Platform East European Performing Arts Companion

Edited by
Joanna Krakowska and Daria Odija

Adam Mickiewicz Institute
Centre for Culture in Lublin
Institute of Arts of the Polish Academy of Sciences
City of Lublin

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National Theatre
Independent Theatre
Archives

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The idea for *Platform: An East European Performing Arts Companion* arose over years of working with critics, historians and theorists of theatre from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, who have been meeting since 2008 at conferences and workshops devoted to questions of Theatre After the Change in postcommunist countries. In particular, we have examined the question of how the performing arts – from the artistic and organisational side – in each country handle issues such as elaboration of the past and responsibility for the present. These debates, held first in Budapest and later in Kraków, and taken up during various academic and festival meetings, concerned both the history of theatre in academic discourse and historical narrative conducted in the theatre; both the political entanglement of theatre in the past and its contemporary engagement in public life. All of these questions were considered both at the level of possible general statements and taking into consideration local contexts and the specifics of a given country.

It appears that many historical and political questions which can be discussed in relation to the theatre are similar in the former communist countries, and are conditional on similar contexts. Still, they are not similar enough to minimise the differences and ignore the historical, political and national specifics of the region's individual countries. This tension between the common political and cultural experience, and the differences in identity, history, language and mentality, which make cross-border treatment of the region's theatre impossible, gave rise to a need to create a glossary of fundamental concepts that would capture and name both the similarities and the differences. For we realised that certain words, concepts and terms that we use have quite different meanings depending on who uses them, where they are used, what background and experience determined their content. This observation led directly to the idea of a book that could establish a platform of mutual understanding by explaining the most important and widely used terms: how they function in different countries, their historical context and why they are frequently misunderstood. So this Platform is needed in order to give us certainty that when we talk about institutional, criti-

cal, national, independent or avant-garde theatre in the context of social, political and economic transformation, as well as about the role of theatre in public life, we are talking about the same thing, or we at least understand what we're talking about.

This book has two fundamental and clearly defined aspects, historical and contemporary, which relate reflectively to the past and critically to the present. Thus it allows us to raise fundamental questions: Do historical circumstances entitle us to be convinced of a commonwealth of experience that finds its reflection in the theatre? Do there exist regularities of emergence from the systemic crisis in the countries of the region that would entitle us to formulate general statements? Finally, does there exist something like a Central European identity? Here it seems particularly important to reflect on the way theatre has functioned under the political rigours of communist times and under economic pressure in capitalism – and the accompanying question of the nature and effects of the limitations that result from these conditions. In some sense this project is also a methodological proposal in the social sciences – that theatre and the performing arts be used as a lens through which historical experience, systemic generalities and the discovery of identity can be described and analysed. Last but not least, the purpose is also simply to learn something about theatres and their situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – concretely, substantively and not superficially.

We decided to concentrate on three themes, which appear to cover a range of connotations and contexts broad enough that with their help we may gain a view of a range of problems and mechanisms that extend far beyond the performing arts. National Theatre could potentially encompass an entire spectrum of questions – from theatre as an institution and the current priorities of state cultural policy, through a feeling of national identity, its historical conditioning and the principles of creating a community, through the role of tradition, historical policy and the method by which theatre functions within the categories of "high art" or "mainstream culture". Independent Theatre allows reflection on how we understand the concept of "independence" in relation to various oppressive mechanisms, but first and foremost it relates to the question of the structure of theatre life, the economic and political conditions in which theatres operate today and in which they operated in the past. Independent theatre also allows us to inquire about the avant-garde of the theatre, about exploratory and underground theatre, meaning the possibility of doing theatre somehow outside the system. Finally,

Archives is fundamentally a question about the source of research on the history of the theatre in a given country, and, which follows, about the basis for constructing a historical narrative, the degree to which it is ideologised and dependent on state policy. Archives are also – in the contemporary humanities, in academic and artistic discourse – a subject more of creation than of exploration, and thus they reveal, better than any other concept, the methodological traps and the vested interests of all narratives. Including those offered in this Companion.

The invitation to join in the creation of *Platform: An East European Performing Arts Companion* was taken up by theatre researchers, historians and critics from twelve countries of the region: Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and Ukraine. Each of the themes was described by a different author, sometimes two – and thus there are a total of thirty-seven. What they decided to write about in their texts and what aspects to bring up was left entirely up to them. We did not restrict the authors or their creativity by imposing frameworks of chronology or the structure or scope of the themes we assigned them, operating on the assumption that this is the precise basis for the specific nature of history and public life in their countries, which we want to reach – that what is significant begins at a different historical moment, reaches into different areas and encompasses aspects that we may not even dream of elsewhere. The articles created as a result of this approach thus vary widely in terms of form and content.

This diversity applies not only to the substantive content, but also to form – sometimes rigorous and exceedingly formalised, and sometimes free and essayistic. We begin with the assumption that not only facts but also interpretations, the way of handling the material, the relationship to the established literature of the field, referring or not referring to authorities, allowing or refraining from remarks in one's own name, emotional engagement or a passionless recital of figures – all of these say something very important about the nature of theatre, about the place and role of the performing arts, about the nature and degree of advancement of methodological reflection, and indirectly about the social situation in a given country. Thus, *Platform: An East European Performing Arts Companion* has both a narrative and a meta-narrative character. It is a historical work, and simultaneously a testimony to the potential, level of preparation, state of reflection and conditions of creating such a work. Each text thus says what its author wanted to say, and also what

we ourselves are capable of reading into it – both its content and its form. One should keep in mind however that most of the texts in this volume have been written between 2013 and 2015, thus they do not take into account current dramatic changes in general and cultural policy that have recently affected theatrical life in different countries, like Ukraine, Hungary, Poland etc.

The *Companion* provides material for comparative studies and will be useful in designing the programmes of international conferences and workshops; it will provide inspiration for research work and be a source of unique information. It's also an example of international co-operation unprecedented in its scale, demonstrating that debates and meetings sometimes bear fruit only after several years. In this case the inspiration was the conferences organized in 2008 and 2009 by Attila Szabó, one of the authors of this book, and the initiative of Marta Keil within the East European Performing Arts Platform, the organisation that commissioned this book, produced it and ensured it was published. My heartfelt thanks to all who contributed.

Joanna Krakowska

National Theatre

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BELARUS

Four theatres in Belarus have been awarded the status of "national". This rank was introduced in 1990s and was the way of recognising these theatres as official cultural institutions, representing Belarusian culture and being supported by the official authorities. Theatre workers at these institutions receive a package of benefits provided by the state, such as degrees, awards and privileges. The state declares its concern for and support of theatrical art, and in return demands loyalty to the official ideological positions, no matter how difficult and intricate they may be.

This situation does not apply to theatre as a whole. In other words, there exists an official canon of national theatre which is embodied in a certain repertoire and a certain dramatic form (traditions of directing and acting). National cultural identity is based first and foremost on tradition. The history of Belarusian theatre is embedded into the official canon of history of culture.

As far as today's attitude to national theatre goes, as in the case of other fields of culture, one can trace the problem of the relationship between the national and the Soviet. It should be admitted, however, that it is exactly in the realm of theatre that this problem is delineated to a lesser degree. Thus, while in literature what is national may be set over and against what is Soviet, in the sphere of theatre, even vocal opponents of the Soviet style turn out to be trapped in the aesthetics of a grand theatre style, which has found its institutional expression in Belarus as a result of the Soviet cultural policy.

The representative function of Belarusian theatre can be called indisputable as theatre is perceived by the overwhelming majority of experts and even foreign partners as a phenomenon of Belarusian national culture. What's more, theatre occupies an important place in the hierarchy of values and achievements of the official culture, as it is here that the whole complex of phenomena related to language and identity is revealed. Theatre as a synthetic art can combine different forms of national culture, and it is through theatre that literature, visual and performing arts focusing on the issues of national identity seek to manifest themselves.

One has to admit that the role, functions, tasks and objectives of theatre as a social phenomenon are vague today. Unfortunately, there is no clear programme of theatre development under discussion in Belarus. It may be best exemplified by the (in)ability of theatre workers to start joint projects or even solidarity in issues being discussed. There is so little unanimity in Belarusian theatre that it can hardly be conceived of as a single structure.

While speaking of the signs of a crisis in Belarusian theatre, one should first admit the lack of an effective legal framework which would foster theatre development, second, the stagnant processes in theatre organisations' structures, and third, the atmosphere of isolation from any world theatrical process.

The critical troubles of Belarusian theatre include gaps in infrastructure (spaces for performances and rehearsals, storage facilities, information channels, forms of communication within the professional community, marketing mechanisms) and no less pressing problems in the sphere of theatre management (lack of a theatre managers' training system, low management culture, command-administrative system of management).

Belarusian theatre has a distinctive tradition of development as an institution, which can provide answers about its structural disruption of today.

Early forms of theatres as institutions

The first professional forms of theatre and theatre institutions were associated with the emergence of *skomorokhs*, wandering clowns and actors. They derived from spontaneous forms of folk theatre, which were deeply connected with common traditions. Such actors were required to possess a variety of skills – they sang, danced, performed tricks and mastered the art of improvising, switching from serious to fun. On Belarusian lands – as opposed to, for example, the Muscovite state – skomorokhs never suffered cruel persecution and could develop their art. However, while taxes were imposed on them, they often fell under the patronage of wealthy aristocrats. History has preserved records of skomorokh 'academies,' e.g. the Smarhoń-based one, known for the training of bears. Folk forms of theatre also included puppet shows: *batlejka* and *vertep*. *Vertep* and *batlejka* are not totally the same. In Belarus was batlejka and *vertep* is more specified to Ukraine.

These theatrical forms might have generated a deeply national in its form theatre tradition, as it has happened with commedia dell'arte.

But folk forms of theatre games were only partly incorporated in the theatrical shows which developed later on in Belarus.

In the 18th century, school theatres were established at colleges, theological seminaries and fraternity schools as a result of the influence of Western tradition. Their repertoires featured mystery, miracle, and morality plays, based on biblical, ancient, and historical themes. School theatre, in spite of its applied character, provided students with the possibility of putting their knowledge of rhetoric and theology into practice, as well as fostering the development of acting techniques and stage mechanics.

Around the same time, private theatres appeared in towns and manor houses associated with the names of influential noblemen of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, and later of the Russian Empire. In Sluck and Niasviž, the Radziwiłłs organized theatrical performances, of which the most notable were based on the works of Franciška Uršuła Radzivił (Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa). Antoni Tyzenhaus founded a theatre in Horadnia, and Michał Ogiński established a theatre in Slonim. Equally well known were the theatres of the Sapieha princes in Ružany and Dziarečyn, those of the Tyszkiewicz family in Švislač and Pleščanicy, as well as the Šklov-based theatre of Count Semyon Zorich. Theatre was a fashionable amusement and the repertoires of these theatre companies included mainly opera and ballet productions which would feature well-known performers from all over Europe. The establishment of theatre schools in Horadnia and Slonim was a fact of great importance, which in many respects institutionalised the cultural tradition created by private theatres.

Addressing this period of development of Belarusian culture is important for an understanding of the ideology of the National theatres of today. The Radziwiłłs became characters of two performances staged over the last years which contain insights about theatrical culture, underlining in both cases the links between Belarusian and European theatre traditions. That said, one should note that the two theatre cultures – the elite and the folk – came into contact and influenced each other on a very small scale. The elements of skomorokh shows, *batlejka*, and folk drama appeared on the stage only as interludes; isolated genre scenes. The theatres of the nobles gladly and willingly imitated the best patterns of European theatre, such as French ballet and Commedia dell'Arte.

