

The Sheep Song

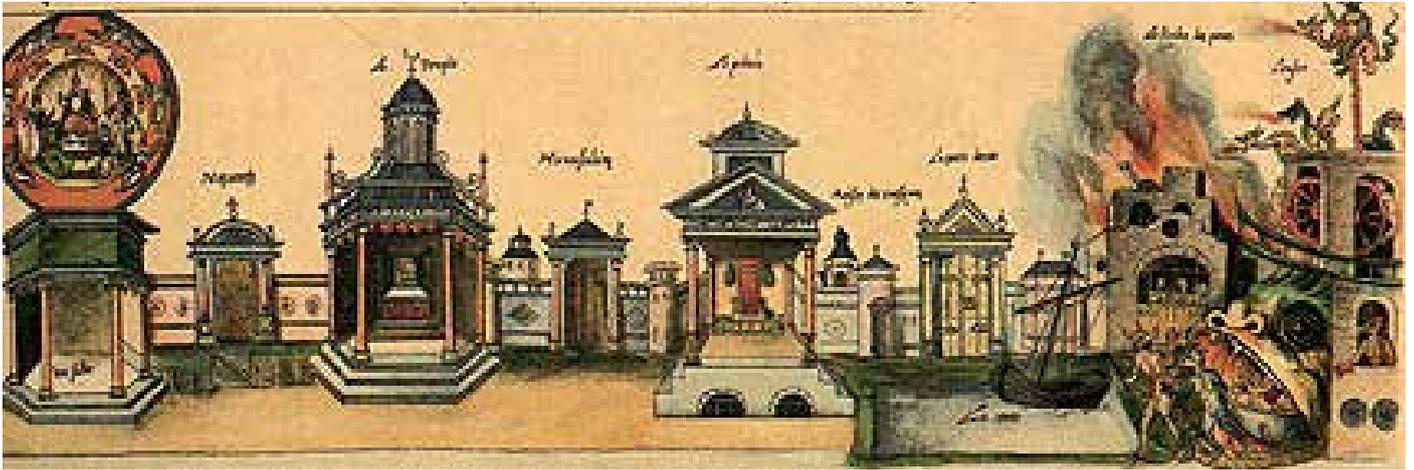
'The painted bird circled from one end of the flock to another, vainly trying to convince its kin that it was one of them. But dazzled by its brilliant colors, they flew around it unconvinced. The painted bird would be forced farther and farther away as it zealously tried to enter the ranks of the flock. We soon saw afterwards how one bird after the other would peel off in a fierce attack. Shortly the many-hued shape lost its place in the sky and dropped to the ground.'

The Painted Bird, Jerzy Kosinski



The Sheep Song is a new, wordless production by FC Bergman. It will be a modern parable about people's fear of and attraction to change in their lives. About the tragedy of human beings as fundamentally changing creatures. In our modern times, we have an extremely paradoxical way of dealing with change. On the one hand, there is the existential desire to transcend the limits of our mind, our body, our knowledge and our own capabilities. On the other hand, human beings are fearful and preservation-minded by nature, and we experience the changes that are inherent in life and society as threats.

In our show, we investigate the characteristic form and content of medieval fables and moralities (*Elckerlyc* [Everyman], *Mariken van Niemeghen*, *Abele spelen* [noble plays]) in which simple moral principles are handed down through stories. Today, we wonder whether these forms of narrative are still applicable to our complex, constantly changing view of the world.



The central figure in our story is a sheep that one day decides to rise above himself. Like in a Faustian pact with the devil, he decides to become human. The Sheep is an innocent, pure being that lives in a world where good and evil don't exist. He enters the human world in which he's confronted with diffuse and ambiguous moral and religious principles. The Sheep tries as best he can to adapt to his new surroundings. He ends up in a tragic, intermediate state as half-human, half-sheep. When he returns to his own kind, he is no longer recognized. The Sheep's metamorphosis enables us to think about what it means to be human.



