

To Speak and Sing Through One's Body

Delo, Wednesday, 03.03.2010

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The multimedia music performance *Frozen Images* can be seen as a concert-performative offshoot of the last year's multimedia performance *Ways of Love*, which brought together the dancer and choreographer Maja Delak and the musician and performer Luka Prinčič. In the excellent performance *Ways of Love*, which indicated several potential outlets for the tandem, the authors convincingly interchanged their existing creative roles, and at the same time made a radical thematic leap into the contents that concern the questions of gender, modes of stage presentation, and thus also of stage genres themselves, from contemporary dance to contemporary variety show. It is Maja Delak and Luka Prinčič, who are "hiding" behind the names of Wanda, which brings to mind Sacher-Masoch's dominatrix figure Wanda, and Nova deViator, which reverberates the years long DJing of Luka Prinčič.

While *Ways of Love* was still based on movement, thus inhabiting the movement terrain of Maja Delak, in the *Frozen Images*, the authors moved to Prinčič's concert territory. The concert-performance is thus a fluid concert-like fusion of songs: the author of electronic music, background video, and real time programming is Luka Prinčič, while the texts are signed by both authors. Bearing the major part of vocal performance, Maja Delak's stamina is outright surprising: the over one-hour-long concert is not something to be sneezed at also for an experienced vocalist. **The performance *Frozen Images* goes beyond the mere form of a concert by adopting the form of contemporary variety show, in which the authors refer to, with movement, visual, and textual elements, various literary and theoretical texts – from Mina Loy, Clarisa Pinkola Estés to Amelia Jones –, which problematize gender and identity, (non)integration of the body in the universe of media images, failed realizations of the imperative of pleasure, acting out of the hyper-sexualised, cross-dressing style, which did carry a subversive charge in the 80s but was during the last two decades, as nearly every cultural strategy, profitably encroached and "tamed" by fashion and popular industry.**

The authors also broach the question of originality, namely through the etiquette of originality, with which the centres of capital power feed themselves on artistic paradigms from the margins of mainstream culture, appropriate them, and profitably authorise them as their own inventions, while the original incubators of ideas as a consequence unlawfully, though actually justifiably, attempt to regain their rights to use the common cultural legacy with "pirating", thus resisting the elitist usage and commercial abuse of their own ideas. The authors and performers convincingly and more or less precisely perform the shifts of sexual roles by using different costumes and vocal elements, permuted live, also with movement, while their execution thematically brings up the uncertainty of partnership and emotional and sexual relationship, which involves various strategies for the survival of the subject, from BDSM contents and aesthetics, all the way to the libidinally troublesome partner relationship as a reiteration of the primary mother-and-son relation.

In its contents and sound and visual elements, the performance *Frozen Images* carries a radical charge, which was very much present in the 80s, though in historically different coordinates, but which later dissolved and nearly evaporated in the Slovene social climate. While one could sense ever so slight swings in the premiere's intensity, we can certainly count on a more polished performance in the following re-runs, which brings to our space the format of contemporary variety show, which would surely deserve to be released in an audio and video format – in collaboration with an excellent music producer, of course.

Mojca Kumerdej

Theatre Frozen into a Concert

Radio Student, Friday, 26. 2. 2010

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Concert or Performance? Performance art or Happening? Not or. And!

Maja Delak and Luka Prinčič continue their *Ways of Love* under their now already recognisable nicknames Wanda and Nova deViator. The premiere of *Frozen Images* took place yesterday at Menza pri koritu in Metelkova. Their new work, labelled as a multimedia sound performance, builds on an aesthetics outlined already in the beginning of their collaboration. In their joint creations, the author's move the boundaries of their usual activity and successfully meet in the common territory of the stage, where none of the roles exclusively belongs to any of them.

In the present project, Maja Delak, coming from the field of contemporary dance, has put her primary medium in parentheses. In *Frozen Images*, she focuses on self-perception of the body and the production of images/representations of – primarily – the female body and its reception. The woman's body and its representations become the object of a critical feminist analysis, which is this time cried out in the form of songs and the accompanying visual and sound material.

While Maja Delak confidently tunes the resonance of the body with voice into the microphone, the sound artist Luka Prinčič finds himself in the role of a performer. The »drag« performance masterly subverts the idea of naturalness of manliness, highlighting the fact that male or female sexuality is always constructed. While the liminality of the form of the event, neither a performance nor a concert, nevertheless allows for subtle inconsistencies in the presence.

The aesthetics of Wanda and Nova deViator is based on trashy-kitschy-cheap-porn look, which aims to subvert the reification of persons and their sexualisation. At the same time, the texts build on an open talk about sex and explication of different sexual practices, problematising women's indoctrination into pleasing men to the extent of simulation of pleasure, which is an even bigger violence over one's body as supposedly deviant forms of sexuality, such as BDSM practices.

Tactile-sound interventions are interesting: the artists create them through sound generating gloves. At these points, physical actions indirectly connect with the sound, because every touch makes a sound, thus doubling the signifying structure and at the same time the performative effect. Other interactive interventions, such as the simultaneous reproduction of the material recorded live on stage, function clearly and effectively. Once doubled, the stage image becomes distant, alienated, and mediatised, thus spicing up the point by association to visual consumerism, consumption of frozen images.

