

ONE FLEW OVER THE KOSOVO THEATRE – adapted from a text by Jeton Neziraj – directed by Blerta Neziraj – produced by QUENDRA-MULTIMEDIA, Pristina – guest performance at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination – CZKD, Belgrade – Monday, 11th December 2012.

POLITICAL COMEDY IN SPITE OF INDEPENDENCE

Goran Cvetković

There is a sentence in Sterija's *THE PATRIOTS*, uttered by one of the most keenly nationalistic and for the Serbian Thing, who would for Serbia push into ruination everything except his own commotion, while others remind him he needs to consider whether it is really wise to pursue such an aggressive politics against the neighbouring Hungarians, regarding the rapturous events of the 1848 LIBERATION, and that sentence goes as follows: NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION, AND WHEN THERE'S ACTION THERE'S NO TIME TO THINK! He means, at the height of the national LIBERATION movement, that it is not important what is right and what is wrong from broader, moral and, general, social and historical standpoints, or to what extent! Under this parole a lot of evil has been committed in today's world history, and especially so here in the last twenty years of national euphoria. Few and far between were the voices which, in the heights and depths of our national war euphoria, from the world of art - in books, magazines, exhibitions and especially on the theatre stage and in films – reminded us of the consequences of Sterija's sentence about the needlessness of thought, when it comes to such an important action such as *THE NATIONAL THING!* Oh, what happiness if there had been many more reminders and that the warnings had been heard by the one who was behind that insane NATIONAL project!

Jeton Neziraj, a playwright and theatre worker from Pristina, has committed himself to constantly REMINDING, all of those who think that the time of thought has passed just because Kosovo has won that which it won, independence and international support, and the fact that it is becoming a state, thus achieving its century-long National Dream. Already in his first co-produced shows, in collaboration with people who share similar opinions from the entire Region, and especially with production companies in Belgrade, Skopje and Tirana, Jeton Neziraj looks for the other side of the VICTORY, in which people massively enjoy, he seeks that other side, those weak spots everyone in power has, and he reminds them that they are JUST HUMAN and have those same weaknesses, just like everyone in their places in history used to have and in any given country. Simply put, Neziraj laughs out loud in the face of bribery, brutality, dullness, lack of knowledge, ignorance....in the face of the leaders of the National Revolution and a State In Making – Kosovo! And precisely at the time when it is all actually taking place! He laughs in the face of those who enjoy the massive support from people and the international community – he shows them – as Shakespeare would say – THE TRUE FACE OF REALITY, meaning themselves, in order for them to remember it and be sensible in all their endless euphoria. Here in Serbia we do have a few critical pieces about our own myths and the national ones – but even the very best works in this modest opus are concerned with the PAST – albeit the recent past, such as the critical works concerning the murder of Zoran Djindjić or questioning the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, which are also shown on film. However, we don't have a SINGLE piece which represents precisely the CURRENT government and its arrogance and unbearable lies and deceits.... And it would certainly be more than useful for someone to set at least one such piece in Serbia, don't you think?

The play ONE FLEW OVER THE KOSOVO THEATRE follows a suitable storyline which by itself speaks of the matter – questioning the NATIONAL EUPHORIA. In the performance, following a sudden order by the minister for culture, the National Theatre of Kosovo is tasked with preparing a play for Kosovo's celebration of independence in Pristina! How should the show be prepared, what needs to be included in its ceremonial content, who will be in it and who would be watching it, how can the still unknown speech by the Prime Minister be incorporated... and, above all, WHEN is this play going to be performed? All of this is a topic of questioning and MOCKERY! The minister in question, of course, is himself self-inflated, half-literate and entirely uninformed about the theatre. The actors and the director are both vain and prone to flattery. Well, people will be people... and of course then there is a sequence of brilliant scenes which show the making of that grotesque play, which, naturally, has to possess many national symbols but cannot, because of the Western powers, be nationalist, so words but not those words need to be used, and these sorts of songs need to be sang but not those sort of songs, and the characters need to be a bit melodramatic, and a bit heroic, a bit modest and a bit brave and arrogant. Moreover, in addition, there are the personal motives of the performers and the corrupt minister, who represents the whole government! Furthermore, there are mocking games with the National Aims and results...comments on account of the big budget set aside for the show, which ends up in some entirely different places and not in the theatre which needs to perform the play. Naturally, all this WITHOUT PAYMENT FOR ACTORS, because – for God's sake – IT'S A NATIONAL THING! And so on and so on – a healthy and cheerful POLITICAL COMEDY dealing with relevant issues, one which every theatre in the world would wish for. Because – THERE IS ONLY ONE WORLD, of course!

The actors in this performance are PERFECT! By this I mean that they're cheerful, fluid, witty, intelligent and convinced of the purpose of their critical and artistic attitude. They are responsible and progressive – they act with their heart and intelligence equally all the way through the play. From the bard of the Albanian Theatre in Skopje, Bajrush Mjaku, who skimps on neither strength nor energy, after his important part in *The General of the Dead Army* by Dino Mjustafić and other productions, we have seen the PATRIOTIC HYPERMARKET at BITEF Theatre, and here he plays another important role of critical art and responsibility, to young Adrian Morina, Anisa Ismaili, Adrian Aziri and Ernest Malazogu, all of whom exhibited progressive and adamant personalities to seriously tackle otherwise entirely taboo National Topics. The on-stage music is played by two young Italians – violinist Susanna Tognella and accordion player and composer Gabriele Marangoni, and they play EXCELLENTLY – they are modern, convincingly and skilfully! The dramatist is Ilir Gjojcaj and the choreographer Arthur Kuggeleyn. The costume designer and stage designer is Zuzane Majer Staufen, who made a symbolic grid which covers precisely the moment when the celebration is at its peak – it falls on the actors when they are supposed to enjoy themselves the most. It is a simple and clear metaphor – well done! And so the triumphant end of this Celebration Performance, with many colourful balloons which start falling together with the grid, turns into – of course – an embellished PRISON for freedom and Art, surely!

The play has been staged over the last few days, having been premiered in Prishtina on 5th December and then in Skopje and Tirana, where just like in Belgrade yesterday, it received huge ovations and acknowledgement. The play has shown that – AGAIN – there is only ONE world and that Art is also ONE AND ONLY – or it isn't art! Here we have had a chance to see a seriously political theatre, full of

laughter and joyful glee in recognising and mocking the government's stupidities and its bureaucratic violence. Bravo! WELL DONE! Come again!

Goran Cvetković, Radio Belgrade 2 – Wednesday, 12th December 2012