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Mandićmachine

The performance of the theatre extremist Marko Mandić and Via Negativa is once again proof that Mandić's body is not merely a medium for playing the parts of others.

Over the recent years Marko Mandić has become one of the most recognizable faces of Ljubljana's Drama; no great performance is imaginable without him. Initially he brought attention to himself with the parts he played for the Small stage (Mala drama), but his explosive energy was no less visible on the big stage. That Mandić is an acting machine in the most positive sense of the term is borne out also by his engagements outside the institution, amongst which there is his collaboration with Via Negativa. Last summer, for example, their performance at the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Zagreb, in which Mandić masturbated onto a piece of cardboard, took the Croatian public somewhat aback, while the regulars of Mandić's performances have grown accustomed to such moves.

The last in the series of his performance trilogy is MandićMachine, directed by Bojan Jablanovec, and a kind of overview of parts Mandić created between 1998 and 2010. Thirty-eight parts, which we had occasion to see in the past, mostly in Drama and the Mini Theatre, are strung together into a performance, in which Mandić once again proves himself to be an inexhaustible spring of energy, a master of transformation and, as he was once described by the committee members at the Borštnik meeting -- a theatre extremist.

On the stage of the Old Power Station, Mandić once again rose up to some of theatre's greatest characters and some lesser known ones, aided by a striking costume and the audience, which he communicated with throughout, inviting them on stage, sending them out from the auditorium, getting them to change seats or involve them in some other way.

From playing Oswald of Ibsen's Ghosts, via Renton or rather Tomaž Kos of Trainspotting, to Bob of Hanif Kureishi's Outskirts and Al from the performance Sallinger staged two years ago at the Mini Theatre, Mandić seeks the core of the actor that transcends the part. In this he is merciless, sucking out the essence from the role. He hardly stops to pause at transitions, which makes the performance seem less an overview of the various roles than an uncontrolled source of Mandić's creative energies as an actor.

Mandićmachine captivated the audience throughout, engaging them without fail, and deservedly earned a standing ovation at the end.