

My Message Uneasiness

The unifying theme of this year's volume of Divadelná Nitra is very directly connected to the nationalist and xenophobe tendencies which have been increasing since about a year and half ago. Openly speaking, many of the performances which I have seen have been very tendentious and it was quite easy to summarize their „political message“.

After the first performance *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* which I have seen I went to bed easily. No unsolved problems followed my mind because I knew for a certainty that the performance warned me against the negative consequences of individualism. The very well made and impressive „German theatre“ aesthetics of depersonalization turned out to be quite a secure way how to illustrate the shining thesis of the performance.

In *Back Then In Bratislava* there was a lot of effort to make the realistic staging comprehensible to a wide spectrum of spectators. I also appreciated the skill of the actors who played in a very psychological and serious way. But I got a headache from the general illustrativity of the performance. The director Patrik Lančarič stated at the public discussion (I am paraphrasing): „We do know that many elements are illustrative and they may appear silly but we intended to stage them like that because we wanted our spectators to get the important message.“

Well, in some way I admire this strong-mindedness. But I also find it very naive. The performance criticises the absurdity of a world where people are blindly following their images of „the good“ attitude to life without any regard to the feelings of their fellows. The performance criticizes a lack of self-reflexion but it itself almost misses any humour or at least a distance. How can his work warn people against taking their fixed ideals and themselves too seriously when it is in general using such a serious and unimaginative approach to staging?

These were just two demonstrations of a general tendency in the dramaturgy of this festival which makes me a bit depressed. I think that such endeavour to force theatre to state clear „advices“ is contra productive in it's consequences. Art has a power to release a great amount of energy in it's recipients in the realms where cognitive means of affecting society fail. In contrast to them art can afford to be open and subversive. In these two cases it voluntarily traded a huge amount of it's power off.

Barbora Etlíková (Czech Republic)