

***"I am and will always be an explorer"***

***Interview***

**You have always navigated between theater, film, dance and music. Which artist are you?**

Sascha Ley: After three decades, I'm just beginning to know (she laughs). Since school, I have always had a total approach. It's hard to choose, to give up practices, passions. At the time, everything was framed, but today, forms and disciplines are mixed. It is in this kind of proposal that I blossom the most. The important thing is that there are always open roads, paths on which I can advance. I am and remain an explorer.

**In this vast artistic palette, where does music fit in?**

It is always there! I have a strong bond with music, and I want to do it all the time. It's not an effort for me, even if sometimes I work like crazy on a project for six months or two years. This connection is all the more true if you boil it down to the voice: I always carry it with me. It's my instrument.

**Your first album dates back to 1999. Do you feel like a precursor in Luxembourg?**

(She hesitates) It's complicated for me to find a status. What I do know is that I belong to the generation that did everything in the country to make sure that our art was considered as a job, and not as a simple hobby. To be paid for it, to have rights... But let's be modest, I didn't invent anything! And in theater and music, there were already other forerunners, just as motivated and inspiring.

**In recent years, the national scene has changed radically. Is it more difficult to make a place for yourself?**

Back then, I was the first known female jazz singer here. And the scene was much more spontaneous. When I played somewhere, for example, it was not uncommon for people to come up to me and say, "Are you coming to our place next week? And it worked, even if sometimes I was paid by the hat, or I received a ridiculous fee. Nowadays, there is a lot of talent, and the whole scene has become more professional. To do a concert, you have to organize yourself, plan months in advance. It has become a job in its own right! Afterwards, I'm not complaining: I'm still here, I have ideas in my head, I find my public... I'm not lost or forgotten at all.

**With this new album, *In Between*, you put aside for a while your collaboration with Laurent Payfert. How does it feel to go solo again?**

(She laughs) It's a great adventure, always exciting! I felt the need. Yes, I did it without thinking, out of necessity. There were those two and a half crazy years, when I was torn between different projects. It was exhausting... I then felt like concentrating on something more determined, through which I feel free. But be careful, solo doesn't mean being isolated: I can indeed go everywhere, encourage meetings, imagine performances with other colleagues. Being alone opens up a lot of possibilities. And it allows me to say certain things directly.

**What is *In Between* about?**

Behind the improvisation and the abstract narration, it is about great reflections on the meaning of life. I lost two people who were dear to me the same year. I accompanied them to the end, and when you confront death with such intensity, you come out changed. *In Between* is about that in-between time, from birth to the inexorable end, during which we are

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agitated, we live, we love. It speaks of beauty and tragedy, of the infinitely large and the infinitely small. To be aware of this kind of things, it's a little bit closer to happiness.

### **This record is more radical than the previous ones, almost experimental. Is the stripping down a way you are looking for?**

I like to go to the essential, to the very essence of things. To dig deep into the feelings. Especially that this desire of restriction does not prevent a certain force to impose itself. In such a music, the feelings nestle in the spaces, the cracks, the breathings. There is beauty in the restraint. After that, I am not obsessed by sobriety! Besides, in live, I will add instruments, and surely words, images...

### **Is going beyond musical traditions a motivation?**

As soon as I hear a new sound, my ears open wide and my brain clicks! Afterwards, however, it's the naturalness that takes over. I don't try to do something experimental at all costs, but it happens! Let's say that I like to express myself through unconventional tools, and inevitably, the result can be singular. I even manage to surprise myself! When I like it, I dive and the more you go down, the more you discover things in the depths. So it may get even crazier in the future (she laughs). But again, it's not a concept. I don't like the idea of making art for art's sake. The important thing is to reach the audience. If not, it's because we've made a mistake.

### **You spoke of your voice as an instrument. How did you come to this association?**

I have always sung, without any academic training. It simply fascinated me. And a voice is one of the things that best characterizes you. At the beginning, if I chose jazz, it's because I understood, very early on, that one could invent things. As time went by, I discovered experimental and avant-garde music... It's fascinating to think that music is everywhere, that you can catch it and arrange it. The important thing for me was to avoid falling into a form of sophistication. I wanted my voice to express itself naturally before coating it with effects. It took me a while, but now I'm having fun!

### **The language, the voice, the minimalism... Do you feel close to an artist like Camille?**

The comparison is flattering, but I don't know her repertoire well. My references are rather to be found in free improvisation. To be in the middle of musicians, with one of them jumping in and the others following, on instinct. I've seen people make incredible sounds with their instruments! I am trying, today, at my level, to do the same thing with my voice. And to define through it my own universe.

### **On more "classical" pieces, you take on the role of storyteller. Telling stories is what unites all your projects, isn't it?**

Yes, it is! Whether I'm in concert with my songs or in the theater with someone else's text, telling stories is indeed a common thread, whether we address the intellect or the senses, the brain or the body. Besides, when you talk too much, it doesn't work as well.

### **Fortunately, there is abstraction...**

Yes, it's a way to let the audience or the listener build their own stories, their own dreams.