

THE PROJECT

A Radio Drama

by Renato Gabrielli

Character:

The Artist, in his forties. Italian.

THE ARTIST - Good evening. Hello. Nice to meet you.

No, no problem, I like to wait. Waiting in a corridor is good for an artist. So many ideas come up to your mind. "Waiting is very important" – Tadeusz Kantor said.

A director. From Europe. Dead.

Yes. My project. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to illustrate The Project.

No, there's no title yet. I mean, The Project is the working title. You know, this international project is so huge, so open, so universal, that giving it a proper title would... narrow its scope, if you know what I mean. So, being international, The Project (working title) will involve artists from ten countries...

Please, answer. Please.

No, no problem, I like to be interrupted. It's so stimulating. Anyway... What was I saying? Is it yours? The dog. Nice. Very very big. Hope it doesn't wake up...

Oh, yes. The ten countries. First is Great Britain, of course, the homeland of theatre, and I really think that your theatre, which is the most admirable in Great Britain, will be happy to be the first to support The Project.

Yes, maybe. Just a supposition. And then there's Italy, of course, because I am from Italy...

Europe. South of France.

And then there are two countries from America, two from Africa, two from Asia and two from Oceania; and this is because – and I am revealing to you a little secret – this is because this project is about...

No, no problem.

The women, eh? No, I just mean: the women. They like to phone. Anyway, this project is about... globalisation. Please, keep the little secret. Someone could copy the idea.

The plot? "The plot is a big load of old crap." – Eugenio Barba said.

Director. From Europe. Alive.

You see, I respect very much the plot-driven theatre, but in *The Project* rather than a plot we have... A web. A grid. A mosaic. A very open abstract structure, if you know what I mean. A multimedial, multiracial, interactive event, a huge spiral of images and sounds revolving around the big questions raised by globalisation...

What questions? That's a good question. For instance: we see that the circulation of idiots worldwide is dramatically increasing, while more and more decent people stay at home and starve. Why not the opposite?

Oh, I woke it up. I am sorry. No, no, I am not scared. Nice dog. Big. What's its name?

William? Like the famous?... You're obsessed with him here.

So? Everything clear about *The Project*?... Ah, of course. The budget. Here it is.

It could seem a lot of money. I am sure it is not for you.

Yeah, not less than fifty. Why?... Why do I need fifty Chinese dancers? It's rather obvious. You know, the only certain thing about globalisation is that there's a lot of China in it. I mean, all the things we used to make, they, the Chinese, make them now. And they make them better. And they make them cheaper. You know why? Because they work a lot. Fourteen,

sixteen, eighteen hours a day. So here comes my brilliant paradoxical idea. We invite fifty dancers from China, we put them centre stage and then for two hours and a half... they do nothing. They just stand still and stare in the void. No, no, no – even better: they do what they want, anything but dancing, they just chat, fart, scratch themselves, have at last a bit of free time and relax, while everybody around them works hard to pay their enormous fees. Does that make sense?

Well, I wouldn't use that word... I'd rather say it is a clever provocation. Anyway, I see it would be a bit expensive, even for you. You know, I am an artist but I am open-minded, I can change The Project a little. Here is another budget. We don't invite the dancers, we film them in China and then we project the film on a wall inside the theatre.

We don't pay them, of course.

Okay, let's cut them. You know what? You are probably right. All the China thing is bullshit. The seven Indian gurus will be more than enough for Asia.

Three gurus?

One?

I see.

No, no problem, please go. I like that. You going to the loo... It makes you more human. Doesn't the dog come with you? William? No, no, no, no problem...

Good dog. Stai buono, eh, William? We good friends, ok?... Leave alone my bag! There's my project in it. Go away. Go away. Pussa via, cane di merda!

It's so lovely, William. We became good friends. So... The Project. I've thought over it better while you were... You were? Anyway. I got to the conclusion that a project, to be international, needn't be so international. I mean, what's the meaning of inviting so many artists from so many countries? They cost a lot and they are probably idiots. We can address exactly the same international issues just among us. Me, you, and some very good only

British actors. I mean, what about a good, old well-written play? With a simple story and an engaging plot?

Yes, about globalisation. The basic idea, but I am working on it of course, is: there are four or five British people in a living room. A cheap one, you can even use the set of another show. These characters talk about globalisation, and then just before the end there is a sudden twist and we discover something very dark about their past life.

Yeah, that's all. "Don't bother about the details!" – Peter Brook said. Director. English...

Ah, you know him! Personally? Say hello to him. Anyway, here is the budget.

What about three actors? I'd like that. It would help me to be more concise, more sharp, more poignant, more... And instead of a living room we could have something cheaper, symbolic, like an empty living room. Robbers stole all the furniture.

I see. Could I ask something?

Could you tell William to stay just a little far away from me? Thanks.

No, this wasn't the question, the question is: what can you afford? How much?... You know, I am an artist but I am flexible...

No! A monologue!... Not again!

Well, maybe a site-specific monologue, why not? What do you think? Site-specific is cool, isn't it?

Idea! I have an idea. The last one. Listen to it, please. You too, William.

Our play will be set in a peep show club. We won't tell the clients it's not going to be the usual show, so we'll get a huge audience. Each client will be alone in his personal booth, separated from centre stage by a wall of glass. They are ready to get the most out of the forthcoming experience. Lights on, and who enters the stage? Not a Brazilian model. Not a

French entrepreneuse. Not an Egyptian belly-dancer. It's the Italian artist, who immediately starts his monologue about the globalisation. The monologue is wonderful, but nobody can hear a single word, because of the glass walls. Moreover, the Italian artist isn't sexually attractive. But, having paid the tickets, the audience try to have a good wank anyway. The artist sees that and thinks it's an over-reaction, or that the audience isn't quite getting the text, so he becomes nervous and starts to shout, and he shouts and shouts, and they wank and wank, until everybody is exhausted. When they get back home, the audience are so ashamed that they don't confess what really happened, but say to friends and relatives it was a fantastic night. The press believe it and write that "The project, working title, a monologue" is the biggest event in town. What do you think?

But... It's a metaphor...

No need to swear. If you don't understand, I can't lend you a new brain.

And tell your fucking dog to shut up!

Sorry, William.

I go. I go. Just one thing... I've had some expenses to come here. The flight...

Yes, I know you didn't invite me, but, you know, it's just Ryanair...

Okay, quiet William, I go...

Just one thing! I have no change for the underground ticket, could you?...

Quiet, William, no! Not my arm! Leave me! Get this instead! My bag! My... project.

Oh, thanks. But this ticket is valid only for zone 1. Anyway, that's so kind of you. It was a big pleasure. Hope to see you again. In Italy, why not?

But don't bring the dog.

