

Bojan Jablanovec

theatre director, VN artistic director

Bojan Jablanovec graduated from AGRFT in Ljubljana (Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film, and Television). As early as his graduation project *Helios* (a project based on *Brecht's Galileo Galilei*, Cankarjev dom, 1988), Jablanovec revealed his interest in opening the theatrical field and exploring audience perception. **In 1989**, he conceived and directed performance *Triumph of Death* (produced by SNG Maribor), which synthesized the theatrical trends that characterized the 1980s. **From 1993 to 1999**, Jablanovec directed in most Slovenian theatres. His work during these years included *Pierre Corneille's L'Illusion Comique* (Slovenian national award for the best set design), *Federico Garcia Lorca's The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Howard Barker's The Love of a Good Man* (Slovenian national award for the best director), *Alfred Jarry's Ubu Rex*, *Philip Ridley's The Pitchfork Disney*, *Werner Schwab's Die Präsidentinnen*, *Friedrich Dürrenmatt's Romulus the Great*, *Henrik Ibsen's Hedda Gabler*, *Bertold Brecht's Mr. Puntila and his Man Matti*, *Eugene Ionesco's The Chairs*, *Antonin Artaud's Jet of Blood*. From 1997 to 1999, he was an assistant/trainee for theatre directing at AGRFT in Ljubljana.

In 1999, Jablanovec stopped directing in Slovenian institutional theatres and dedicated himself to theatre research. During the period up until 2002, Jablanovec launched three research projects, which dealt with the staging of the subject through sexual difference (*Europa – The Girl Who Ran Too Fast*), the staging of the subject in relationship to time (*Lenora*), and the staging of the subject through the difference between speech and language (*Olga Grad vs. Juanna Regina*).

With these projects, Jablanovec successfully developed his working method and **in 2002** he founded *Via Negativa*, contemporary performing arts project. From the very beginning his prime goal was to develop a working method that will allow the performer to stand in front of spectator with his/her own statement, his/her own body and his/her own meaning. This basic creative field becomes the performative “self here and now”: my story, my relationship, my body, my situation, my gesture, my conflict, my anger ... The creative field is strictly bounded: a paring down to basic stage elements (via negativa); theatre as a medium of communication and not aestheticization. *Via Negativa* focuses on the relationship between the performer and spectator (between what is shown and what is seen – which is the basis of theatre communication) and on the question of the real in this relationship (which is the key characteristic of a live theatre situation).

The first seven years of VN (2002 - 2008), Jablanovec devoted to seven negative aspects of life that are commonly known as the seven deadly sins (wrath, gluttony, avarice, lust, sloth, envy, and pride). This results in cycle of seven performances under the title *Seven Deadly Sins*, which deal with a “deadly sin” as a basic agents that drives performative act and forms relationship with the audience. With the first performances, *Starting Point: Anger* (2002) and *More* (2003) *Via Negativa* clearly outline its creative field, great response from the audience and critics, however, confirm its method of production.

A period of rapid international expansion of VN project follows in next few years. Through a number of workshops Jablanovec intensively developed a flexible model of international contemporary performing arts production that is not closed in the logic of a limited number of permanent members of the group. The creative team in performances *Incasso* (2004), *Would Would Not* (2005), *Not Like Me* (2005), *Viva Verdi* (2006), *Four Deaths* (2007), and *Out* (which competes *Seven Deadly Sins* in 2008) becomes international.

In the period 2009 - 2011, a new cycle of performances under the title *Via Nova* emerge. Twenty small format performances (mostly solos or duets) were created on the basis of questions raised during the period 2002 – 2008 in order to ask these questions anew in new contexts and to introduce them in new formats of presentation. *Via Nova* is the inverse of *Via Negativa* (announced at the time of establishing the VN in 2002), which reflects its own production through questions about the relationships between old and new, creation and destruction, theory and practice, copy and original, presence and absence, worth and cost ... Under the conceptual and directorial leadership of Bojan Jablanovec VN produces some exceptional achievements in the field of contemporary performing arts: *Katarina Stegnar: Drop Dead*, *Marko Mandić: MandićMachine*, *Barbara Kukovec: Spotlight on Me*, *Jaka Lah: Pure Performance*, *Primož Bežjak: Invalid*, *Uroš Kaurin: Tonight I Celebrate*, *Boris Kadin: What Joseph Beuys told me while I was lying dead in his lap*, *Kristian Al Droubi: Interview with an Artist ...*

The most original novelties of *Via Nova* represent *Collective Presentations* - projects in which Jablanovec merge *Via Nova* performances into more complex events. With these concepts he strive to establish the maximum communication with the structure of the space, the concept of the event or the context of the story in which *Via*

Negativa enters (theatre, gallery, museum, symposium etc). As the most notable collective presentations should be mentioned:

- *Via Nova Museum*, City Museum Ljubljana, Ex Ponto festival 2009
- *Via MSU Zagreb*, Museum of contemporary art Zagreb, Eurokaz festival 2010
- *Naked Presence*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf 2010
- *Via New Territories*, Live Art Festival New Territories Glasgow, 2011
- *No one should have seen this*, Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, 2012

In 2011, a new cycle of performances begins to emerge under the title *Irresolvable*, by which Jablanovec wants to upgrade Via Negativa creative processes and staging strategies. Creative interest moved from the research of radical individualization and voluntary subordination to mechanism of modern subjectivation (as a critique of the post-Fordist model of neoliberal subject) to the research of mechanisms of hierarchy, manipulation and subordination of social collectives (law, religion, culture, democracy, equity, etc.), which still represent utopian ideal of every ideology.

In 2012 Jablanovec establish *VN Lab*, the Via Negativa laboratory for contemporary performing arts. It is a regular education program meant for emerging performers who want to develop their own creative processes and to explore the strategies of contemporary performing arts.