We see the setting as a dark black emptiness, the cosmic void as the scene of action for our main character. A large church bell floats above the heads of the audience. To the left and right are two portals, representing heaven and hell. A scene-wide conveyor belt literally sets the journey, the odyssey, of our main character in motion and, at times quickly, at times slowly, lets characters and set pieces glide across the stage like a revue of life. Along the way, he meets fellow-sufferers in a group therapy session, a strange buffoon who introduces him to the world of crime and punishment through aggressive puppet theatre; a blind woman who gives birth to his deformed child; a xenophobic group of people who humiliate and suppress him... The majority of the performance takes place

in this almost two-dimensional universe. Then, as the plot of the performance accelerates, we open the space and offer our main character literally and figuratively perspective. At this point the cosmos takes over in a choreography of stars, meteors, galaxy's and black holes.

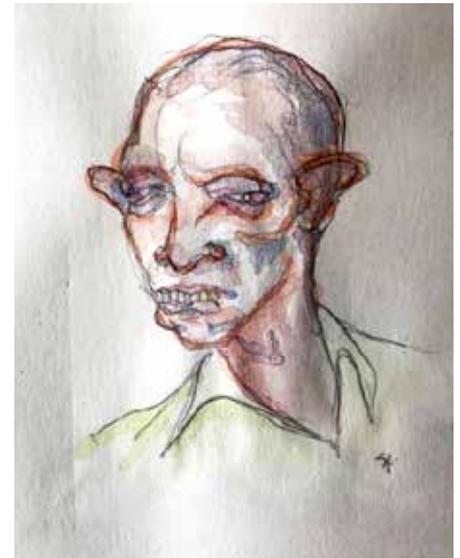
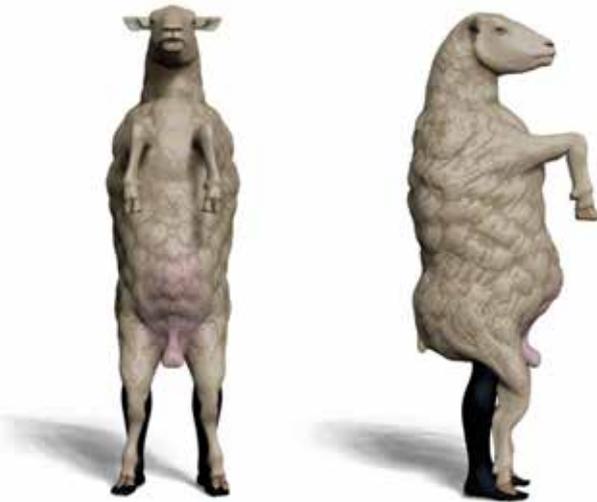
We were inspired by Goethe's *Faust*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, the history of medieval theatre and films like *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man* by David Lynch, *Annihilation* by Alex Garland, *Under the Skin* by Jonathan Glazer....

The four core members of FC Bergman will play all of the characters, complemented by an extremely physically-acting performer in the role of half-sheep. He will be enveloped in an advanced robotic suit with sensitive built-in electronics that enable the wearer to convey facial expressions.

