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Review of the performance »First Altruistic Performance: The art won't save the world«

After ten years since his setting of the play entitled »Last Egoistic Performance«, the stage director Mare Bulc, with a reversed paraphrase of the title of his performance, returns to the stage with another author's theatre project.

However, as the first project was not really egoistic (it was actually a study of the fluidity of the author's function and was, therefore, polemical towards the concept of ego), it could only with a touch of irony be said that his second project is altruistic. As author explains in the booklet which was (as well as everything else necessary for the performance and according to the title of the play paradoxically) designed by himself, the performance is a critical response to every artistic project that hasn't done anything else than exploiting the cooperation of the unprivileged people in order to strengthen their artistic ego.

So what does he do? He brings the spectator into a very simple, almost poor situation where everything is a bit limping. The chairs are too small, wobbly and the wedge attached to them can't reach the shorter leg of one's own chair. The performer is - in some broken and free manner- alone. When in the running order he announces the course of events, we are already imagining ourselves how we will have to place chairs in such a way that everything feels comfortable for everyone, and in one way or another, as soon as possible, to become better altruists. Even before the beginning, we are called upon to make a radical decision: to participate or to leave. In fear of yet another foolish participation, we hesitate. However, it turns out that, as if in some bad educational situation, with its concrete activity in the structure, as it is set up, nothing really can contribute to anything really crucial. And perhaps this is also the author's statement.

Anyway, there would be no performance without our participation. We actually co-create the half of the material that forms the exhibition from the inscriptions on which we can read pairs, such as "the misanthrope - to imagine a different world", "paedophile - mutual cooperation", "colonialist - financial and material help", which can be read as a way of how to help these non-altruistic persons, or more sarcastically, how they (should) help the world. Some of the combinations are quite (to say brokenly) successful. More or less meaningful and nonchalant walks, the transfers of material and equipment around, where we are like little sheep, completely left to our own reading, are framed by performer in different scenes. In the initial scene with the didgeridoo, this new-age tribal "community" instrument par excellence, which the performer puts on his phallus, the author clearly demonstrates that even the playing of Christ the martyr as a paradigm of an altruist can have purely egoistic purposes. In the last scene, with his body he literally "wedges" into a semicircular horseshoe made from chairs on which the spectators squeeze and thus, for the collective thing, gives his own body. It is not just about giving – we need to sacrifice ourselves. But in the end, this is not only humility, it is also the pleasure, which at least according to orthodox Christian logic, for the purpose of a true altruism, as a concept must be cancelled. Or does it? So has spoken Mare Bulc.

So what did we get? Hardly anything. However, this modesty is more than a major goal of saving the world, which is often promised by art. Why should we even expect something like that from it?



After ten years, since the setting of the »Last Egoistic Performance«, Mare Bulc returns on the stage with a new author's project of the »First Altruistic Performance« (Photo: Tomaž Skale)