

Oponent's notes on Lea Blasko's master thesis 'Documentary Theatre in Post-War Communities'

Lea's text reads as a self-reflective and critical confession, on some occasions as a manifesto of an author of documentary theatre. Without the need to burden the reader too much with explanations and formalities such as the introduction or conclusion, Lea opens what might be, but is not at all, a big and heavy curtain of a difficult past (her own, her own's homeland's) and invites the reader to take a fascinating and very honest journey that ends with an open question. While the text is formally divided into chapters, the structure and the flow remind a transcribed interview very much; or rather a confession, a memoir, as if Lea was a witness of her own life-so-far, understanding where she is now and how she got there. She looks at her experience with some distance, with understanding, sometimes with kindness, sometimes with humour, sometimes with irony. It is the point of view of a narrator who looks back but knows better now, accepts what happened without the urge to change the interpretation of it.

Lea chose the theme of documentary theatre, yet she does not approach sociology or contemporary history or other fields of human science in order to define the mental region she explores. Rather, in the spirit of docu-drama, she turns to herself, to her experience (as a viewer, or gazer, as an author, performer, student, researcher) and thus creates a piece of documentary text: a script of a documentary theatre performance. However, rather than being egoistic, Lea's fascination is not with herself but with the topic and how she can apply what she has learnt so far in her future quest as an author. Her short reflections of her experience as a student provide with an understanding, not bearing big meaning for the reader, but for Lea, of her creative process of making authorial pieces. The self-reflective part of the text is an honest recollection of thoughts and sharing of development.

The second part, a personal analysis of selected performances of contemporary former Yugoslavian theatre, is a good insight of someone who deeply understands the phenomenon not from the outside, theoretical perspective, but from the inside, as a spectator of events turned into theatre, and performer on both parts as well. We do not learn why Lea chose these performances, and we do not learn other opinions, but Lea does not pretend to give a theoretical analysis. In this respect, the text is not a dialog but a focused stream of thoughts. The author shares with the reader her ideas on some plays she saw, performances she found inspirational, she touches upon the issue of ethics in the docu-drama creative process-making etc. and does so with openness, light humour and brightness.

I wish her much luck with the fragile healing process of making documentary theatre in her home region, connecting people with their own interpretation of history through theatre.

Despite some formal inadequacies and somewhat poor referencing, Lea's thesis is a valid contribution and I am happy to recommend it for the defence.

Questions:

1. You mention the term 'in-yer-face' generation but don't list whose term is it or where does it come from. Please explain.
2. When talking about DJ, you use the term 'public solitude' without connecting the term to its original author or explaining how it relates to the discipline of DJ. Please explain.

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