

To my readers!

United by the typical representatives of the old art tendencies, driven to defend its beliefs, freedom of speech and the right to criticise anything shamelessly (the toughest mode of criticising in the history of Czech theatre), a part of the young generation assumed the title that had been thrown in their direction: the editor's office of the Meeting Point. We want individuality, and we want it in the art of critique as well as in art per se. Individuality above all, full of life, creating life.

We see the people that received a heap of chintzy productions instead of the light of enlightenment. The people have become a vapid mass, devouring the self-appointed art (often below average). A flock of sheep that settles for a form bordering on kitsch in the name of “good fun”, and lets itself be herded by the pawns of politicians.

Art should serve a higher purpose. We do not value thoughtless, fanciful patching of second-hand thoughts and forms, imitations of popular songs, cheap, sing-songy rhymes and grey sectarianism, false personality cults and flat pseudo-objectivity. We want freedom in art, the honest inner truth that has only one standard, its bearer, the individuality.

These are truly strange times, in which the newest generation grows up – fed up with empty phrases. Carried away by sympathy for commotion and life. It seems, however, that the mutual communication and meeting may be the beginning of a new era in the history of the whole world.

Yesterday's program was the fullest one yet. Apart from the students of DIFA JAMU with their “Romeo and Hero”, our dear guests have presented themselves – guests from Slovakian VŠMU, Poland, Switzerland (a premiere of an international production), and last but not least, the unique participants from Iran (anyone who did not get the chance to see them yet – go today, at 10:30 a.m. to HaDivadlo theatre).

We woke this morning to the light of the last day. No festival visitor should miss the opportunity to see the Encounter movie (an edit from TV Encounter that ran throughout the whole festival) at 3 p.m. in HaDivadlo theatre. And then the eyes of all the citizens of Brno will turn again to Goose on the String Theatre (Divadlo Husa na provázku) where the final verdict of the festival jury will see the light of day at 6.00 p.m during the closing ceremony. We keep our fingers crossed for everybody's sake, and we're looking forward to the results with great relish.

We have worked for many days and today we bring you the last printed copy of Meeting Point. The fifth and final issue will be presented only in an electronic version

on our official website www.encounter.cz, where you will find final results and accompanying photos, but also reviews that could not be printed anywhere else.

At this point I would like to thank by name all those who have taken part in this difficult, but noble task (that is, the preparation of a new issue each night, in two language mutations, and under difficult technical conditions). The names are as follows:

Hana Svobodová,
Eliška Luňáčková,
Pavel Nesvatba,
Maruška Votavová,
Marek Doležel,
Táňa Kovaříková,
Simona Vaškovičová,
Jan Krupa,
Kateřina Menclerová,
Alex Parker,
Michaela Dragounová,
Eliška Poláčková,
Barbora Doležalová,
Martina Kavínová,
Jana Šunková,
Kristýna Šedivá,
Tomáš Kubart,
Iveta Šedová,
Martin Macháček,
Ervin Hodulík,
Michaela Malčíková,
Jana Žáčková,
Viktor Černický,
Markéta Toufarová,
Milan Čtveráček,
Michaela Suchá,
Lukáš Kubina,
Dorota Lichvárová,
Markéta Zástěrová,
Ludmila Nerudová,
Zuzana Malášková,
Katarína Cetkovská,
Silvie Kudelová,
Martin Veselý
and Simona Nyitrayová

PS: Postmodernism exists!

Lukáš Paleček
ex Editor-in-Chief
an eternal revolutionary



REVIEWS OF THE MAIN PROGRAMME

The Artistic Academy – the Faculty of Theater
(VŠMU)

BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA

MIDSUMMER NIGHT DREAM

Simply Simple Shakespeare

To stage Shakespeare is not simple today. Anyone who tries is facing a difficult task of seeking out his own themes, new meanings and new approaches to a notoriously known text. The search of the VŠMU students was quite successful.

Michal Vajdička, the director, has dressed the old text in brand new clothes, literally. Even though the audience is watching the story of two couples in love rambling in mythical woods, the director's concept took the plot from ancient Athens and situated it in contemporary world: fashionable clothes, mobile phones, bikes, bottled beer. At the beginning, there is a fabric block, from which the trickster Puck introduces himself. When the block is lifted above the heads of the actors, the stage remains empty: the white floor and horizon are used for screenings. The empty space underlines the performances of the actors. The students delivered an extremely physical demanding performance: they fling themselves up and down, drag or carry each other around, what more, they run through both the stage and offstage spaces – they used literally every inch of the “Husa na provázku” Theatre.

The production aimed at connecting physical erotics and psychological mysticism. Stressing the first part, they have succeeded only partly. As far as the physical erotics is concerned, they made the most of the original text: long pauses after double entendres (“I am so hot...”) illustrate the approach. Someone might object that to employ dirty humor is dirty, the truth lies somewhere else, though. The dirty humor was following the mound of the funny situations building up on the mise-en-scene and physical acting, it fitted together. On the other hand, those who were looking for spiritual love were disappointed. It is not clear to what extent the authors of the performance were looking for it, though. They overlooked the seriousness of the romantic words, turning them into irony, of which the dramatic personae are not fully aware of.

The potential of the parts were turned to profit by all the actors, however, the comic four of amateur actors were the favorites of the audience, mainly because of the performance of Martin Šalacha as Nick Bottom. Andrea Sabová as Hermia seemed to be, on the other hand, the weakest of the group. She portrayed her character as a doll, who acts out of pure naivete and ignorance, and manipulates her boyfriend, so that her love

seems to be only a passing fancy.

A Midsummer Night's Dream by VŠMU has found its own themes and fulfilled the task. It was up to the audience to either warm to its merits or to slip away – the door was open wide.

Viktor Černický



applause 1,5 min

Shakespeare dressed in the costume of a circus clown

The Bratislava ensemble of travelling comedians came to Brno with a play by some Englishman, and set up their tent at the Goose on the String Theatre... This introductory entrée could sum up the production of Bratislavian VŠMU nicely. Their version of “A Midsummer Night's Dream” was characterized by carnality that verged on acrobatics and a certain level of erotic charge, which never slipped into vulgarity.

