

# Kirill Serebrennikov

## Voices (Towards Other Institutions) #5

At the very beginning I made a motivational video with isolation guidelines. I had lots of experience because of the house arrest. There were several points and now I have to admit it was more of a way to cheer people up.

What I wanted to say was: Friends, don't ever give up! But the situation is different. Being wrongfully arrested, slandered, bearing all the injustice makes you build up an enormous energy of resistance. But this is completely different from being stuck at home because the whole world stopped.

It's a different scenario, with nothing to resist. You realize this metaphysical pause is like radiation, no wonder the pandemic is compared to Chernobyl. There's no apparent source of danger, everything is just on hold. And the pause penetrates your pores, gets into all spheres of life, and there is no knowing what to do.

It would be nice to encourage people to learn languages, read, write, listen to music, watch films, use every second of the suspended time, this rare gift of fate that doesn't fall upon many lives. We are living a unique experience. But apart from that, at

some point you want to give in to the pause, stop, do nothing, listen to nature.

Actually, nature hasn't stopped: trees are still growing, rain's falling, weather changes, first the sun, then the clouds, birds're singing. It's still the same, maybe even better, as they say nature is healed. If nature hasn't stopped, then what has? Our hustling, trying to conquer nature, our rapacious ways caused by the bloated ego of humanity. We think we can conquer the world.

A while ago a capsule was launched into space by the amazing Elon Musk. A private company transported people to the space station. It means the state can no longer usurp space missions. People used to order and control must be hit the hardest. People belonging to the state, to structures. They draw their own conclusions from the pandemic. There's a theory that all the state measures: restrictions, controls, authoritarian instruments, come from dealing with epidemics, like plague in the Middle Ages or Spanish flu in the early 20th century. The state had to cope with epidemics. But when they were over, the know-how expanded to normal life. By the same token, after 9/11 we take well to being searched, X-rayed, deprived of water bottles, we fight terrorism non-stop. Terrorism might have changed, but we are still battling the old one, of the turn of the century. So, the State learned its own lessons.

But we artists belong to the chaos, we must fill the uncertainty with music, perceive it, and eventually embrace the pause...learn to love it in ourselves, find an accurate expression or a feeling in our own nature, in music, or in other art forms, which are all music after all. Our challenges are different. We must feel, listen, understand. And fall silent, after all. It's time to be quiet, stop hustling around.

There is this nice tale of two Buddhist monks. The older one asks: 'What have you been doing?' The younger one replies: 'Watching the trees grow.' 'Keep hustling around, eh?' says the older one

We should stop hustling, listen to the pause, blend with it, so that less muck, noise and scum gets beyond our wonderful lockdown.

*Kirill Serebrennikov is a Russian stage and film director, and theatre designer. Since 2012, he has been the artistic director of the Gogol Center in Moscow. He is the author of numerous productions at the Moscow Arts Theatre, and has staged operas at the Saint-Petersburg Mariinski theatre, Bolshoi theatre in Moscow, Helikon-Opera in Moscow, Berlin Komische Oper, Stuttgart Opera, Zurich Opera House, among others. He has also staged ballets at the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow, and has vast experience with film and television. In 2011, he founded the experimental project "Platforma", which he directed until 2014.*

*In August 2017, the leading Russian director was accused of conspiring to embezzle state funds allocated for Platforma. After spending almost 20 months under house arrest in his apartment, he had to go through an excruciating Kafkaesque trial, facing up to 6 years in prison. On June 26th, Kiril received a three-year suspended sentence and a heavy fine. He also has to reimburse the state for most of the costs for Platforma over the 4 years of its existence. His management team was sentenced to fines and employment bans.*

*Kiril's video contribution to Voices (towards other institutions) was recorded prior to the Court's ruling.*