There is no denying that these private theatres were, en masse, serf ones, which lead to such dreadful phenomena as actors' lack of rights, violence against the creative individual, and bondage in the literal

sense. A talented actor could be sold or exchanged while theatres were fully dependent on their patrons.
In the 19th century, as Belarusian cities developed within the Russian Empire, playhouses were established in all the provincial centres where private non-repertory theatres performed. These were most often Russian or Polish touring companies. The theatre of this period lacked self-sufficiency and was deeply provincial. The most significant events were linked to guest performances of well-known performers, and the best actors left for Warsaw and Saint Petersburg at the earliest possible opportunity. Under such conditions, Belarusian theatre life could not develop progressively any further. Indeed, theatre traditions established in the preceding centuries were discontinued.
Belarusian theatre had not yet become a full-blooded cultural phenomena which could foster its own development. These processes started later and were synchronised with the national democratic movement.

Emergence of the forms of national theatre

According to a traditional understanding of Belarusian national theatre, its most primary value is that it stages works in Belarusian. Because of the lack of the Belarusian language's official status since the 1569 Union of Lublin, these theatre forms did not develop for a long time, that is to say, they were not institutionalised and only sometimes could be seen on the main stages as short genre scenes and interludes. These were, as previously stated, primarily forms of folk drama such as *batlejka* and carnival performances.
The initial stage of the development of Belarusian national theatre (that is, theatre in the Belarusian language) was associated with the activities of Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievič (mid-19th c.). His amateur theatre group staged his play *Sjalyanka* (*Idyll*) in Minsk, and after it was officially banned they kept on giving underground performances. For Dunin-Marcinkievič, theatre was a form of mass education and advocacy of the ideas of national self-determination. It is characteristic that in the later period of his life, while under house arrest in the Lucynka country-house, he still practised theatre together with the pupils of the school that he set up.
While Belarusian national movement had taken shape by the early 20th century, there developed more evident forms of theatre which were national in their ideological content. A rapid development of Belarusian literature provided for the emergence of a body of dra-

matic texts in Belarusian. The first productions were clandestine ones. The phenomenon of so-called 'Belarusian parties' emerged which were a kind of public events dedicated to Belarusian culture and featuring drama performances as their important elements. It was logical, then, that the most wide-spread was the genre of musical comedy *Modny shlahtzjuk*, *Paulinka* (*A Fashionable Squire* by K. Kahaniec, *Paulinka* by Y. Kupala), but, as the genre and thematic diversity grew rapidly, real preconditions emerged for developing a full-fledged national repertory theatre. Of all the figures who encouraged the development of theatre, one should mention, first of all, Ihnat BujnickI. Theatre studios and circles were established all around the country.

A number of publications appeared in the national-oriented periodicals of the time (primarily the *Naša Niva* newspaper whose title is used to describe this period of development of Belarusian culture as "the Naša Niva period") which focused on the question of what national theatre can and should be. Ideologues of the Belarusian renaissance movement (such as Maksim Harecki) admitted the immaturity of many forms of the theatre, but this, as they believed, could be offset by Belarusians' keen links with folk forms of performance, games, songs and dances. This emphatic outer form, anxiety for rhythmic and physical expression, and musicality were to become the typical features of Belarusian theatre in its best manifestations.

These processes were interrupted by the First World War, the revolution, and the civil war, all of which had a significant impact on the development of Belarusian theatre.

It was finally the Belarusian theatre of the Soviet period that for the first time allowed the implementation of the idea of an open and explicit national self-expression on the stage. Belarusian actors expressed the Belarusian national character for a Belarusian audience. It was the first time that Belarusian speech sounded from the stage as a self-contained cultural phenomenon. A full-blooded theatre process got under way whose logic can be traced to the present.

Acquiring statehood was a watershed in the development of Belarusian national theatre. Establishing the Belarusian People's Republic (BNR) and the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) did not mean full-fledged sovereignty for the Belarusian nation, but provided greater possibilities for the development of their own culture. The theatre activists (such as Fłorian Ždanovič and Francišak Alachnovič) who participated in the theatre studio movement of the previous decade, started to fulfil themselves on a higher organisational level.

That being said, one should admit that national themes were closely linked to politics. As the policy of Belarusization was implemented in the early 1920s, there appeared a great number of drama works exploring Belarusian national themes, theatres were open and all activities were of a high professional standard. At the same time, authorities used drama as an effective tool of propaganda. Working youth theatres and portable theatres were peculiar phenomena of the times. But as early as the mid-1920s, the national policy vector was re-oriented and an anti-nationalist campaign was launched in the press followed by purges and repressions. Various forms of vulgar sociologism flourished in criticism.

The history of Belarusian theatre of the first decades of statehood very clearly shows its dependence on politics, that is why it is not easy to make a clear-cut evaluation of it in terms of culture. Many well-known cultural luminaries, the figures of great significance for national awareness, stifled their conscience and sometimes were even directly involved in horrible crimes.

One way or another, today's structure of official theatres was outlined as early as the third decade of the C20th. In 1920, the Belarusian State Theatre was established (the now Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre), which determined the basic direction of national policy in this sphere for almost a century to come.

In 1926, the Second Belarus State Theatre (now the Yakub Kolas National Academic Drama Theatre) was set up in Vicebsk as a successor of the Moscow-based Belarusian drama studio. In the 1930s, new theatres were established which later developed into the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Belarus, the Maxim Gorki National Academic Drama Theatre, and the Belarusian State Puppet Theatre.

It is beyond doubt that, in terms of their form (organisational structure, repertoire, work with the audience, and authors), theatres inherited much of the system of the one-time provincial theatres, but under the new conditions they fulfilled the sharply-defined state order. As far as regards their content, though, these theatres were primarily national ones and followed the literary tradition of Dunin-Marcinkievič, Kupala and other Naša Niva writers, energetically exploring national themes.

The newly-established Soviet authorities, which initially advocated a revolution in art, soon became disenchanted with the new aesthetics and reverted to intelligible, mimetic theatre concepts. One of these was a theatrical variation of psychological realism epitomised by Konstantin Stanislavski's method acting. His ideas

shaped the ideological basis of theatrical art, compulsory for all the Soviet theatres.

It is important to realise that the Belarusian theatre school absorbed Stanislavski's ideas in an indirect way. There hardly were any of his disciples among Belarusian directors or theatre pedagogues, which is why, regardless of what is officially claimed, questions on the origins of Belarusian theatre school – who set up the traditions of theatre teaching, and so on – remain open to debate. One cannot deny the fact that this tradition actually existed, though, upheld by actors in the first instance, as the two parallel trends merged: folk forms of theatre were put onto a professional basis while professional theatre was forced to social and ideological responsibility.

The influence of neighbouring cultures' theatrical traditions became more centralised and consequent. Belarus was frequently visited by experts from Saint Petersburg and Moscow (for example, in 1920s, Nikolai Popov was art director of the First Belarusian Drama Theatre and in 1930s, the Russian Drama Theatre was headed by Vladimir Orlov) who started to shape the artistic core of Belarusian theatres. Alongside with their Belarusian colleagues, they developed the schemes taught at the Theatre Institute established in 1945.

And yet, the basic characteristic of theatre of the Soviet period was its lack of self-dependence. Theatre was a mouthpiece of Soviet propaganda and followed the official cultural policy. As such, it discarded foreign drama, there was an anti-cosmopolitan campaign and the non-conflict theory produced profound effects on the development of theatre in the first post-World War II decade. At the same time, conformity with the official canon, which used to be checked at special festivals in Moscow, became a yardstick of artistic success. Theatre historians consider the successful participation of Belarusian theatre in the 1940 and 1955 Ten-Day Festival of Belarusian Art in Moscow to be its major achievements of the period.

The so-called Khrushchev Thaw of the 1960s and 70s witnessed a painful process as the artistic generations changed. In the national theatres, new theatre directors were at times appointed once a year. In that period, young actors and directors replaced those of the older generation. The Thaw resulted in bringing back the idea of director's theatre as opposed to collectivist, naturalistic theatre that had dominated in previous decades; the names Meyerhold and Tairov, which had been suppressed, were brought into public discourse; prominent Western theatres made guest performances in the country. Valery Rayevski, Valery Mazynski, Borys Lucenko, Andrej Androsik, Valery Masluk became, in the eyes of critics, the

embodiment of a new art direction that often sparked a massive public outcry.
This was the period when works of national literature were staged in theatres. The most talked-about playwrights were Andrej Makajonak *Tribunal*, *Zatyukanniy apostol* (*Tribunal*, *Intimidated Apostle*) and Alaksiej Dudaraŭ *Ryadoviye*, *Viecher* (*Private Soldiers*, *The Evening*), whose best plays also became well-known abroad. Apart from that, there appeared landmark productions based on the works by Uladzimir Karatkievich, Vasil Bykaŭ and Ales Adamovich.
Due to the influence of the official ideology, theatre was dominated by the themes of socialist construction and 'production plays', but the most successful productions were the ones concerning the Second World War. Notwithstanding the constraints of the official aesthetics, Belarusian playwrights, directors and actors managed to use the emotionally complex material to explore Belarusian national character put in the context of world problems.

National theatre of the independence period

1980s and 1990s were characterised by the processes of liberalisation of society as a response to the years of crisis and stagnation. In Belarus, this period witnessed a growing popularity of the ideas of national renaissance, as well as the activation of cultural processes. A great number of independent theatre projects were launched, which formed the so called 'studio theatres movement.' The new names among the directors included Vytautas Grigaliunas, Vital Barkouski, Ryd Talipau and Mikałaj Truchan. Vyacheslav Inozemtsev occupied himself with experimental physical theatre. Each of them was backed up by his own studio; each had his own unconventional approach to art.
The rapid development of studio theatres coincided with a difficult economic situation. Due to the lack of state support, these theatres gradually died out. The only survivors of the wave of theatre studios were the Dzie-Ja? Theatre (the now Minsk-based New Drama Theatre), the Theatre-Laboratory of Belarusian Drama (the now Belarusian Drama Theatre / RTBD Theatre) and Vyacheslav's Inozemtsev's InZhest Theatre.
The National Theatres were up to the challenges of the time, however, staging a number of outstanding performances. Theatre made its first steps towards greater involvement in the social and political life of the country. Performances were produced that provoked public discussion (e.g. *Tsynkoviye Malchiki* (Zinc Boys), based

on a documentary evidence about soldiers killed in Afghanistan by Svetlana Alexievich). Many productions of the earlier banned Western drama (mainly Absurd drama) were staged, and a number of performances settled accounts with the Soviet past: the collectivisation policy and political repressions. The most spectacular was the performance of Yanka Kupala's *Tuteyshya* (*Locals*) (which was practically banned in the Soviet period) directed by Mikałaj Pinihin. The director presented, in a playful form, the ways of Belarusian nation's self-awareness in the setting of the civil war. In the play's finale, comical scenes reached a tragic climax. For a long time thereafter, the aesthetics and journalistic passion of this production thrilled the nation-conscious audience who turned performances into public demonstrations. The performance attained the status of legend, and the issue of taking it off the repertoire led to many political speculations. It is the *Tuteyshya* (*Locals*) that is considered a model example of the genuine national theatre for the majority of the audience.

