

Begüm Erciyas
Voicing Pieces

SMART PERFORMANCE CREATES A DISTANCE OF YOUR OWN VOICE



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With little you are as familiar as with your own voice, but still it is always strange to hear yourself back. As if you hear someone else, while you are undeniably yourself. Begüm Erciyas plays with this ambiguity, in the special Voicing Pieces. The performance from 2016 was selected last year by the Flemish Theater Festival as one of the fifteen most remarkable productions of the previous season and can be seen in the Brakke Grond this week as part of Beyond the Black Box.

Voicing Pieces is something you do alone, you are both performer and spectator. As a participant you get headphones with microphone. With this you go off three hollow objects, where you always insert your head and then read out a text. Initially it resembles the autoteatro-performances of Ant Hampton, for example, but then it turns out to be a silent second witness: an invisible technician who uses your voice and volume to get to work.

In the first part you still have a lot in your hands: the words you pronounce may be determined for you, but you turn the pages into the black folder yourself, so you determine the rhythm and tempo of what you say. Occasionally your voice is distorted or echoed. It feels a bit like playing. It is very safe too. Still.

Then Erciyas does something clever: in the second object she lets you count up to eight times, so that, without being aware of it at that moment, you yourself record a rhythm for the rest of the text. The pages now also shift automatically. So now, in addition to what you say, you are also increasingly giving in power over your tempo, volume and rhythm. Then you compose the auditory environment of a busy one yourself, tourist piazza - like standing in the middle of a crowd. A crowd that you have also created yourself, just like the rhythm that you always tried to keep up with so frenetically, is something that you have imposed on yourself. Suddenly the performance is about the pressure we impose on ourselves, and how we can reduce the experience of chaos and disorder to ourselves.

In the quiet finale, your voice seems to be completely disconnected from you from the words you say. As you read the sentences from the paper, you only hear them a fraction later over the headphones, making it almost impossible to pronounce the text correctly. Like a drunkard who has given up all control over what he says and the way it comes out of his mouth, you lose yourself in the sentences, work your way through the words and get stuck in a vicious circle of language. And eventually you find liberation in that too.

Your voice is not only the sound of the words you say, it is also your identity, that what you stand for. It is strange and at times very disorienting to be so disconnected from it and confronted with it, but also meaningful to think again about the pace you pursue in life, the volume with which you face the world and the ease with which you blindly say what happens to be written for you.

Never hurts, a little disorientation.