

Five minutes before the head comes off

It must have been four, five years ago and early summer. Five minutes before the curtain went up, several of us were standing enjoying a last ray of sunshine or smoking a cigarette at the artists' entrance to the Bourla. We were in our last year at the Conservatory and doing work placement with Olympique Dramatique. FC Bergman had only been in existence for two years.

It was there, on that evening that Liesa Van der Aa came skidding over the cobblestones on her bicycle as she braked to a stop and suggested *en passant* that we make something together. An opera, or at least something with music. We knew each other from school and because there was no shortage of admiration for each others' work, the matter was soon settled. After several pithy meetings, that "something with music" bore the working title *Van den vos*, after the medieval animal poem *Van de vos Reynaerde* (About Reynard the Fox). It wouldn't be a full-blown opera, but a musical *Gesamtkunstwerk* and, ideally, it would have its première that same year in the Bourla's majestic, chocolate-boxy auditorium.

But because all sorts of things can come between dream and action, and particularly practical difficulties, the project was put on the backburner, as so often happens.

And perhaps that was no bad thing.

At that point the ship's crew began to mellow slightly and as the years passed was also increasingly determined to put to sea. And best of all, the most marvellous figures were hoisted aboard... For these reasons, and because of the incessant input of ideas, the scale of the project soared...

Some three years after that particular summer evening, we were still dreaming of opening *Van den vos* at the Bourla and so we knocked on Toneelhuis' door asking if we might perform the project in that auditorium and if they might be prepared to help us. Toneelhuis' initial answer was negative, but then came a counterproposal: "How would we feel about coming to live under their roof for four years?"

How would we feel! *Van den vos* would be our first project under the auspices of Toneelhuis.

And so it is. The head will come off on December 5th. And in this case you can take that quite literally.

And you know where you'll find us five minutes before the curtain goes up...

FC Bergman