An Elizabethan, minimalist stage had been created by an acting area delineated by a piece of neutral white cloth that ended at the backdrop. Light-motifs depicting the setting of the action were projected on the backdrop during the show – something which seems unnecessary, because the original text had been used in full. Equally redundant seemed the quadratic area fenced with chicken wire that was elevated and de facto played the part of the curtain. The actors used the whole space of the auditorium and of the whole theatre building, and the general public would not even suspect that the production had not been rehearsed in the given space. The original play had been probably written as a celebratory piece for an aristocratic wedding, later adjusted for a common audience. Shakespeare connects three lines of the story – the one including the aristocrats, the fairytale creatures and the craftsmen. The last mentioned level is the most prominent one in the production, and evokes familiar village figures from the times of “budding socialism”. The stage is gradually filled with a party of proletarians in flannel shirts, riding old time “Ukraine” motorcycles – ecological scooters of co-operative farmers – to rehearse a play about Pyramus the knight and lady Thisbe.

Director Michal Vajdička probably wanted to work with two levels of theatre in theatre, and that is probably why he sends the actors to get into their costumes right in front of the audience. His intent had not been, however, carried out thoroughly, even though the actors shouted at the audience, or stepped out of character. The intent remained unheard among the bursts of laughter that were provoked by the character of Nick Bottom. He is the connecting element of the three levels of the play, and therefore he is crucial for the concept of the production. Martin Šalacha, who reminds one of the actor Josef Króner, depicted the folk spon-

taneity and roguishness of his character perfectly. Eye-catching facial mannerisms and a well-thought out work with his voice show – especially in the scenes when Bottom is transformed into a donkey by mischievous Puck – that he mastered this difficult character completely.

A climactic scene of the show came when the proletariat performance was presented in front of the aristocratic audience. The noblemen stand on platforms opposite each other and watch a constrained performance of the craftsmen in an imaginary arena. The amateur actors try to explain the system of theatre signs they will use to their lords in advance, in order to prevent any misunderstandings. Shakespeare, with his own unique style, shows a narrow-mindedness of the higher classes that are not able to understand the folk theatre that uses a system of signs. The summit of the show comes in the moment, when three of the workers create an industrial coulisse out of three joined bicycles. This wall is then mounted by Tom Snout (Marian Viskup) - slightly retarded, flour-stained, and almost always high-spirited thanks to beer – who stands in the wake of a newly budding love of two lovers. A beautiful maiden – played by a bearded young boy according to the Elizabethan practice – has to talk to her beloved one through a hole that is usually reserved for human waste. But the craftsmen's show falls apart under the pressure of the aristocratic audience and ends up a complete disaster. Puck comes forth in the final moments of the show, to toy with a spotlight, and to apologize for the show.

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* made by the Slovakian team was an enjoyable surprise. Their adaptation was almost flawless and it is therefore a great pity that a more detailed review was not possible. The actors resembled a *Commedia Dell'Arte* troupe, and the comedy of the original text was augmented by a certain histrionic touch to the performance. However, the meaning had been a little lost in the merry atmosphere that reigned during the whole performance. What did the authors want to say with this well-rehearsed circus act? This is the only thing that eludes me...

Ervin Hodulík



applause 2:05 min

Midsummer night dream

If you went to *Goose on String Theatre* (*Husa na provázku*) on 8 April with the expectation of seeing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in its classic interpretation you must have left the theatre very surprised. The final year students of the Academy approached this famous piece by an even more famous playwright in their own way. The actors proved that even such a familiar story can be handled in a modern fashion without the blank ver-

se reproduced by cell-phones sounding awkward but in fact the opposite way.

One of the most important things about every drama is the translation. Michal Vajdička, the director, chose the translation of L'ubomír Feldek and Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav. The spectator realised very quickly that this adaptation was going to be slightly different from those we are used to. The script, in fact, contains many modern words, sometimes even quite vulgar ones. However, this doesn't go amiss since they are always well-timed.

The modern approach can be felt already at the very beginning of the play when the author sketches the story itself. It is when Hermia learns from her father Egeus that she has to marry Demetrius, even though she loves Lysander. Surprisingly, the physical absence of Egeus in this scene poses no obstacle, as he communicates with a cell-phone. And there are more jokes like this one.

The scene setting of the human world is modern as well. There is a white cloth on the floor and on the back wall of the stage, in front of which the actors stand dressed in coloured costumes. Hermia and Lysander are in white and red, and Helena and Demetrius wear dark colours. The whole stage is brightly and clearly lit.

But when the plot moves to Fairyland, where Titania rules, the lights soften and the spectator finally understands the function of the large cloth in the background. It is a projecting screen, on which various ornaments and shapes created by the reflectors appear. First, they look like small jelly-fish floating in a dark sea, then, when the king Oberon is talking about crying, there appears something like tiny drops; tears. Another speciality of Fairyland is mysterious background music, which couldn't be heard in the world of humans.

It was very nice to watch the young actors who obviously enjoyed being on the stage. They acted with skill, although some scenes must have been physically very demanding. For example the part where Helena tries to convince Demetrius to love her and leave Hermia to Lysander. It is a fight rather than lovers cooing. Demetrius pushes Helena away hard several times, they tussle and she won't stop urging. However, the spectators had the best time when Martin Šalacha as Nick Bottom emerged on the stage. His character – an unappreciated and quite pretentious amateur actor – was the real icing on the cake brought to the Festival by the Slovak Academy students.

Markéta Toufarová



applause 4 min



Puk



Hermia and Demetrius



Hermie and Leandres, Helena and Demetrius

University Theater House of Iran
TEHRAN, IRAN
WOMAN, MAN

Eraserhead from Persia

The darkened stage vibrates with a heartbeat, the sounds of a megalopolis complete the idea of a person thrown into the world. In the darkness, we hear car horns, snatches of conversations, everyday rush on the streets of a city. Morteza Mirmontazemi, accompanied with the music of the dead King of Pop presents the eternal theme of cold and heat, light and darkness, woman and man in a complete theatre form. Superficial from the point of view of a story, but very imaginative theatre-wise, this form manages to keep the whole production above the level of boredom and greyness thanks to its creative and inventive geysers. The performance is more about the horrific fatality and life predestination which we cannot escape, rather than the misfortunes of a married life turned into a disaster.

