

Chain Reaction of Revenge

THE MEURSAULT (COUNTER) INVESTIGATION, after the novel by Kamel Daoud.

Director Amir Reza Koohestani. Scenography Mitra Nadjmabadi. Video Meika Dresenkamp. Lighting Christian Schweig. Music Michael Koohestani. Dramaturgy Katinka Deecke. With Gundars Āboliņš, Hassan Akkouch, Walter Hess, Mahin Sadri, Samouil Stoyanov, Maya Haddad.

In Camus' 1942 novel *The Stranger*, a Frenchman named Meursault shoots a nameless man, "an Arab". Seventy years later, Algerian writer Kamel Daoud revisits these events in his novel *The Meursault (Counter) Investigation*, giving the victim a name (Musa), a mother and a brother (Harun), and retelling the story from the point of view of the latter.

Iranian director Amir Reza Koohestani presents his adaptation of Daoud's novel at the Münchner Kammerspiele. In his non-linear approach, Koohestani covers a time period from the once colonial lords to the beach tourists and neo-nationalists of today. One of his most original proposals is the triplication of Harun's character, who is played by three generations of actors. The triple Harun recalls how his mother incited him to avenge the murder of his older brother Musa and shoot a randomly selected Frenchman. But the revenge that young Harun accomplishes does not bring him any relief. His sole moments of happiness are experienced with Meriem, a student who is taking a doctoral degree in Camus.

Using simple means such as carpets and sand, the director creates strong scenes. In his search for "the cause of violence", Koohestani also introduces religious criticism, which Harun as an old man, with only his head jutting out of the floor of a "mosque", pronounces magnificently. Koohestani's dense, epic theatre requires several actors to play multiple roles. The director creates a collage of dramatic impact, merging monologues, dialogue scenes, recorded voices and video projections. In roughly 100 minutes, Koohestani brings to life Daoud's novel with very poetic images under a large, perfectly circular disk of the "moon".

But the real enrichment of the convincing evening is the multilingualism of the performance. The actors speak German, Farsi, Arabic, Bulgarian and Latvian. A non-neglectable aspect, as "the question of the language and, above all, the link between language and identity is one of the most important themes of the novel", says Koohestani, adding that "the language is not only a medium of communication, but it becomes a social and political statement". **Irina Wolf**