

I Am Not Ashamed of My Communist Past

by Sanja Mitrović and Vladimir Aleksić



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"Mitrović 'performances tackle major political themes, but never in the form of political pamphlets. It is the responsibility of a theatre maker to open minds, not to close them."
Evelyne Coussens

"Mitrović and Aleksić forge a bridge to the past as comic video jockeys. (...) But their investigation of that enigmatic thing called memory is not naive in any sense. It is cinematically broken down, meta-cinematically ironised, and dressed up as the critique of capitalism. (...) From this search of lost time you return with chalk dust on your hands and a poisoned apple in your mouth."
Tages-Anzeiger

"This is the last picture show of a country which no longer exists. (...) Whether Black Wave (Yugoslavia's answer to the French Nouvelle Vague) or Red Wave (partisan films) Sanja Mitrović and Vladimir Aleksić reenact different film histories about love and war, occasionally reinventing the scenes on the screen as their own personal stories "
Zürichsee-Zeitung

"An elaborate elegy filled to the brim with playfulness, skill, imaginative twists and turns, and a triumph of talent and precision. (...) Two protagonists demonstrate artistry of the highest order which, in combination with fascinating film montages, results in an important and stylistically distinctive work. (...) A picture of widespread devastation, which surrounds and marks all of us now, has found in this production an honest and multilayered interpretation."
Goran Cvetković (Radio Belgrade 2)

In *I Am Not Ashamed of My Communist Past* acclaimed theatre maker Sanja Mitrović and Serbian actor Vladimir Aleksić address the recent history of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a country which now exists only in imagination and memory. And yet the fundamental idea of SFRY, as a multiethnic, multi-religious, socialist state, is still relevant for the European struggles of today. This is the conviction which brought together these two performers, and childhood friends, who both emigrated in 2001. While Sanja still lives and works in Western Europe, Vladimir returned to Serbia, re-building his life there.

Their investigation takes place through a dialogue between film and theatre. The performers employ a variety of strategies—from voiceover and real time dubbing, to physical reconstructions and fictional set ups—in order to intertwine the course of their lives with the history of the Yugoslav territories, and open up a host of seemingly unrelated themes: the socialist past, the antifascist struggle, the welfare state, the sense of community, the nationalist wars, the post-socialist transformation, the neoliberal revisionism, deindustrialisation, and the devastation of their hometown, which was once an economic giant.

No other medium managed to express the 20th century better than cinema, leaving a legacy of images that shaped the attitudes and perceptions of people. Over the course of its history, Yugoslav cinema, once an important and popular artistic form, expressed the internal contradictions of the socialist country, from spectacular Partisan epics to stories from the margins. Just as Yugoslavia was not a monolithic totalitarian state, so its films reflected a multitude of voices and political and cultural positions that existed in society.

Yugoslav cinema, its studios and production companies, ceased to exist with the rise of nationalism, corruption and, consequently, the destruction of the socialist heritage. Even Avala Film, one of the first and most important studios, once famous for its award-winning titles and international co-productions, was recently sold, along with the rights to its back catalogue, under suspicious circumstances and for a fraction of its real value. The fate of the once grand factory of moving images, visions and dreams, thus proved to be not all that different from other, less glamorous companies who also disappeared in the transitional hurricane. Mitrović and Aleksić use the case of Avala Film as a symbolic framework for the story of their lives. The last Avala Film production was released in 2000 and soon after their paths went separate ways.

What has been lost in the period of transition and how do these two performers cope with the sense of loss? How did socialist families collapse together with socialist companies, and in which way did this influence Sanja and Vladimir? *I Am Not Ashamed of My Communist Past* searches the performers' own backgrounds and their current situations, the value of their lives and work, and the weight of choices they made, both personal and professional. In today's society, can we hold on to values inherited from a country which has disappeared? Do we, as a community, come together only to mourn and protest? Or is it possible to remain loyal to ideals which we once believed in and to work together towards their realisation? *I Am Not Ashamed of My Communist Past* brings face-to-face the embodied personal memories of performers and images of a national cinema to investigate what remains from the shared values of solidarity and social justice in times of materialistic individuality.

CREDITS

CONCEPT & PERFORMANCE Sanja Mitrović, Vladimir Aleksić

DIRECTED BY Sanja Mitrović

IN COLLABORATION WITH Vladimir Aleksić

DRAMATURGY Jorge Palinhos, Olga Dimitrijević

CHOREOGRAPHY Sanja Mitrović

SET & COSTUME DESIGN Frédéric Denis

LIGHT DESIGN & TECHNICIAN Giacomo Gorini

SOUND DESIGN Vladimir Pejković

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Siniša Mitrović

ORIGINAL VIDEO MATERIAL Vladimir Pavić, Frédéric Denis

VIDEO EDITING Nikola Vrzić, Siniša Mitrović

VIDEO & SOUND TECHNICIAN Wouter Dupont

CONSULTANT Cis Bierinickx

ENGLISH TRANSLATION Siniša Mitrović

PUBLICITY Jeroen Goffings

PRODUCERS Jelena Knežević, Tamara Pović

PRODUCTION & TOUR MANAGEMENT Liesbeth Stas

PRODUCED BY Sanja Mitrović/Stand Up Tall Productions (Amsterdam) and BITEF Theatre (Belgrade)

CO-PRODUCED BY Beursschouwburg (Brussels)

PARTNERS Pianofabriek (Brussels), Centar Film (Belgrade), Yugoslav Cinematheque (Belgrade), Avala Film (Belgrade), Film Center Serbia (Belgrade), National Theatre Toša Jovanović (Zrenjanin)

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SPECIAL THANKS TO Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (Brussels)

ON TOUR

27-28, 30–31 May 2016 . BITEF Theatre . Belgrade (SR)

22-23 August 2016 . Theaterspektakel . Zürich (CH)

7-8 October 2016 . Beursschouwburg . Brussels (BE)

12 October 2016 . Cultuurcentrum Hasselt (BE)

13 October 2016 . NONA . Mechelen (BE)

29-30 October 2016 . FIAC BAHIA . International Performing Arts Festival . Salvador de Bahia (BR)

26-28 November 2016 . BITEF Theatre . Belgrade . National Theatre Toša Jovanović . Zrenjanin (SR)

2-3 February 2017 . Reims Scènes d'Europe Festival . Reims (FR)

HIGH RES PHOTOS

PHOTOGRAPHER Marko Berkeš

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/2087643/Sanja/SUTP_Images.zip

TRAILER YOUTUBE

<https://youtu.be/nOCV7DPCCG4>

MORE INFO & CONTACTS

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