



WHAT MAKES YOU GO ON?

NENAD JELESJEVIĆ

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THEATRE ON AIR

You're heading around the world (bye, bye, bye)
You'll be back again, when it's cold (bye, bye, bye)
You're still wearing my ring on your hand (bye, bye, bye)
I know about your lovers in every land (bye, bye, bye)

This is what Bisera Veletanlić used to sing; she was one of the Yugoslavian show-biz singers back in the seventies. Those were the years, when some of us were born and started our, at first glance, very prosperous life paths in the middle of the collapsing so called self-management socialism. Like the three members of the group **Beton Ltd.** Who are looking for the conceptual starting point of their performance entitled ***Everything We've Lost, While We've Gone on Living*** in this early period of their lives.

The performance is based on two dramaturgical lapses between samples of (past) social realities, which are dealt with introspectively. The first lapse happens between the above mentioned early

period – a fairy tale about early casino-capitalism, which actually sprouted as early as 1977 in the middle of socialism, and two decades later in Slovenia, when capitalism was in full bloom – the prom period of the generation 1995/96. From this point the second lapse is into the uneasy present, into the here and now of 2013, which is represented by a “winners and losers” TV quiz. These two time lapses cause the breaking effect of the performance.

The performing actors found another conceptual starting point in the work by **Eugène Ionesco** *The Killer without Cause*, which in late fifties lucidly stated that we would once bring the lie to perfection. The performance therefore wants to investigate the all-present spectacle potential, but not only from its outer, pop-up level, but rather from within, from the protagonists' perspective, who is nowadays literally forced to internalize its psychology. Probably even more so if he's involved in art himself, where presentation, organization and managing of the creative act in most cases prevail over its real political, emancipatory realization.

The situation of the devastated present where our futures are uncertain, our social bonds and socialization manners questionable, while our political organizing represents an immense challenge, is the crucial situation, which is stressed by the performance. This is achieved especially by exposing the absurdity of all the three chronologies in question. These absurdities are funny and gloomy at the same time. On one hand they evoke the nostalgic euphoria of some naïve optimistic past period, be it in the form of suspicious promise of luxury bits for everybody or the revival of the moralizing prom kitsch, which should be representing the “maturity exam” before entering bourgeois morality. On the other hand the exposed absurdities – being aware of the broken perspectives of modernism, socialism, capitalism, progress, middle class, individualism etc. – are facing the “historic scam” we are (and were) not only witnessing, but are at best its main actors; in popular words, its fucked party.

With the performance *Everything We've Lost, While We've Gone on Living* **Primož Bežjak**, **Branko Jordan** and **Katarina Stegnar** are creating some kind of show negative, since they successfully turn the aesthetics of glamour, empty rhetoric and medialization of reality into its opposite or uncover its face. In fact they point at the ambiguous nature of spectacle, including the theatre spectacle, where they are themselves active protagonists. While we're asking ourselves together with them, what we should have done to feel better in our own shoes but we haven't, we return to reality; we actually sink completely into it, because they fictively, virtually and imaginary, surrounding us in the form of mediated images, successfully crush the stage as grotesque as they can.

The biggest success of this performance is exactly this crushing, banging and demolishing of the fiction while enjoying a glass of champagne – the fiction, which is persistently trying to cover the politics of our lives, so we wouldn't be able to see it. For such a deconstruction of the spectacle discourse of false freedom to succeed, the attempt to abolish the border between performers and spectators was necessary, which – especially in the sense of perceiving and using the performance space – were substantially involved in the performance. Perhaps the spectators could be involved even more or left the experiment of opening the space for everybody present in it.

Somehow we wish for the performance to transform into life even more so, because it already succeeded to transform life onto the stage in a relaxed and sensible way. All this added to experiencing a reminiscence of Ionesco-like grotesque atmosphere and reliving his alienation effect. This is undoubtedly a consequence of the actors' active consideration of some essential personal, professional and political questions, which they were asking themselves and each other. The unanswered quiz question, *what makes you go on*, could be one of the major challenges for the future performative experiments by Beton Ltd.

The review was written by Nenad J.