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Persona re-personified

Klare Lanson, Chamber Made Opera, Another Other



Erkki Veltheim, Sabina Maselli, Anthony Pateras, Another Other photo Nina Gilbert

Chamber Made Opera's Another Other, produced in collaboration with Punctum and New Music Network, is a new work created and performed by Erkki Veltheim, Sabina Maselli, Natasha Anderson and Anthony Pateras, a stunning audiovisual renewal of filmmaker Ingmar Bergman's legacy.

In "The Snakeskin," an essay written in 1965, Bergman sees art as hunger, pessimistically describing it as a dead snakeskin full of ants, eaten from the inside but still moving with systematic, uneasy activity. A year later Bergman released his seminal film Persona, in which he explored the validity of art, authenticity and the transformative aspects of self.

Another Other probes these themes with expertise and loyalty, a contemporary exploration of our digital age, which enables various online selves, our gaming skins and the smiling veneer of busy loneliness that they project.

Entering the ICU performance space—aply a dark hospital basement—we see an indistinct black plastic sculptural object, inside which is something sonic and kinetic, rhythmic in its disconnection and obscurity. We are seated on opposing banks, projection screens a mask between audience and performers. The performers' stillness emphasises their geometric positioning. Vocal sighs initiate the score, evoking Persona character Elisabet's feelings of shock as she spirals into silence. Two clocks loom above the performers, activated simultaneously. One counts down, alluding to anticipation, while the other counts upwards, indicating time yet to come. There is continual, circular referencing of the film, repurposed and displaced.

A phone rings. Echoing footsteps walk slowly to one side of the audience. The lights shift; we are spotlight. Alongside the performers we become Bergman's ants in the flaking remnant of snakeskin that here is theatre.

Five video projections come into play throughout in front of the audience and on the walls behind. A 16mm projector stands alone, an antiquated sculptural object; it could be a ready-made. Sabina Maselli handles live visual mixing with ease, driving imagery at different speeds, generating abstraction and re-imagining old film footage. Saturated and hallucinogenic, a mixture of processed and real, it's all a blur.

The acoustic score is both measured and random. Natasha Anderson shifts air



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through the wooden flaps of an elongated Bavarian recorder, often using the mouthpiece for extended voice work. She plays it as a multipurpose object, hitting, spitting and blowing, her action fractured and magnificent.



Another Other, Chamber Made Opera  
photo Christie Stott and Josh Burns

Loops of sound rise and suddenly there are simultaneous projections. A discordant violin twists and turns as a facial close-up is revealed. Colour saturated images shift to black and white and slowly the film disintegrates before our very eyes as it did in *Persona* (1966). It peels away from the edges, revealing soft white insides. I'm aware of the other half of the audience peering through.

Erkki Veltheim plays remarkable violin, oscillating between exquisitely slow tonal bowing and high-pitched dissonance. He also plays out the most overt reference to the film—the retelling of the sunbaking scene as a spoken word piece. While it doesn't sit well within the entirety of the work, there is an interesting gender switch as he tells the female story of voyeurism, of sexual experimentation of youth and the violent impact that the experience has on the woman's identity. The female vocals become a choral undertone and combine with the imagery to intensify the sense of psychosis.

Anthony Pateras is an astonishing improviser. For *Another Other* he plays electronics and reel-to-reel tape, altering time and voice. Pre-recorded sound and intense processing generates severity in the score. Pateras is masterful and foreboding as always, an embodiment of storm. The resonating bass takes over, travelling through the body with a harshness that relates to the slapping sounds of the recorder.

The lighting of the audience shifts, creating a new perspective. The clocks now tell the same time, becoming a place of sonic and visual rest. There is silence and then a minimalist sound work begins. It has an oceanic quality, perhaps recalling the beach scenes in *Persona*.

Images of droplets form and Sabina Maselli stands to operate the projector, turning the cogs by hand, forwards and back, place-making in time.

*Another Other* is a riveting and fragmented series of micro movements, collectively composed to merge filmic and musical elements just as characters' identities merge in Bergman's film. This hyper-expanded cinematic experience shows our mental life to be a complicated mesh of meaning, open to interpretation.

Like the ego, *Another Other* is impossible to unpack methodically; there's no narrative thread. This courageous and bold artwork feasts on the art of *Persona* before the clocks stop and finally there is silence inside the self.

Chamber Made Opera with Punctum and New Music Network, *Another Other*, creators, performers Erkki Veltheim, Sabina Maselli, Natasha Anderson, Anthony Pateras; Punctum's ICU, Castlemaine, 5, 7 Dec, 2014

Klare Lanson is a Castlemaine-based writer, poet, performance maker and sound artist. Her project #wanderingcloud (RT118, p41) is to premiere at the upcoming Castlemaine State Festival (<http://castlemainefestival.com.au/2015/event/wanderingcloud/>).

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