A woman and a man trapped in white boxes, trying to leave the womb of birth – this is represented by cutting the umbilical cord hanging from the actors' bellies. "I was born here. This is my city," can be heard from the loudspeakers. The white stage changes and becomes a sketching pad for small children. The boy is drawing a car, the girl (Mahnaz Zabihi) a house, flowers ... until they finally meet during a meeting game and walk out together, totally in love, to subsequently create their sweet heart using red sprays in order to celebrate their dear feeling (there is a funny association of the shaking of the spray, which alludes at certain sexual images). Then several nights pass when the married couple rolls stereotypically in the bed until a baby is born. "Without a child, it would have been better. Easier ..." The good times are over, the man (Amin Tabatabai) enacts the busyness of everyday work, the woman is home alone with the child, feeling neglected, "daily life" becomes a "deadly life". The boredom brings television into play, knitting, falling asleep while watching political debates (the man comically repeats his childish gesture when found by the woman to be watching some erotic show). The woman tries to look pretty, the man works to feed the child, but somehow the paradise is not working. The direction took advantage of the scene and with a stroke of genius materializes the woman's fantasies (a lover cut out of the paper stage) and those of the man (money cut out the same way). .. the relationship is shaken by lack of trust, the man finds himself a lover (orange silhouette with "-18" - let's hope she was at least 15 ...).

"Maybe we've said too much," guesses the couple. Sitting with their backs to each other, they are moving the screaming child, each of them trying to avoid it – a heavy stone that has wedged between them. The woman ends her relationship with it symbolically by taping its mouth, while the man literally squeezes the baby to death until black liquid is pouring out of it. The bile pours

out and is cleaned only in the old age through crystal clear understanding. Coming over the bitter topic is done with a clown's pride, the two walking on the chessboard towards death. As if the fatality and predestination had already been announced in the man's first words: "I was born here. This is my city."

Tomáš Kubart



applause 3,54 min

A Universal Couple

When an Iranian company performs for a mainly Czech audience a performance about the man/woman dynamic, it naturally leads to a lot of expectations. Most Europeans have a host of prejudices about the Muslim world, some of which could be cleared up by this performance. What really needs to be said as an introduction is that if we didn't know it is an Iranian company, we wouldn't be surprised if it were any European company.

Dynamic music helps to graduate the expectations of audience who are witnessing the life story of a man and a woman from birth to death. This life journey is divided into short episodes that metaphorically portray different life stages. The birth is expressed by a visually impressive cutting of a transparent material, cutting of the umbilical cord and the start of life. Life as a couple, with all the usual problems, work, tiredness, birth of a child, old age and death, as well as relationship problems, lovers etc. The normal life however ends with the killing of the baby – represented by a fabric puppet. The question is what was the real cause of its death – whether it was the general neglect or the man's crude force with which he deliberately squeezed the baby. This moment is a sort of elevation from an otherwise predictable story about life stereotypes.

The performance *Woman, Man* does not give rise to many controversies, as one would expect; it would be interesting to see the reactions of audiences in Arabic countries where the women's situation is problematic, to say the least. In this environment, though, it is a rather simplifying collage of stereotypical episodes without deeper meaning - it is rather a thirty-minute *étude* about the life of a man and a woman. The life stages are not clearly distinguished and, unfortunately, the development of the characters is not traced either, so at times it is difficult to say which life stage we are currently in.

From the formal point of view, the performance is very inventive, there are genuine ideas perfectly interwoven into the overall conception and the production is coherent in the use of means during the entire show. There is a sheet of white paper on the floor that has the function of the acting space. It is used for example when the man is cutting out the bank notes and the woman – in the same moment – is cutting out a figure she later has

an affair with.

Amin Tabatabai in the role of the man, looking like a fairy-tale brigand with a full beard, is better than his partner Mahnaz Zabihi in terms of acting, and is thus the main comical element of a performance that is full of witty ideas despite the monotonous storyline.

Lukáš Kubina



applause 3,40 min

At the beginning everyone is by themself

The play *Woman, Man* depicts human life from birth to death showing passages from childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age.

Concerning the performance, a person of my age and experience cannot predict what to expect from a Muslim culture. *Woman, man*. Two worlds. At the beginning, the scene is divided in the same way – a man on one side, a woman on the other – each of them in their own cell. The man and the woman are shut in a “cell” the front of which is covered by plastic. Some time later we figure out that the cells represent placenta and the ropes hanging inside them resemble the umbilical cord. A scalpel cuts the plastic and the children are born. The cord, as an umbilical cord, is symbolically cut, too. The atmosphere is set and the play continues with depiction of children’s games.

The passage from children playing and drawing to their early school years was simply amazing. A boy drawing a car goes on to counting first simple calculations and then complex equations. For me, the most powerful moment was the scene where a newborn child is constantly crying. The man and the woman are clueless about how to soothe the child so they are tossing the child back and forth between them. The woman takes a tape and seals the mouth of the child (which is actually a doll). This particular scene split the audience into two groups – one was horrified, the other was laughing. However, the laughing part of the audience was dumbfounded not long after .

This cross-section of life from birth to the last breath simply engulfed me. I am not sure whether it was because of the wonderful conception of the scene and how it was used in an innovative way, the atmosphere or the acting almost without words. In short, I was delighted and pleasantly surprised.

Martin Veselý



applause 3,50 min



man and woman



man and woman



man and woman

Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna im. Ludwika Sol-
skiego w Krakowie/ Ludwik Solski Academy for the
Dramatic Arts in Kraków
KRAKOV, POLAND
EVERYTHING SLIPS AWAY...

Even this article slips away!

The production by Polish Students under the guidance of Joe Alter left a desire in me to dance through the entire day, and also a feeling that even if everything slips away and this ephemerality often causes pain, it is still worth going through it again and again. Inspiration with ephemerality is clear and communicable from this dance performance, and it is primarily human ephemerality. Human desires, disappointments, expectations, fulfilment, meeting and meetings in all phases of life from the birth until death. From the stage, I could feel the energy which wrapped around me gently and filled me, and led me to an understanding that my life in a long-term relationship with a partner actually looks very much like this: I love you, Milan!

The Krakow students of The Ludwik Solski State Theatre School all seemed like outstanding individuals to me – individuals that know how to come together into a single unit on the stage, and thus act as one body. With them, movement is natural and full of concentration, and human life is portrayed as the law of action and reaction, the dancers are set in motion by inner as well as outer impulses. Some of the moments in the show reminded me strongly of the German dancer Pina Bausch. A dance performance the way she created it – a succession of emotionally charged images, full of memories, desires, questions of identity and mutual understanding between a man and a woman, a man and a man, a woman and a woman. To name something specific I will mention a scene, where there are some hugging couples, and one of these keeps falling over and getting up again, as if this was a direct allusion to the Café Muller production.

