

RED HAired MEN (2018)

Alexander Vantournhout



*"There was a red-haired man who had no eyes or ears.
He didn't have hair either, so he was called red-haired arbitrarily.*

*He couldn't speak, since he didn't have a mouth. He didn't have a nose either.
He didn't even have any arms or legs. He had no stomach and he had no back and
he had no spine and he had no innards whatsoever. There was nothing!*

*Therefore we don't even know whom we are even talking about.
It's better that we don't talk any more about him."*

-Kharms/Charms-

1. The Piece: duration and interweaving

Red Haired Men will be a 90 min. performance, interweaving the microproza (short texts) of Kharms, with elements of dance and 'pratiques minoritaires': circus, contortionism, puppet-theatre, magic and ventriloquism. Central characters will suddenly disappear in moments of comedic fairground illusion; prosthetics will allow bodies to contort into bizarre and stunning new forms; props and objects will be manipulated into a physically demanding new movement language.

This mingling of forms that are considered "high art" with those historically regarded as "just" entertainment will reflect the anarchic, polyphonic spirit of Kharms' own work. The short texts mirror the rhythms of "low" performance practices such as circus or magic: they are brief, dense, virtuosic, sequential and often end with a 'punch line' – even a bewildering or confusing one. His texts have highly performative. An essential element in the performativity of Charms' work is "the incident" – a disruption that is both violent and wondrous.

The aim is to push magic and circus routines to such incidents: Charms himself also organized magic shows in which he drove his audience to near madness, playing with the energy of the expectation, tricks and abandonment. The idea of creating a rather long performance is to avoid an episodic structure with the audience feeling knocked from one text and movement vocabulary to another. We aim to create a coherent universe, a form of *gesamtkunstwerk*, a surprising world for the audience to inhabit.

In Circus Sjardam, prohibited by the Soviet censors, Charms resorted to children's stories, poems and plays, his disruptive realist absurdism nevertheless stayed elementary, breaking conventional ideas of what "a show", "a trick" are supposed to be. **Red Haired Men** takes as a challenge to perform a similar exercise: four performers trained in various (circus) disciplines explore the limits of their artistic forms: taking risks, including failure and reskilling in other practices such as performing texts.

2. Daniil Kharms: disappearance and anti-logic

Daniil Kharms was poet, short-story writer, dramatist and leading light of the 1920s Soviet avant-garde. An absurdist and eccentric provocateur, he would parade around Leningrad dressed as Sherlock Holmes and engaging in incendiary public art-stunts and interventions.

As the Soviet regime grew ever more restrictive, Kharms was effectively banned from publishing. He retreated into the only branch of literature in which he was allowed to operate: children's stories.

But these are not children's stories, as they are conventionally understood. They are absurd, cruel and arbitrary. The narratives are driven by an internal anti-logic. All expectations are smashed; all coherence is intentionally shattered. We are left with a set of brutal and capricious non-sequiturs – any rationality we try to apply will twist against us. These are the children's stories of a society broken by unreason and totalitarianism - a society in which the link between crime and punishment has been broken, and justice has become an arbitrary form of unknowable sadism.

One of the central themes of the work is disappearance. Many stories end abruptly with a central character simply ceasing to exist. No explanation is offered, only the cryptic warning, 'it's better that we don't talk any more about him'.

This was the world of Stalinist purges and terrors in which Kharms worked and lived. A world in which his friends and colleagues disappeared one by one, and the rest simply marked time until their turn came. Kharms himself was finally arrested in 1941, declared insane and starved to death in prison in February 1942.

3. Context within my practice

There are many themes within this piece, and within Kharm's work that resonate with ideas I had begun to explore elsewhere, particularly in the solo *ANECXKANDER* (2015).

The character *Aneckxander* was conceived as a tragic figure, forever punishing and contorting him in pursuit of an unachievable goal. Kharms writes of an even more extreme version of this idea, describing an ontology governed by the positive reaction of reverse-thinking – whatever you desire will fail to occur as a direct result of you wanting it.



