

EXTRACTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

Karmina Šilec and Tatjana Ažman

The questions, emerging nowadays time and again are, where have all the values disappeared, what are the mechanisms of belief, how to restore ethics ... They are most probably not so distant from the reflections, on which certain “starting points” of this piece are based.

The musicians on the sinking RMS Titanic played until the very end. These unusual circumstances are at the heart of our curiosity or rather wonder about this – so far -, most “popular” catastrophe. The tragic shipwreck is namely a synonym for heroic scenarios. Heroes are the icons, mastering heroic deeds - and thus fields of art as well -, on a daily basis. Their ability to rise above fear has been enchanting the society for thousands of years. What is it that inspires man to an uncompromising act of courage, which is in fact opposed to his seemingly selfish nature? We wanted to find out what were the motives that actually prevented the musicians from letting up their playing. Was their music a special strategy? Was it a parallel to religiosity? A supplication directed towards Heaven? Was it connecting, consoling or channeling their fear of death? Were they keeping - with the music they played -, the connection with the demonic sensuality rather than the connection with God? Was it heroism or just a selfish act? A primordial feeling or striving for a sense of belonging, connectedness with others? An altruistic suicide? And was it heroism at all, as compared to the similar situations in present time? Perhaps it was about a quest for rapture. People are always looking for certain moments of elation, for a transcendent experience, for something that touches us deeply and allows us to exceed our limits, at least for a brief moment of time. It is in such instants that we seem to live fuller than usual, push things to the edge and identify ourselves with the entire mankind. Religion is one such way. But if we fail to find it in mosques, temples, churches or synagogues, we tend to look for it elsewhere – in music, sport, drugs. It seems that it is in the borderline situations of existence that man is called to demonstrate what he is capable of. And as Frankl puts it: « the borderline, the stable situations are the ones that force us to mature, to grow beyond ourselves, whereas suffering gives us a possibility to thrive, and thus change as well. Surpassing oneself is characteristic of human existence, therefore it is the only way that leads to self-realization; the more we ignore and forget about ourselves, the more human and ourselves we are. It is through this very picture of the last moments before the shipwreck that we are actually tackling the universal, ethical issues. What emerged in the process of creation were some very interesting reflections of the artists participating in the performance.

What the story of Titanic - as you see it -, is most probably about, is much more than a sheer summary of basic behavioral patterns, or just another present-day myth. What could be its next step?

What the ship actually presents is a very old and rich symbol - a means of transportation between this and the next world. In Christian tradition the ship symbolically represents a pilgrimage, since it transfers/transportes the faithful through the world of seas to the heavenly home; and even a part of the place of worship is named after this symbol. The water, on the other hand, stands for a universal fatherland. It is an element of melancholy:

Super flumina Babylonis sedimus et flevimus (the water weeps along with the whole world). And it is also, above all, an invitation to death - to a special kind of death. The kind of death that allows for a return to that primeval, material refuge. It is in fact the water that decomposes most thoroughly, and thus helps us to die completely. To me, taking one's leave on the sea shore is the most touching and the most literary of all the partings; perhaps it is because I imagine it as walking, or rather departing on the water.

Large cruise ships are designed to pamper their passengers, offering them luxury and entertainment. As they sail across the water, they pass different cultures, thus allowing their passengers to remain passive observers. Their happiness is all that matters. In its historical context, the RMS Titanic stands for a symbolic culmination of the development of modern West, a technical miracle of contemporary times, and therefore a metaphor as well for a brave new world, sailing into the bright future. Even when travelling on the famous RMS Titanic, people were divided into separate classes, the same way as the World is divided today. There were more than thousand among them travelling in the third class, and they were primarily emigrants, who embarked on the fatal journey with certain hopes. It is not difficult at all to imagine the locked doors that separated them from the rest of the passengers. Similarly cruel and incomprehensible seems to be the behavior of the modern "first class", the rich West, which, perhaps, listening to light music and sipping wine or tea, announces to those who are drowning: "You cannot get in here, go back." It is then that we most probably remember the RMS Titanic, the mighty and unsinkable ship that drifted to the bottom of the deep sea, where her remains bear witness to the human greed and arrogance.

Although deprived of the narrative flow, *Evergreen* certainly boasts an extremely multi-layered structure. It is nevertheless expected to have a defined volume, allowing for both the unity and the recognisability of the structure, similarly to the other performative forms, without which it simply does not work.

Since my focus of interest lies in the matters that are not unambiguous, what I wish to convey is not to be narrowed down to a single meaning or even a single story. It is my wish to avoid the descriptions as much as possible, since I am quite convinced that the audience is not to be presented with any instructions or guidelines of how to read the performance and thus guided to its expectations in advance. Therefore what I aim to create with this "choregie", are the fields and spaces where the spectators could feed their imagination and yield themselves to their feelings and reactions, since at the end of the day they are not getting the instructions on how and what to think or even feel.

I did however take out as a starting point a scene, a basic tone. It is the moment when the musicians on the sinking ship decide to play to the very end, the moment which we are able to imagine in many ways.

Therefore this performance should be understood as an attempt to trigger our associations and creativity, an attempt to set us out to an emotional voyage.

(Tatjana Ažman)