

# ABSURD HERO



BY ROMAN  
ŠKADRA

**ABSURD HERO** is a contemporary solo creation featuring the circus and performance artist Roman Škadra. The piece is envisioned for black box stages or exhibition spaces. It is currently in its late-stage of gestation and is already being performed at festivals. It is aimed to premiere in spring 2021.

"THE AUDIENCE WATCHES AN ARTIST WITH A LARGE RED BALL

SAID ARTIST ROLLS THE BALL AROUND THE STAGE. UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS. THE ARTIST CARRIES THE BALL ON HIS SHOULDERS. UNTIL THE BALL STARTS ALTERING HIS PHYSIQUE. THE ARTIST STICKS HIS BODY TO THE BALL AND TRIES TO DOMINATE IT. NOTHING HAPPENS. THE BALL IS UNMOVED BY HIS ADVANCES.

THE ARTIST'S ACTIONS ARE LOOPED, PALINDROMIC, AS IF THIS WOULD BE HIS SISYPHEAN DESTINY. OVER AND OVER UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS.

THE ARTIST PUTS HIMSELF REPEATEDLY INTO THE HOPELESS SITUATIONS ON THE EDGE BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ENDURANCE. THE ARTIST STRUGGLES. THERE IS/CAN BE/HAS BEEN NO SUCCESS, ONLY THE PERSEVERANCE OF PERSISTENT ATTEMPTS.

HOW LONG CAN THIS ARTIST KEEP ON GOING?"

## STARTING POINT

The work 'Absurd Hero' is based on the relation between a large walking globe (diameter 90 cm; weight 25 kg) and a body (height 176 cm; weight 68 kg). The material arose out of a long-lasting physical research on diverse practices, including the techniques of acrobatics, globe balancing, object manipulation and contact improvisation. During the process, the artist has also undergone a special training, and has learned principles of wrestling and weightlifting.

The walking globe is treated as a giant juggling ball rather than an acrobatics apparatus. In fact the whole circus discipline has been completely flipped on its head, as much of the research requires having the globe on top of the character - 'walking globe walking on man'.

During the research, the emphasis has been on a deep exploration of different situations with an intention to create perpetual or endurance events. Special attention has been put to the observation and recognition of body-object relation that arose from physical practice.

Rather than present an execution of circus skills, the circus techniques will function as a base language which allow the (anti-)hero to appear.

Questions which I have attempted to shed light on throughout the research process:

How long can I carry the ball for?

What is success?

Is failure a state of mind?

Can I find joy and happiness in my struggle?

If the object does not care if I beat it, am I really beating it?



## DRAMATURGY

'Absurd Hero' will be a full-length performance composed of several autonomous scenes. Referring to Philosophy of Albert Camus, the piece portrays different situations that show a difficulty, endlessness and futility of human's activity. The work will revolve around several precisely constructed scenarios - each designed to succeed only by failing. In order to keep the authenticity of the work, these scenarios will keep changing organically. Following different sets of rules, the material will be more situational rather than choreographic.

The Sisyphean nature of the work will be revealed not through moments of triumph, but rather through the perseverance of the man's actions. Each time the ball falls, the only choice will be to take it back up again. Each drop of sweat that falls is only a sign of the character's strength of determination. 'Absurd Hero' is not about a moment of success, but rather striving to succeed.

Although the piece is based on circus techniques, the final version is on the borderline of various performing arts (contemporary circus, physical theatre, performance art). Thus the work can address an audience beyond the circus scene.

The scenes are:

"Pushing right back" - The man attempts to carry the ball throughout the space, changing position only when the body begins to give way. This will slowly turn into a sort of beautifully pointless dance that requires maximum effort, and minimum outcome.

"Die Balloon Die" - The man blindfolds himself and while walking on the ball attempts to pop a small balloon in the space. The only info he gets will be from the gasps and oos and ahhs from the audiences as he near misses again and again.

"Lava" - The man walks on the ball and attempts to collect 20 smaller balls without touching the floor. However this forces him into obscure situations as every time he gets close to succeeding they all fall down again.

"Light and Heavy" - The man inflates a giant red balloon to the same size of his big heavy ball. The contrast of heavy and light creates a beautiful tension as he for some reason makes another attempts to find meaning in this situation - until the balloon pops and he is left back where he started.