Contemporary, expressive dance connected with words felt like a single unit, and I did not have to think through whether the dominant element was the word, or the movement, or vice versa. The fact that Everything Slips Away... is presented as a certain, irrefutable fact. Still, changes for the better are possible, and so are the changes for the worse. And then there are the changes which in fact don't change anything at all, not if we stay the same.

To conclude this review, I'd like to take the liberty of being a little informal and ask you – if you have already finished reading – to go out and dance today, and also to tell your nearest and dearest that you love them.

Jana Žáčková



applause 3,20 min

Joe Alter: Everything slips away...

Bouncing their legs, five men and four women were sitting on the forestage of the Bolek Polívka Theatre, while the audience was coming in. As soon as the noise calmed down and the lights dimmed, the actors started an excited discussion. One of the actresses paused after a while and danced to the row of seats at the back of the stage, followed by her colleagues, one by one. The forty five minutes of the performance started, during which you couldn't take your eyes off the actors-dancers.

All the actors danced in their own style at the beginning, maybe to show what the audience could expect from them. After a while, two actors synchronized their movements, dancing together for a short while. Then, one of them departed to be replaced immediately by another actor. Each of them having taken turns like that, they ended up dancing the same figures all together, which was very impressive.

The whole performance consisted of many short stories which were almost without exception danced. The particular stories pertained not only to the relationships between men and women, but also between two men or two women, presenting stories of lovelorn or unrequited love, misunderstandings, forgiving, fear, contempt and such.

All the actors remained on the stage during the whole performance, changing their roles several times. The basic pattern was two central couples dancing in front, being watched from a distance by others, who were developing minor wordless pieces on both sides of the stage. However, their minority was relative, as they could in a moment pass from the edge to the centre of the stage, becoming the centrepiece. One story hadn't finished yet, and a new one was already beginning in another part of the stage. One story was, thus, transferred into another, which, later, bridged into yet another etc. What was interesting was that the audience was not immediately aware of the fact that the story was over, because the process of passing over was gradual, requiring some time to be noticed.

The music being an important part of movement performances, this one definitely wouldn't have such layering without it. The choice of music was very appropriate, supporting the atmosphere of the story. The changing of musical motifs could help the spectators to recognize the crossings from one story to another.

Last but not least, I'd like to point out the acting. The performance was very physically and mentally demanding, but the actors managed to act it out in an excellent way. Unfortunately, as the title of the performance suggests, everything slips away. Therefore, even this performance finally slipped away, a striking success with the audience.

Markéta Toufarová



applause 3 min



dancers



dancers



dancers

The Dimitri's Theatre School / Scuola teatro dimitri
VERSCIO, SWITZERLAND
GLUTTONOUS AMPHITRYON

Excuse me, mister God...

At the beginning, the scene was rather empty. Minimalism. However, such decoration was sufficient, because any additional piece of decoration would only mean an encumbrance. The actors were taking turns while acting and those who didn't play at the moment were sitting on the chairs on the side of the stage and supported the atmosphere by sounds, voices, tapping or playing a musical instrument (a clarinet).

I have never seen before a physical performance or a whole play with masks employed in the way they are used in Commedia Dell'Arte and that's why I was absolutely enchanted by the Swiss theatre school. Each and every movement was very precise and exact. The masks were rough, rich in colours, decorated with ornaments and they covered the majority of the face except the mouth. The eyes, which are so important for mimic gestures in classic drama, were almost hidden in small loopholes. Therefore the whole weight of expressing oneself was on the movements. This fact was by no means an obstacle and there was nearly no language barrier. The actors played with their bodies easily, fluently and flamboyantly; everyone showed a wide range of movements which, in some scenes, were even synchronised. In this way they presented to us a number of different traits even within one character when the real Amphytryon loses his personality and his different images in different times and contexts (a dog, a woman, a German officer, a thief, a clerk) start to appear. The whole play was very imaginative and impressive. I even caught myself staring with my mouth and eyes open wide like a child watching a fairy tale or a magic trick (and I wasn't the only one – the actors on the sides of the stage shared my feelings). Mercury's evolution which was rather purposeless but impressive may be forgiven because of the points mentioned above. Comments of different characters mainly in English (even though the German "Scheiße" was also very relevant) built on the humour of the play. Pulcinella was simply endearing and DIO was genuinely human (or should I say classically masculine?) after sleeping with Alceme, he even danced the dance of joy. Alceme was the femme fatale in a spring breeze with "ka-ching!" which was mirrored in her eyes (supported with a ting) when Amphytryon/DIO attached her necklace.

We have seen a contemporary drama with contemporary characters. Only the means of the play were somehow magical and that might be the reason why we had the possibility to look at our lives – very unobtrusively – from a different point of view.

Dorota Lichvárová



applause 2, 50 min

Viva la revolución, salto mortale and goofs

A deadly serious Amphitryon? A cliché? No way. Presented by the Swiss Scuola Teatro Dimitri the Amphitryon was played as a Commedia dell'arte and in addition, it was Gluttonous. The antique “tragicomedy” in which the highest of gods decides to seduce Alcmene, the wife of general Amphitryon, was transformed into a period of revolutionary outburst in South America in the 1960s. Or at least I hope so.

Amphitryon (performed by Raúl Nene Vergas), in his costume, was reminiscent of Che Guevara. A charismatic fighter with a beret and an ammunition belt around his shoulder who left his home for a great war and left his wife Alcmene (Sophía Rodríguez) to the mercy of the situation. The great god (Micga Goldberg) profits from said situation. This divine seducer has a simple name. He creeps in disguised and Amphitryon and starts to seduce the wife. Eventually, coincidence and many miraculous events bring the spouses back together. Beside the framework of recollections of revolution in the region, the creators work also with a television banality from South America and they parody the absurdity of never ending “telenovelas” (soap operas). Except the thematic aggravation, the form of the Commedia dell'arte itself changes. Therefore, instead of the character of “Capitano”, there is a wild revolutionary woman called Capitana (Alaide Ibarra). Together with Capitana, the character of Pulcinello (Claudius Hoffman) creates a couple who stand out from the performance (even though other actors were also amazing). The actors are flexible, energetic and the masks of the characters fit their faces perfectly. All the same, to ensure a rapid flow to the play, it might have been better to shorten some passages, particularly at the end because it seemed (inaccurately) that the play had three endings.

