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Interview from the Series "Art in an Emergency."

Samuel Fintsi

I think I am out of shape and Alexander Kiossev's request to answer a few questions gave me some discomfort. Although I am an actor and should be able to react fast – and professionally, so to speak, I can see there is something in me now that delays or slows down my response and frustrates the routine I would usually deploy for such an endeavour.

Forgetting your routine might offer some advantages as well. This seems vital for an actor. Isn't that the goal of our work: every time we go out on stage or in front of the camera, everything should look as if we are doing it for the first time? And it should happen for the first time. So these two months off stage and off set have had a pretty good effect on me personally. Yes, I am one of those, perhaps not many, people who have benefited in this situation.

Coincidentally, at the moment, I still don't need to worry about earning a living and my physical shape over the next few months. I'm healthy. There are work projects ahead, and I hope they will materialise – not immediately, but in the last quarter of the year. And that's why, in a time like this one, when I was already into a few-day vacation, that has grown for all of us into a few-month one, I'm trying to do no more, but relax and think of nothing, but how to spend a good day. And then spend an even better one. My loved ones are all around me – my children, with the situation providing a chance to give them much more attention than I would be able to in our day-to-day due to the nature of that day-to-day when they go to school, we go to work, etc.

That's just about it for the personal side. To sum it up in one sentence, I'm fine. However, I must not forget that while being isolated in nature, the kind of idea I get of, let's call it, "real life" or life in the city is the one I only get through social networks. I don't watch TV; I don't watch the news and what social networks offer me are the observations of people who post their thoughts, opinions, or experiences on social networks. This is the information I use, my measure of what is happening at the moment in society - in Bulgaria or Germany, or here in France, where I am at the moment. What I found was that I have wound up, let's say, as a voyeur, not in the bad sense of the word, for being reluctant to throw my hat in the ring. I do not consider it necessary to come up with my own opinion on whatever is going on, to respond to conspiracy theories or to join their opponents.

All this is so fascinating; for me, this is a development I happen to observe for the first time in my life. Once again, I am a person who is sitting on the fence, and the moment might

come when I jump into the fray. It hasn't come yet. I guess I have been so busy with work throughout recent years, busy meeting people, absorbing information – my participation in life has been so intense that this withdrawal only seems healthier to me.

Yesterday, during a walk in the nearby town, watching the incremental loosening of measures and small shops opening up for the first time, I was becoming aware of what it was all about. What kind of trials and tribulations townspeople or people dependent on their work had been through in recent months without knowing when they would be able to earn a living over again and cope with their basic needs. I saw this yesterday with my own eyes. And I realised that it wouldn't be easy. The return to reality will be tough. First of all, we still have no idea where this whole shebang is headed.

That's why I shy away from making comments on the significant trends. I don't feel ready for that; I need a bit more time. And here I come back to one of the questions asked by our hosts: "Should artists necessarily reflect what they see or what is happening around them?" They do, indeed, but over time. When someone reacts hastily, I think one risks failing to penetrate through all the layers, the whole complexity, the entire scale of the event.

What kept me hanging on and filled my days, besides physical effort, physical work, were films and books. I haven't seen theatre productions because I don't think theatre can exist that way. There must be people who like it and who understand something. I, for one, am unable to watch filmed theatre performances. I guess I am too much at the deep end of this to be able to sit on the side and impartially indulge in watching a filmed stage show. Perhaps I could make an exception for a dance show.

I am hanging on and keep waiting and watching from afar, gathering strength because I think all this will pass. And all our doubts and fears – they will pass as well. The world is unlikely to change, for better or worse. But it might as well depend on how long we still have to spend amid this uncertainty. And I need time to be able to start reflecting normally on what is going on at the moment, what's going on with me, and with the people around me.

I guess serious artists or writers will also take their time to incorporate what we are experiencing right now into their work. And I do not think that there will be good works of art that fail to relate to these few months in 2020. Once again, I hope it will be just a few months. But we are still too much stuck in the eye of the storm, and we cannot step back and look at the whole picture impartially to understand how much this has affected us or left us unscathed.