

a tragic comedy

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*inspired by Gogol's novel*

# The Overcoat-s

by Davide Perissutti



# About

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**T**he overcoat-s is a reflection inspired by the homonymous story by the Russian writer Gogol. Akakj Akakjevich is a tiny cog in the enormous bureaucratic machine that oppresses entire social classes in late 19th century Petersburg. Bureaucracy is made up of tons of paper: rules, regulations, laws, other rules that explain previous rules and then paper, lots of paper, all signed or to be signed. Then there is the diabolical accountability system, an excellent mechanism for transforming all this into an authoritarian government. This is how Akakj dies, crushed under the weight of a bureaucratic system formally intended to protect him, only capable of condemning him to death. The artistic research begins inside the pages of the Russian novel and continues imagining the protagonist beyond the end of the story: now he is a ghost and he can carry out his little revenge by stealing as many coats as he wants from all the high officials who buried him instead of helping him. The result is a performance dedicated to bureaucracy, the intent of which is to tell how the little man feels in the face of the insurmountable effort to

understand why human beings must continue to accumulate so many laws that they become paralyzed. This is exactly what happens on stage, a progressive and tragic paralysis that turns into a comedy, a “teatro dell’assurdo” show. The atmosphere brought on stage is “Russia”. The characteristics of the setting are taken from ‘800 Russian writers. However this atmosphere is progressively mixed with Bekkettian style mechanisms, whose absurdity is merged with physical images and gags that belong to fantasy worlds. It is initially a theatrical research, because the dramaturgical intent and the author’s purpose are very clear: to stage the paralyzing effects of a complex bureaucratic system; from a dramaturgical point of view, however, the path taken is not simply theatrical. The artistic research method is based on the figure of the clown and the fool, as well as on the circus techniques of research on detailed movements. In fact it is the movement that guides the action on stage and not the story of the character, as normally happens with written text.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PERFORMANCE

# The aim of the project is comic, but also...

It aims to convey an emotion that everyone has felt at least once in his life. It is not anguish, it is not even anger. The bureaucrats lack of concern towards those who arrive with a problem at the counter generates an emotion that is not well defined. Perhaps it is a mixture of helplessness and anger, with a hint of envy for that official who seems to have reached something like a “stoic imperturbability”. In the face of his imperturbability you can adopt any strategy, you can throw yourself on the ground and tear your clothes, but he will remain impassive within his own bureaucratic securities. It is something profoundly tragic and yet decidedly comic. Generating tragedy on stage to turn it into comedy is another goal of this work that mainly uses physical theater.

The show is silent, there is no theatrical dramaturgy, the tragedy is composed starting from the actions that occur and these find their genesis during the increasing absurdity in which the subject on stage finds himself. There is no intelligible ending; this is not the goal of the artistic project.

The critic of the bureaucratic system is not explicit; it is rather an exploration inside the folds of the system to understand its absurdities and transmit those emotions that we hardly analyze when we find ourselves in front of the counter, with the bureaucrat who begins to list a number of laws, pages of signatures... , “considering that, in order to...” and then he sends you to another official, to another floor, to another counter where his colleague once again starts the exact same litany.



# Intent and artistic research

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Laws meant to understand other laws, rules generated to solve the problems generated by other rules, articles, decrees, contracts and policies, all to guarantee a security that in fact no one has. Starting from the terrible fire that burned down my home at the beginning of 2021 I decided to take over this project - originally born in 2016 - in a completely different form. At the time it was a circus show with three people on stage. The show was meant to reinterpret the story of the Russian employee designed by Gogol.

On January the 11th in just one afternoon I lost my home, clothes, many memories, diaries and notes from my life. The tragedy that followed the tragedy is the monstrous world of policies, insurance experts, banks and all those lawyers, officials, directors, people paid for not being people but cynical machines that evaluate human tragedies with the same cold mind with which it is calculated an algebraic sum. Their hideous worlds have suddenly plunged into my world. It was at this precise moment that I thoroughly understood the lines I had read a few years earlier. Somehow I became Akakij Akakievich and I realized how his real tragedy is not the theft of his coat but his struggling against the intangible and fully pervasive power of bureaucracy.

The idea of a solo was born: artistic research, movement on stage and comedy are meant to tell the audience this precise stratification of emotions that accompany the little man as he fights with all his might the monstrosities that we the humans have built in order to live more safely.



# Creation path

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- September 2021 creation with “Helikos International School of Physical Theatre” - “Greenhouse of Fools” project;
- December 2021 residence at “Circo all’inCirca” with performance presentation;
- January/February 2022 building props and scene designs;
- March/April 2022 research with new objects and creation of 10 more minutes;
- May 2022 residency devising the show;
- June/August 2022 work in progress presentations

# Solo.. but not alone

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Collaboration with:

- Giovanni Fusetti, physical theatre coach and devising of the show.
- Irene Giacomello, dance and choreography and character building.
- Marco Floran for musics/sound and character building.
- Frankie, building props and scene designs.



- Bartolomeo Rossi, pictures and videos.
- Circo all’inCirca crew for organization and production of the performance.

# Currently seeking...

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Residency and presentation stages; donors, producers and co-producers; a tailor; feedbacks from different audiences; lights and music designer.

# Daide Perissutti

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I've been studying physical theatre and comedy theatre since 2003. I studied at "Civica Accademia di Arte Drammatica Nico Pepe" as an actor in a one-year project meant for professional theatre artists; I met, studied and performed with several Lecoq method teachers as Pierre Byland, Philippe Gaulier, Giovanni Fusetti, Yevgeni Mayorga. I attended "Hope Music School" in Frascati and "Accademia del Comico" in Rome. I founded Circo all'inCirca in 2010 which name means "almost circus" ...because I believe in the revolutionary importance of the word "almost". In 2013 I met Roberto Magro who literally opened my way of thinking circus. Thanks to this meeting, as a company called "Circo all'inCirca", we begun a new kind of artistic research. Still I'm not doing circus though! Later I begun to direct circus shows, performances and pedagogical projects and I won several local prizes as director. In 2016 I started to create circus festivals, events and projects for local municipalities. This last two -organize and direct- are still my actual main job while I'm struggling to let the clown survive on the circus stages.

Oh, I also have a magistral degree in philosophy with a focus in theatre aesthetics. I've been studying theology too... but still working to graduate there.