

Oponentský posudek

Re-evaluating the visual in the theatre artistic research

MgA. Katharina Schmitt

I have relished reading this dissertation very much. It's a many layered, complex system with ideas such as perspective, body, god, blindness, destruction and creation meeting in logical yet inspiring connections. I am very grateful for a text that is so informed yet multifaceted. It is a text written by an artist, where the connections are deep yet never over-described. And while sometimes I wished to hear more, I cherished the liveness and the openness of the system.

I would like to admit that my work and my thinking is remarkably close to the ideas disclosed in this dissertation. My own dissertation about work of Arpad Schilling was also similarly dealing with his ideas of perspective, visuality and presence of (audience's) body. My creative work, for instance with artists Julian Hetzel often deals with destruction and creation. So, it was a delight to think with this dissertation about this idea further.

I especially appreciate parts where Katharina unfolds how the theoretical ideas of perspective and perception within the dramaturgical systems, how they happen within performances, both in the examples of her own work as well as other artists. Experiencing visuality, fragility of perspective and conditionality of perception are for the audience, in my opinion, most important aspect of contemporary theatre. This is what is experiential and exciting, this is what helps the audience be present, but maybe more than anything – this is probably the most important ethical and political issue within contemporary theatre: understanding of fragility of perspective, fragility of icons, fragility of being together. To paraphrase Diderot: theatre is a place where the audience sees their own blindness.

In this sense Katharina proves that theatre is not a place where one consumes, receives narratives, nor a place of pure escapism, but a place of change, metamorphosis, a journey into unknown – where what changes is not the characters or story, but our own understanding of how we watch and thus our understanding of reality.

I am sure one could always find in every thesis this or that theory that is missing and is not quoted. In that sense I would like to recommend for instance *Visuality in the Theatre* by Maaïke Bleeker (2008) or Eyal Peretz *Dramatic Experiments: Life according to Diderot* (2013) for Katharina's attention. But I sincerely believe that the amount of theory is so vast that there will be always something missing and that the artist has the right not to know all the theories, and that the theories can be both inspirational but also burdening for artistic research.

Here are some of the follow up questions that I would like to continue having dialogue with Katharina about. And I am obviously asking as a dramaturg and a teacher:

- What are the basic elements or strategies of this dramaturgy of visuality, perception and perceptibility? Since it is obviously quite different to drama and post dramatic dramaturgical elements.
- Does the audience need to be aware of the aspects of watching, perceiving and perspective when experiencing this kind of performance?
- How can one apply this type of creating and relating to audiences within teaching young directors? What would a workshop for instance look like?

I recommend this dissertation for defense.

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