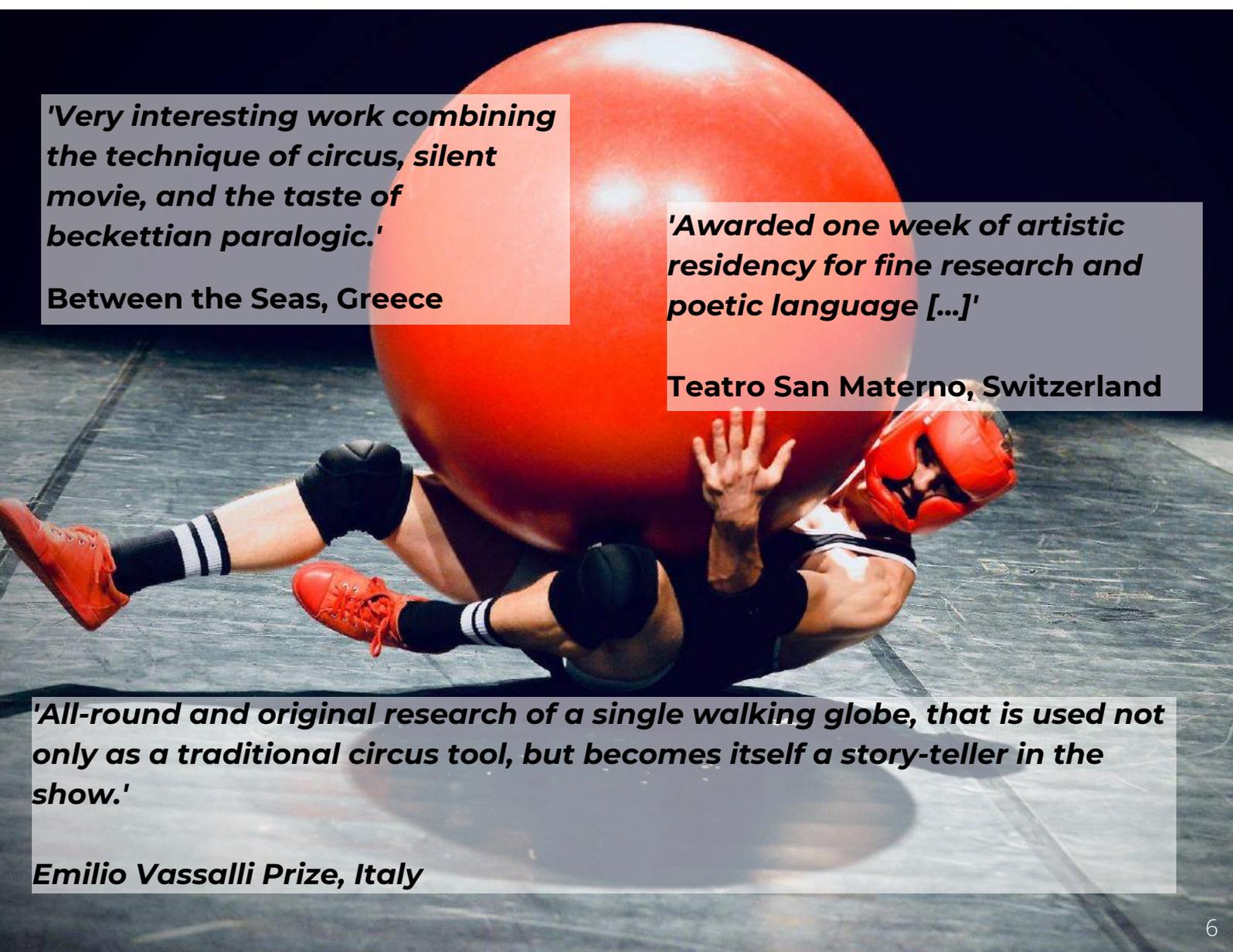
"Wrestling" - geared up like a UFC fighter, the man attempts to beat the ball into submission. Unfortunately the ball is indifferent to his attempts and in its silent response almost seems to mock the man.

### ***Holding up a mirror***

The intentionally chosen stage format of an arena allows the audience to be in close proximity to the action. This changes the perception of the artist as well as that of the audience. By 'being able to see each other', the reactions of the audience become part of the performance. Instead of shocking, amusing or telling a concrete story, the piece offers a space for reflection, to be faced with one's own questions and emotions. The dramaturgical decisions are particularly important, on the basis of which circus is presented not as a heroic performance but as failure. Thanks to the innovative handling of the objects, the audience only slowly becomes aware that they are observers of different duets instead of a solo.

