

Joanna Kocemba about *Beak to beak* by Piktogram Theatre (dir. Florian Staniewski)

Pecked up!

One of the most interesting and most important events of 2018's Theatre Village of 2018 was the performance of „Beak to beak” directed by Florian Staniewski presented by the Piktogram group from Sztum. Shown not in the abstracted empty space of the theatre stage but in the school in Jonkowo, in the daylight flooding the floors from the window and at the uncovered scaffolding of the gymnasium. It appeared different than the other performances that way. The social context was literally there at every step, the theatrical microcosmos took over the reality, used it and visualized it.

The story is simple and told simply. Very popular among directors of performances for children, but also in groups of children's theatre, the text „Beak to beak” by Malina Prześluga is a story about exclusion of a group and lack of tolerance for otherness. The group is exclusive and closed. However, due to certain events that allow personal contact with the excluded person, some members of the group are convinced of the possibility of establishing a close relationship with him. The process allowing for the inclusion of the Other into the ranks of the group is obviously not simple and requires a specific sequence of events related to overcoming the threat accumulated before everyone as a result of the intervention of the changeling and the use of the role of external authority. However, the story ends successfully for all, followed by unification, and divisions disappear.

This universal story, which in the case of the Prześluga's text is told by pigeons, sparrows and cats, took on an exceptional quality in the case of Piktogram's interpretation. As told during the evening discussion, the members of the theatre group are residents of the semi-open division of the prison in Sztum. The idea of staging this particular text belonged to the group leader and the director of the performance. Although, of course, there were some changes, the performance should be placed very close to the text of a play. Sławek Sidorowicz - an educator - commented on this later (not directly though), expressing the opinion that creating literal performances about prison would be belittling to actors. You can discuss with the above, however, in the performance we will not find references to

the situation of the prisoners, not direct and obvious ones for sure. In the metaphorical plan, as well as from the viewer's perspective, without imposing on the actors their relationship with the spectacle, one can assume that it is a story about them, or perhaps more broadly: the history they belong to, the history they bear - as a group.

What certainly struck us in the case of Piktogram's piece – when analysing it simply as a theatrical performance, is the incredible vitality or even spontaneity on the stage. Contact with the audience, energy, commitment, language jokes, maybe even ironizing about themselves as pigeons or sparrows, made the audience laughing permanently. Thunderous applause, probably the biggest on this year's festival, made the actors bow down endlessly. One can say that it is a good example of an „old school“ of directing, playing, thinking about text, music, set design or just theatre. An efficiently executed piece of work, without experiments in the formal field, but with a huge load of emotions and commitment - to sum it up.