

## Dogma and anti-dogma: Breaking the Waves

It wouldn't have been hard to guess that the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj would celebrate the International Day of Theatre in a very special way: during the weekend of April, 25-26<sup>th</sup>, the Studio Hall of the Theatre presented an adaptation of one of the representative works of the *provocateur* stage director, Lars von Trier - more precisely, an

Those familiar with the movie upon which this adaptation is based will discover that most of the original dialogue has remained perfectly unmodified, except for some parts where dramatist Eszter Biro has tried to bring the action in a meta-textual form: the famous sequence that takes place on a bus is transformed into an anecdote about the only part of the movie that a friend of the narrator remembers, and Bess's first descent in the dark world of the port is turned upside down and made comical by the male cast.

What makes this adaptation really glisten is not only the faithful replication of the original story and the excellent performances by the actors of the Hungarian Theatre, but especially the way the makers of the play have chosen to apply the rules of von Trier's famous *Dogme 95* manifesto. Being a movement that pleads for a purification of the cinema, both from a thematic point of view and concerning the usage of diegetic music and of sets closer to reality, the implementers have built, behold, a theatrical product with the minimum of props, and a soundtrack which is mostly played live by the actors.

The original *Breaking the Waves* does not entirely respect the *Dogmes*. The adaptation from the Hungarian Theatre takes this into account and does even more: at about the middle of the play, a cloud of artificial smoke covers the stage and Bess and Jan go up on the table situated in the middle of the stage, discussing what they have become, in a pirouette-groovy dance. What is staged in as minimal a way possible blossoms into an analysis of Bess's destabilized psychic, in which hyperrealism leaves room for surrealism. Maybe the smartest detail of the scenography is the use of a handheld video camera, operated in turns by most of the actors on the stage - a clear reference to *Dogme* aesthetics and a mechanism that offers the spectator an enriching counterpoint of close, selective detail alongside the live action before him.

Even though the cost of a ticket to *Breaking the Waves* may seem a little steep for the pockets of those in their early twenties (25 lei), what the spectators are offered is a theatrical product, equally intelligent and cerebral, as well as profound and touching. Recommended not only for von Trier fans.

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