

Is mastery possible?

Karolina Leszczyńska about „How to become a master?” dir. **Marta Guściora**

The theatrical plays prepared by Borders of Social Welfare Homes, including people intellectually disadvantaged, belong to tradition of the Theatrical Village. Instantly the legitimacy of the notion „disadvantaged” would have to be questioned. It is becoming increasingly clear, that the performers are simply Actors, undistinguishable from those „advantaged” performers.

The subject matters in play „How to become a master” of the theatrical crew „Barka” from the Community of Mutual Help Home in Olsztyn directed by Marta Guściora also does not refer to any issue of disability. They reached to eastern fairy tales. This genre is not that easy for theatrical production, as it could appear, because one can easily become schematic and fall into a trap of being schematic. Here, the effect turned out to be interesting, mainly due to a medley of seriousness and humour and even absurdity as well as simple however suggestive construction of the stage. The mood of fantasy is introduced by a gold, eastern folding screen. In the middle of the stage one was able to notice a dais, which usually functions as a seat or a throne for a master.

The plot was comprised of a few fairy tales which had a common leitmotiv that is the relation master-apprentice or master-apprentices. Each story contains a suggestive moral, it usually turns out that it is not that easy to become a master in Eastern Culture. The stories are shown in a way, that they can be understood very literally and they are

simply comical or, one can search for some basic guidelines to be followed in life. Wisdom taken literally does people more harm than good, though. One of the tales is a history of relation between a lazy master and rather foolish apprentice. The master does not feel like giving lessons, he lays down on the dais, claiming that he has no time for the apprentice. Eventually he asks him to neatening the path. The path, suddenly, happens to be made of a colourful cloth of tulle, and some stones symbolize the way it is adjusted. The apprentice tries to neatening the path by altering the position of stones. The master is never satisfied with the content does not conceal his impatience. Further interactions between the master and the apprentice make the audience laugh. At least the impatient apprentice asks for precise guidelines and then the master neatens the path himself, saying that it was the effect he wanted. The story is closed with a strong message that there are different ways of adjusting the path. However, it is not clear who was a fool and who was smarter, who was bamboozled by whom, who did not understand the depth. Is the apprentice, who decided to follow the guidelines blindly, or is it the master, who does not understand that the apprentice is an individual and every path is different.

It seems that the issue of helplessness, of following role models and self-admiration of those regarding themselves as such, is closed to hearts of creators of the play. We saw, among the others, the master, in. who obsessively sought for an apprentice – follower who he could pass the knowledge to. It is supposed to be somebody who, being himself, is also exactly like the master. All apply but no one is good enough for the master. The theatrical performance ends up with a story about someone who wanted to get rid of a shortcoming he was born with. No treatment could help and medicine had no cure for a button instead of a navel. Eventually, the stubbornness of the protagonist made him lose that shortcoming but he lost his bum as well. The shortcoming is therefore a part of us, and that, what we perceive as an obstacle, is inseparably joined with our entire life. What is bad cooperates with what is good, and some tough moments can become the beginning of what turns out to be the best in our life. Such philosophical reflections could be made on and on. Certainly, the audience leaving the theatre made their own. One is sure, the play did not offer any clear, equivocal answers to the question stated in the title.