The difficult economic situation did, however, influence theatres' repertoires: entertaining commercial performances grew in number, theatre's civic significance declined, a greater number of historical plays were brought to the stage. That is probably why the change of policy after the first presidential election did not significantly influence the theatre process as a whole. It should not go without mention, however, that the authorities placed unprecedented pressure upon Valery Mazynski, who was forced in 2000 to resign as theatre director of the Theatre-Laboratory of Belarusian Drama. Mazynski was known primarily for staging performances which could be understood as political polemics (e.g. *Kariera Arturo Ui*, (*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*) by Bertolt Brecht).

By the end of the 2000s, state policy was mature enough to impose its ideological demand on the arts. I will provide some simple examples that, unfortunately, show how the authorities ignore the specific and unique character of performing arts. As a result, theatres are considered as a sui generis branch of entertainment and are given the same tasks as other branches, that include, most notably, achieving performance goals.

It is worth mentioning, though, that this coincided with a large-scale project of renovating Minsk's theatres. Within recent years, the main theatre arenas of the city, that is the National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre and the Maxim Gorki National Academic Drama Theatre have been renovated, while some others are under renovation now. But

these reconstruction processes have not solved the root problems stalling the development of Belarusian theatre. The renovated facilities in the majority of theatres were never designed to deal with artistic possibilities. The last purpose-built theatre building was that of the Belarusian State Musical Theatre (1981). Some theatres were set up, for example, on the premises of cinema theatres that provided limited capacity for stage productions. More often than not, local theatres cannot meet the requirements specified in the technical riders of touring theatre companies.

State authorities have also been paying a special attention to youth problems. Youth organisations patterned after the Komsomol are given as much prominence as is given to the ideological control of education. Numerous grants and scholarships that are offered to talented young people including, in particular, special theatre production grants for young directors.

The problems met by creative young people are systemic ones. Young actors, for instance, can barely fit into the system of a repertory theatre with its low wages and have to wait for a chance of personal fulfilment. But they cannot, in fact, find any place to realise their potential beyond the system of state-run theatres. The theatre infrastructure is underdeveloped, there are almost no sources of private funding, cultural exchanges are scarce, and this results in the lack of possibilities for young artists to engage in laboratory activities and to develop themselves. In the long run, those few creative individuals who get brought up under these conditions, as a rule, go abroad.

The very system of promotion of cultural products is absent in Belarus. While trying to comply with the set obligations, on-stage performance groups are afraid of experimenting. As a result, there is no new blood in drama and stage direction.

Whether the state authorities are liable to commission a performance depends not on the play's title – on this count, theatre artists are still independent – but on the scale and magnitude of the production. The core requirement is that the performance must be a spectacular and large-scale one. The authorities are ready to provide funding if a production is likely to produce an immediate and noticeable effect.

In 2011, the National Theatre Award was established in Belarus. Until then, similar functions were performed by the prizes awarded by the Belarusian Union of Theatre Workers decided by a secret jury. The National Theatre Award was declared to be a fair and transparent annual award for the best achievements in theatrical

art, recognised by a jury of more than a hundred theatre workers. The first two award ceremonies were beset by scandals, as the jury members claimed they were put under pressure. And while the decisions concerning the main awards are generally considered to be impartial ones, a large number of special awards are given to theatres associated with the Awards' founders. At the same time, the discussion aroused by the National Awards made up for the lack of communication within the theatrical community: the problems of local theatres were articulated once again, distrust was expressed regarding the community of experts, and a conflict developed between the proponents of traditional values and innovators. In that context, it became evident that Belarusian puppet theatre stands out among other types of theatre. Being an integral part of the European theatrical process, a dogma-free and youth-oriented puppet theatre is noted for its intellectual liberty and a wide palette of artistic devices.

The National Award ceremony was not held in 2013. According to the Award's founders (representatives of the Ministry of Culture), its format has to be further developed. Instead, in 2013, for the first time in a long period, the State Theatrical Art Award was given to the performance of Dunin-Marcinkievič's *Pinskaya shlahta* (*Pinsk gentry*) directed by Mikałaj Pinihin at the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre. The performance was noted for a clearly articulated idea of Belarusians' national identity expressed through negation: "We are not Russians, we are not Poles." According to the common opinion, this statement clashed with the official state ideology, but the fact of the award suggests otherwise. Now, we can observe the evidence of the fact that ideology is formed under the influence of artistic elites acknowledged by the authorities and is not just handed down to be shared without question.

One way or another, it is stationary repertory theatre that is recognised by the authorities as an inherent part of Belarusian culture. State support to this type of theatre is often maintained at the expense of other forms of theatre, such as project-based, private, independent, amateur ones.

Translated by Andrij Saweneć

BULGARIA

The concept of "national theatre" suggests a field of re-negotiations in the relations between theatre as a socio-cultural practice and the politics of constructing and articulating national identities. In order to discuss its usages in the Bulgarian cultural context it would be useful to apply a hypothesis to the concept's structure; a matrix to distinguish layers of significations and the necessary conditions for their emergence. It could be borrowed from the theoretical approach of examination of the structure of a nation proposed by the sociologist P. Ganchev as: 1) a community of people; 2) a set of institutions; 3) a set of material things (not merely material conditions, but economic and other network embodying values, including intellectual ones); 4) a set of durable, supra-personal cultural formations, traditions, values (Ganchev, 2001). The nation is thus revealed as a system of individual and collective identities, institutionalised practices of organisation and representation, creation and utilisation of material and symbolic capital and cultural continuity.

If these summarised positions are laid over the field of theatre, then the hypothesis of the "necessary conditions" for a "national theatre" means that theatrical activity should lie within the framework of certain language-cultural community with a comprehensive system of institutionalised practices, circulation of material goods and symbolically evaluated capital, assigned with the task of cultural continuity, which legitimises it before that same community.

Therefore, in order to examine and test the relations thus schematically set it is necessary to trace:

— how theatre has been recognised by the policies for constructing and articulating national identity
— what institutional practices organise and (re)produce it
— what value is assigned by the community to the capital circulating within the theatre system
— what legitimating strategies and practices are being applied as the focus here is on whether there are any definite aesthetic forms legitimised as "national theatre" now, in terms of its artistic characteristics.

Here the main outlines of the debate surrounding the construct of "national theatre" in the Bulgarian context will be examined by touching upon some aspects of this set of relations by examining the expectations regarding the attribute of "national" and the changes in its meaning.

People's – National

In historical terms, the discovery of the phenomenon of theatre by the Bulgarian community happened around the middle of the 19th century and was directly related to the processes of construction of national self-consciousness in the period of Bulgarian Revival[1]. The origins of Bulgarian theatre are not some primary forms of folklore or church theatricality as in other European countries. It was discovered as a phenomenon of modernity: from the community's need for some form of public representation, from education and enlightenment being recognised as main values for development and national revival. In the mid-19th century, this was made possible in major Bulgarian cities due to the intensification of European cultural influences, the development of an urban culture and therefore new types of publicity. School became the first place where theatre forms happened (in the conventional meaning of a stage performance based on written drama) in Bulgarian territory. These were important as an act of self-representation that took part in the process of Bulgarian community's self-identification as a collective subject and triggered its reorganisation towards a national vision (Iordanov, 2006:103). It was precisely in that period of late Revival that theatre historiography sees the formation of some basic and durable consensuses about the theatre's reception by the community. After the staging of theatre performances in some Bulgarian cities and among the organised Bulgarian communities in Brăila (Romania), Belgrade (Serbia), and others, a controversy broke out in the press over the advantages and disadvantages of theatre.
The main arguments affirming it in the spirit of Enlightenment-romantic pathos were that: 1) theatre is a good school, 2) it contributes to the formation of a national self-consciousness as it is through theatre that "a need of people's revival and a need of people's development is felt," 3) it teaches good manners and last, but not least, 4) it is a means of integration with other European nations perceived as more developed. Plays, now being written in Bulgarian, were assessed in terms of their contribution to "our future people's theatre." "People's" was becoming a basic value category according

1. Bulgaria lost its independence for a period of 5 centuries (1396–1878), in which it was a part of the Ottoman Empire. "Revival" designates the period from the 18th century to the Liberation in 1878. It is characterised by a transition from traditional to modern society, a movement for independent church, a national liberation movement, development of people's education and urban culture.

to which theatre is an expression of what is Bulgarian in general and is a symbolic image of collective identity projected onto a future free Bulgaria.

In the project of building the New Bulgarian state after the Liberation, theatre was still thought of as "people's" but with some transformations in meaning. Theatre companies emerging after the Liberation (private ones, subsequently partly subsidised) were named "people's" to emphasise that 1) they belong to the already independent nation as ones expressing its own "native" identity, 2) they serve the needs of the "people" and 3) they are accessible for them. In 1883, one of the most active advocates of the establishment of a national theatre and, subsequently, its patron, the writer, poet and playwright Ivan Vazov, insisted that a national theatre should be founded because "What do we have that is our own, eternal?" (Ivan Vazov, "Bulgarian People's Theatre," 1883).

Discussions of a "national theatre" started when the question of the affirmation of theatre art as a socio-cultural practice was posed in the context of building national institutions symbolically representing the modern state and manifesting its European orientation. Theatre activity was included into the competences of the Ministry of People's Education and it became part of the programme for the development of Bulgarian education and culture in the framework of which the Minister, Prof. Ivan Shishmanov, proposed in 1903 to Prince Ferdinand that Bulgarian "national theatre" should be built with the following argument: "I place the National Theatre on top of the categories of institutions with cultural and educational importance." It was solemnly opened on 3rd January 1907 in a neo-baroque building especially built in downtown Sofia and designed by the Austrian architects Hermann Helmer and Ferdinand Fellner who had also designed several theatres in Eastern and Central Europe. It was named "Bulgarian National Theatre[2]" and acquired the status of a "state cultural institution" (all administrative and budgetary matters were settled by the Ministry of People's Education) and was stated as an over-representative institution that fully covered the meaning of "Bulgarian theatre." Here the meaning of a "people's" theatre started to be shifted towards a "state" one, by virtue of the perception of the state as the highest representation of the sovereign collective subject of the people. Analyses have identified a contradiction in the overlapping of the meanings of these two figures – people's and state – which is crucial for the understanding of some durable perceptions of the theatre-community-state relationships.

2. „Български народен театър" in Bulgarian, literally meaning "Bulgarian *People's* Theatre." Throughout the text, however, its official name "Bulgarian National Theatre" is used as the reader should keep in mind that when a reference is made to the "National Theatre" (capitalized) it should be read as "People's Theatre." (Translator's note)

After Bulgaria's Liberation "people's" designated mainly a "construct of identities based on a community principle"; it was established as an "image in which the Bulgarian cultural identity can be embodied"; as its reality is the "extra-institutional being of the Bulgarian outside the global social systems" while it is precisely the "national" that is associated with the "institutionalised statehood" (Elenkov, 1994:16). The insistence on the representative state theatre institution's designation precisely as "people's" reveals that theatre was given significance mostly as a place for shared community experience, or "Bulgarian theatre is "people's in spirit" but it is "nationalised" because it is useful and representative for the nation" (Iordanov, 2004:30).