Nevertheless, the play preserves a pleasant mask and surprises not only by its form and wild situations, but also by the manner of speech. The actors spoke Italian, German, English and Spanish. There was another level of playing with genre and forms connected with the language – the character of Pulcinello browses through a fictional script and finds out that he is going to die in one of the scenes. He gets rid of these pages by eating them and hence he prevents other characters influencing the development of the play.

Such a constellation was strengthened by the cellar stage of CED, the raw walls of which went together with the zero setting of Gluttonous Amphitryon. This enabled a birth of energy that worked not only on the stage but also along the walls, where the actors not needed at a given moment watched the performance. It must be added that the erotic aura reached even the spectators...

Macháček



applause 3 min



maids



Capitana and Pulcinella

Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in
Brno (JAMU) – Faculty of Theatre
BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC
ROMEO AND HERO

Thanatos's Ejaculatio Praecox

Eros, who hits us with his arrows in the shade of Thanatos on the verge of dream and reality, slashing the horses of Freemasons. Director Ján Mikuš opens too many topics at the same time: Death, Love, the Ode on Solitude,... The classical story of Leander and Hero is being renewed by panoptic visions of the director in the 18th century in a story of a young Serbian mason and a poor student. However, a performance which needs twelve pages of supplementary texts makes me hesitate at the very beginning (as if a photographer added explanatory commentaries to his pictures), so I demurred at reading it at all. Theta, the letter of Death, hangs ostentatiously above the lives of the characters (as if we had few speakers of the language of the Death this year), while ejaculatio praecox is a big problem of at least the main character.

The set design (by Iveta Ryšavá and Ján Mikuš) seems to imply the irregular order to the performance, or the mysterious world of fractals and Fibonacci's numerological magic, being the most solid component of the performance at the same time. The impressiveness of the scenography lies in its dynamic potential: white in the light, the frames become blue in the light of UV lamps as strings bound together, framing the performing space. Héró (Lucie Schneiderová) is from the very beginning dangerously floating in an over-expressive approach to her character, managing to balance it a bit later by precise gestures and exact timing. Long exposition opens the performance like a fishbone jammed in one's throat, serving as a non-essential packet of crispy rice that don't satiate you, although filling your stomach: a useless commentary and no theatre at all.

The most impressive part of the performance was, unquestionably, the quartet of musicians (Tomáš David, Veronika Lazorčáková, Ladislav Odrazil, Darina Kovářová) varnishing the situations and representing the fauna of Činorič's farm. The members of the group, together or each on their own, work as a vitalizing element in the performance, both in the comic (David, testing authenticity of a coin tossed by Eros, choking) and animal scenes (Odrazil's excellent dog). Other interesting directorial ideas are for example the paternal wisdom pronounced during urination, that goes in one ear of Čihorič the Son and out the other, or Father's arrival with a revolver, which starts Son's short run. Leander Čihorič doesn't hesitate to use all his messianic tricks in balling Heronea Bukurová (Petra Lorencová), even walking across the lake during the cruise in a boat. It is obvious that the text of the performance, as well as Mikuš's other play *Ryba horí*, is full of senseless pseudo-mystical announcements not supported by experience.

I was anxious about Leander's painful problem of premature ejaculation, which was due to his "inability to establish contact" (the expression being slightly inappropriate and inaccurate, though). I felt oppressed by too many allusions. I was distressed by the futility of searching for the meaning of the presence of the characters on the stage. I felt burdened by strife for finding any meaning of the performance at all. Nevertheless, at least the acting lit up "Der Himmel über Marta", showing people from the theatre its serene face, although the text, thanks to the absence of some glue of meaning, was left mainly with empty paraphrases of the New Testament.

Tomáš Kubart



applause 2 min

Mirror behind a mirror

On the stage of Studio Marta we are able to observe the mythical story of Leandr and Héro in all sorts of varieties. One layer of the story is made by the own action of these two characters. With time come into this more amorous destinies from different time levels (mediæval, present) so in final we have the opportunity to watch more stories connected by the identical motive – love. That is personalised by Eros who was impossible to overlook. Perhaps because he was striking the characters by love just for the feeling of own satisfaction when he didn't care about the effects his actions. Hanging with his head down and arms crossed he reminded nearly of a bat more than a baroque angel.

If we were up until now used to simple stages Romeo and Hero was scenically as complicated as the text of the authors duo Mikus – Hanzelova. The stage is using the vertical movement, scene braking which carried more meanings. At the beginning for example the front part of the scene meant death of the heroes and their descending into the underground. Later on was by the same way described the distance in time and relationships, the impossibility of their meeting. Straying without the light which was showing them the way that Leandres should set out to Hero.

The scene exponentiates the impression of shattered world. White strips which were the only shining element on often dark scene created the impression of mirrors. One reflected another and we were unable to establish what is real what is only reflection and what is the reflection's reflection. It is necessary to say that this formal treatment didn't help to make sense out of the performance just the opposite. The viewer was losing himself and was drowning in meanings the same as Leandres when Hero didn't indicate where to swim by the candle light. It was impossible to say what is happening in the mirror and behind it.

A big mythical discussion was excellently accompanied by music. The quartet of actors telling the story sometimes overtook the role of animals or musicians was

more distinctive (with three exclamation marks) than the quatrefoil of the main heroes. But it is not only their credit. In such a complicated director's concept where the viewer doesn't have enough time to catch neither to endorse with any character, the figure is hard to describe. The idea is understandable but we cannot speak of a deep understanding of the performance.



Viktor Černický

applause 1,40 min

Pictures of a black horse

The only play by the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno on the official programme of the festival is *Romeo and Hero* written by Ján Mikuš and Jana Hanzelová. This graduation project of Ján Mikuš performed in Studio Marta deludes the audience by its atmosphere and a fascinating form. However, even the mounds of metaphoric images and highly refined details don't seem to help the play to become an ensemble.

