

Romantic Revolution

Performance “Cefas” by Damir Bartol Indos and Tanja Vrvilo at Theatre ITD in Zagreb – An engaging lesson on Croatian history

ZAGREB – “What else could we have done?”, asks at one point Damir Bartol Indos, an excellent performer in “Cefas”, of which he is co-author with Tanja Vrvilo. The opening of “Cefas” took place on Thurs 30th Sept at Theatre ITD. Designed like a sound card, this performance-cum-event-cum-concert transforms the symbol of a rebellious students' resistance towards the hated Austro-Hungarian monarchy in the Croatian capital city in 1912, into movement and sound. Authors Damir Bartol Indos and Tanja Vrvilo, with the assistance of Vilim Matula, Nikolina Majdak, Adriana Josipovic and Kate Marusic, use this episode in Croatian history and create an open scene full of meaning, unbelievable enchantment and communication. The event from Croatian history was the unsuccessful assassination attempt on governor Slavko Cuvaj in which the youth group “Val” took part both intellectually and personally, encouraged by the successful students' strikes of that time.

The performance title itself is taken from the literary and revolutionary circles held by Janko Polić Kamov, who was an idol of the Val youth group (a group of progressive youth, high school students and young writers that used to publish a magazine called Val). Vladimir Cerina was the Editor of the magazine, which was banned after only a few editions due to the nationalistic overtones in writings by some of the most important names in Croatian culture today such as Tartaglia, Kamov, Krleža and Cesarec. “On 8th of June 1912, Croatia joined Europe”, prophetically wrote 19 year old August Cesarec half expecting to be arrested, not knowing that two months later he would indeed be in prison.

Actions on the stage produce sounds that juxtapose trials against revolutionary youth with fragments from Cesarec's prison writings, poems by Cerin and Krleža and Zora Ruklic's journal devices which are amazingly contemporary and full of insight.

The performance space itself is a construction made of iron and it is a copy of the prison cell in the royal jail in Mitrovica where Cesarec was held. Apart from the already mentioned sound image, the stage is also filled with a still image that represents the students' republic known as the Stenjevac Utopian Republic which was set up on the territory of a holiday house in the vineyard in Stenjevac.

Besides the already well known Indos's tuned/out of tune unconventional musical instruments such as springs, metal draws etc... sound design is also inspired by legendary German group Kraftwerk who, similar to the Val youth group, also had revolutionary views. In addition, Vili Matula plays violin and Damir Prica Kafka is on saxophone and piano.

The destiny of young rebels told through sound and movement leaves the audience with thoughts about the romanticism of revolutions, intentions to die

for higher ideals, decisiveness in the fight for the independence of your homeland and the fight for the wellbeing of all people. It ultimately repeats Indos's question – "what else could have we done?"

The sad part is that the situation in the country today is not better but probably even worse – revolutionaries are not being born, poets don't point their verse at authorities and this is enough to provoke grief and nostalgia for past times. But it is also the reason to engage with this lesson on Croatian history through which we could all find out "What else we could do ?".

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