



Abstract

Žiga Divjak is a director who has, in recent years, been intensively engaged in productions that put environmental themes front and centre. His productions are examples of socially engaged documentary theatre that portray various aspects of climate change through the simultaneity of theatrical strategies. The productions do not offer solutions but rather inform the spectator about and raise awareness of environmental and humanitarian crises and open the theatre as a space of public reflection in which audiences are faced with the contradictions of the modern world. This paper closely analyses three works, namely, *Vročina* (*Fever*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2021), *Krize* (*Crises*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2022) and *Kako je padlo drevo* (*How a Tree Fell*, SNT Drama Ljubljana, 2022), connected by the shared theme of the tree and the latest scientific findings about the secret life of trees and the cooperation among beings that form part of every ecosystem.

Keywords: contemporary Slovenian drama, environmental themes, Žiga Divjak, tree theme, devised theatre, documentary theatre

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The Secret Life of Trees in the Theatre Productions of Žiga Divjak

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We live in a world with wildfires, floods, droughts, the extinction of animal and plant species, migrations, a warming atmosphere, and other phenomena that call our attention to humanity's unsustainable treatment of the planet. Every day we are faced with various articles, reports, news and data about environmental problems. In this text, however, we are interested in how drama and theatre can raise awareness about environmental issues. The theatre, with its strongly anthropocentric heritage, has been relatively slow to respond to environmental issues in comparison with literary, media and film studies. But lately, scholars of the theatre and the performing arts, as well as theatre-makers themselves, have been giving ever more thought to the subject. This is also characteristic of Žiga Divjak's directorial opus. For the past five years, he has been intensively engaged in productions that put environmental themes front and centre. His productions are examples of socially engaged documentary theatre that portray various aspects of climate change through the simultaneous use of various theatrical strategies. The productions do not offer solutions but rather inform the spectator about and raise awareness of environmental and humanitarian crises and open the theatre as a space of public reflection where we are faced with the contradictions of the modern world. In this paper, we will more closely analyse three works, namely *Vročina* (*Fever*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2021), *Krize* (*Crises*, Mladinsko Theatre, 2022), and *Kako je padlo drevo* (*How a Tree Fell*, SNT Drama Ljubljana, 2022), with the tree as their connecting theme. The tree has various roles: the dry branches held up by the actor allude to rising temperatures and the ensuing drought, wildfire and forest loss; the scenography with the stumps of felled trees parallels the exploitation and exhaustion of the contemporary human beings and the objectification of all living things; the tree on the green plot of a residential neighbourhood that is to be felled to make way for a luxury housing development becomes a symbol of resistance to gentrification, violence, capital and dehumanisation. These productions are informed by the fundamental idea that humanity will survive only if it is founded on cooperation and a fairer distribution of goods, in which everyone takes only what they need. This idea is also supported by the latest scientific findings on the secret life of trees and the cooperation among the living beings that make up each ecosystem.

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