### ***Exchange with my own work***

The piece has developed a life of its own in the creative process, which requires special care. This fact has aroused great interest in me. The effort involved in creating the project has taken on a new meaning. As a creator and performer, I am faced with challenges such as practicing constant determination and self-discipline and cultivating qualities such as patience and willingness for a long work and development process. The impact on my body and the lifestyle changes that come with it prove, that it is not only about creating work, but also about having a dialogue with the work.



***'Very interesting work combining the technique of circus, silent movie, and the taste of beckettian paralogic.'***

**Between the Seas, Greece**

***'Awarded one week of artistic residency for fine research and poetic language [...]'***

**Teatro San Materno, Switzerland**

***'All-round and original research of a single walking globe, that is used not only as a traditional circus tool, but becomes itself a story-teller in the show.'***

**Emilio Vassalli Prize, Italy**

# THE ARTISTIC TEAM



**Roman Škadra** was born in 1985 in the former Czechoslovakia. After the high school he studied geography and has completed his master degree in 2010. Driven by his passion in juggling he decided to move to Berlin in 2012. It has been a crucial decision of Roman's life regarding his professional experience. In September 2017 he graduated DIE ETAGE - school for performing arts in Berlin. After the graduation, his act was awarded the third prize at the contemporary circus competition in Poland and presented at the Berlin Circus Production's OFF NIGHT at the Chamäleon Theater (DE). Since 2017 Roman has been one of the core member of Stefan Sing's juggling company Critical Mess. In 2016 - 2019 he has been cooperating with the Zentrum für bewegte Kunst, an inclusive and artistic project in Berlin. Roman is currently creating his first full-length solo piece ABSURD HERO, which results from a long-term physical research on the discipline of walking globe.

**Darragh McLoughlin** was born in 1987 in Ireland as youngest of three siblings and son of two professional chefs. In the early stages of his life he had little exposure or interest in the arts until the age of 15 where he began juggling and dancing. In 2006 as he finished school Darragh packed his bags for Berlin to attend a full time programme at the Jonglier Katakomben School of Juggling. In 2008 Darragh attended the Academy for Circus and Performance Art. During this time, he developed his own object manipulation practice, and did extensive dance, acrobatic and performance training. Darragh completed his education with a Bachelor Degree in Circus Arts in 2012. Late 2012 Darragh started creating "Fragments of a Mind" which premiered in October 2015. In 2013 Darragh created "The Whistle". Premier 2014. Darragh teaches at different professional institutions around Europe: FLIC [IT], ACAPA [NL], Die Etage [DE], Circus Factory (IRL). Darragh is currently based in Berlin and finishing his 3rd piece: "STICKMAN".



**Anna-Katharina Andrees** from Berlin is a trained actress, theater pedagogue (BUT), teacher of the Michael Chekhov Acting Technique as well as coach and outside eye for artists and performers. As a director of various shows of different formats Anna-Katharina has worked with many different artists, musicians, dancers, theaters and festivals. Except directing, Anna-Katharina teaches regularly at the Michael Chekhov International Academy, in the IN.ZIRQUE® of the ZBK e.V., which she founded, at the school for performing arts - Die Etage and gives international workshops (e.g. Russia, Palestine, Belgium ).

**Emese Csornai**, born in Hungary, specializes in installations, performances and lighting design. She studied architecture in Budapest. In 2009 she completed her bachelor's degree in "audiovisual arts" at the Gerrit-Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. Her work was funded and supported by Saint Gobain, AFK, VSB fonds, Rabobank, Dansmakers Amsterdam, 2 Turven Hoog Festivals and Materiaalfonds. Emese currently lives in Berlin and publishes her book "The Market".





**Concept and Performance:** Roman Škadra

**Artistic Advisor:** Darragh McLoughlin

**Creative aids:** Ana Jordão, Lorenzo Aureli, Declan Mee

**Coaching:** Anna-Katharina Andrees

**Light design:** Emese Csornai

**Residencies:** Cirqueon (CZ), Katapult (DE), Sztukmistrze (PL), Pfefferberg Theater (DE), Jatka78 (CZ), Plum Yard (CZ), Circ'Opificio (IT), Circus Schatzinsel (DE), Ehrenfeldstudios (DE)

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