

**49th Week of Slovenian Drama**  
**THE GRUM AWARD JURY REPORT**

When we think about Slovenian drama, we always start with questions linked to relevant contemporary content, and those linked to the form. We expect it to be vital, able to address us as a text for reading and to have performative potential. It should also reflect the time we live in or make us its protagonists. Tonight, just as it has for many years, a new drama will be crowned with the Slavko Grum Award.

The jury read the submitted texts with an understanding that it does not merely read the self-sufficient literary works, but rather perceives the texts as a constituent part of theatre, that a dramatic text is not an isolated, but rather an integral part of the performance and that theatre is a living organism. A quarter of the entered texts have already been performed. It is for this reason that we debated the rationale behind the anonymity of the competition. Texts for theatre are no longer created as exclusively literary works that would then more or less unsuccessfully wait for artists and theatres to produce them and would only come to life during the creative process of rehearsing a performance. More and more texts are created as an immanent part of the performative process, increasingly as a collective effort of the collaborators in the performance. For this reason, such texts cannot compete as anonymous. But it would be a shame if this limitation would disqualify them from competing alongside those that are created in the space of an author's intimacy, yet with stage potential, addressing stage creators and opening the vast field of staging possibilities.

The jury read forty-two texts for the Slavko Grum Award, twelve in the category for the Young Playwright Award and two recommendations for the biennial Grun-Filipič Award for achievements in Slovenian dramaturgy.

The competing texts showed a significant diversity and fusion of genres, different formal approaches that lean on the established canons, modify, ironise or steer them into a completely new context. If last year the jury could scarcely find a non-drama text among those sent in, hence selected two dramas and one completely non-drama text and earned itself a censure for a conservative selection of conventional texts, this year it had a much larger choice. The same thing happened on the thematic level. The authors were searching for drama, and mostly found it, where they were hurting, where they perceived injustice, where they more or less skilfully played the established dramatic procedures, reached into their

intimacy and screamed into the society, with an awareness of glamour and misery revealed the mechanism of the authorities whose consequences we all feel, used jokes and irony to speak and sing about serious and tragic things. They spoke about fear, xenophobia, taboos, growing up, love. The yearly pool of submissions is increasingly inhabited by the contemporary ways of communicating introduced by new technology and the new business and communication procedures emanating from it, as well as the subsequent new kinds of loneliness, addiction, relationships and existential questions. Among the abundance of approaches we did, however, notice some disadvantages. The characters are often only one- or two-dimensional, they're not hashed out and alive, the narration is linear, or is stilted and never develops, the lack of structure that could support the perceived idea stutters or remains rigid. Yet these insufficiencies are a part of learning, honing, because we're aware what it means to write a good theatre play, or, as Simona Semenič, a multiple-winner of the Grum Award wrote in one of her recent columns in connection with Slovenian drama: "By not being afraid of mistakes and allowing them, a milieu also enables the surpluses."

We are pleased to find that in recent years, several incentives for theatre writing have appeared. The platform Dramska platforma is a way to mutually check and exchange experience in writing plays; Vzkrík Festival, which comprehensively follows the entire production process of creating and presenting the plays written during workshops; SNT Drama Ljubljana offers mentorship to young playwrights and presents them in the form of reading performances; and Ljubljana City Theatre intends to invite a resident young playwright per year into a joint creative procedure leading to a staging; while UL AGRFT teaches practical playwriting. And the Week of Slovenian Drama has for many years been organising playwriting workshops.

There is a growing number of public reading of plays or reading performances, which, because of scant actual performance possibilities, are an increasingly established way to present fresh plays to audiences, and a way for young authors to check their texts through the actors' interpretations. The same happens to all the Grum Award nominees and the Young Playwright Award winner, in this case heightened by the uncertainty about the winning text.

But this only means we're half way towards the goal. The play only fulfils its mission when it's staged. It is onstage that it comes to life, excites; it is there that it reveals itself and pulses in its own rhythm. Let us therefore from this stage, at the conferring of both awards once more encourage all the Slovenian theatres to reignite the creative dialogue with the young, new Slovenian drama and consequently to stage these works.

And considering the submissions we described in the beginning, this year's five nominated texts vary greatly in form and in content:

- a cabaret, this increasingly rare visitor on Slovenian stages is this time a collage of comedy genres that sticks its satirical point into the paradoxes and injustices of our everyday;
- a family drama, essentially a one-act play, the anatomy of a contemporary Slovenian family, its teenage daughter becomes the audience's confidante;
- a documentary drama where the spectators remains settled among the majority of the local xenophobic population, the six teens, foreigners, remain present in their verbal absence, just as was Smole's Antigone;
- a documentary drama that encompasses all the levels of contemporary precariat and only takes the title of Cankar's famous work only as an alibi to discuss the socially unjust world;
- a touching drama that could be a children's counting game if it weren't a play about violence and child sexual abuse.

Vilma Štritof,

President of the Grum Award, Young Playwright Award and Grün-Filipič Award Jury 2019