The main opposition to such a concept of the institution of a National Theatre was voiced by Pencho Slaveykov, poet, philosopher and director of the theatre in 1908/1909. He joined the debate around the People's Theatre by publishing an article, an almost manifesto-like essay entitled "National Theatre." In it he proposed a different meaning of the categories of "people's" and "national." "By using 'people's theatre' we are going in quite another direction," he wrote and emphasised its meaning as a commonly accessible entertainment, a part of the "popular culture," while "nation" and "national theatre" for him meant the next stage of development of the liberated society and its culture. Its task was to serve the supreme cultural needs of the country" by manifesting the national "consciousness of life" through the Bulgarian language. Slaveykov's assertions were grounded, to a great extent, on a modernist type of individualism characterised by disregard for "the masses" and insistence on the freedom of the strong personality and creative spirit. In this line of reasoning he insisted on autonomy in theatre's management while the state should just "see to the implementation of its objective." Slaveykov's ideas remained unappreciated in a context in which "autonomy meant for the mass consciousness a departure from the highest social status, the "state" one (Iordanov, 2011:13). To a great extent this was also due to the need of security assurances in an unstable economic situation and a truly limited circle of actual users – far as more than 80% of Bulgarian population remained rural well until the middle of 20th century.

In 1909, the People's Education Act was passed. It contains a description of the structure and functions of "Bulgarian theatre" implying that the National Theatre is the only representative institution. Gradually, the construction of a system began around it that ensured the cultural institute's functioning, and the implementation of its

national representative tasks, as it actually set a prototype of the complex "Bulgarian national theatre." In addition to the nationalised theatre company and building, it also included the resolving of several more questions related to the repertoire and the national drama in it, educating artistic generations, building an "acting" style and overall artistic organisation of theatre productions, focused on the stage director's figure.

The debates on these questions in the public sphere intensified after the First World War when a number of short-lived private theatre formations emerged staging commercial cabaret or operetta performances for "that numerous and unknown public that sought and found entertainment everywhere after the war" (Hrisan Tsankov, director). This became the occasion to trace out the opposition between entertaining and educating art, popular and high culture. As far as they offered "entertainment" only they were not associated with the vision of "national theatre" that should serve the "education of the people," i.e. "to raise them up to its level." In terms of the questions what the national theatre cultural institute should be, how it should participate in the "developments of our national culture" (Lyudmil Stoyanov, publicist) and what the term "national" conveys, the National Theatre's positions and actual practice in that period consolidated around the following: 1) National Theatre's repertoire should integrate Bulgarian culture with the main European processes and present the most important works of European and world drama; 2) the "national theatre is made up of Bulgarian dramas," i.e. it should stimulate the development of national playwriting; 3) the problems of the eclectic late-romanticist "actors' theatre" should be resolved by introducing the figure of director who must be a Bulgarian because of the need of an in-depth understanding of the language and of attaining its stage purity, and must be familiar with the tasks of "contemporary directing," which, at that time, meant to have studied "in the West." (Nikolova, 2004: 52–59).

In reality, in the period 1924–25, two directors joined the theatre: Hrisan Tsankov (a graduate of Max Reinhardt's studios in Berlin who conducted the line of conditional-expressive theatre) and the Russian N. O. Masalitinov, an actor from the Moscow Art Theatre (a follower of the aesthetics of historicism and psychological realism), of international pedagogical experience which he brought to the National Theatre by opening an acting school there. These two figures "changed the face" of the National Theatre that established

itself as a model pattern for the entire Bulgarian theatre and determined its aesthetic face as directors' drama theatre.

In 1920s, theatre activity in Bulgaria expanded and the need of a broader and comprehensive vision of a "Bulgarian national theatre", which was to cover the theatre practice in the whole country with organisations of different status started to be discussed. After numerous debates between radicalised left- and right-wing positions, its direction was determined by the changed political situation in the country after the anti-government military coup in 1934. As a result of that coup the multi-party parliamentary democratic system was replaced by a centralised state power that was largely authoritarian and principles of classical monarchism were restored. The conservative nationalist politics imposed the ideological construct of a "cultural nationalism" which reflected some essentialist and neo-romanticist ideas of a heroic "spirit of the nation." Its task was to "protect and enlighten the spirit of the nation, which is the people's divine principle and divine power... The national spirit must be set free from the wells of our villages and flood our land." (Yanev, 1933). The notion of a theatre network covering the entire country was associated with a "national spiritual space," a narrative space of the "spirit of the nation".

This was the underlying ideology of the first Theatres Act passed in 1942. It defined the state as the principal management, funding and supervisory body of theatre activity. In a mix of nationalist and universalist conceptual system it prescribed theatre's task of defending the "people's legacy," to enlighten the people and develop their aesthetic education and civil consciousness. The theatres in five Bulgarian cities were now named "people's theatres," again in the sense of "state" but also as bearers of people's spirit. The law was criticised for legitimising the ethnocentrism in Bulgarian theatre practice by founding it on traditional "popular values" and for making the Bulgarian origin and nationality mandatory for the exercise of theatre activity; as well as for restricting creative liberties by administrative measures and real censorship. However, this act was welcome as a whole, and it allowed for theatre to be "placed in the service of the State and not of the society" (Iordanov, 2004:119).

Despite the network of theatres that had already expanded, the National Theatre remained the emblem of the Bulgarian national theatre and its name was associated with the significant aesthetic achievements in the post-Liberation period until 1944, the landmark date of Bulgarian history.

National – Communist

On 9th September 1944, while the USSR's occupation forces were entering Bulgaria, a coup d'état was staged, and a new government dominated by the Communist Party was formed. After a referendum in 1946 the monarchy was replaced by a republic and under the newly-passed constitution in 1947 the Kingdom of Bulgaria was renamed People's Republic of Bulgaria. A single-party communist dictatorship was established and subsequently headed by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). The consolidation of party's bureaucratic and power apparatus triggered a fundamental reorganisation of Bulgarian state and society after the Soviet model for economic and cultural development and the building of the so-called "people's democracy." The state became the full embodiment of people's power as the designation "people's" reflected the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of class equality imposed as the dominant one. The notion of the "people" was consistently perceived as a mass, as "people's masses" and was overtaken by the collective identity of the "proletariat", the "hegemonic class" as all other classes were put to repression. In the course of the thaw of the regime following the renunciation of the "personality cult" after Stalin's death in 1953 and especially after Khruschev's speech at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1961 the concept of the "all-people's state" was launched proclaiming a homogenisation of society and a denunciation of the notion of the "enemy class"; the state became one of all "working" people.

Within the establishment of single-party dictatorship, art and culture were subjugated to the political argument for the re-education of the Bulgarian people in the spirit of communism, and the mission was to educate to everyone. A policy of centralisation and ideologisation of theatre started. The entire theatre infrastructure was nationalised and the so-called "extensive policy" was applied to it as over the next two decades a large-scale construction of theatres got under way in all district cities and towns as well as in the capital city; each having a full-time artistic staff as they were divided by type into drama, puppet, opera, ballet, musical and operetta and circus theatre. The main purpose of the state was to guarantee that a clear and ideologically correct message would reach "the masses" with a Marxist-Leninist ideological platform. The individual professional and creative initiative was cut off entirely. The 1942 Theatres Act was repealed by the Ordinance on theatres passed in 1949, which stated that the main purpose of theatres in

Bulgaria was to "reflect, in an artistically realistic form, the progressive development of society [...], support the ideological and artistic education of our people and mobilise its forces to build socialism, assist for the development and strengthening of the national realist drama..." as "persons having a record of fascist and other contradictory activities may not be employed" at theatres. Thus the said Ordinance affirmed that the theatre activity was entirely directed and legitimised by the socialist State and that its purpose and educational and propagandist ideology consisted in people's education in party's socialist spirit by means of socialist realism as the "only correct method." This signalled "the end of the time of Bulgarian national theatre and the start of the socialist theatre" (Iordanov, 2003:8).

In terms of the overall cultural and social field the preceding *national doctrine* was replaced by a "barely comprehensible internationalism" (Zneposlki, 2008: 75) of the Soviet type that was based on a party spirit and "solidarity" with the socialist nations. This was also referred to as "socialist patriotism." Socialist realism was their aesthetic expression, a normative aesthetics articulated in 1930s in the Soviet Union and imposed as mandatory for all socialist countries. In that sense, for the Bulgarian theatre practice that aesthetics was a *colonising* one as gradually it acquired own national specifics. Theatre led by the National Theatre in Sofia in its functions of a leading theatre institution was thus called upon to be the representative media of socialist state (Nikolova, 2008:93).

The appropriation and reproduction of the method of socialist realism as the ultimate aesthetic platform for national theatre practice is a complex process of different stages of multiple layers depending on the degree of its adoption or circumvention and repulsion that was bound to remain in the theatre institutes themselves. It consisted of interpretative strategies, methods and rules for theatre representation based on a reduced version of Stanislavski's system. It was forced on the Bulgarian theatre practice along several lines covering the entire complex of "national theatre," all of which were first tested at the stage of the National Theatre. The first one was to mobilise the professional circle to "fight for socialist realism", which included debates over the possible realisations of the method, but also removal of those artists, mostly directors, who opposed it. Centralised control over the repertoire was introduced – the directors of theatres were obliged to submit for approval a repertoire plan of titles for each season, which had to include a Bulgarian play, a Soviet play and classical drama. Theatre

criticism assumed the functions of seeing to the observance of the ideologically "correct line" in theatre productions as well as of certain criteria for artistic value of theatre and dramaturgy. As a colonising practice it was necessary to "appropriate the philosophy and poetics of the theatre of socialism from the source" (Nikolova, 2008:89) by means of exchanges of Bulgarian and Soviet theatre artists, and, later, of artists from other socialist countries as well. In order to make the normative method stable and consistent in 1948 the Theatre School at the National Theatre was transformed into a Higher State Theatre School to train staff for the theatre system. Theatre was clearly divided into a centre and a periphery. The capital city and mostly the National Theatre was the model centre that served as either an example to be followed by and multiplied across the periphery, or as a kernel for negative thrust back and quest for alternative to it. This created premises for the establishment of places for "secret publicity" and "secret societies" in some theatres in the country at different times (Burgas, Plovdiv, Haskovo, Pazardzhik, Lovech): artistic groupings around the figure of a director or a group of like-minded directors who developed artistic strategies to overcome the socialist realism's normativity, inventing the so-called "Aesopian language," i.e. a double, allegorical interpretation as a kind of criticism of the system, the genre of satire was discovered as a kind of vent. The cultural policy towards Bulgarian theatre during the totalitarian regime reaffirmed it as a project of the state through which the national ideology should reach all over the country. The optimal aesthetic and organisational model by which this could happen was the one of a "drama repertoire theatre." The normative boundaries of socialist realism were gradually overstrained and mostly in 1980s it was forced to allow a widening of the thematic fields and the emergence of new styles and writings gravitating toward an interest in elements of physical theatre, grotesque and clowning.