Besides subversive feminist considerations, the theme number two of this tandem is precisely the tackling of topical cultural-political issues, bound to the neoliberal capitalist logic. The critical moment in a song about copyright issues is equally strong as in the critique of post-feminist representation of women in the media. As a matter of fact, it is about the one question of contemporary society, which is poured out as a powerful performative cry.

The tandem devotes a great part of their attention to the problem of fetishisation of the human body. They aim to deconstruct this power structure of desire with magnified shots of skin and a necklace made of human hair, which is worn by Wanda as an adornment. The body is a mere organic structure, which can – with this kind of alienation – even provoke the feeling of disgust. At the same time, the body's surface is not only a medium, but the very essence of the human being as the being-in-the-world.

In their fragmented performative actions and soundings, Maja Delak and Luka Prinčič say a lot, but actually nothing truly new. What is more important is the unique stage fusion, brought about by the fact that the two artists originate from different art fields, which with accumulation and weaving of all these frozen images create a critical level of saturation and a particular charge.

Even more pronouncedly as in *Ways of Love*, *Frozen Images* restructure the form of performance event into a concert. The soundings, here supported with elaborated vocals in most cases, correspond to the form of individual songs, which function on their own. The performative extrovert charge is thus sometimes lost in the introvert intensity of music. In the present case, the multimedia fusion just might have done a big favour to the dramaturgical form and dance. However, if we put them in the parentheses for a moment – even if in the context of deliberations about the recipient of the Prešeren Foundation Award for contemporary dance – it is precisely this distancing from the primary medium that brings about a certain new, fresh wind.

Pia Brezavšček

From the Edges of Images to the Folds of the Body

Dnevnik, 1. 3. 2010

Institute Emanat presented its first premiere this year, *Frozen Images*, in the club atmosphere of Menza pri koritu in Metelkova City. The performance features the choreographer, dancer, pedagogue, and the institute's director Maja Delak (under the pseudonym Wanda) and the musician and multimedia artist Luka Prinčič (Nova deViator). The tandem presented their multimedia performance *Ways of Love* in Ljubljana precisely a year ago.

In *Frozen Images*, Luka Prinčič or Nova deViator and Maja Delak alias Wanda investigate the relations between different art genres as well as between images, representations, and identities.

The act of entering the creative process from two separate artistic genres opened new fields of research for both artists: Delak has devoted herself more to sound, music, electronics, the writing of texts, and vocal interpretation, while Prinčič has met with the process of movement research, stage presence, where he is more and more involved in performative and not only sound interpretations of the discussed themes. Their research is founded in modes of collaboration (advising of Maja Smrekar, Irena Tomažin, and others), which broaden their idea of a concert form of the performance. Besides more structured music parts and the video, they articulated also several other aspects: special emphasis is placed on performative actions and choreography in the sense of space organisation.

The performance thematically refers to sexuality, the critique of pornography, and the abuse of the medium for the purposes of marketing the woman's body. Thus, *Frozen Images* appear to be a logical consequence of previous collaboration. The performance effectively draws from the investigation of representations of the female body. With the video, the authors introduce feminist perspectives of different social, cultural-political, and historical contexts to show the domineering myths of society – thus, we can see Delak in the role of the Playboy's bunny, evoking the image of a reified woman's body. On the other hand, the performer also appropriates certain male attributes by way of technology. The dissolution of boundaries between the sexes takes place through the exchange of visible signs, with voice and image modulation, and consequently with a relativization of stereotypical social-sexual tokens from mass media. **The authors tackle a complex examination of the two key features for identity construction, the roles of the observer and the observed, (she is filming him, while he, dressed as a woman, follows the instructions of a woman-coach from an American TV show, etc.). In front of the lens of a camera, we constitute ourselves in a pose, attempting to construct a different body – image, which either brings the body to life or makes it lifeless.**

Individual scenes are performed with humour and distance. Through confrontations of different media, the self-reflective gaze over the construction of own identity turns out to be inevitably bound between the image of the body and its remnant. The associative character of words, images, and sounding outlines sexual identities at increasingly hevasive borders between the public and the private. Ultimately, we are dealing with an ethical question about the status of reality beyond technical and aesthetic questions. Does reality disappear because the eye is incapable of preserving it? What does the image preserve or, better, freeze? What is concealed in the process? Such questions reflect a tendency toward an open, interdisciplinary treatment of images. In this sense, the mediality of images reveals the experience of the body, while every image embodies a way of seeing.

The performance event builds on extreme boundaries of representations, which the desiring subject from the field of the visual nearly unconsciously drags into the folds of the body. Under our gazes, many images are dead or provoke a mere absent-minded interest. Such is the case also with individual scenes – some of which are less readable in their iconography than others. However, the performance as a whole is formally and thematically rounded – especially because of the convincing performance of both artists. The performance reverberates under the token of new connections, but also interruptions, especially from the perspective of relations of power, eroticism, and the search of love as fundamental ties.

Mojca Puncer