

Review

Documentary performance

When a Name Becomes Art

By Jela Krečič

The More of Us There Are, the Faster We Will Reach Our Goal
Directed and conceived by Janez Janša, Janez Janša
Production: Maska, Aksioma
Brut Künstlerhaus Vienna

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The most famous example of a theatrical treatment of the meaning of a name is probably the scene in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in which Juliet, standing on the balcony, ruminates about what her loved one's name means. Her Romeo bears the name of her family's enemies which is why their relationship is doomed. Is a name really so important, Juliet wonders. Would a rose by any other name not smell as sweet?

The documentary performance by Janša and Janša *The More of Us There Are, the Faster We Will Reach Our Goal* is entirely dedicated to the problem of a name. Why do we have names? How do these names influence our lives? What is the point of changing one's name? What does a new name bring? In the documentary performance, various people on screen answer these questions. Among them, there are those that have namesakes, people like artist Kirstin Sue Lucas, who changed her name into the same one, a legal expert (Miro Cerar), a theatre critic (Blaž Lukan) and a philosopher (Mladen Dolar), etc. If, according to the statements of some of the actors, it seems that one's name is the most natural thing in the world, something we are born with, we at the same time see that a name brings a series of complications, troubles and – as in *Romeo and Juliet* – often demands a pound of flesh.

In the performance, we follow the weight of the name change primarily in the concrete case of three artists changing their name to Janez Janša. We follow more intimate testimonies, for example, of their parents, who – as their new birth certificate bespeaks – gave birth to Janez Janša. Their son's decision confused them, shocked them, even hurt them. They do not understand this gesture. Then, there are political analyses of this name change that explain the gesture either as an apology of Janez Janša's politics (as we can gather from the excerpts from a text by Marina Gržinić) or as a subversive act (Marcel Štefančič jr.), whose multiplication of the name relativised the value of the "original" Janša (Dolar).

The stack of material, statements and sequences (of which the most noticeable is Janša's wedding with Marcela Okretič, at which the best men were Janša and Janša, or the merrymaking of Janez Janša and Janez Janša at the SDS convention) at the end culminates in a scene in which the faces of all the participants appear on the screen repeating: "I am Janez Janša." Here, we sense fully the problem of the name, the gesture of the name change. For we see that people who before claimed how satisfied they were with their name are now prepared to momentarily change it for the purposes of the

Janša project. The new and temporary identity – expressed in the sentence: “I am Janez Janša.” – works and in a (comical) way justifies and consistently realises the title of the performance: *The More of Us There Are, the Faster We Will Reach Our Goal*.

We should say a few words also about the form of the performance, the relation between the film material and the performer Dražen Dragojevič, “playing” the director, editor, the voice-over, narrator, translator and MC. What does the introduction of documentary material to the stage actually mean? In what way is it connected to the status of the theatre? Is this connection a fruitful one? The answer could go along these lines: if, in the film scenes, there emerges especially the ontological, sociological and political dimension of the name and the name change, then, with the transfer of this material to the stage, the name becomes a distinguished theatrical object. Or, put differently, in this synthesis, the name becomes art.