The rehearsal for the new production is still ongoing when we arrive at De Hallen in Schaerbeek. On stage, Miet Warlop is giving instructions to her performers. Large rolls of blue and beige fabric lie on the floor. High above the stage, more rolls of fabric in various colors are suspended.

In the auditorium, Stephen and David Dewaele—known in other lives as 2manydjs and Soulwax—watch from behind a mixing desk. They also run the successful record label DEEWEE, which releases albums by artists such as Bolis Pupul and Charlotte Adigéry. “Five more minutes,” Miet Warlop and Stephen Dewaele announce almost simultaneously.

We take a seat in the small but extremely charming garden of the Eenens-Terlinden Castle, right next to De Hallen. It’s a moment of respite for the trio. The workdays are long. Rehearsals begin at 9 a.m. and rarely end before 11 p.m.

With Inhale Delirium Exhale, Warlop presents her first new theater production since the acclaimed One Song in 2022. The world premiere takes place Sunday as part of the Kunstenfestivaldesarts. All four performances have been sold out for weeks. The same goes for the four shows in early June in Ghent. Everyone wants to see Miet Warlop.

Exactly what Inhale Delirium Exhale is about is hard to put into words. There is no story. “It’s about the battle against endless thoughts and nightmares in your head,” she says.

“I could become hysterical from the pressure after the success of One Song. But not if I take some distance. This show is a new puzzle piece in a career that has been going on for twenty years. Inhale Delirium Exhale is deliberately completely different from One Song. I’m never interested in making similar shows. A constant in my performances is the use of fixed materials on stage. I’m letting that go now too. I’m only using fabrics—silk, 6,500 meters in total.”

Also new is the electronic music by the Dewaele brothers. There’s some debate about how and where the brothers met Miet Warlop. Tinder, as Stephen suggests, is quickly ruled out. There was a meeting in New York once. Miet says she first knew the brothers from stories she heard. “Which ones?” they ask, surprised.

But the first real collaboration dates back to the show Mystery Magnet in 2012. “Until then, I didn’t use music in my work. But for that production, I needed a cowboy song. Through a mutual friend, I ended up with the brothers.”

**Why now again?**

Miet Warlop: “I’ve actually been working on this show for over three years. One Song, a commission from NTGent, came in between. Initially, the plan was to create Inhale Delirium Exhale with the same team. But the many performances of One Song were so exhausting that many people dropped out. Including the person who was supposed to create the music. That was in October. So I urgently needed musicians. I thought of Stephen and David.”

David Dewaele: “We had to reshuffle our schedules, but we didn’t hesitate. It was a dance that needed to happen. We’re also supporting Miet musically next year when she takes over the Belgian pavilion at the Venice Biennale.”

Miet: “Mega thank you, guys.”

**How should I see the collaboration? You’re making the soundtrack?**

David Dewaele: “You could call it that. We make music that fits the images Miet creates on stage. We try to get inside her head. We’re five days from the premiere. The main structure is set, but Miet constantly tweaks the show. We follow her lead. So no, I don’t yet know exactly what Sunday’s premiere will look like.”

Stephen Dewaele: “This is new for us too. Our manager already asked: what exactly are you guys doing with Miet? We are essentially at Miet’s service. It’s her show, not ours.”

Miet Warlop: “But the music does play a major role. If there’s a beat that matches my visual on stage, the result is different than when someone just moves to the image.”

**Is it hard for you, Miet, to dislike a musical idea from them?**

Warlop: “Of course.”

Stephen: “Really? Are you serious?”

Warlop: “Definitely. When I doubted something the first time, you didn’t answer at first. Then you were even stricter than me.”

David: “We’re hard on ourselves too. We made something that we initially liked but live on stage sounded too much like a KBC commercial. We didn’t want that, of course. We had to find a kind of shared language between the three of us. From there, we could move forward. The big advantage is that the three of us aren’t afraid to fall on our faces. We’re fearless.”

Warlop: “The advantage is also that the performers don’t mind if things still change. I’ve experienced it differently, where people want to know exactly what they have to do and when. That doesn’t always work with me.”

**You work a lot with young people. Has the work ethic changed compared to ten or twenty years ago?**

Warlop: “Young people always seem to have enough time. Whereas I always feel like I’m running out of it. But I’ve learned that a lack of time is the best fuel to push forward. Time pressure gives rocket energy.”

David: “That’s why I’m not sure you need a whole year to make a production like the one for Venice.”

Miet: “To get back to your question: relationships in the workplace have changed. We’re all equals nowadays. That’s fine by me. But it has to go both ways. I’m fine downsizing my role, but then performers also have to take responsibility. It’s a fine line. Luckily, it works well in this group. For the first time, I say: this is my idea—now it’s up to you to work it out. I’ll evaluate it afterward and adjust if needed. But sometimes I think: okay, Miet, get your shit together, step forward, and clearly say: yes to this, no to that. Otherwise, what does the work even stand for? I find that incredibly difficult. Last year, I had a kind of undiagnosed burnout. It went deep. I still struggle to stand in front of a group and carry everything. So the group dynamic is now really good.”

Miet Warlop is happy that she has complete professional freedom through her non-profit Irene Wool (which receives an annual structural subsidy of €366,189) that she manages together with general manager Saskia Liénard. “Saskia is decisive. She’s the one who says: we’re going to make this show even if we have few resources. As a non-profit, we ride a BMX, but we’re now invited by all the big houses in Europe. Our working funds are really limited. We spent the first month rehearsing at LOD music theater in Ghent. We had to rent a party tent to weld our installations together. Good thing it didn’t rain—there’s no workshop there. Sometimes I wish we could work like Opera Ballet Vlaanderen. That’s a machine we can only dream of.”

**I think artistic director Jan Vandenhouwe would love to have you.**

Warlop: “He already asked me. But I also want to continue making independent productions. In three years, my big retrospective is coming. I’ll bring all my shows together into one new production. All the puzzle pieces will come together then.”

**Does it bother you that the brothers earn a lot from their music while you depend on subsidies?**

Stephen & David: “Whoa, man. We don’t get any subsidies. We’re the bicycle bell of the BMX.”

Warlop: “They don’t know it yet, but I actually can’t pay them.”

Stephen: “David, have you sent that invoice yet?”