"I am some special kind of loser. For some time now an incomprehensible law of non-realization has been hanging over me. Whatever I desire, that's exactly what never turns out. Everything what happens goes against my intentions. In truth: man proposes, God disposes."

-Kharms-

In *ANECKXANDER* (2015) this dynamic was particularly present in how the character related to objects and prostheses – boxing gloves and platform shoes were all attempts to compensate for physical “deficiencies”, but ended by actually emphasizing the body’s vulnerability.

This exploration of the confounding of desire and expectation – particularly through the manipulation of prostheses and heavy objects- is something I am particularly interested in continuing and deepening in the creation of *Red Haired Men*. Bodies falling apart or geometric shapes such as spheres and squares popping out of these living corpses.

4. Images

Teaser :

https://youtu.be/CCi5F_jG9hg

Link RHM lyon (45 min)

<https://vimeo.com/258519914>

paswoord: charms

5. Information performance

Team on tour: 6 or 7 (4 performers, 1 rehearsal director/dramaturg (depending which tour) , 1 or 2 technicians (depending which tour), 1 head of production)

Duration of performance: 70 min

Build up : on day of performance

Suitable for school performances: 12+ (contains male nudity)

Audience: max 800 (up to the configuration of the space)

Stage Surface 9x9 m



6. Team

Alexander Vantournhout

Alexander Vantournhout (Brussels-based, 1989) studied single wheel, juggling and dance acrobatics at **ESAC** (Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque, Brussel). Due to an injury in his wrist in 2009 Alexander began to dance more often. From 2010 till 2012 he studied contemporary dance **P.A.R.T.S** of Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker. In 2013 he worked as an actor at **Rolf Alme** (NO), founder of the Norwegian Theater Academy, Frederickstadt (NO).

Alexander has created a couple of solos including ***Caprices*** (2014), a choreographic solo to the music of Sciarrino, ***ANECKXANDER (2015)*** (cocreated with Bauke Lievens) that won **Circus Next 2014**, the public and **young theatre price at Theater Aan Zee**, Oostende 2015 and was selected for Aerowaves Network and for 'Het Theaterfestival Belgium' (most remarkable belgian performances 2016).

For the creation ***Raphaël*** (2017), became Alexander and Bauke artist in residence at **Kc Nona**, Mechelen (BE). Alexander is **Cultural Ambassador of the city Roeselare** (BE). From 2017-2021, he will be **Vooruit-resident, Gent (BE)** and also from 2017-2019 associated artist at **PERPLX**, Marke (BE)

Alexander taught regularly at, ESAC and ACAPA (Academy for Circus and Performance Art, Tilburg, NL) and was a guest lecturer at Codarts (NE), Verigo(IT), P.A.R.T.S, Danscentrum Jette.

After P.A.R.T.S. Alexander continued his studies; travelling to Vermont (US) to study (contact) improvisation with Steve Paxton and Lisa Nelson. Recently Alexander has become connected to "Movement Culture", and has exchanged information with, and studied under, Martin Kilvady, Ido Portal and Fighting Monkey. Alexander has been a member of the **Fighting Monkey Research** team (Rootlessroot) since 2017.

His movement language is influenced by different educational processes and by working in several fields within the arts. There are two constant factors in the work: his search for **creative and kinetic potential in physical limitation**, and the relationship or boundaries between the **performer and the object**.

Ruben Mardulier was born in Tienen (BE) in 1993. He studied in **ACAPA** (Academy for Circus and Performance Art) in Tilburg, specializing in **acrodanse**. In 2015, Ruben studied with puppetmaster Kanroku (JP), and began working with the **Ulrike Quade Company** (object-theatre).

Winston Reynolds was born in Skåne(SE) in 1992. He later moved to England where he studied at **Circomedia** (Centre for Contemporary Circus and Physical Theatre), specializing in acrobatics and physical theatre under the guidance of

Bim Mason, a student of Jacques Lecoq. He furthered his circus education in **ACAPA** (Academy of Circus and Performance Arts) in the Netherlands.

