

Ivana Müller: "Edges"

Ivana Müller is a choreographer, theater-maker and visual artist. All this comes into play in her pieces where she questions the usual order of performances.

Exhibitions, Music events, Performances and Dance - international and national artists have been invited to the Festival „Made in Potsdam“ in the last two weeks. The interdisciplinary festival is showing contemporary pieces mainly for the stage, as well as some visual art and for the first time this year sound art, too. Last night was the German premiere of the choreography „Edges“ by Ivana Müller, it is a piece only for supporting actors and it was the last premiere of the festival.

Extras in the center, circling around empty spots

Ivana Müller really takes the extras to the stage, those necessary to make opera, theater, dance and film work, those who shape a scene on stage or in film as a mass, whose importance however is hardly every perceived and whose names are lacking in the program and credits.

In Edges they are in the centre, yet still in their function as an choir of an opera or a group of bystanders in a movie scene, the main actors remain invisible. They are empty spots but everything seems to be still turning around them.

Ivana Müller, originally from Croatia but living in Paris, studied Literature and French in Zagreb, Dance and Choreography in Amsterdam and visual arts at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. With her six performers Müller plays with the reflections in many scenes of the piece, laying her focus on stage and film mechanisms and how stories are staged and illusions created.

An opera choir and a Film set

The opera choir for example is seen through five performers, who slowly cross the stage, with their gaze fixed on the audience and their mouths and lips moving as if they are singing, only there is no sound to be heard. Body language, gestures, a smile, glances to the side, the reaction to something, something that we cannot see - all this seems to come together to create a scene of an opera. By just observing how they move as a group, around which empty spaces they circle, one can guess where the Soloists, if they would be present, would sing their arie.

A different scene could be that of a film shoot. The performers are in small groups and seem to be standing on a street, they are talking with each other, making jokes and burst out laughing until suddenly they look scared to the side, start to run away in panic and sink to the ground as if dead. The scene is repeated several times, with breaks in which the performers seem to be listening to someone giving directions from the side and again they move their lips without a sound coming from their mouths. It is left to the viewer's fantasy to decide what kind of movie is in the making here and whether the extras are being shot several times before the scene is finally wrapped.

Postdramatic Theater

Ivana Müller is using a fragmented narration, that the audience can explore and expand on. Every audience wants to complete the image, no matter if biochemical reactions in our

brain, experiences and conditioning in our lives or the aesthetic viewing experience are responsible for this, we want to finish the story and bring a sense of closure to the scenes. This empowering of the spectator, to become himself the author of a work, is the starting point for Ivana Müllers works, as well as the exemplary post dramatic theatre, which is dominating performance and theatre at the moment, apart from the stages of the state theaters. Questioning who the author of a piece is, how spectators can participate, what of the shown is authentic, how illusion can create realities on stage, with witch habitus figures can be presented, how real bodies become forms represented by fiction, how space, time and plot are constructed and offered - reflections on all these questions are content and stylistic elements of the post dramatic theater. Ivana Müller is using these ideas and techniques, while always also playing with the visible and invisible, further winding the reflection (feedback?) loop of what is real and true.

Declining epistemic allure but lovably enchanting

Like it is often the case in this form of theatre, the epistemic allure, the desire to comprehend everything, is declining as soon as the concept of the work is understood. Maybe the border that is being drawn by performance and theatre of the spoken word against the traditional theatre of illusion might soon become history, like it has already been the case for conceptual dance - it was an important form to play, actually triggered by theatre studies but has now been long enough present on the stages.

Ivana Müller, who is choreographer, director and visual artists, is however more charming, witty and creative than it is usually the case. The playing with fragments of stories, the layered reflections of the imaginary, the artfully-contradicting narrations in scenic tableaux, which can be freely interpreted. These all are full of humor and in a quite, calm way graceful and enchanting, it is by no means dry discourse theatre overridden by theory but instead lovably playful.

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