

**DANCE****Miet Warlop choreographs loss as a concert**

The Belgian visual artist and performance maker on 'One Song', difficult goodbyes, the components of her work and her view of art

*Ιωάννα Γκομούζα*

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*Miet Warlop, the Belgian artist comes to the Roof with "One Song" © Ivan Put*



## Miet Warlop: Interview on the occasion of the performance "One Song" coming to the Onassis Dance Days festival at Stegi

"Run... run for your life / until you die / until I die / until we all die." On a moving runway, the actor Witche Tanghe sings breathlessly against time and metronome the same lyrics, each time differently, but always with undiminished intensity, in a sui generis choreographed concert. Around him, in a setting reminiscent of a palais de sports, his stage "teammates" in " **One Song** ", an ensemble of dancers who make up a peculiar band, are also running towards exhaustion. A violinist playing balancing on a beam, a bassist bending whenever he needs to touch a string, a keyboardist jumping on a footstool to touch the keys, a percussionist sweeping the stage to meet the scattered drums. Time and time again, from the stands and the floor some of their cheerleaders and fans or their elderly coach rises to push them to their limits.

Contemporary dance, sports marathon or concert? **What is certain is that Miet Warlop** 's performance - which was applauded in **Avignon** in 2022, entered the New York Times list of the best performances in the same year and is coming to this year's contemporary dance festival **Onassis Dance Days** on February 24 and 25 -, has discussed for its virtuosity and uplifting, ecstatic rhythm, its accessible and original form, its approach to the absurd and its humor. Because comedy is not missing from the path of the Belgian unclassified creator, even when her stage testimony has a painful starting point. " *It's the only way to tell the truth without being taken down, without making ourselves miserable,*" she explains to me from her studio in Brussels.



Miet Warlop, "One Song" © Michiel Devijver

## Miet Warlop talks 'One Song' coming to Onassis Dance Days

It all started when NTGent invited her to answer the question: "What is your story as a creator in the theater?". And she choreographed a strange hymn to life, a ritual about farewell, hope and rebirth, to exorcise her personal and also our collective demons, death, mourning.

Twenty years ago, while graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent (KASK), her life was scarred by her brother's suicide – the 'Sportband/Afgetrainde Klanken' she choreographed in 2005 was her own tribute, a requiem, for the late Jasper. So, in trying to give an honest response to the invitation of the Flemish theater and artistic programming manager Milo Rau, she felt she had to return to that moment and to her many years of trying to cope with the loss since then.

Sports activity here becomes *"a metaphor for what is going on inside your mind and heart. It is actually a portrait of your energy. Through the show we reach out to the audience and try to connect with them. Because sports are about winning, but "One Song" is a game about loss as a connecting field. After all, at some point we all lose something/someone and experience mourning, whether it is the death of a loved one or e.g. about your house burning down or even when you lose a part of yourself because of the events."*

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...genuine experience through presence. After all, this is how our coexistence with loss evolves, he argues. *It goes from the smell, to the body, to the memories, to a voice that you can no longer remember, to a situation that you cannot imagine or that you might imagine. Transformation is always within you, how you find an attitude towards what happened to you or happened to someone else. Because, of course, it's not just about me or you, but it also hurts someone else by our side. We are all connected.*"

*"The stage of "One Song" is like a microcosm, where all the actions and desires that govern the principles of the collective can be exorcised, even turned into a ritual. I want the energy released on stage to transcend the boundaries of the room and the exorcistic nature of the repetition of a movement or an emotion to reach the audience".*



Miet Warlop, "One Song" © Reinout Hiel

## Miet Warlop : the components of her work and her view of art

**Physical effort as a metaphor** was also a characteristic element of her research in "Sportband/Afgetrainde Klanken" - where a cheerleader was also present as a character -, while the concert as a choreographic motif became the basis for "Ghost Writer and the Broken Hand" Break" (2018). Note, of course, that music and lyrics had already entered her creative vocabulary with "Fruits of Labor" (2016), *"an invitation to sing about what scares us, freeing ourselves from fears and desires"*.

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Laughter was heard loudly from the square on that occasion. In any case, humor ranks high in her practice, as does the concept of connection. *"Not only in terms of how we connect with others but also how e.g. performers can relate to a situation on stage, even using their desires or even their fear".*

**A slight pause comes when I reasonably ask her what inspires her.** She is certainly interested in life, the human condition, she finally responds. *"People, what we think and want, how we act, how we sit and sometimes watch some situations without understanding them and how we suddenly understand them. How you emerge from silence to the surface; I find that process interesting. I can still be inspired by someone touching my hair. I mean it can be an experience as a starting point and not something concrete. Truth, too, is a very powerful source of inspiration for me. But I think everything is inherent in everything. How you cook is about how you eat and how you eat about how you feel and how you feel about how you play..."*.

Her work does not speak through the visual element, she says, emphasizing that the image essentially works as a vehicle to transport you to another point of view. The essence of her approach lies in transport, she emphasizes.

**So what is art for Miet Warlop and what is the most precious gift it has given her?** *"My answer will sound rather classical, but I think it is beauty, in all that the term can mean. And connection, of course. Otherwise you can immediately feel if someone is lying on stage when they are not connected to themselves or look around. As an artist you are constantly trying to shape the things around you and understand them. But what is art then? Do you want to be understood or understood through what you create? For me it is the second because it can bring the first."*



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### One Song "

AV Team

**Chassis Foundation Roof**, main stage, ave. Syngrou 107, Neos Kosmos, 2111981784



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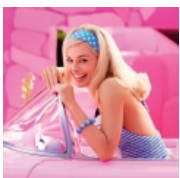
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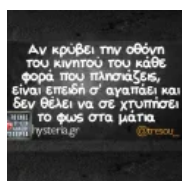
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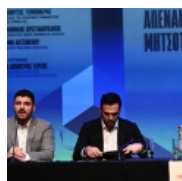
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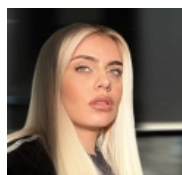
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