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## Abstract

The article examines the series of lecture-performances about the sexual pleasure of women, *Sex Education II*, directed by Tjaša Črnigoj, as an example of feminist theatre in Slovenia. It begins by exploring the intersections of feminist theories and performing arts. Each component in the series (*Diagnosis, Consentire, Ability, Play, Fight*) reflects on feminist approaches to performance practice, both in the production and the creative process, wherein the focus on documentary theatre plays a decisive role in the thematic and formal analyses of the performances. *Sex Education II* gradually transitions from addressing issues of women's bodies to broader questions about the position of women in society and the influence of patriarchy on the most intimate aspects of their lives. Diverse strategies for approaching stage material and conveying it to the audience reveal the intersectionality of feminist theatre as realised in *Sex Education II*.

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**Keywords:** feminist theatre, feminist performance studies, documentary theatre, Tjaša Črnigoj, *Sex Education II*

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# Feminist Approaches to Performing Arts: The Case of *Sex Education II*

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The article examines the series of lecture-performances on women's sexual pleasure, *Sex Education II*, directed by Tjaša Črnigoj, as an example of feminist theatre in Slovenia. The introduction briefly outlines the history of feminist theatre in Slovenia and the broader societal developments that introduced awareness about the neglect of women's sexuality into public discourse. This historical overview reveals the specific contextual placement of the production of *Sex Education II*, which was co-produced by City of Women and Maska – both independent producers historically connected to similar feminist artistic practices – together with the institutional Mladinsko Theatre. In the Slovenian performing arts landscape, explicitly feminist content that does not originate from drama texts is very rare in institutional theatres. A particular achievement of this production is its visibility and audience reach, as it was awarded at all major (and national) Slovenian theatre festivals and presented internationally.

A feminist approach can be seen in the all-female creative team and in the structure of the creative process, which lasted nearly a year and a half. The development of the performance cycle was based on equal co-authorship, undermining the patriarchal model of the director as the ultimate author. The commitment to the documentary form incorporated a multitude of testimonies into the material, creating a polyphonic stage voice that addresses the complexity of topics typically neglected on institutional stages. The format of multiple lecture-performances throughout the theatre season generates a unique feminist dramaturgy with multiple climaxes, allowing the topics to be presented continuously and become more deeply rooted in the audience's consciousness.

Before analysing individual parts of the performance cycle, the article delves into the historical development of feminist theories in performing arts, primarily drawing on writings by Jill Dolan, Elaine Aston and Sue-Ellen Case. The author gives special attention to liberal or bourgeois, radical and materialist feminisms as potential frameworks for analysing *Sex Education II*. In each part (*Diagnosis, Consentire, Ability, Play, Fight*), feminist approaches are traced in both the production and the creative

process – where the documentary theatre form plays a crucial role – and in the content analysis of the performances. *Sex Education II* gradually shifts from issues concerning women's bodies to broader societal problems of women's positions and the impact of patriarchy on the most intimate aspects of their lives.

While the first two parts (*Diagnosis* and *Consentire*) primarily address the female body from a biological perspective, the following three parts of *Sex Education II* enter the domain of intersectional feminism. *Ability* explores sexual pleasure at the intersection with a physical disability, *Play* deals with non-normative sexual practices, gender identities and sexual orientations, and *Fight* strongly emphasises the context of social class and education as some of the most decisive factors in women's lives. From *Diagnosis* to *Fight*, *Sex Education II* moves from the female body to the broader social context that shapes that body. Addressing unresolved questions of the past and seeking ways to overcome such oppressive mechanisms – both in the organisation of the creative team and in the aesthetics of the performances – lays a framework for a new feminist theatre poetics. Each part of the cycle demonstrates a plurality of approaches, which feminist theatre scholars highlight as a hallmark of feminist engagement in the performing arts. The entire cycle carries a political subtext: such discriminatory practices must and can be changed. *Sex Education II* thus represents a comprehensive example of feminist theatre, where feminist principles are embedded from the inception of the performance and not merely applied retrospectively.