

Ode to joy

The International Theatre Festival Divadelna Nitra 2016, which takes place in Nitra, Slovakia, it is really a reason for joy. Performances that talk about the past, present and future in different aesthetics and directorial visions, from different political and social contexts could be seen in the frame of this event.

For me, as a young theatre critic who comes from a conservative, pseudo-stanislavskian theatrical context, where the theatre is 100 years lagging behind, it's a great opportunity to synchronize myself with what is happening today in the European theatre, which are the artistic trends of nowadays creators, what themes they are approaching and in what form they are delivered to us.

Ode to joy? (past-present-future)

The theme of this edition is connected with the Slovak presidency of the Council of European Union. Organizers are aiming to raise some general questions about European values through the performances and accompanying program of the festival. I should necessarily mention that they have an extraordinary, well made accompanying program. It is really created for the "normal" peoples from Nitra. Creative workshops for children's, screenings, readings poetry sessions, concerts folded by young musicians from Nitra, white nights-art exhibitions, discussions and workshops for schools, actions, installations, book launches, residency, debates etc. Not every international theatre festival has a so diverse accompanying program, for all ages, from various art fields, that involves several institutions and organizations in Nitra and I want to congratulate them for that.

Past

[One of the main questions that the organizers launched is: How should Europe cope with the past? - Through dialog...]

Back Then in Bratislava (by Peter Pavlac, directed by Patrik Lančarič, Slovak Chamber theatre Martin, Slovakia) and *The Hearing* (by Tomáš Vůjtek, directed by Ivan Krejčí, Chamber theatre Arena, Ostrava, Czech Republic) try to answer to this question. The soviet totalitarian regime and the holocaust are at the base of those performances.

They are staged in a conservative, traditional way, with wonderful actors, with documentary screenings and without any sophisticated demanding. Is this way of staging the past is relevant

for nowadays? Which is the impact on the audience? How to talk about past in the present without slipping into pathos and stereotypes? These are the main questions that the directors must ask themselves when they decide to stage such a text. Otherwise, it is the risks that the performance will turn into a museum piece, outdated and lifeless.

Present

[how does Europe face the challenges of the present?]

"чему на свете так богато зла"

Roses

Dakh Daughters band from Ukraine – an organic and affective combination between good and evil, love and hate, aggression and fragility, femininity and masculinity, staged in the aesthetic of freak cabaret. Five girls are speaking about war and love using texts of various national and international authors like Taras Shevchenko, William Shakespeare, Charles Bukowsky etc., mixing all genres of music, playing at 15 different instruments, accompanied by screenings of symbolic images. Their music produces joy and empathy.

Future

[what is indeed the future of Europe?]

"we are not only a community, but also individuals"

Why does Herr R. run amok? (directed by Susanne Kennedy after the text of Koen Tachelet, from Muenchner Kammerspiele, Germany) it's the most honest confession about the (present) future of the European citizen.

Susanne Kennedy's style is totally new for me. She destroys everything that was built by theatre makers until now: the way of existence of the actors on stage. Actors are wearing silicone glacial masks which blocks any human emotions, movements are automated, and they are not even speaking with their own voices. The text is recorded by amateurs and is just mimed on stage by actors. Even swallowing or scratching head sounds are mimicked. We are witnessing the deconstruction of history, of the human body, the interhuman relationships, human individuality. The way of behaviour of the contemporary man, stamped habits, disconnection with the nature, denial of primary instincts, driven models of existence, the emptiness of life brings man to loss the feeling of life. Mechanization born aggression and aggression born death. A very powerful deep and harsh performance made in challenging and stylized way.

The aim of the festival is primarily the audience development, education of the public. Secondly, be a source of inspiration for local artists a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences. A mini platform for this kind of exchange is the morning discussions with the creators of the performances from the festival program. Discussions necessary both for artists and critics, a place where you can call spade a spade, where you can find out details from the backstage etc. Mr. Patrice Pavis, our mentor from the **V4@theatre Critics Residency 2016**, said that critics should be more courageous, more aggressive, to say what they think about the performance, to move things forward, to be that bridge that connects the artist with the audience. I agree with that, but there is sometimes the risk of conflicting with the creators and it's not easy to take that risk, you can become a persona non grata. In the framework of this residency, I had the rare opportunity to make a presentation of the contemporary theatre situation in Moldova, together with my colleagues from Ukraine, Belarus, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. It is really interesting and useful to find out which are the trends in theatre in other countries, what problems they are facing, what themes they are approaching, how does survives independent theatre from different social and political contexts, are they politically engaged, can they change something by the activities they do?

[How many reasons to joy has Europe to offer today? To her peoples, to the world...]

I think that there will be reasons to joy as long as there such kind of festivals. Events which are asking questions and trying to find answers. Events meant to connect. Events meant to bring joy.

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