

Odd One Out

by
Simon Granit Ossoinak



Photographer:
Charlotte Hofer, charlottehofer.com

Duration: 30-40 mins

Co-produced by:

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Residency/rehearsal spaces:



P. A. R. T. S.

**dans
ateliers**



In short

Odd One Out is a half-length solo show about oddness and how oddness relates to belonging. In the show we meet a man who has grown tired of his constant struggles with feeling like the odd one out and has decided to be alone, indefinitely. When others are not there, there is no one who can judge him.

In his isolation he starts reflecting and exploring.

What is it that makes something odd?

What should you do with your oddities?

How do you know when oddness is a strength and when it is a weakness?

Why is it so incredibly scary and uncomfortable to feel odd?

His exploration covers everything from the concrete shapes and abilities of his body to his subjective perceptions he has around oddness.

This is expressed through a mixture of acrobatics, dance, handbalancing, spoken text (in english) and theatre. The show moves through beauty, ugliness, joy and sadness, and while the character is odd, he is simultaneously just as human as any one of us, sharing vulnerabilities and desires that we all have.

The show aims to give a nuanced take on the topic of oddness, extending the reflections of the character into the world, showing how oddness can be both a great strength and a great weakness, and how a little bit of understanding and compassion can go a long way.

Acquired support & performance dates

The creation is co-produced and supported by PERPLX Circuswerkplaats based in Kortrijk, Belgium with the sum of 2500 euros.

The first week of residency is given by Pargas Municipality in Finland between 1-5th of August.

The second week of residency is given by P.A.R.T.S in Brussels between 8-12th of August.

A 15 minute work-in-progress version will be shown at Circusbende Festival in Amsterdam between 2-4th of September.

4 days of rehearsal space are given by Dansateliers in Rotterdam spread out over September.

Two weeks of residency is given by PERPLX and will happen between 26th of September - 7th of October.

The show premieres on the 8th of October at Vitrine Perplx #3.

Theme

Oddness is defined as:

“Deviating from what is ordinary, usual, or expected” -
The Free Dictionary

Feeling like the odd one out is one of our greatest fears as human beings, with social connection being hardwired into us as key to our survival. People were not just a pleasure, they were a necessity, and the odd one had to adapt to stay alive.

Today's society does not require social interdependence to the same degree. Oddness has been given much more space and the odd ones can be seen in any class and position. In many cases the odd ones can be wildly successful. They are the ones that turned the unordinary into the extraordinary. But the odd one does not always find their place. They can live for many years through bullying, ostracization and with a feeling that no one understands them.



Photographer: Thomas Lenden

Oddness does not come in one form, shape or size. Oddness is simply something out of the ordinary. It can be your behaviour, your appearance, your origins, your passions or simply your lack of anything of what is considered ordinary at that specific moment in time and space. Oddness is a consequence of human perception. It is dependent on a set of beliefs and observations set by a group in a certain time and space.

Circus has always been a sanctuary for the odd one, and while circus has changed through the years that one fact has never changed. Circus not only accepted oddness, but embraced it.

My fascination with oddness is not only about the extreme ends of it. The space of nuance where one starts to question whether something is indeed odd and then if it is **too** odd is a space I find equally fascinating. Where one starts to wonder: Is this something I can connect with? Is this something others can connect with? Is this something they can understand?

I am also exploring the second layer of oddness. The self perceived oddness. Oddness could on one side of the spectrum become a self imposed narrative, more an internal feeling of separation rather than something noticed by a group. Or on the flip side of things, something everyone but you yourself notice.

Perceiving yourself as odd will always be a part of our lives, so as an artist and person I wish to go deeper into this topic to see what I can learn, and share from a deep dive into oddness and all that it entails.

Story & inspirations

The show will explore the oddities and thoughts of one man in his isolation. He has grown tired of his constant struggles and has decided to be alone, indefinitely. You will experience his desires and longings, his anger and frustration towards the world and his sadness, but also him finding moments of self-acceptance that lead to joy and freedom, his odd creativity and a very playful inner child. You will experience how, in spite of his oddities, he is just as human as any one of us, sharing the same desires and vulnerabilities.

Physical expression is going to be the main tool used, but the character will also talk during the show. Primarily about oddness and belonging but also other strange reflections he has during his isolation. At moments he will be talking fully, in some moments the text complements and highlights the movement or situation, and for some parts it will just serve as inspiration in the creation of the physical and theatrical language only and not appear on stage.