National theatre – theatre practices

The disintegration of the Eastern-bloc and the fall of totalitarian regime in Bulgaria in November 1989 gave rise to a new situation in the country, which entered into a period of transition to liberal democracy and a market economy in the context of political instability and periodic financial crises. The reality of Bulgarian theatre after the democratic changes was marked by a "theatre reform" that is yet to be completed. This term designates the at-

tempts to reorganise the extensive national theatre network of 55 state-run repertoire theatres towards decentralisation (switching to privatisation and municipal or mixed funding theatres) and diversification (not only repertoire theatres but also host stages, production centres, etc.), switching from state subsidies for institutions to competition-based funding of activity, integration into the common European and global processes. However, due to the country's periodic political and economic instability, both a consistent cultural policy and a comprehensive vision of theatre sector's development are missing, so this process has not produced an efficient outcome so far.

The democratic changes reinstated the right to individual and creative freedoms guaranteed by the new Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria passed in 1991, on the one hand, and, on the other, by a special Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 1991 that granted theatres freedom to form their artistic policy, and determine their organisational structure and activity. By rejecting the normative theatre language the monolithic concept of theatre started to multiply in a variety of theatre structures (state, municipal, one subsidised on a project basis (independent theatre) and private (commercial), practices, and aesthetic choices. The state is, to date, still the main sponsor of theatre activity in the country, but performing arts practices are not confined to the space of the established national theatre system only (meaning the state- and municipally-owned theatres and companies). The present-day nation is now being experienced as a democratic society of free citizens with various individual and cultural identities, and everyone has the right to creative expression. Theatre activity thus goes beyond the framework of "institutional theatre" and is multiplied into a heterogeneous theatre practices that make the national space permeable and a part of international processes.

In this context the concept of "national theatre" was again fixed on the institution of *Ivan Vazov* National Theatre. It preserved both the category "people's" in its name (now in a sense of a continuation of "Bulgarian tradition") and its role of a micro-model for Bulgarian theatre. In 1994, it was the only theatre to be granted the status of "state cultural institute of national importance," whose mission is to "implement the state policy in the field of preservation, creation and dissemination of high samples of Bulgarian cultural heritage by carrying out long- and short-term programmers and projects of representative nature."

In the first years after the changes, the concept of "theatre tradition" was a subject of reconsideration, mainly on the stage of the National Theatre as a socio-cultural space of its articulation and legitimisation. At accelerated rates it started to accommodate what had remained excluded and what had been defined as "not being constitutive for the nation" and omitted during the time of socialism. Thus it was supposed to get integrated into the national performing arts practice as something "experienced," on the one hand, and, on the other, to position that practice into the open international cultural space. The "reflex of the National Theatre and the permanently established public attitudes towards it being the centre where organisation and re-organisation of theatre [in Bulgaria] is made or at least initiated" is thus reproduced and this also explained the "mix of traditional, avant-garde, mass-popular and other types of performances at the stage of it in the 1990s as an attempt to introduce [...] theatre ideas, practices and strategies of reception characterised the theatre network of developed democracies" (Nikolova, 2007:67).

After Bulgaria's accession to the European Union and the faltering development of civil society the debate surrounding the construction of a contemporary Bulgarian cultural national identity is still marked by contradictions. It is a clash of different values and balance is prevented by the lack of an updated concept for Bulgarian culture and cultural life and, respectively, of a consistent cultural policy. Thus, the market liberalism that is imposed on an institutional level (budgetary theatres get state subsidies on a box-office basis) acquires the function of lawmaker of cultural processes. As a result today's face of the National Theatre is again determined by a moderately conservative and, at the same time, populist artistic policy. It is the occasion for renewed debates on the place and functions of the national theatre institute in contemporary society: "today the National Theatre is still looking for its new face and a new philosophy of its name". (Iordanov, 2005). What is mainly expected from it could be consolidated around the position that the present-day function of the national theatre institute is to participate on an equal footing in the "line of national theatres in Europe and worldwide [...], preserve and show the archive of its own and the world's theatre heritage (dramatic texts, directing and performing styles, basic value attitudes) and constantly archive the present day of theatre," i.e. the achievements and innovative processes in Bulgarian current stage practice. (Nikolova, 2007:68).

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Translated by Atanas Igov

CROATIA

Stemming from the 19th century European bourgeois revolutionary ideology, the notion of a Croatian nation as an entity belonging to the Southern-slavic unity is a product of a Romantic cultural movement called "the people's renaissance", which started in the 1830s and was led by Croatian intellectuals of the time.

Their idea of a national linguistic and cultural union relied on connecting the Northern and Southern parts of Croatia through a reliance on their rich literary heritage and a fairly developed theatre culture both within the Zagreb religious schools and within the aristocratic Dubrovnik Republic, which, unlike the rest of the Venice-ruled Dalmatian coast, maintained its independence until the arrival of Napoleon's army.

This movement, which conceived of theatre as the primary vehicle of national romantic political ideas, included prominent playwrights and musicians who struggled against the long standing dominance of German travelling players and Italian singers performing on the stage of the otherwise well-visited private Pejačević-Amadé theatre in Zagreb.

The basis of an ensemble that would perform in Croatian was formed by Flying Dilettante Theatre from Novi Sad, invited by D. Demeter to contribute to the inauguration of the national stage. The first professional drama performance in Croatian was given by National theatre society, of *Juran and Sofija* by I. Kukuljević Sakcinski (10/6/1840). The date of this performance, as well as the one of the first opera performance in Croatian, of *Love and Malice* by V. Lisinski (28/3/1861), figure as the dates of foundation of the modern Croatian national theatre.

On 24th of August 1861, the Croatian Parliament ruled against the presence of German players on the stage in the building on the Place of St. Mark (built in 1834. by K. Stanković and designed by C. and A. Cragnolini), putting the new cultural institution of the Croatian National Theatre (Hrvatsko narodno kazalište) under state protection. In 1870 the opera and ballet joined the relatively small drama ensemble, following the Viennese formula of organisation of a national Burgtheater, and in 1895 the beautiful baroque build-

ing designed by F. Feller and H. Hellmer celebrated its opening to some 750 spectators.

The first decades of its life are marked by the artistic government of important literary figures D. Demeter and A. Šenoa, as well as actors J. Freudenreich and A. Mandrović, but the most vigorous incitement to its true modern thriving was given by the critic and director Stjepan Miletić, impressed by the style of the Meiningen troupe, which he tried to implement in the institution, while broadening its repertoire to include European classics.

From being the only national theatre institution by the end of 19th century, The Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb remained the central one all throughout the first half of the 20th. However, by the end of the 19th century theatre buildings had been built in almost every major Croatian city, and after the World War II five of them gained their own National Theatre institutions (Zagreb, Varaždin, Rijeka, Split, and Osijek), Zagreb HNK, with its 150 years of history, remained the leading, cultural, political and most privileged financial centre of Croatian mainstream theatre; its repertoire of drama, opera, and ballet performances embracing more than 3000 drama, 1000 opera and 350 ballet opening nights, featuring Croatia's most renowned actors (A. Fijan, E. Kutijaro, M. Ružička Strozzi, V. Podgorska, D. Dujšin, E. Dragman, N. Rošić, T. Lonza, V. Drach, B. Boban, M. Nadarević, Z. Zoričić, D. Despot, A. Prica, G. Grgić, Z. Cvitešić, O. Pakalović, etc), internationally reputed singers (M. Trnina, J. Kašman, Z. Kunc, M. Radev, V. Ruždjak, T. Neralić, R. Pospiš-Baldani, I. Boljkovac, etc), highly esteemed dancers (M. Froman, the Mlakar couple, A. Roje, O. Harmoš, D. Nova, V. Butorac-Blaće, D. Bogdanić, A. Osmanović, etc) and choreographers (M. Froman, N. Bidjin, S. Kastl, M. Šparemblek, N. Kokotović, M. Skorupski, V. Turcu). All the major Croatian playwrights of the 20th century had their plays performed there for the first time (I. Vojnović, M. Begović, M. Ogrizović, M. Krleža, M. Feldman, M. Matković, R. Marinković, R. Ivšić, S. Šnajder, L. Kaštelan, etc.), as had composers of their operas and ballets (I. Zajc, J. Gotovac, I. Tijardović, K. Baranović, F. Lhotka, B. Sakač, M. Kelemen, I. Brkanović, S. Šulek, B. Papandopulo, D. Savin, etc). Above all, it cherished the German tradition of an auteur-oriented approach to directing, and ensured the artistic prominence of major Croatian directors (I. Raić, B. Gavella, T. Strozzi, B. Stupica, V. Habunek, K. Spaić, G. Paro, B. Violić, I. Kunčević, K. Dolenčić, O. Prohić, I. Boban, N. Delmestre, etc).

This has enabled its continuity in various political regimes, which tried to gain control over its repertoire, resulting in a series of

performances thought to threaten the power structures being shut down of, mostly in the first half of the 20th century and in the period during and immediately after WWII (*Galicija* by M. Krleža, *Hrvatski Diongenes* by M. Begović, *Slučaj Maturanta Wagnera* by M. Matković, *Za dobro naroda* by I. Cankar, *Kazna* by I. Dončević, *Porin* by V. Lisinski, *Nikola Šubić Zrinski* by I. Zajc, etc).

The first years of the 20th century (1902–1909) were still marked by the era of Stjepan Miletić, author of *Hrvatsko glumište* (*The Croatian Theatre*, 1904), the first systematic reflection upon the specific circumstances and ambitions of the modern national theatre, which would later find its sequel in Branko Gavella's essay bearing the same title (1953).

The Zagreb opera closed, but the drama repertoire thrived. Among the 150 opening nights, more than 60 were of Croatian plays which favoured the development of a national style of acting and directing ensuring the growth of the ensemble. The next theatre manager was Vladimir Treščec Branjski (1909–1914), who, being a writer himself, introduced a host of new, modernist playwrights to the stage (M. Ogrizović, I. Vojnović, J. Kosor, M. Begović, S. Tucić, M. J. Zagorka), as well as establishing the new positions of stage – and costume-designer. He also made the theatre's literary advisor – playwright Ivo Vojnović – the editor of the first theatre weekly – *Hrvatska pozornica* (*The Croatian Stage*). Treščec also managed to extricate the theatre from the absurd administrative jurisdiction of Internal Affairs, transferring it to the Governmental heading of "Religious Education and Teaching" which, however equally unfit, was at least more removed from the heated political atmosphere of the day.

His greatest legacy, however, was the establishment of a travelling troupe that performed the repertoire of the house in regions of Istria, Dalmatia, and Bosnia, thus maintaining the central position of Zagreb theatre in Croatia. The only comparable establishment at the time was the newly established national theatre in Osijek (1907), which also suffered from frequent changes in its administrative-juridical status. In 1928 it was obliged to merge with the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, while in 1934. it was encouraged to establish a firmer artistic and technical collaboration with Zagreb HNK.

During Treščec's management of Zagreb HNK three important names joined the ensemble – actor and director Ivo Raić, who studied in Germany with Max Reinhardt, and theatre critic Branko Gavella, who soon became the most influential director and theorist in 20th century Croatian theatre culture. Treščec even tried

to organize the first summer festival in open space, in the Zagreb park Maksimir, where Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and I. Gundulić's *Dubravka* were performed in 1913. The foreign repertoire included not only Shakespeare, Molière, Marivaux and Schiller as classics, but also modernist playwrights, such as Ibsen, Strindberg, Wilde, Shaw, Hauptmann, Bahr and Wedekind.

WWI interrupted this phase of development, forcing theatre to vegetate within its established parameters while suffering political and financial pressure. Many a young actor and director, such as B. Gavella and A. Verli, were forced to leave, resuming their work only in 1917 or 1918.

