

# The Powerlessness of the Political. The Power of Acting

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This article examines the performance *Powerlessness* produced by Mini teater, and assumes that it belongs to the field of political theatre, even if only conditionally, as its emphasis is on the presentation of an individual human fate. The starting question of the article is: how to penetrate the field of the real or the political using the tools of fiction; a question which it answers first with an overview of some newer approaches to the field of the performative and the role of the political in it (Read, Pavis, Lavender).

Lukan first sketches the general theoretical situation within the studies of contemporary performing arts regarding the relation between politics and theatre, that is, contemporary performing practices. He then attempts to offer some conclusions through an immanent analysis of the theatre performance *Powerlessness*.

In Lukan's opinion, *Powerlessness* can only conditionally be designated as political theatre, as it emphasises the presentation of an individual fate, a lost existence, emanating from novelistic prose. As such, the performance does not tie the "loss" of this existence so much to Heinrich Böll's novel *The Clown*, from which it deviates significantly due to the process of necessary reduction. Instead, it ties itself to a new context, in the frames of a specific adaptation, combining Böll's prose with Yanis Varoufakis's collection of popular economic essays in *The Global Minotaur*, which it has also simplified for the needs of the stage. Thus, the performance produces enough starting points for the construction of a paradigmatic axis that also creates room for debate on the level of political discourse.

Beyond what has already been said, we could speak about the political in performing practice simply on the basis of the dispositive, which contextualises a certain practice within the political. This, firstly, allows the author an adequate level of subjectivisation in the analysis of representational policies, which is an act of the "politicisation of the subject"; secondly, it enters the discussion on the political that takes place within the presented thematic block on equal terms, and thus, on the surface, also politicises its own object; thirdly, it implements a concrete analysis of performative strategies that enable political identifications into the public space; and fourthly, it also

(un)intentionally politicises the reader of this article who has not yet even seen the performance or does not yet have a formed opinion about it.

As an example of the new understanding of the political in performing arts, Lukan selects a short excerpt from the performance, in which the performer stages performative chaos or a total dissociation from the world that cannot be appropriated. With practically uncontrollable speed, the “historic” process of both the development of the individual personality and the evolution of the community unfolds. In this way, the performance itself becomes an act of the political that does not need additional politicisation. At first glance, *Powerlessness* simply, yet explicitly enough, establishes a series of dichotomies, either duplications or divisions: between the personal and the public, intimacy and politics, aesthetics and economy, etc. All these dualities are brought together into a seeming unity by the character of the clown Hans Schnier performed by Nik Škrlec. Actually, this is also a duplication, if not multiplication: on the first side, we have in front of us a character, a “novelistic” narrator and fictional protagonist in one; on the second, some sort of an essayist lecturer, motivator or simply an engaged reader; on the third, the addressee, or the “victim” of the global minotaur, as Varoufakis calls it, and, as such, the representative of the spectators. From the three mentioned, a fourth position emerges, which is difficult to describe or name, but we could call it the position of ignorant distance or merely-becoming, the embodiment of some new logic of knowledge that will in fact only be embodied in perspective, for now it is only a voice, or more precisely, a pause between the sound: a new speed, the intonation of the narrative.

Škrlec’s acting in *Powerlessness* allows for fascination which not only eschews the simple dichotomy between political and intimate, aesthetic and discursive, fictional and real, but also the more complex dichotomy between consensus and disconsensus (Rancière) and through recognition (or also through the spectator’s “immersion” into it, no matter how “passive” it may seem), it simply makes it possible to survive the “state of radical insecurity” as Varoufakis calls our time (276). The staging of “powerlessness” in fact manifests a new power of acting that can be realised either as the power of the new politics or political action or merely as the ability to survive the “state of radical insecurity”.