The show takes inspiration from the books *Notes from the underground* by Fyodor Dostoevsky and *Under The Net* by Iris Murdoch. Both books feature two very introspective and eccentric main characters who, mostly by the whimsies of their own minds, experiences extreme contrasts in emotionality and consequently make radical decisions seem all too natural and at the same time can make their everyday “normal” decisions seem as the biggest and most important events of their lives. On the surface they are loners who have no problem going long stretches of time without others, but in their loneliness they are constantly reminded of their fragile humanity and plagued by their previous interactions and current social desires and dreams. They are philosophically inclined and often entangle themselves by their own thoughts rather than anything external. With their thoughts they finely thread the line between intelligence and slight insanity.



Photographer: Thomas Lenden
Tent, Amsterdam

Research

Movement

I will be utilising multiple different movement techniques:

- Acrobatics features explosive movements such as flips, inversions and dynamic displays of strength and coordination.
- Soft acrobatics is focused towards acrobatic movements utilising flexibility and coordination in a calmer and more controlled manner.
- I work with floorwork techniques commonly found in contemporary dance and breakdance. In floorwork you utilise your whole body as potential floor contact points.
- I am also working with threading, which is a breakdance concept where you creates holes with your limbs and thread through them with your other limbs. This technique can create very interesting shapes and theatrical associations, pushing your body to more abstract movement options that can still create very concrete and real associations.
- In my work I also utilise moments of handbalancing and bodyweight strength making inversions, holds and slowing down movements in strange and challenging positions.



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Theater Rotterdam, Circusstad

I have been researching oddness with movement mainly in four different ways:

Trick/movement execution, shape manipulation, body and rhythm/tempo.

One way of altering movements/tricks is to make them imperfectly executed. Such as doing a backflip but it is so low in height that my head is just a few centimeters over the floor, or by doing a movement with one bodypart disconnected, such as doing a trick without bending my legs in the takeoff. I have been playing a lot with direction changes, making my setup movements for tricks be opposing to the movement that comes after in terms of energy direction, creating an unpredictability I really love. I have also been utilising failure, making my movements appear to crash (but in a still coordinated manner).

I have been exploring threading as well as some other ideas to change the shapes of my movements and tricks and to make the initiation, middle part or exit of the movement be in odder shapes. For example: landing in splits, on my neck, or in an internally rotated hip position. Doing a movement with my arms locked into a threaded position or by holding contorted shapes in challenging positions.

In terms of body I have been looking at which parts of my body are odd, at what odd things I can do with my muscles and how perspectives or clothing contorts the appearance of the body. Some examples of this: my elbows have a very outwards rounding shape, one part of my quads look like small tumors, I can ripple my butt like an ocean wave and seeing how I can with breath, perspectives and muscles change my proportions drastically.

Some examples of ways I have been playing with tempo are: using very prolonged repetitions of movements, increasing pause durations to discomfort, utilising my bodyweight strength capabilities to slow down movements that otherwise are typically only done dynamically and having rapid unexpected speed ups.

All of these explorations in combination with the text inspirations eventually lead to more theatrical propositions, where I add emotionality, context or a more concrete idea to the movement I am doing.

Emotional states

I am focusing on four states primarily.

- The first one is loneliness, with sadness, fragility and a sort of childlike naivety to it.
- The second one is a state of deep contemplation with an intense focus, and touches of being aloof, head in the clouds.
- The third state is a combination of joy, freedom and play. This state is also what can show the strength of oddness and the joy one can get from it. The character gains it through moments of finding personal inner strength, through self-acceptance and by allowing himself to simply be himself and do what he wants to do.
- The fourth state is a deep longing and desire to be seen, heard and understood, which at moments turns into frustration and anger.

Relatability

Performing oddness can have the issue of being hard for the audience to relate to, which is why I am also utilising positions and gestures that are common in everyday life. I take something relatable but put it in an odd context and from there gradually develop the oddness. Such as doing a classic thinking pose, but something is not quite correct. From there the more abstract movement research develops.