Axel Guerin was born in Mechelen(BE) in 1992. He studied Duo Acro-dance with Winston Reynolds in **Circomedia** (UK) and **ACAPA** (NE).

Winston Reynolds and Axel Guerin have collaborated with several choreographers including **Florentina Holzinger, Mor Shani and Marc Van Loon**. They have also worked closely with various projects with **NofitState Circus**.

Kristof van Baarle is **dramaturg** and researcher at Ghent University, where he currently finishes his Ph D on posthumanism, the work of Kris Verdonck and the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben. As a dramaturge, Kristof works with **Kris Verdonck / A Two Dogs Company, Michiel Vandeveld, Heike Langsdorf, Thomas Ryckewaert and Alexander Vantournhout**. He is also an editor for Etcetera, a Belgian journal for the performing arts.

"One must write poetry in such as way that if one threw the poem in a window, the pane would break."
-Kharms-

CONTACT

General information: info@alexandervantournhout.be

Website: www.alexandervantournhout.be

Artistic

Alexander Vantournhout

art@alexandervantournhout.be

Production

Merel Van de Gehuchte

productie@alexandertournhout.be

Technique

Rinus Samyn

tech@alexandervantournhout.be

Tour management

info@fransbrood.com

www.fransbrood.com



CREDITS

Choreography and concept: Alexander Vantournhout

Creation and performance: Ruben Mardulier, Winston Reynolds, Axel Guerin, Alexander Vantournhout

Dramaturg: Kristof van Baarle

Choreographical eye: Anneleen Keppens

Theatre coach: Jan Steen

Outside eyes: Geert Belpaeme, Lili M. Rampre

Magical advice: Tim Oelbrandt

Construction: Willy Cauwelier

Technique: Rinus Samyn/ Bram Vandeghinste

Production coordinator: Hanne Ghekiere

Photos: Bart Grietens

Contact & touring: www.fransbrood.com

Avant-première: Actoral, Marseille (FR) 6-7/10/2018

International Première: 11-12/10/2018 CIRQUE-THÉÂTRE, ELBEUF (FR)

Belgian Première: 25-26/10/2018 Vooruit, Gent (BE)

Coproduction: Les 2 Pôles Nationaux des Arts du Cirque normands — La Brèche, Cherbourg and Cirque-Théâtre, Elbeuf (FR), Vooruit-Gent (BE), PERPLX, Marke (BE), Subsistances, Lyon (FR), Le Manège, Reims (FR)

Residencies: Les 2 Pôles Nationaux des Arts du Cirque normands — La Brèche à Cherbourg et le Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf (FR), Vooruit, Gent (BE), STUK-Leuven (BE), Bateau Feu, Dunkerque (FR), Theater op de Markt, Neerpelt (BE), Subsistances, Lyon (FR), P.A.R.T.S, Brussels (BE), Circuscentrum, Gent (BE), De Warande, Turnhout (BE), Circa, Auch (FR), Tanzhaus NRW, Düsseldorf (DE), Le Manège, Reims (FR), De Grote Post, Oostende (BE), Kaap, Brugge-Oostende (BE), Actoral, Marseille (FR), Wood Cube, Roeselare (BE)

With the support of: Flemish Government, City Roeselare

Production: NOT STANDING asbl /adresse: Beversesteenweg 78, 8800 Roeselare (BE),/ N. off entreprise: 0849019917

Thanks to: STAD Roeselare, Gili (Lieven Gheysen), Dirk van Boxelaere

Alexander Vantournhout is residency-artist at Vooruit, Gent (BE) for the period 2017-2021, and associated artist at PERPLX, Marke (BE). From 2016-2018, Alexander is cultural ambassador of the city Roeselare (BE).

[DNA]



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union



La brèche
PÔLE NATIONAL DES ARTS DU CIRQUE
DE NORMANDIE / CHERBOURG



manège
scène nationale - reims



LES SUBSISTANCES
Subsistances international
de création artistique (Lyon)
Théâtre, Danse, Cirque, Musique

