

They played hopschotch with Herbert's words

'(Playing) Mr. Cogito's Games' directed by Tomasz Rodowicz in Theatre Association Chorea.

There are several genres whose declamation will inevitably bring a school play to your mind rather than a good performance. Theatre Association Chorea took a risk of Herbert's poetry declamation preparing a performance based on these pieces. They showed in this way that every kind of literature can be performed.

The choice of author is not a coincidence; the Year of Zbigniew Herbert, which was established in his tenth death anniversary, is nearly over. At the same time an opportunity to get more than 2 million zlotys in a program of the Ministry of Culture called 'Herbert' can be missed. It was the money that started the initiative. The literary works of the leading opposition poet have been promoted all over Poland recently: from The National Theatre to a state library in Zgorzelec. Theatre Association Chorea also took advantage of the state program 'Herbert,' and not without the benefit for the Lodz audience.

The leitmotif of the texts taken from different collections and periods in Herbert's life was 'a game'. For many reasons it is a very clever attempt. A play with the audience, convention or culture are very characteristic features of Herbert's poetry, though. Using them as a plaything is simply in their nature. In cultural anthropology theatre itself (mimikra) is treated as one out of four kinds of game. At the beginning of the performance the actors refer to the theory of a famous philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. In this way, they choose the theory of games and plays as a leitmotif.

The actors invent 16 games with a common rule: the use of Herbert's words to play them. In 'A Metaphysical Game' (Gra Metafizyczna) each actor-participant recites the lines 'The study of an object' (Stadium Przedmiotu). There is no rule as far as the order of the sentences is concerned, but if more than one person recites the same passage at the same time, all actors must start the game with the previous line. The play is improvised, the actors play genuinely and the game evokes inseparable sports competition: there are numerous misses. In this manner the group play hopschotch, cross and circle and other invented games. The trigger to make rules is the contents or form of the works as well as a broadly understood notion of 'a game.' In a scene based on Herbert's 'Love Poems' two women play a sexual game whose rules are hard to define, as well as love is.

In line with their artistic credo, Theatre Association Chorea can in a justified way combine words, choreography and music, relieving Herbert's poetry of the doom of solemn, devotional manner of the master's poetry declamations. Literature recited in a new, surprising context is given a new life. It's only a pity that sometimes in those mathematical and physical strategies of word exchange disappears a human being and the meaning of Herbert's poetry.

'They played hopschotch with Herbert's words' ("Pograli w klasy słowami Herberta")

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