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Tent, Amsterdam



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Artistic aim

I want the audience to feel a bigger freedom in accepting their own oddities. To find not only acceptance but to also see the potential strengths their own oddness can bring. But I also want the audience to realise how oddness can be something which can make life very difficult for people, particularly when it comes to finding social acceptance and belonging. The journey of the main character will serve as an example of this. I wish the audience to feel appreciation for the (hopefully) unique and personal research I have put into the movement and theatrical propositions. I also hope the texts can not only trigger feelings and recognition with the audience, but also bring some intellectual curiosity and insight.

This project is a very personal project for me. Oddness, in one form or another, has always been a very big part of my life, for good and bad. My own oddities have brought me my closest friends but in parts of my life also caused me a lot of suffering, which makes me really want to bring attention to the topic since I believe many others will have shared my ups and downs.

I want to use this project as a starting point for discussions and dialogues with people after the performance. I would like to know about peoples own oddness. When they feel as if it is a burden as well as when their oddness is a strength. What strategies people use for managing as well as getting joy from their oddness. I think having discussions about oddness with other people will give the realisation that many people have things they find odd about themselves and many people can struggle with finding their place socially. I have experience with philosophical group discussions and have some ideas and tools available for me to facilitate a discussion where people feel safe and able to express themselves.

One idea I have is to perform this show in schools, for older teenagers. Our teenage years are usually the times when we struggle the most with oddness and have the hardest time finding belonging with our peers.

As an artist I wish to introduce topics that all of us will experience in life at one point or another, something that is not necessarily specific to any one target audience, but is something that will always occur within human societies. I think finding common ground is a great way to bring more understanding and connection in society.



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Creation

The creation is approximately 5 weeks long, with my graduation act setting the groundwork for the show which reduces the residency weeks required.

Aurelia Brailowsky, a circus performer with a theatre background, will help me in the creation, as well as Melody Nolan, a circus performer from Codarts, who will act as an outside eye.

The show will not feature a lot of music, as silence and voice is integral to the piece, but for some moments of the piece music will appear. A collaboration has been arranged with musician Branko Valchev who is a percussionist and drummer who, in combination with a colleague of his, will create music for the show.

Promotional info

I would like to reach an adult and older teenage audience within a wide array of arts interests. As mentioned before, I want the show to be relatable to everyone, but I would especially love to gather the interests of people within the arts world who are also interested in having discussions, combining the feeling of arts with the thinking of an intellectual approach. The fact that I am making it rather interdisciplinary with circus, dance, text, theater and an after-show talk with an intellectual/personal discourse will hopefully make it appealing to culture workers working within these fields, especially the ones that have interdisciplinary interests.

Artistic Vision - The future

I want this project to be the start for me to create and develop my own performing arts company. I want to work as an artistic director, project leader as well as performer for it. By performing, gaining recognition and connecting with the performing arts supports structure through this show, I am hoping to be able to move forward and create larger works with more people. I also want this project to be the breeding grounds for me to develop my own unique movement language and vocabulary. I want to put less focus on beauty in the typical sense. I really value oddness, personal imperfections and being genuine. To be able to be strange, odd, unique and ugly without it being necessarily funny. To find sophistication and a certain relatable beauty in these expressions as well.

In the further future I would like to create more projects with artists from multiple different arts fields. I find the intersections between fields very interesting, because they make you question the norms of both fields, and questioning gets you to discarding what is less strong or interesting and further developing what is strong or interesting. I think the intersectionality of arts can really strengthen the arts field as a whole.

Recent work

In 2021 I performed in the creation *Unforbidden Pleasures*, directed by Eilit Marom at Korzo Theater as my third year internship. The creation premiered in June 2021 and is set to continue being performed and developed in 2022. The performance featured three dancers, me, and one musician & actor. The project works around the idea of appreciating the unforbidden “small” pleasures in life compared to the forbidden and “grand” pleasures.

During July 2021 I created and produced a 15 minute duet called “To be Not me” with circus performer and dancer Ghia Fieandt that premiered on the town square of the island of Korpo in Finland. The duet worked with the theme of social connection. Residency in Korpo was given by the municipality of Pargas for the creation of the duet.

For a week in march this year I aided the creation of the newly written opera *Drömdöden* in Copenhagen, Denmark through creating and improving the movement propositions to be used in the show.

During the three days of Lowlands Festival 2022 Melody Nolan, Henri Kangas and I performed multiple site-specific short performances based on a video project I initiated and edited during 2020 titled “Instead Of”.



Matthijs Immink, *Unforbidden Pleasures* by Eilit Marom
Korzo Theater