

OPPONENT ´S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE MASTER ´S THESIS:

Attachment to the state magister ´s examination report.

STUDENT: KUKOVIČIČ Lea

Branch of study: MA DOT

Opponent: MgA. Branislava Kuburović, Ph.D.

“Cizinci ve Vesmíru” / “Aliens in Space”

Lea Kukovičič’s Master’s Thesis reflects in detail on the processes of creating a trilogy of performances that marked her master studies in object and devised theatre through engaging a dramaturgical strategy of alienation and playfully proposing to read performance situation(s) as events involving ‘aliens in space’. Kukovičič chooses to draw from the most formal statements of meaning and significance of the topics she engages with by continually referencing their dictionary definitions, and to read them primarily via their uses in pop culture. This conscious strategy of starting from and staying with the most general tastes and references is not explicitly addressed in the thesis but allows a similar kind of distancing from the agreed systems and standards of meaning and value in theatre making. It allows her to approach the most general topics (art, happiness, love) from a certain position of unknowing, to keep discovering them anew, both in the processes of making the work, and perhaps not as successfully in the process of reflection and writing about the works themselves. The format of the thesis, requiring her to describe the ideas and strategies behind the works, to reflect on the processes of making and to situate the work theoretically and historically, has perhaps not been made alien enough to allow for a truly productive manifestation of her chosen strategies of making as an active principle of the writing itself.

The difficulty in finding the best balance between an informed and clear reflection and her playful approach to her topics and dramaturgical tools, has really done a disservice to the works, which did allow the audiences to join in with this unknowing and undoing of meaning and expectation, and get a fresh and unexpected view of the spaces and topics of the trilogy and to truly experience themselves as alien(s) in the situations

they found themselves in. The reader cannot really experience the work and these strategies in quite the same way. The reflection is detailed, the sources are present, the context is set, but the thesis simply documents and lists them in an articulate manner and does not engage them in a way that would allow the reader to join in the process(es) of discovery, or that would take the ideas to their full consequence. It remains a kind of depository of ideas for discussion and for some possible future use. I certainly do see the value in this, but feel that there has been a missed opportunity in the thesis to fully engage these notions and deepen and strengthen the student's engagement with them in the writing process itself, and through the additional research.

The thesis shows that the student is familiar with the literature, the choice of references is solid even if not extensive, but the dialogue with the sources has not yet been truly established. Maybe the best case in point is the notion of alienation itself. Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt* is such a well-established notion in theatre and the thesis only engages with it directly in a short section in the third chapter. The work would have benefited a lot from a much more thorough analysis of the technique. The same is the case with the idea of the other, of stranger, of the alien. We can see how these notions functioned truly productively in the devising process and for the dramaturgical, acting and spatial choices of the performances, but they remain not fully explored in the thesis.

Maybe the key to really making the best use of this depository of ideas established through the thesis is to engage far more fully in dialogue, to be unfamiliar and strange in a dialogue with the others, with one's sources, with one's collaborators, with one's audiences. Once we have successfully made the world, and art, happiness and love, unfamiliar to ourselves so as to really expose ourselves to them once again, it is crucial to be able to maintain the dialogue in this exposed state.

I recommend the thesis for the defense.

Date: 14th of June, 2019

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