There are four storylines that intersect and overlap in many different ways and are framed by four characters – the mythical Hero (performed by Lucie Schneiderová) and Leandr (Radúz Mácha), an 18th century mason Leandr Čihorič (Petr Pavlas) and his son and a present-day student of chemistry Heroneja Bukurová (Petra Lorencová). Their lives are closely interwoven. They exist in a world controlled by Mikuš's imagination and his ideas. The doctrine of creativity is solidified by a group of four actors (Veronika Lazorčáková, Darina Kovářová, Tomáš David a Ladislav Odrazil) and by Eros (Petr Míka), a mysterious conductor of love and the whole existence. The group similar to gods is transformed into animals, inhabitants of the village or even into the environment in which the play is performed. Beyond the visual scene, they transform into sounds, too. They lead the characters through a labyrinth and they complicate their communion. They can be humorous as well as terrifying, they seem to be confused and at once they are coordinated. The characters possess a sense of humour; they suffer from depression or manic attacks. They are comic and tragic at the same time. Mikuš benefits from the room of Studio Marta – ladders by the portals, hydraulic tables (overused), the auditorium or the area behind the curtain of the rear prospect.

Each half of the play follows the destiny of one character. In the first half, Mikuš already overflows with ideas. However, it seems that the climax is destined to the part of Heroneja and her passionate relationship to Manasija's brother. The scenes in the second part are even more vivid. Still scenes? But where do the poetic discourse of the characters and their tragic destiny come from? Who created these intense characters who were

put by Mikuš into an intricate background? Was it an author whose name got lost in visual codes? It's difficult to say, Pavič. The intellectually buoyant might offer something more.

Energy gushes to such an extent that it fades away. Distinctive poetic and provocative discourse is lost in a rush of others. A lot of prohibited but sparkingly erotic activities disappear because there comes another wave of ephemeral wisdoms. Where is the kingdom then and where is his black horse? Who is the king and what on which horse does he ride? Is he even black?

Martin Macháček



applause 1,35 min



Lucie Schneiderová



Tomáš David

REVIEWS OF THE OFFPROGRAMME



Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in
Brno (JAMU) – Faculty of Theatre
BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC
SALOME

I work in the media sphere I am a celebrity.

After monodramas based on pivotal female roles like Medea, Ophelia, Grushenka – here we have another one – Salome.

The blond-haired Salome H. (Simona Zmrzla) is not from the scrap-iron Herod's time. Mobile phones, make-up, magazines – ideally with an article about her that's all a modern famous girl needs. Primarily to be the centre of attention, to give a memorized interview full of excuses but, alas, if somebody scores a direct hit, she loses her footing. She is uncertain, agonized and is looking for help – any, anywhere, from anyone. And the viewers are becoming the direct participants of her manipulation. Humming a musical motif she expresses who is the queen here. And, oh horror! if she falls onto the second place among the celebrities – that's the worst news she can come across. You have to understand it – to be behind Britney Spears, that's the end of the world!

Salome is trying in her home under house arrest to entertain somehow, she's taking pictures of herself, she's reading. And maybe once at night when she's locked in her home and is not illuminated by the light of a big city she sees the sky. In her relationship to the moon (what gender is this orb?) she's portraying the perception of herself. The moon is at first a virgin to her and by and by it becomes a whore. Angry, moody, capricious Salome is taking off her wig and mask and begins to be real, honest but also vulnerable. She is trying to come to terms with her relationship towards men and the surrounding world in general, seeking the answer why are they looking at her, why are they all staring. In her loneliness she is latching onto the most inappropriate person, the publicist Jan who writes about her. Every time she gets to the topic "men" she anxiously covers her lap. She is endangered, torn. She's not able to face anything any more and being hurt she runs back into her solitude, into her girlie bedroom full of blinking lights from the market and teddy bears, into a place which is hardly acceptable for a party animal like her.

The humility which the program expresses to the team work does not hit the spot and there is nothing else to say than just – keep up the good work.



Michaela Malčíková

applause 1 min



Simona Zmrzlá with a wig



Simona Zmrzlá without (wig)

About a Girl

A small, intimate space of room no 013 in the far-famed actor's school secured a place for monodrama "Don't eat smoking fish" (directed by Marika Smreková) during the highest peak of the festival hustle and bustle. Her own adaptation had been inspired by a short story by Slovakian writer Dašena Krištofovičová. This author wrote her testimony in the 1970s, reflecting in this way on her own emotional life.

A bulletin that had been placed on the seats informs the audience that the production team let themselves draw inspiration from the aesthetic of Czechoslovakian theatre director E. F. Burian. Nevertheless, I was not able to detect the nature of this influence during the course of the show – in fact, I was not offered even the briefest of glimpses of the genius of this avant-garde director. The only notion close to his legacy could be traced in the team's work with theatre signs. The production is notable for its nature that lies in the work with signs. On the other hand, the chosen form of the production is usually linked with the notion of theatre signs – and what is more, it is often dependent on it when it comes to the initiation of the actor's actions. Actress Alžběta Hofericová perfectly matched the nature of the character she played. She portrayed a credible type of a happy teenager who is characterized by a moody nature. The actress sometimes lost her way in the text, but she always managed to turn the slip to her benefit, and always found her way out of the mess again.

Her character swam in an imaginary fish tank on the stage, as she identified herself with a fish - "I am the queen of fish!" The fish tank was created by many bottles, empty or filled with water, which delineated a rectangular acting area. The young girl communicated with the outer world by the means of glass objects. She received various messages in bottles, or she pulled her plastic colleagues out of glass jars. A rostrum covered in black velvet was placed in the middle of the enclosed acting area. May be a more mobile object might have been more useful here – for example a chair that might have taken on more meanings in the process of the work with the sign.

The storyline of the monodrama is mainly occupied with the relationships of the main character, whose words at some moments sound murky and pathetic – the male spectator could only roll his eyes. An image of a young girl is depicted – a girl who is dragged out to the open ocean by the current of life, where she feels lost and lonely. In five stages of her adolescence we discover how she copes with this. The stages are separated by the sounds of somebody blowing into an empty bottle – these sounds function as lines of different characters, and also as the starting signals for the ac

tors' actions. The element of music is always present in the production, but does not create any new effects, it merely accompanies the action. A ricky-ticky of a guitar did not create any sort of atmosphere, nor did it bring new meanings to the actress's utterances. Other elements of the production are used only very hesitantly. Seven years of the girl's life is contracted into a single year cycle with the changing of the seasons. After three unsuccessful relationships we discover ourselves in the autumn, when the protagonist comes out of the closed area of her own failures and leaves the auditorium with a hope of a brighter future to come.

