

Inside of a nightmare

Koniec shows a brand new face of Krzysztof Warlikowski – an introvert full of bitter questions passing into the shadow

Warlikowski is not in a hurry. The newest production is constructed of the infinitely stretched sequences when seemingly nothing is happening on the stage. The author of *Koniec* said before the premiere that a classically structured dramas with so called a plot hides only emptiness. That is perhaps why he wandered off as far as possible from the theatre in traditional sense. The first step was already taken in *(A)pollonia* read as the manifesto of the artists who wants to nose about the time in his newly established Nowy Teatr but avoids the most obvious temporary references. Despite of it that production was burdened with an assumed in advance thesis stating that traditional approach to relationships between victims and executioners must be reversed. It was prepared for international audience and for led by Avignon, big festivals. It had to be understood worldwide and so it was written by Warlikowski with “capital letters”.

Koniec goes toward the opposite direction. It does not try to cover wider perspective thus turns into the most personal production in the artist’s career and probably also the most hermetic one. Even for the fervent fans of this artist it is not an easy one. The whole thing lasts for almost five hours and is kept in an equally monotonous, somnambular rhythm. There only two choices: to make an effort and delve into Warlikowski’s world or to dismiss it completely treating it as some delusions of this artistic light spirit who abandoned former approach to this theatre but did not know what to replace it with.

I choose the first alternative without hesitation. The new Warlikowski’s seems to be a consequent continuation of things I valued the most - *Krum* and *Angels in America*.

It is said straightforward from the stage that searching for logic in *Koniec* is pointless because we are invited to the world which has little to do with reality. We are in a ditorcotr’s dream that is populated with characters from *The Trial* by Kafka, *Nickel Stuff* by Koltes and *Elizabeth Costello* by Coetzee. It is the dream of a man who stopped considering himself young. That is why he does not care about what is happening outside the windows but is more concerned about what is happening inside of him. It is an honest approach. Warlikowski hid himself even beneath Blanche in *Tramway* though this part was originally inspired by and prepared for Isabelle Huppert. Now he admits it openly: this is about me. I am K., Costello and Tony from Koltes’s script.

He locates his dream story in the familiar, sterile and simple scenography designed by Małgorzata Szcześniak, the set design similar to those that has been creating landscape of his theatre for years. Nevertheless he allows it to become anything it wants disregarding rules for building suspense. So this uneasy dream presses on regardless seizing the audience. We are in the middle of an illusion, a nightmare that seems not to have end but only pathological returns, loops and repetitions. We do not feel comfortable because it is impossible but Warlikowski loves it. He wants us to be like him, to lose all refuge in what is constant, predictable and safe.

While delving into his own obsessions he opens the perspective that is so unusual in the theatre nowadays all the better. *Koniec* talks about the end and what happens after the end. It talks about a fear of the ultimate that sneaks in our existence. Yes, Warlikowski does not portrays Jospheh K., Tony or Coetzee’s famous writer but the present everymen, the people without characteristics who are also helpless when facing the inevitable. The fact that the director speaks also for himself makes this production even more touching. This nightmarish style does not create problems for the actors that give up strong effects in order keep integrity

of the whole production and blur the characters on purpose. There can be found many references to their earlier roles. Stanisława Celińska and Jacek Poniedziałek are a son and a mother just like in *Hamlet* and *Krum* and it is easy to see their affection that is so rare in the theatre. Maciej Stuhr wades inside of Joseph K.'s ego, turning him into a neurasthenic doomed to a failure in his battle against his nightmares. Marek Kalita who rarely abandons the stage and plays many roles is simply excellent. His especially memorable part is the guard watching the gate in *Elisabeth Costello* who is perfectly played by Ewa Dałkowska giving the Warlikowski's theatre a new colour of a dry and laconic conciseness.

You might say that Krzysztof Warlikowski has been exposed as an egocentric shamelessly putting himself in the centre of the theatrical universe. Let me remind you that similar accusations were directed at Jerzy Grzegorzewski. And in addition it is not about self flattering but – excuse my French - eschatology. And we supplement it with boundless sorrow of *Koniec*, the sorrow one has to mature up to, all accusations seem rather of small significance.