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In extreme or nothing

Marko Mandić is an actor of extremes, fanatically devoted to the principle of “all or nothing”, never half-hearted, or affording himself any leeway, also by way of transposing the function of the body to a merely symbolic level. His performative statement is always absolute, pure, psycho-physically all-encompassing, and compact. Already in the two earlier performances of Viva Mandić and Mandić Extract (within the Via nova series), Mandić’s body became an embodied phenomenon of surpassing its own potentials always totally devoted to the moment on the stage and condensed into a vortex of a performative surplus. His carefully thought-through promotion of an actor’s narcissism and vanity – with which his titles already ‘provoke’ – is highly distanced, lucid, calculated and sober. Even as a metaphor it is no less truth conducive. And precisely herein lies the fascinating aspect of Mandić’s elusive “double presence”, conveyed as a seamless integrity that operates at once without inhibitions or prejudices, giving itself entirely in the form of a private self, while at the same time being thoroughly steeped in the process of creating fiction and deeply committed to the realization of directorial ambitions. In MandićMachine, verbal dexterity is captured in the fluid destruction of the individual extracts from his acting opus that has been rendered already automatic. In collaboration with the director Bojan Jablanovec, Mandić has brought back to life just under forty characters or rather parts, sequencing them into a multilayered performance – a back-and-forth shifting between the principle of engaging the audience in jest, then soul-searching contemplation, followed by compulsory coquetry and back again to engaged reanimation of past interpretations – transforming these fragments of performances played in the Slovene National Theatre Drama in Ljubljana, the Mini Theatre, Glej Theatre and at the Academy of performing arts (AGRFT) into an exclusive enactment of one’s so-called personal history -- ‘live’.

This is a particular model of theatrical memory, the enactment of which does not depend lazily on the technological support; rather its key value and authenticity are derived from the performer’s immediate presence and his revitalization of the “mental pantry”; a memory, which Mandić chops up retrospectively , always in a focused and imaginative manner. While systematically switching roles of soldiers, lovers, angry young men, mythological beings, men of genius and social misfits, he originally changes his custume and takes care of the stage machinery. Logically and intuitively he manages to connect the characters, weaving between them subtle communication, perhaps even unsuspected similarity; this precisely is what enables him to disclose an attractive invisible “higher order” to the puzzle of theatre fiction that can, when the moment passes, live on its own. However conceptually impersonal,

intellectualized, and charged with the contemporary context of being an actor, ultimately we feel that Mandić's intelligence, his first-rate skill as a performer, and his overwhelming commitment, stand on their own. With or without the title.