. We started from the lowest rung and sent our next appeal one rung higher. I always paid him handsomely. The official fee was next to nothing.

42.

KLARISSA: Secretary of State for Canada, Ottawa. November 26th, 1964. "Private and confidential"

Dear Madame, You certainly recall that in my letter to you dated the 6th of November, I mentioned my intention to take steps with the Secretary of State to find an opportunity for your husband to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Although the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs does not find it necessary, as you recommended, to issue an appeal to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR, he will ask our embassy in Moscow to request the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR to make a positive decision regarding your husband's appeal. By the way: could you be so kind as to advise your husband to submit the appeal for emigrating from the Soviet Union? He has a right to do so ...





VOLTAIRE



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Estonian Theatre Agency
www.teater.ee
Address: Telliskivi 60A-9, 10412 Tallinn, Estonia
Phone: +372 6282 342
E-mail: info@teater.ee