Between the two world wars (1918–1941) various political-historical forces imposed harsh limits on theatre work, both in Zagreb and in Split, where a professional theatre was established and soon abolished, or in Varaždin where endeavours to found a stable company were made to no avail. The most important period was the one in which the triumvirate Benešić-Gavella-Konjović ruled (1921/22–1926), since it was marked not only by the memorable direction of B. Gavella, but also the first attempts of the major Croatian writer and playwright, M. Krleža, while Lj. Babić, a world-renowned painter, made his most important stage-designs.

The control of Zagreb Croatian National Theatre was in 1919 taken over by the Belgrade Ministry of Education (Croatia was then part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), so that in 1922. its entire income had to be delivered to the Central State Budget, which imposed its control through annual financing and the division of theatre professionals into pay-classes. The former theatre critic turned theatre manager, J. Benešić, whose idea was to open other, more commercially oriented stages in Zagreb, such as Theatre in Tuškanac (1923–1929), was intermittently accused of frauds, and eventually had to resign. B. Gavella's engagement resulted in a series of outstanding performances, including rediscovered Croatian baroque and 18th century classics, groundbreaking plays by M. Krleža and L. Pirandello, as well as operas by Mozart, Debussy and Wagner under Konjović's musical direction. However, thanks to the constraints of the centralised control, and to the incomprehension of the public, Gavella left for Belgrade. Ballet, however, thrived due to the arrival of dancers Margarita, Valentin and Maksimilijan Froman in 1921.

After the end of this most prolific era, during which even Stanislavski's MHAT gave visiting performances, Zagreb HNK continued to live on, albeit in turmoil and dictatorship, as well as in frequent changes of its governing structures, preventing any continuity.

The only artist that succeeded in maintaining his autonomy was K. Baranović, who managed the internationally reputed opera ensemble. Osijek HNK fused with the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, while Split fused with the Sarajevo theatre, all under the order of the state Ministry of Education. Many performances criticising the regime or the Church hierarchy were censored or shut down. In 1939, with the foundation of Banovina Croatia, a separate administrative entity within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, theatre moved under its administrative and financial control, which however also meant censorship for all leftist plays. Despite all these unfavourable circumstances, until World War II the Croatian National Theatre continued with fairly impressive directing and set-design standards. Its acting style, relying heavily on the study of literary language, was psychological realism, taught in various developing pedagogical schools and studios; primarily the Zagreb State School for Actors (founded in 1920) and rather often verified against standards of visiting performances from France, Poland, United Kingdom, Germany and Soviet Russia.

World War II brought fascist domination. From April 1941, when the Nazi collaborationist Independent State of Croatia was pronounced, the running of the theatres was taken over by loyal administrators, who purified the repertoire even of the most prominent European writers to ensure the dominance of the ones suitable mostly to the German occupiers. All Jewish, Serbian, and communist professionals were banished from the stage. Many decided to work illegally, as Communist party officials, and many left to join the partisans: on 22 April 1942 the first group of Zagreb actors, led by V. Afrić, went to the liberated territory, where various partisan regional theatre troupes were formed – most of them under the heading of The Theatre of People's Liberation – ensuring the forthcoming renovation of all the major Croatian theatre ensembles.

Partisan theatre aimed at entertainment and political education, it was thematically linked to the historical moment, while formally it consisted mostly of one-act plays acted in a rough, farcical style, celebrating the advent of a new ideological era. The repertoire, however, was rather broad and varied from Gogol to modern Soviet and local playwrights. It is due to this period's break with the traditional realism, however, that a new generation of Croatian actors appeared, and a new organisational structure was envisaged, so that by the end of the fifties professional theatres emerged in all major Croatian cities – including those which, like Karlovac, Bjelovar, Požega,Vinkovci, Sisak, Pula, Rovinj, Rijeka, Za-

dar, Šibenik, Dubrovnik, relied until then on local amateur or half-professional troupes.

The idea of a national theatre after World War II presents a much more consistent organisational and stylistic paradigm: theatre buildings were spared destruction and many theatre professionals survived the war, eager to join their colleagues who remained to work under the occupation, preserving some kind of continuity. Actors engaged in Split Croatian Theatre of People's Liberation joined the Zagreb drama ensemble and gave their first performance on 27 May 1945, two months before the actual administrative fusion. The same process characterised the rest of the Croatian cities, and in Dalmatia, where Italian was considered to be the official language, Croatian was finally introduced on the professional stage.

The first years of the new government and the new theatre life were again marked by the interference of administrative structures, in both positive and negative ways. A lot of new professional and amateur theatres were founded, receiving ample financial, organisational and pedagogical support from the state, but once this support subsided, theatre had to turn to local resources, the regional theatres in Rijeka, Split and Osijek had to close due to material reasons – ruined or burnt buildings, and the like. However, up until the 1950s, theatre acquired a prominent position in social and cultural life. The interest of the audience was enormous, tickets were hard to find, and quotas were administered for intermittent use of various economic, social, or political organisations – performances for target audiences are not only prepared, but loudly announced and advertised.

Over time, however, such a model persisted only in traces, and theatres had to rely more on their own initiative, animation, and management. The arrival of film and TV industry forced them to fight for the public, while the actors gained a new status, being more and more famous as screen or TV stars. The acting profession and its social features underwent a thorough transformation: actors brought not only new modes of expression, but a new ideological outlook from their partisan experiences. One conveying the spirit of collectivism and collaboration with directors, who renounced their previous authority with respect to the distribution of roles and the choice of repertoire.

In 1950 the Academy of theatre art was founded (today the Academy for Dramatic Arts), where B. Gavella introduced his pedagogical vision. The surveillance and interest by party structures in the functioning of theatre was huge as well, and theatre was once again used

as a privileged medium for instituting not only aesthetic, but also ideological standards. The organisational model of Zagreb HNK was taken as a prototype for the regional professional theatres, in Osijek, Rijeka and Split, which were encouraged to introduce new playwrights, both international and Croatian, on their repertoire, once their performances on the Zagreb stage were proven to be acceptable. The turning point of the epoch was the decision made in 1953 by a small group of young HNK actors and directors to found a new theatre on the premises of the former Small Theatre in Frankopanska street, now renamed Zagreb Drama Theatre as a result of their dissatisfaction with the HNK policy. It was a period of general liberalisation, following Tito's break with Stalin, as well as a memorable speech given by M. Krleža to the Ljubljana Congress of the Federation of writers (1952), in which he pleaded for pluralism in literary creation. A new phase began in which administrative control lessened.

Zagreb HNK responded with the establishment of a new stage, The Chamber Stage (1957). Since regional theatres had to close down, Zagreb consequently took over, or rather, fortified its leadership in theatre matters. Its repertoire was varied right from the start of this new period, though firmly anchored in traditional choices of translated classics (Shakespeare, Molière, Balzac and Goldoni) as well as national classical and contemporary drama (Držić, Feldman, Kolar, Božić, Krleža), providing that the plays did not challenge the new set of ideological ideas.

Russian playwrights dominated – Ostrovski, Gogol, Leonov and Simonov, but not Majakovski, Bulgakov, or Erdman. Such an unfavourable atmosphere resulted in a reduction of directorial ambition, impoverished by strictly realistic stage-setting and conventional *mise-en-scène*, while the actor's art ran closest to the romantic emphasis, and almost caricature moral *chiaroscuro*, evident even in the choice of costumes and masks.

But signs of a different, more complex dealing with contemporary issues were visible in a thematic broadening of contemporary Croatian drama, in the works by S. Kolar, M. Božić, E. Šinko, D. Roksandić and D. Gervais, of which R. Marinković's *Gloria* (1955) is considered to be the best. Due to the theatre manager Marijan Matković, who took over the job in 1950, and perhaps more to the comeback of B. Gavella and T. Strozzi, the repertoire changed and the theatre opened up to the more personalised directing of younger artists like K. Spaić, M. Škiljan, and V. Habunek. Habunek's interpretation of J. Giroudoux's *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place* (1952) introduced a new scenic vision, thus marking the advent of a more pluralist

artistic space, visible in contemporary Croatian drama. This was augmented by M. Matković's own *The Fair of Dreams* (*Vašar snova*) and *Heracles* (*Heraklo*, 1958), and M. Božić's *Silk Slippers* (*Svilene papuče*, 1958) or I. Ivanac's *Why do you Cry, Daddy* (*Zašto plačeš, tata?* 1959), performed in the newly established Zagreb Drama Theatre.

The Zagreb Drama Theatre also promoted contemporary world drama – T. Williams, A. Miller, E. Ionesco and S. Beckett, whose innovations influenced Croatian playwrights – like I. Ivanac, who has already been mentioned, but also V. Kljaković and Z. Bajsić.

With the exception of M. Krleža and R. Marinković, however, Croatian playwrights did not manage to rise to such artistic challenges, and many of them, such as I. Supek and I. Raos, remained of no lasting influence. An interesting artistic couple formed by the director, set-designer and pedagogue B. Stupica and his wife, actress M. Stupica, who brought to Zagreb HNK outstanding performances of Dürenmatt, B. Shaw, J. Anouilh, B. Brecht, L. Goldoni and V. Vishnevsky, in which the actress excelled in the leading female roles. Stupica's conception of a "total theatre" differed radically from Gavella's approach and was highly important for a whole generation of both HNK and ZDK actors – R. Bašić, V. Drach, Z. Madunić, A. Dulčić, Š. Guberina, Z. Crnković, K. Valentić, and others.

The sixties were marked by the prominence of B. Violić, the director of a memorable performance of A. Šenoa's *Ljubica* in Zagreb HNK (1964) and a member of a "post-Gavellian cartel" which included M. Škiljan, G. Paro and D. Radojević. The latter two were also reputedly great rejuvenators of M. Krleža's avant-guard plays in the seventies. The major institutional event was, however, the inauguration of Theatre &TD in 1966, with two new stages open mostly for contemporary repertoire, boasting now of a unique trophy, a performance of R. Queneau's *Exercices of style* (1968), directed by T. Radić, which entered the Guinness book of records with its 40+-year run with the same cast. Having started as a platform for the younger generation of playwrights (from A. Šoljan, I. Kušan, S. Šnajder via M. Gavran and L. Kaštelan to I. Vidić and others), Theatre &TD is now a place open for all innovative projects of contemporary dance and performance art.

The 1970s, the period of HNK theatre management by M. Škiljan and K. Spaić, present a rather unusual picture: while the international theatre scene turns more and more toward the affirmation of the material specificities of the theatrical event, Croatian playwrights were suspicious of directors' "totalitarian" ambitions and obsessed by the preservation of the national language as the crucial means of

political resistance. Such a discrepancy must however be considered against the backdrop of party repression, equally harsh towards radical leftist claims of the student 1968 upsurge as towards liberal ideas of national party officials.

"Political Theatre" was the order of the day, but by indirect means and allusive interpretations of classics. Intertextuality and metatheatricality ruled in the plays of R. Marinković and I. Brešan, whose *Performance of Hamlet in the village of Mrduša Donja* (1971), directed by B. Violić on the stage of Theatre &TD, represents the boldest example of political subversion. This line of interest persists in the 1980s as well, with a series of plays by S. Šnajder, who writes "counter-biographies" of prominent Croatian intellectuals, suffering himself however from the indifference and incomprehension of the critics when dealing with Croatian Ustashi regime in his plays *The Croatian Faust* (*Hrvatski Faust*, first performed in Split in 1982) and *Gamllet*.