Premiering in late January 2021

Character description The Sheep Song

THE SHEEP



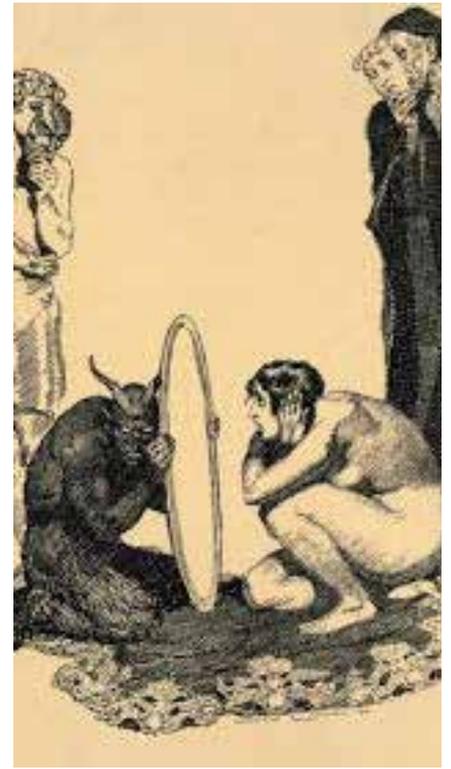
An anonymous sheep floating numbly in the status quo of an equally anonymous flock, makes the overnight decision to become a human being. Assisted by a modest yet ubiquitous Faustian guide he learns what it takes to be part of human kind, and, once able to walk upright, speak and read, he finds access to a universe of lustrous opportunities and bitter traps. Since sheep and man will always be equally mortal.

THE SHEPHERD ORPHEUS



A common shepherd routinely and prosaically takes care of his flock, humming a little ditty along the way. His voice however enchants the Sheep so deeply that instead of a farmer in body warmer and cap the Sheep discerns Orpheus himself, whose divine power he cannot resist. From now on his dream and only goal is being like this ultimate godlike human himself. In his clumsy odyssey, from time to time the Sheep returns to the comfort of his shepherd's soothing voice, until the sheep herder, as is done with disobedient cattle, one day simply slits his throat.

THE DEVIL



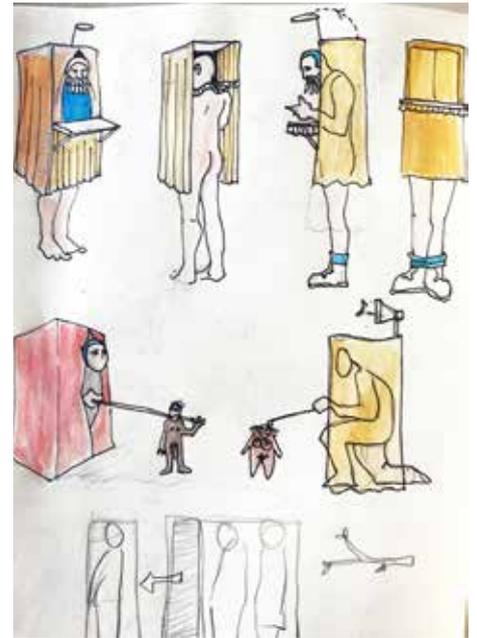
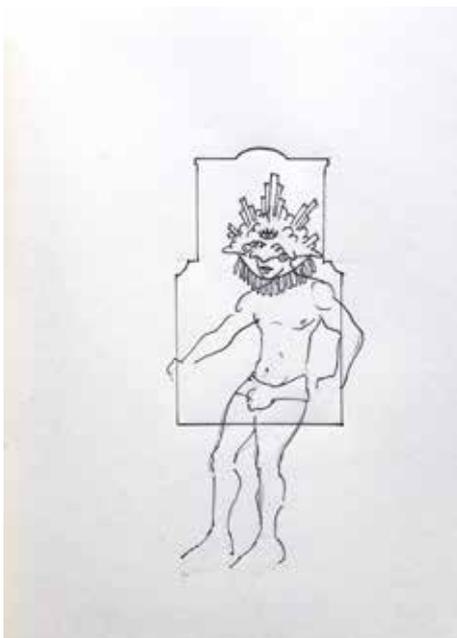
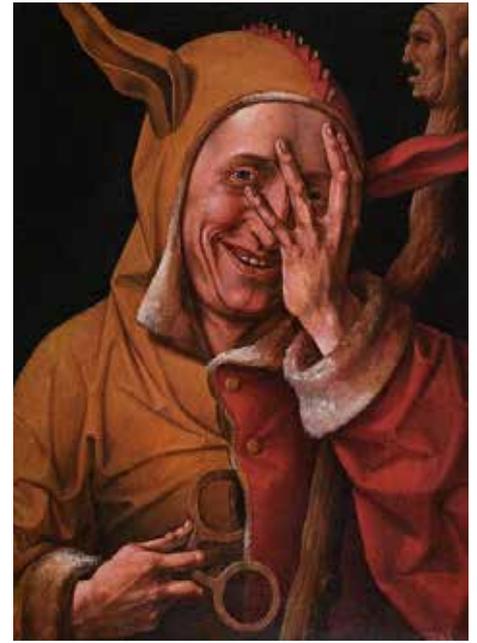
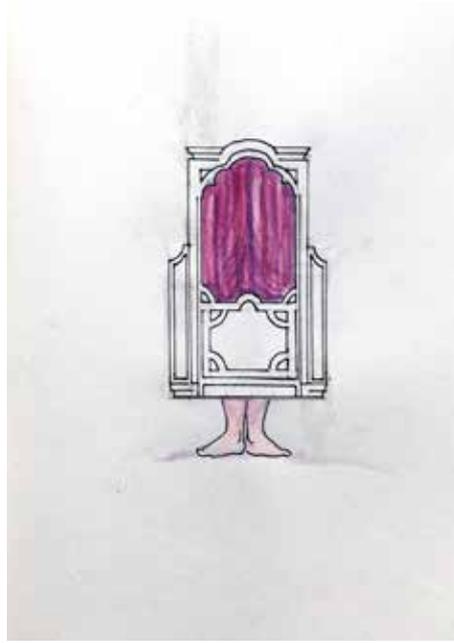
Rather representing the Sheep's conscience than impersonating pure Evil, this mumbling appearance carrying a goat on his shoulder, his naked body scarlet red, will be the Sheep's inseparable companion along his quest for human incarnation. He silently assists the Sheep's first steps of hubris into human existence, and thus into the inevitable fall. Lost and stranded somewhere halfway between sheep and man, the Devil confronts his poor pupil with his personal failure, by showing off his own unlimited and infinite metamorphosis, whereupon he vanishes into the void.

