



ABC

Sidney Leoni

EN | Choreographer, dancer, and performance artist Sidney Leoni's feature-length film *Under Influence* première this week at the Beursschouwburg. This is his ABC. **IVE STEVENHEYDENS • PHOTO: IVAN PUT**

"I grew up in the south of France and at a young age, I decided to take ballet lessons at the Toulon opera. I was able to build a theoretical foundation thanks to my studies in dance, music, theatre, and ethnology of the arts at the university of Nice. Afterwards I did research into choreography as part of the Master's programme at DOCH in Stockholm. Despite the good fortune of having completed several arts programmes, and especially surrounded by talented artists, I do primarily consider myself an autodidact with a great sense of **ADVENTURE**. That is also true of this film project. The 'dynamite acting' of Gena Rowlands in John Cassavetes's *Opening Night* and Elizabeth Taylor in Mike Nichols's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* or the last seconds of darkness in Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* made me eager to start working on this project. I don't really want to be identified as a dancer, choreographer, or filmmaker. Again, autodidact fits me best."

"I travel often, and I really enjoy commuting between here and Stockholm. But there is nowhere in the world that you have the same cultural freedom and possibilities as in Belgium and Brussels. The number of artists, spaces, and enthusiastic creative people is enormous here. Unfortunately, I don't think we cherish that enough. Friends and colleagues - cinematographer Doan Hoang-son, performer Manon Santkin, choreographer Mette Ingvarsten, Helga Baert from the Hiro production house - convinced me to move to Brussels. Here I immediately found people and institutions that were willing to help and support me with this ambitious film project, for example Buda in Kortrijk, the Beursschouwburg, and Centre Culturel Jacques Franck in Brussels. But this **BIOTOPE** is so fragile, and with the latest cuts to subsidies, I'm afraid that it will not emerge unscathed. Let us hope that the arts scene in Brussels continues to be this full and rich for many years to come!"

"My research and productions often tend to be immersive, sensorial, and experience-oriented. Over the last few years, I have worked in total darkness so as to submerge the audience in soundscapes and let them experience wind circulation, temperature changes, vibrations, and smells. The transition from choreography to **CINEMA** was thus small and logical. Making the film has allowed me to explore further the relationship between images, sounds, music, dramaturgy, and dance. Film opens a space between reality and dreams that you can fill up freely as a director. Writing and making this film did not necessarily follow a logical and linear pattern. That is why the work especially attempts to move people, rather than presenting a structured narrative. Instead of asking the old question: 'What is it?', the film seeks to explore the question: 'What does it do?' Of course, it is up to the viewers to judge whether or not we have succeeded in this goal."

⊕ **UNDER INFLUENCE** 25 & 26/3, 20.30, Beursschouwburg, www.beursschouwburg.be