

Staging a Play: Antigone

Performance project *Staging a Play: Antigone* by choreographer and performer Matija Ferlin is the continuation of a few-years long research of performative practices through two different creative approaches: he tackled solo performance in the series of works *Sad Sam* and the concept of extended choreographic performances in projects under common title *Staging a Play*.

In the concept of extended choreographic performance, Ferlin uses choreographic tools for reading and deconstruction of the selected theatre play. Working with either existentialist play of memory *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams (2015) or classical critique of fanaticism as in Molière's *Tartuffe* (2017) the artist approaches them as a kind of choreographic score, he disassembles the textual frame and the linguistic sign, abolishes the speech, affirms the unwritten, to build the performance in a new form of stage "utterance". In both mentioned projects the movement takes the place of the speech and leads the drama through all its structural, content, and semantic levels, reading a new logic of representation that is inscribed in the script.

By selecting *Antigone* as a starting point, Ferlin decided on an even more radical and complex approach to the idea of extended choreographic performance, while reducing the dramatic characters to a single performing body and one voice and, at the same time, keeping the narrative of the play and the logic of dramatic situations intact. So far removed, the element of speech becomes the predominant choreographic tool in the case of *Antigone*, an element that autonomously negotiates with the body and movement, composing an integral stage act. Speech, even if being dominant, remains invisible. It is only present in its manifestation, as an amplified voice that we are able to hear, while its apparatus of execution, what performs it, the mouth, remains invisible to the eyes of the beholder. Speech thus achieves a complete stage autonomy, freed even from the body that articulates it as well as from the movement that accompanies it.

By taking on the functions and lines of all the protagonists and the relationships they create, Ferlin exposes his performing corpus; the movement and speech, to a set of situations that try to find the balance right at the border of the logic of performance, constantly destroying and restoring the relations between performance elements.

Ferlin creates a ritual space of the quest for the almighty, polyvalent performing body that is at the same time being built and destroyed, established and erased, separated and summarized, and enters into the deconstruction of the conventions of drama, dramatic narrative, performance, and stage act but also his own performing constitution with sincere risk.

The body that establishes on the stage is at the same time the carrier of the one and only sign, the

one that summarizes the lead character, Antigone, and also all other signs and functions that pass through the play and thereby also through him. The body at the same time carries both the choreographer and the performer, the tyrant and the rebel, the prophet and the messenger, as well as all tragic destinies that occurred as a consequence of hubris, the carelessness that arouses arrogance and leads one to ruin.

The body continually grows with the execution of assignments, it becomes an intersection of the dramatic forces, the place where antagonists and protagonists meet, a point of heterogeneous multiplication of functions and an object of continual change. With each new line, a new body establishes itself and with it also new relations between elements of the entirety. The body of continual change takes on itself the whole narrative frame, everything that describes it and at the same time transforms it into the suffering body of the system as well as the body of resistance. By insisting on the extremes, generated by the borderline terms, such as the beginning and the end, attention and carelessness, life and death, active and passive role, Ferlin enters into a formally radical, choreographically layered, and emotionally exhausting dialogue with the historical-theoretical genre of Greek tragedy and Antigone as the symbolic centre of power and 1968-inspired resistance to any kind of repressive and exploitative system of government.

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