THE BLIND WOMAN



Prosaic reality. A woman with dark glasses, equipped with a white cane and a guide dog, passes by, ignorant of her importance to the Sheep. He chooses her, or rather, in one way or another he succeeds in making her choose him to love, to mate, to marry, to breed. They don't listen to her guide dog objecting ominously. Is it her blindness or his adaptability that facilitates this strange yet genuine love affair? Either way, as love affairs do, it gives rise to offspring.

THE PUPPETEER



Once penetrated into human society, the Sheep encounters a puppeteer carrying a dirty old mobile puppet theater. He offers to put on a little performance for him, like a bone thrown to a dog. The utterly strict, moral content of his little play – a sinful, unchaste puppet gets severely punished by a violent God - is almost drowned by the brutal, obscene humor and the aggression in the puppeteer's performance. We don't know which affects the Sheep the most. Later on the disruptive puppet master appears again, but while in this second play the puppet again cannot restrain his sins and guilt-ridden expects God's punishment, God doesn't show up this time. Desperate by God's absence, the little puppet finally punishes himself even harder. We will meet the small, scruffy and forlorn puppet later again, passing by, searching in vain for God.

THE BABY BLOB



Under the appalled eyes of a surgical team the blind woman gives birth to a living yet horribly deformed creature. Although the severely handicapped baby physically doesn't seem to have outgrown its foetal phase, an unmistakable urge to live can be discerned in its eyes and even more in its screeching. While its father makes several attempts to nurse and soothe the screaming monstrosity, its mother faces the desperation of their baby's existence and smashes its head with a rock. The Sheep will carry his child's mortal remains with him in a jar until at one point he is forced to even let that go in order to save his own life.

THE PEOPLE

The Sheep moves around in a world populated by a crowd of illegible and unapproachable people. Literally illegible, as their faces are blanked out, unapproachable in their refusal to accept him in their world. Although the Sheep relentlessly tries to connect with them, resigning himself to their indifference seems the best and safest thing to hope for.