In the ballet and opera repertoire from the fifties on, Croatian composers abound (K. Baranović, B. Sakač, M. Kelemen, I. Brkanović, I. Malec, B. Bjelinski, S. Šulek, B. Papandopulo, I. Kuljerić, F. Parać, D. Savin), ensuring the high reputation of choreographers N. Bidjin, S. Kastl, I. Sertić, F. Adret, D. Boldin and especially the world renowned auteur M. Šparenblek, whose choreographies of G. Mahler's *Songs of Love and Death*, F. Parać's *Carmina Krležiana* and *Amadeus Momentum* based on W. A. Mozart's works represent the highlight of modern Croatian ballet.

The 1990s are marked by the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia, the fight for political independence of the Republic of Croatia, and a re-appraisal of theatre as a medium of national self-affirmation: ancient and modern plays, as well as novels adapted for the stage, dealing with the Croatian traumatic history (by D. Demeter, T. Bakarić, I. Aralica, and others) form the axis of the repertoire, and Zagreb HNK is accorded the status of state theatre of particular national and artistic importance.

Unfortunately, while maintaining the standards of ambitious ensemble-productions of its drama, ballet and opera performances, the theatre has not yet managed to solve the problem of only having one stage for all the three sectors of its activity. Or of having nothing new to offer in terms of directing or acting poetics in recent decades. Younger playwrights are rarely given the chance to try out their work on its stage (Lada Kaštelan's *Giga and Her Suitors*, directed by N. Rošić in 1997 is a rare exception). The same goes for directors, such as B. Šeparović, whose disquieting interpretation of *Crave*

by Sarah Kane in 2006 interrupted the relative conventional and predictable series of performances by J. Juvančić, G. Paro, B. Violić, I. Kunčević, I. Boban, O. Prohić, K. Dolenčić, D. Ruždjak Podolski, and T. Pavković.

Zagreb HNK's artistic stagnation, interspersed by rare flashes of true excitement due to the work of visiting foreign directors (M. Popescu, J. Szikora, H. Heyme, J. Kica, A. Popovski, T. Pandur and V. Taufer), has not been challenged by any of its recent managers: from G. Paro (1992–2002), via M. Tarbuk (2002–2005) to A. Lederer (2005–2013). In many ways, its cultural function was taken over by Zagreb Youth Theatre, not burdened by huge administrative apparatus, led recently by D. Vrgoč (2004-) whose direction of the Zagreb Festival of World Theatre (2003) contributed enormously to an entirely different conception of the mainstream theatre: one quickly absorbing both technological and organisational innovations within the broadly defined field of performance practice.

Even if it would be incorrect to undermine the contribution of Dubrovnik Marin Držić Theatre or Split HNK to the national theatre landscape, the importance of these two regional centres grew in the 1950s primarily with the advent of their summer festivals of open air theatre, dance, and music, which were honoured by President's Tito special protection and sponsorship. A tradition taken over in 1990s by all the subsequent democratic presidents of the new state. This ensured a continuing international openness and the lasting prominence of both festivals, not only for the promotion of national drama, but also by proving a platform for theatre experimentation. While Dubrovnik was oriented more towards the cultivation of its local literary heritage and of European classics of drama, Split excelled mostly in classic opera performances. Dubrovnik in particular cultivated a programme of summer workshops, gathering artists from what was formerly the entire Yugoslavia, and was crucial in the formation of auteur directing, as well as of a generation of venerable Croatian actors (from veterans such as L. Šapro, M. Grković, V. Maričić, B. Kraljeva and M. Crnobori to younger ones such as J. Dijaković, T. Lonza, P. Kvrgić, N. Subotić, N. Rošić, M. Kohn, I. Hajdarhodžić, M. Martinović, Z. Crnković, M. Podrug-Kokotović, V. Drach, F. Šovagović, Š. Guberina, B. Boban, R. Šerbedžija).

Both festivals are still today centres of the contemporary mainstream theatre scene, but the impact of their best performances cannot be said to equal the importance of several pivotal points of the illustrious experimental history of, for instance, at the Dubrovnik festival: B. Gavella's direction of Držić's and Vojnović's plays in the

1950s, a series of both international and national *Hamlets* which turned the fort Lovrijenac into the legendary natural stage set for the play, G. Paro's direction of M. Krleža's avant-garde plays *Christopher Columbus* and *Arethaeus* in the 1970s, and I. Boban's direction of M. Držić's *Hecube* in the early eighties.

The torch of an inventive approach to the unusually diversified natural scenery of the city of Dubrovnik – whose compactness and adaptability to the needs of a stage made it into a stone theatre under the stars which was many a time compared to the Globe – was recently taken over by the authorial duo using procedures of devised theatre, B. Jelčić and N. Rajković, who decided to explore less attractive, abandoned and poor parts of an otherwise affluent tourist destination, or, as in one of their most recent performances, spaces of political decision like the city's council. In Split, O. Frljić raises polemical voices with his provocative *Bacchae* by Euripides in 2008, which denounced the collusion between HNK and political institutions, alluded to crimes committed by the Croatian side in the recent war for independence and let the current prime minister's voice to be explicitly connected with them. By the end of the 1990s, and in the first decade of this century, numerous other local summer theatre and performance festivals emerged on the Dalmatian coast, but none of them is to a comparable extent vitally connected to the mainstream Zagreb theatre practice.

This survey does not embrace in detail the work of all the regional National Theatres in Croatia, nor does it do justice to the impact of genre-specific Zagreb theatres such as Comedy, specialized for musicals and operettas, the Satirical theatre Jazavac, Exit theatre, and other less formally organized venues: for instance, the travelling troupe Histrioni, which cultivates popular theatre, was during the communist regime a very important shelter for the Croatian playwrights who did not belong to the alternative theatre strand and yet did not fit the high generic or ideological standards of national theatre institutions, such as the sophisticated trio T. Mujičić-B. Senker-N. Škrabe, excelling in post-modernist pastiche of high-brow and low-brow culture. Generally speaking, emerging Croatian playwrights (F. Šovagović, T. Zajec, M. Matišić, T. Štivičić, and I. Sajko) rely more on Theatre &TD, ZKM or DKG (Drama theatre Gavella, former Zagreb drama theatre), as well as on the so-called "independent scene", for their promotion, regardless of their preference for mainstream or alternative poetics.

Finally, one should remark that the heading of "national theatre" in the case of Croatia also includes several theatres that, during and

immediately after the World War II, were founded outside today's territory of the Republic of Croatia: The Croatian State Theatre in Sarajevo (1941–1945), The Croatian State Theatre in Banja Luka (1941–1944), The Croatian National Theatre in Subotica (1945–50) and National theatre, Croatian Drama in Subotica (1951–58).

CZECH REPUBLIC

A commitment to constantly new solutions
The current state of affairs

Four theatres currently exist in the Czech Republic whose names contain the designation "national". In the first tier is the state-subsidised multi-ensemble National Theatre (Národní divadlo), located in the capital of Prague. Another two theatres, National Theatre Brno (Národní divadlo Brno) and, in Ostrava, the National Moravian-Silesian Theatre (Národní divadlo moravskoslezské), are also multi-company theatres subsidised by the municipal governments of their respective cities. Meanwhile, a private company supports Prague's National Marionette Theatre (Národní divadlo marionet).[1] While the creation and development of the first three institutions are linked to ideas of national, regional and local representation, the latter theatre belongs exclusively to the sphere of commercial activity; its name is a joke in contrast with the leading Czech stages, but it also reflects a commercial strategy, which, from the point of view of the tourist industry, does a good job of "selling" the attractive product of Czech marionette theatre.[2] Indeed, this example confirms the relevance of the attribute 'national', even though it is in many ways questioned and challenged by the attitudes of the twenty-first century, with its tendencies towards globalisation, ideas of multiculturalism and crises of representation.

The issue of national theatre in the Czech context – as in other countries, where this cultural and political phenomenon is found – consists of the interplay of three different planes. The political plane is linked to the idea of a national theatre itself, and, along with this, who and what such an institution represents.[3] No less important is the plane of management and economics, that is, how the political idea of a national theatre physically manifests in a specific theatre building or buildings, ensemble or ensembles, and their operation and financing. Finally, there is the artistic plane, and the extent to which the idea of nation, or any entity which the theatre is tasked with representing, shapes the artistic programme of the theatre. Inasmuch as the existence of a national theatre is closely tied up

1. In legal terms, a limited liability copy.

2. Black light theatre is another Prague cultural attraction that has been appropriated by the tourism industry. Even though there is currently no 'national' black light theatre, many foreign visitors to the Czech Republic many leave with this impression.

3. Of course this does not apply only to theatre, but also to other artistic or cultural institutions such as orchestras, museums, academies of science, etc.

with the state of the society that established it, it is logical that, while the issue of national theatre comprises all of these elements simultaneously, each of the above-mentioned planes dominates certain situations in the development of a given society.

The dynamics of these individual planes are already apparent in a rough division into eras of the development of the National Theatre. Discourse varies sharply from the context of the encounter with Enlightenment ideas via eighteenth-century German theatre culture, to the nineteenth-century political struggle for the position of the Czech nation in the Austrian Empire, and, later, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; to the independence of Czechoslovakia from 1918, the communist regime after 1948 and, finally, geopolitical developments after 1989. The uniqueness of Czech history and theatre culture is also a factor that distinguishes the general concept of national theatre, which can manifest in an infinite number of specific institutions, from *the* National Theatre[4], as a specific theatre which opened in Prague in 1883.

The layers of historical development in the evolution of the idea of a national theatre are clearly visible in the complex of buildings operated by the current National Theatre, each of which was created in a different historical and political context. "The historical building of the National Theatre, constructed in 1883, is generally considered the prime stage in the Czech Republic. It is the flagship of the National Theatre institution, today amounting to four buildings and encompassing four companies. You can see opera, drama and ballet performances there."[5] The Estates Theatre (Stavovské divadlo) is "one of the oldest European theatres, operating continuously since 1783, and again you can see opera, drama and ballet there."[6] Established by a German aristocrat, the theatre was originally called Gräflich Nostitzsches Nationaltheater. The New Stage (Nová scéna) is "[a] theatre building constructed in 1983, a stage with a specific dramaturgy. You can see there laterna magika, opera and drama and a number of other original projects."[7] The State Opera (Statní opera) is "[a] grand opera house with an illustrious history, built in 1888 that hosts opera and ballet."[8] Originally the Neues Deutsches Theater built by Prague's Germans as a counterpoint to the Czech National Theatre, after 1945 it alternately was and was not part of the National Theatre; a final merger took place in 2012. The linchpin of this administratively intricate complex is the current Preamble of the National Theatre, stated as follows: "The National Theatre is the representative stage of the Czech Republic. It is one of the symbols of national

4. For Patočka on the National Theatre (highlighted by the author), see Chapter 5 of *Socialisticka idea národního divadla v českých zemích*.

