

Attempt on dying is a sober monologue about living by dying

Swiss playwright and director Boris Nikitin has created a solo performance about his father, who died of the neurodegenerative disease ALS. And about how he dealt with this. His fascinating text oscillates between rationality and emotion.

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One year ago, Swiss playwright and director Boris Nikitin lost his father to the neurodegenerative disease ALS. In *Attempt on Dying*, he describes his father's suffering and death in eloquent phrases. Including their most intimate and emotionally charged moments: Nikitin tells us how his father became dependent on a carer; that he became angry with his nervous system and considered suicide. In the meantime, Nikitin walked a tightrope between reason and emotion. On the one hand, he was glad that euthanasia is possible, in Switzerland; at the same time, he passionately hoped that his father would choose life – and his family.

In this solo performance, in which he reads aloud for fifty minutes on a bare stage, Nikitin probes how we relate to reality. Everyone who has lost a loved one will recognise how Nikitin had trouble relating the lifeless body of his father to the person he had spoken to just a few hours before.

Some will also be able to relate to his coming-out twenty years previously, when Nikitin himself experienced how perceptions of others can change. When he delves deeper into our experience of reality – which Nikitin steadfastly describes as propaganda – at a certain point he slams on the brakes. He won't allow himself to become too abstract. To avoid the pain by reflecting at meta level – something he says he all too readily does.

When Nikitin makes a long pause and shifts in his chair, the physical aspect of his story suddenly comes to the fore. Then he takes us into his father's last happy moments. We learn to live by dying, Nikitin seems to be telling us in this sober yet fascinating monologue.