The young director paints a picture of a young girl's fate who finds herself in the middle of the tumult of life's collisions. Her budding youth is subjected to natural forces so that it could bloom later, and use the experience in her adult years. The theme of the production let me unaffected, but the overall composition of the show held together. This shows that Smreková is walking in the right direction.

Ervin Hodulík



potlesk 1,50 min

Where did Marek stay?

One of the last off-program performances, monodrama "Don't eat the smokin' fish" directed by Marika Smreková, refers in its programme to the poetics of E. F. Burian. However, nothing other than a superficial similarity, stemming from the use of the same number of materials, can be seen in the allusion. The set design is limited to many glasses, jars and bottles, framing the space for the performance. Another material used by the set designer is plastic (representing a bed, paper, or a puppet). One could argue, whether the use of plastic, having been part of scenographic aesthetics for many years, is something new and inspiring, when the scenographer is not able to exploit its advantages. It is used, as well as other things in the performance, without any substantial meaning only as an aesthetic object. The light design is at least problematic, making the performance plain and colourless.

The performance is based on the short story by Dašena Krištofovičová, which she wrote at age 17. The question is if the short story is inspiring enough for a monodrama as a theatre genre. It is obvious from the style of the performance that its authors are mainly women. Not only does it want to look "aesthetic", it deals with majority of the topics only superficially, not trying to find any logical outcome for any of them.

The actress Alžběta Hofericová, with grey dress, eccentric hairstyle and prominent make-up, seems to be stylized as the author of the original text. Her behavi

our resembles that of 17-year-old teenager, living in her own world according to her own rules. Whenever the slightest problem concerning morals appears, she refuses to address it. This single, disinteresting mode of acting is not changed during the whole forty five minutes of the performance, so that the actress doesn't have opportunity to show all her qualities.

Unfortunately, not even the music brings anything surprising. Pointless thrumming of primitive melodies doesn't support the stumbling timing at all, only ornamenting and illustrating the particular situations.

The audience enjoyed more the singular scenes that resembled very much those in the HBO programme "Na stojáka", than the whole performance. The TV format is the kind of performance which the director should turn her attention to in the future.

Lukáš Paleček
Editor-In-Chief



applause 1,10 min



Alžběta Hofericová



Alžběta Hofericová

INTERVIEWS



INTERVIEW WITH DEMETRIUS PETER BRAJERČÍK

How long have you been a part of the production? What were the reasons for its staging anyway?

This is our last production, and because we are taking our finals this year, it is also our last production at this school. We rehearsed it at the beginning of the school year, and the premiere took place on November 15. And then we staged it only occasionally, because we have a lot to do in our school theatre. Three years of student work there at the same time, and nine premieres a year take place on its stage. Nevertheless, we did try to stage our production as much as possible, despite the limitations.

How much did the actors help out with the process of organising of the whole production? Did the director give you a free hand at least to some extent?

Of course it was a collaborative effort, the director brought in an idea, and we all joined in. In most cases, this meant that we worked on the technique of movement, because there's quite a lot of leap-frogs, difficult jumps and so on in the show. In this production, like in any other production of a Shakespeare play, an important thing is the situation and what follows from it. Therefore, the director merely suggested a general course for the situation, and we had to fill in the details and come up with our own ideas.

Considering the fact that the show is physically very demanding, you still have a second show ahead of you today, at 4 p.m. How do you cope with that?

Well, you know... Everyone does his best. It can be done, if one does a set of warm-up stretches before the show. Then it is manageable, and no one gets hurt. We are all a little battered, but only within certain limits. A few bruises - that's part of the game:)

How did the space of the Goose on the String's theatre influence the whole production? Did you have to adjust it from the standards of your home-stage?

Our stage is different in some respects, yes. We have an extra storey, therefore we run up and down three floors (balconies) in our theatre, unlike here in the Goose. We have two storeys and the stage. And of course, the backstage area is radically different, the corridors and so on, so we usually have to run through the whole school during the show, just to get to where we need to be. But to stage the show here, at the Goose, was not as difficult – that is why we chose to play here. Because the stage of the Goose resembles the one that we have in Bratislava.

Markéta Toufarová

INTERVIEW WITH IRAN ENSEMBLE

Judging from the applause, the Czech audience really enjoyed your play. What were the reactions to it in Iran?

Morteza Mirmontazemi (director): Since this play was performed only once in Iran and people really enjoyed it there, but I think that here people enjoyed it much more. We've performed this piece in Belarus and Armenia and it was not like this reaction, but it was still great.

Maybe it is because your play also deals with darker aspects of life – is it possible that the audience here is, let's say, more open?

Morteza Mirmontazemi: I think there is no difference between the audience here and in Iran, in this sense.

In Europe, people often feel that the women's position in Iran is not very favourable and maybe there were some hints of this topic also in your play. Was it your intention to show this aspect as well? Or are the things changing?

Morteza Mirmontazemi: Well, I think there is not much difference in the situation in Iran and other countries. It's just a part of real life, but it's not all the same for all the people.

Mahnaz Zabihi (Woman): Well, women do all the work at home, they manage the household in a typical Iranian family, but what is also important, women want more attention from men, they want more passionate men. I think Iranians are more passionate than people in other countries.

Amin Tabatabai (Man): Iran is a really big country, it is developing into a modern country, there is a lot of industry and people want to have more knowledge, so for example, we are improving in pharmacy. We can improve and be a really modern country, we have the capacity for that. After one week in your country, we have found a lot of similarities to our country and to our people. We feel that we have a lot in common, we have same reactions to certain things. And you know, in Iran, people go to work, live normal life – it is the same as in any other country.

The play is not based on language, but uses common symbols that everyone can understand.

Kristýna Šedivá

**INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR
JÁN MIKUŠ**

Romeo and Hero is being played in Marta also besides of the festival. What does it mean to you to appeal at the Encounter ?

First of all it means that the performance chosen by the school pedagogues who decide which out of the absolvent performances should represent the Academy. It means that this production is to present the school and I am very pleased.

Is there a difference in how the audience feels the performance ? Did it show for example in the applause ?

