

MEETING POINT 70 – a motion report

Live Talk on the Opening Night of MEETING POINT 70
Hartmut Krug in the programme "Fazit" on Deutschlandradio Kultur



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"The times when a novel was a novel, a play was a play and a ballet was a ballet are definitely over. In Düsseldorf tonight was the premiere of a piece titled MEETING POINT 70, subtitle: motion report, second subtitle: performative field research by Katja F.M. Wolf. Hartmut Krug in Düsseldorf, let us look at a number of questions that arise here: First of all, what is a motion report and what is performative field research?"

"MEETING POINT 70 was the code name of a what the East German security agency Stasi called an 'operative occurrence'. Stasi agents spied on the choreographer's family from 1970 onwards, the year in which Ms Wolf was born. A motion report is an attempt to bring together on stage motions, biographical movements, which others have recorded of oneself, but which one has also perceived of oneself, and then to reflect them. It is not only about showing a choreographic mise-en-scène, but also about developing a performance together with dancers, actors and in this case a puppeteer, in which one reflects very precisely the conditions and situations from former times and perspectives on that time from today."

"With the notion of 'Performance' one has the impression that everything is a bit insecure and indistinct. Has Katja F.M. Wolf a clear idea of how she can bring this research onto the stage?"

"Yes, she has indeed. She does this using many different tools. You might have noticed already the diverse artists involved, who come from totally different genres, like dance, puppetry, acting, music and video art. This project is not about settling old scores, inventing accounts with victims and offenders, it is a sort of biographical research. On one side there is the Stasi file which the actress Katja F.M. Wolf on stage looks upon as a weird family album as if through a slightly distorted lens, on the other side there are the mother's diary notes and her own childhood memories. Also important is the backward look, today's view on one's own childhood.

This work discusses how one can really appropriate one's own biography when strangers were in this life, too, who wanted to influence it without one knowing. The beginning is very clear and intelligible, it shows what excellent images Ms Wolf finds. There are four characters who move in space and form arrangements of isolation and relation while Ms Wolf walks through the space holding a camera – using a „Stasi-report“, she tells the audience in great detail about what used to be her Leipzig apartment; at the same time she films the spectators and the spectators see themselves and find themselves in the uncomfortable situation of being exposed on the huge projection screen. When Ms Wolf says that she stands in front of a mirror, she films herself, films herself in front of the audience, the whole thing is therefore simultaneously a reflection, and an image of the performative research."

"And how does this develop into a play? If her own life is the object of the piece, does the performance lead to her present self, as she is today, at the end?"

"No, she doesn't end up with herself as she is today, for she is with her present self right from the very beginning. As a piece it is not narrated in a temporally linear way, it's not a performance in that particular sense; instead images from different times resurface continuously. Ms Wolf's research explores the act of researching itself when she asks how we can discern biographical details as true, how we can deal with them, how we can come to grips with them and what does that mean to us today. At times this takes on a really funny edge, for example, when the puppeteer Evelyn Arndt acts out the Stasi reports on a table with a woollen sock puppet and little plastic animals and this is projected onto the video screen. You see that the whole thing is exemplary and not determined by the desire to make externally attractive scenic images, for in fact the real Stasi reports are banal, clumsy reports. In fact, nothing worth reporting happened to the Wolf family. This is further emphasised by the way the abstract reports are sensualized through the intonation and phrasing of the speaking chorus and the comical qualities of the dancers and actors. Then of course, they sing and dance the old East German anthem, which seemed dispensable to me, and also the song "Unsere Heimat" (Our Home Country), not to be left out of any critical review of the GDR. A slide shows runs parallel to that. The intriguing aspect is that the images of Leipzig as it was and as it is now are super-imposed in such a way that you do not know anymore what is when.

And then there is a lot of choreographic movement, choreographic imagery. These movement sequences reveal the emotional world, they encircle the emotional world in a concrete and an abstract way. There are internal images and relations between the characters – one could say that the performance comprises a patchwork of diverse efforts to approach the question of how others have seen one's life, how one deals with that now, how one appropriates one's biography today. The location of this event is not history, it is always already the presence of Katja F.M. Wolf."

"Can you say anything about the venue, the Forum Freies Theater in Düsseldorf?"

"Yes, it is a central venue for free theatre, comparable to Sophiensaele in Berlin or Kampnagel in Hamburg. While the latter always work with the same circle of co-producers I find it exciting that in this instance the Forum Freies Theater has

collaborated with the Ringlokschuppen in Mülheim an der Ruhr and the LOFFT in Leipzig. In this way they really try to open up another circle of theatres and you see an effort here to support the development of new ways of performing on a new level.

One also has to say it is astonishing to have such a theme addressed in Düsseldorf, far away from East Germany, and that this biographical theme is taken on here at all. Nevertheless it was incredibly well received by the public and has led to lively debates after the show."

"Biographically Katja F.M. Wolf has come to Düsseldorf, from Leipzig to Düsseldorf, a long way. MEETING POINT 70 – a motion report, a performative field research premiered tonight in Düsseldorf. It will be shown at the Forum Freies Theater several more times and later on will go to Mülheim an der Ruhr and to Leipzig. Hartmut Krug was reporting from Düsseldorf."