Surely it showed. The spectators have the hardest day of the festival. They were awaited by four extremely long performances so they are exhausted and their attention was excessive. But I think that the audience was great regarding such a hard theatre.

Encounter is getting closer to an end. Is there anything that inspired you ?

I didn't see all performances but I was intrigued by the Korean Hamlet. It was a great experience because I think that this production is of high qualities and on the top if that is reachable to an European viewer.

Where did the idea of making Romeo a Hero originate ? Would you find any personal subject in it ?

I wanted to create an absolvent production based on a traditional text, traditional play. But in the end I decided for something more risky and complicated. I decided to do an authors production in that sense that the text is being written and untested. It was more challenging and more dangerous and more courageous. I also want to thank to the Academy that they decided to put this play onto an international festival.

And why just the name Romeo and Hero ?

Because the play comes out of the authors who processed the antic myth about Hera and Leander. This story is the main inspirational motive which Shakespeare used in Romeo and Juliette so it's acceptable to say that this myth is the antic Romeo and Juliette. That's why I put Romeo into the name – as a joke because there is no Romeo in the play. Nobody knows Leander and Hera but everybody knows Romeo and that's where the joke is. It can be misleading but the play saw many people and the true "theatrical" spectator never got it. He is lost in all sorts of stage expressions. The ordinary spectator is watching the story and is enjoying it.

Viktor Černický

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR DAVID GIOVANZANA

You have worked with masks and movement theatre in different countries, such as Finland and Latvia. Do you think some of them have a greater predisposition for this kind of theatre than others?

No. I don't think there are people-actors that fit better with the mask. It's true that in some countries there is a stronger tradition of this kind of theatre, though. So people know more about this, while in other countries it is like discovering something strange. But it's just the matter of training and approach, and when I teach class acting or direct a show, after a moment it goes beyond, because actually the mask, and especially commedia dell'arte mask, is half mask, related with popular culture. So it is something that is actually coming from times even before Christianity, from paganism, and this is something that is seen across Europe, so that you can see people from Finland, Latvia, or Czech Republic, even from Italy, share the same backgrounds.

You participated in Encounter 2008 with a school from Latvia. Have you noticed any evolution of the festival from that time to now?

Well, honestly, this time I couldn't see anything of the festival, because we arrived very late, as we realized the process of this show is not finished. Tonight is the premiere, the first time, so it's strange because we made the show for an Italian audience and now we have the premiere here, where audience doesn't speak Italian, so it will be very strange for us.

What is it like to work with students from your home country?

Well, that's very funny because actually in this group there is nobody from Switzerland. There are two actors from Columbia, one actress from Venezuela, one actor from Bolivia, one actress from Mexico, one actor from Norway, one actor from Germany and two actresses from Italy. So I cannot say that I was working with Swiss people. Although Switzerland is multicultural.

What feelings do the applause rouse in you?

Of course, the feeling of satisfaction, and it's nice to see that the audience enjoys the work and then that the dialogue has happened. This is most important: the dialogue between actors and the audience.

What is it that fascinates you about masks, that makes you use them in your work?

There is a first question, that is why humans feel the need to cover their face with another face. So there is a really mysterious act and the question why to do that. So there is the element of mystery with the mask, the mystery and transformation. We are working with the energies, kind of unknown energies or energies that stay below the ground, or energies that go beyond the

human, almost like animal energy. This element of mystery and then the mask allows the actor to reach another level, and to see things that he would not see because of the mask. Of course, it's an object, so it can free, it can help you but, it can be also an obstacle for the actors and also for the audience. It's not that easy. It's not because you're putting on the mask - a wall, and it's fantastic. Actually, for working with the mask, you need the big technique. Really huge technique.

(The last question was posed after the performance.)

What are your feelings now?

Relieved, of course. It was very difficult for them (actors) to do such a show as artists, and then it was very difficult for such an audience to understand many key elements that went on.

Dorota Lichvárová



singer



management trio



singer



band

MAIN PROGRAMME



SATURDAY 9. 4. 2011

10:30

Iran, Tehran
University Theater House of Iran
WOMAN, MAN
(30 min)
HaDivadlo Theatre

15:00

ENCOUNTER MOVIE
(60 min)
HaDivadlo Theatre

18:00

CLOSING CEREMONY
(60 min)
Goose on the String Theatre



OFFPROGRAMME



SATURDAY 9. 4. 2011

12:00

Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in
Brno (JAMU) – Faculty of Theatre
Brno, Czech Republic
Hana Mikolášková
MEINE LIEBE PIPSIMAU
(60 min)
DIFA JAMU 105

15:00

ENCOUNTER MOVIE
(60 min)
HaDivadlo Theatre

18:00

CLOSING CEREMONY
(60 min)
Goose on the String Theatre

21:00

EVENING NIGHT
POP Kings Night
Abajo Club

Meine liebe Pipsimaus

Director: Hana Mikolášková

Cast: Růžena Doláková

The text of *Meine liebe Pipsimaus* is based on the first two parts of the trilogy of Hrabal's memoirs, *In-house weddings* and *Vita nuova*. The first part of the memoirs starts with depicting the life of Hrabal's future wife Elishka, who came from a well-off German family. Her parents fled abroad, followed by her brother and sisters, while she could have stayed in the Czechoslovak republic thanks to her Czech citizenship. However, being a German, she was later transported to a work camp and forced to work in a brick factory. The second part of the memoirs is, above all, a collection of humorous, absurd, philosophical and sadly-true stories from Hrabal's and Pipsi's life together.



Sat 9.4. - 12:00
DIFA JAMU 105



Meeting Point num. 4

Editor in Chief of Festival Newspaper:

Lukáš Paleček

Vice editor in Chief of Festival Newspaper:

Hana Svobodová, Eliška Luňáčková

Corrector of Czech Version

Kateřina Menclerová

Jan Krupa

Translators:

Barbora Doležalová

Michaela Dragounová

Martina Kavínová

Ludmila Nerudová

Eliška Poláčková

Kristýna Šedivá

Jana Šunková

Markéta Zástěrová

Corrector of English Version

Alexander Duncan Packer

Mgr. Karel Pala

Graphic designer of Festival Newspaper:

Simona Vaškovičová

Graphic designer of Festival:

Kateřina Miholová

Photos:

Marek Doležal

Pavel Nesvatba

Marie Votavová