5. See the official webpage of the National Theatre, www.narodni-divadlo.cz, accessed 10.10.2015. Translator's note: The quoted descriptions of the National Theatre buildings are drawn from the theatre's English language website.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

identity and part of the European cultural space. It is the bearer of national cultural heritage and simultaneously a space for free artistic creation. It is a living, artistic organism, which understands tradition as a commitment towards continually new solutions and as a stimulus to the highest artistic quality."[9]

To the Native Land and the Muses. The Enlightenment idea of national theatre in the Czech lands

As the favoured form of cultural entertainment for the masses from the Baroque period onwards, theatre was already being used to spread different ideas and ideologies. The idea of a national theatre comes from German theatre culture, where, in the context of Enlightenment ideas, theatre was considered the ideal instrument for the education and moral enlightenment of society. The so-called Bildungstheater, together with the pre-romantic demand for national art, entered the Czech context primarily through the work of J. E. Schlegel, G. E. Lessing, and especially through Schiller's 1784 lecture "Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken" ("What can a theatre of good standing actually achieve?). To the Enlightenment idea of the moral education of society through theatre, Schiller added another aspect, related to the management, operation and professionalisation of theatre, namely a call for a permanent theatre as a dignified space for dramatic work, which, through its close contact with literature, would become a means of spreading bourgeois ideas.

Further, despite causing political and administrative fragmentation, the linguistic hegemony of the German language gave rise to a number of national theatres in the Czech lands, which at that time were linguistically varied, as well as part of the Austrian Empire. Thus in the Czech lands the development of the national theatre idea followed a more than usually complicated path.

In 1783 Count F. A. Nostitz-Rieneck Gräflich opened the Nostitzsches Nationaltheatre in Prague, which espoused on one hand the ideas of the Enlightenment (emphasised by the theatre's opening performance; Lessing's *Emilia Galotti)*, and, on the other, those of national patriotism: the motto incorporated reads "To the Native Land and the Muses". This type of theatre merged aspects of court theatre with national theatre at a time when "the term National Theatre, or National-Schauspiel was used in Central Europe to denote any theatre buildings or groups (either professional or

9. Ibid. Adopted in 2007, this version of the Preamble was authored by Ondřej Černý, former director of the National Theatre.

unprofessional), performing regularly or irregularly in the tongue of the local inhabitants" (Černý, 1985: 19). In the case of this theatre, it denoted a German-language national theatre in a bilingual city, the inherent contradiction of which caused a few problems for the theatre.[10]

It was not only the opening of the Estates Theatre which created the impulse for a Czech national movement; even before it opened, Czech patriots were already calling for a national theatre on the basis of Enlightenment ideas, stressing the importance of linguistic patriotism and nationality. However, the epitome of this – a distinct, independent theatre with regular performances in the Czech language – was initially a long way off. Efforts to establish one can be observed from the mid-eighteenth century, the first phase of the so-called national awakening, when Czech patriots primarily focused on restoring the Czech language as a language of education and motivating the residents of the Czech lands towards national self-awareness.[11] In *Liste o divadle* of 1758, poet, playwright and translator Václav Thám espoused the Enlightenment view of theatre, but simultaneously placed emphasis on the linguistic aspect, and thus, the creation of an adequate amount of Czech dramatic work, only after which, in his opinion, would it be possible to proceed towards the building of a Czech theatre. Actor Matěj Majober advocated a radical view of Enlightenment theatre in his 1784 contribution *Beitrag meiner Gedanken zur Boehmens Theaterepoche*, in which he emphasised the aesthetics of theatre culture and for the first time professed the view of theatre as a "sanctuary" of truth, beauty and morality (Srba, 1983–4: 56).

Given the unlikelihood of obtaining permission to operate a theatre in the Czech language, the first efforts of the Czech theatre community focused on the establishment of a bilingual theatre. The first request for permission to establish a theatre for Czech and German plays was made unsuccessfully in 1784 by Old Town burgher and amateur theatre-maker František Jiřík. One year later, on 20 January 1785 the first performance of a Czech play, Stephanie's *Odběhlec z lásky synovské*, took place on the stage of the Estates Theatre at the initiative of the theatre's Czech-speaking actors. This production confirmed two important preconditions for the operation of a Czech-language theatre: the existence of Czech artists and the interest of the Czech public. After this event, the aim to build a permanent Czech theatre became the most prominent manifestation of the efforts for Czech emancipation. At the same time – because theatre is also a business concern – this unleashed competition

10. Even though German theatre in the Czech lands was by no means the exception.

11. This was acerbated by the introduction of German as the language of education during the reign of Josef II, whereas it had previously been the language of common law.

between Czech and German theatres for new audiences flooding to the cities in the 1780s, following the abolition of serfdom.

Karl Bulla's company, under the name Patriotic Theatre (Vlastenecké divadlo), attempted to establish a theatre with on-going Czech programming in the spirit of national patriotism, which considered the Czech lands to be the common homeland of both the Czechs and Germans who lived there. The theatre had a bilingual linguistic focus and, from 1786 to 1789, operated in the modest conditions of the Hut (Bouda) a basic theatre building standing in Koňský trh (today's Wenceslas Square), which, in the first year of its operations was even visited by Emperor Josef II. It opened in response to the cessation of Czech performances at Nostitz's theatre; indeed, Bulla's company included Czech actors who had taken part in these productions. Patriotic Theatre's bilingual programme was financially unsustainable, and thus the Hut was demolished and the company relocated to a rented space in an abandoned Franciscan monastery, before finally going bankrupt in 1799.

Due to the success of Czech plays at Patriotic Theatre, thought in Czech circles gradually nationalised and louder voices demanded the abolition of German plays. Writer, publisher and journalist Václav Matěj Kramerius began to emphasise the aspect of nationality at the expense of Enlightenment ideas and held theatre responsible "for the development of all the different art forms, which, together with literature, collaborate in the creation of a production, and for the development of Czech art and culture in general" (Srba, 1983–4: 267). The arc in this shift in thinking about Czech-language theatre was completed, paradoxically, in 1787, by an anonymous German author[12] in the pamphlet *Beobachtungen in und über Prag von einem reisenden Ausländer*. Here, for the first time, a call was formulated for the establishment of a representative Czech national theatre, in opposition to the German Nostitz Theatre. The author, knowledgeable about Prague economic and social conditions and with a feel for marketing, suggested the theatre should become "the goal of skilled and patriotically motivated business people who have secured the support of a wide range of patrons recruited from the ordinary Czech citizens of Prague, as well as those outside the capital" (Srba, 1983–4: 267).

In 1793, Czech playwright and translator Prokop Šedivý published his pamphlet *Krátké pojednání o užitku, kterýž ustavičně stojící a dobře spořádané divadlo způsobiti může*. As Lenka Jungmannová notes, it is an unconfessed part-translation, part-adaptation of Schiller's lecture *Die Schaubühne al seine moralische Anstalt betrachtet*, in

12. Apparently Prague university professor August Gottlieb Meissner.

which Šedivý tweaks the meaning of the original, especially at the level of a certain "deification" of theatre. Moreover, unlike Schiller, he makes the existence of the nation conditional not on national theatre, in the sense of theatre cultural generally, but on a single National Theatre. Simultaneously, with Šedivý's demand that the Czech National Theatre supplement the more-or-less non-existent Czech education system, there began a long practice of burdening the National Theatre with non-artistic functions.

Taken together, more radical ideas concerning a permanent Czech-language and the efforts towards its establishment put pressure on Czech productions at the Nostitz Theatre, which was purchased in 1798 by the Czech Estates and changed its name to the Estates Theatre. In 1803, the Estates also purchased Patriotic Theatre's licence and the Estates Theatre became the focal point of Czech theatre practice. From 1812, thanks to dramaturg Jan Nepomuk Štěpánek, Czech performances were resumed. Czech opera also grew in importance, and, unlike Czech dramatic theatre, also attracted the attention of the German-speaking public. In the 1830s, theatre management had to react to the increasing social and nationality-based differentiation of the public: while operatic pieces satisfied the aristocracy, the repertoire of German dramatic plays was intended for an audience of German burghers, and farces and fairy-tale plays were intended for the common ranks of predominantly Czech nationality. Thanks to Štěpánek, the work of the founders of Czech Romanticism infiltrated the stage, especially the generation associated with Kajetán's Theatre (Kajetánské divadlo) and the playwright and all-around theatre artist Josef Kajetán Tyl, who came up with the concept of theatre as "the school of the nation". For the importance of theatre for the Czech nation, it is very symbolic that play *Fidlovačka*, in which the future Czech national anthem "Kde domov můj" ("Where is my home?") was heard for the first time, premièred in this period. In due time, to ease the complexities of operating in two languages, the leadership of the Estates Theatre opened a second stage, the New Theatre in Růžová Street (Nové divadlo v Růžové ulici), which supported not only Tyl's programme, but also Czech opera.

In the second half of the 1840s, however, conditions in the Estates Theatre transformed. On one hand it found itself in financial crisis, while on the other censorship was introduced following the suppression of the revolutionary events of 1848. In 1851, the theatre's funding for the promotion of Czech plays was withdrawn, resulting in the departure of part of the Czech dramatic company led by Tyl,

which, from 1849, toured as the First Czech Travelling Theatre Company (První české cestující divadelní společnost), also known as the National Theatre for the Countryside (Národní divadlo pro venkov). The strong tradition of amateur theatre also continued during the first half of the nineteenth century[13], providing a communicative function, as well as a means of social cohesion for Czech society. Thus Tyl fulfilled the aspirations of his theatrical predecessors concerning the spread of Czech professional theatre to other cities and to the countryside; at the same time, as an experienced theatre practitioner, he created the distinct concept of an itinerant national theatre, which is not bound to its own building.

Despite the advent of the absolutist Bach System, efforts for a Czech national theatre remained the focal point of Czech political endeavours. In 1857, the Provincial Committee, under pressure from the Czech national movement, did not renew the licence for regular evening performances at the Estates Theatre, but instead established two autonomous theatre groups – Czech and German. Thus from 1858 two independent organisations functioned in the same building, a situation which concluded with the building of the Czech Provisional Theatre (Prozatímní divadlo) in 1862. The Estates Theatre later came under Czech management and became part of the National Theatre in 1920, following the attainment of Czechoslovak independence.

The nation to itself
The national idea of the national theatre in the Czech lands

The idea of a Czech national theatre was created in the context of the Enlightenment, but the aspect of nationality grew in importance, as the political dimension of its establishment took precedence, as in other small Central European countries where national theatres have been created in reaction to an externally imposed dominant culture. The Czechs weren't the first to get their National Theatre, yet they came to an extreme understanding of the idea. "The uniqueness of the Czech struggle for the National Theatre lies… in the fact that the struggle for it became *the central political action of the national liberation movement in the nineteenth century* and that *all strata of society* really built it, the whole nation" (Černý, 1985: 20). Already in the pre-March period, theatre had become an instrument for the dissemination of national ideology; due to censorship, "theatre to some extent substituted for political journalism, and especially for political education" (Rak, 1985: 46).

13. Amateur theatre played a similar role during the period of Normalization after 1968, when, it functioned as an "island of freedom" during the censorship of the official professional theatre and strengthened the social significance of theatre.

Growing politicization posed challenges for theatre; it became a means of political propaganda, with radical poet and politician Josef Václav Frič attaching terms like 'citizen' and 'independence'. This phase of the national awakening was not only about the patriotism of defending the language, but also about the nation as programme.

František Palacký, a historian and politician advocating the idea of Austro-Slavism, based his national programme on the establishment of Czech institutions, particularly on two pillars. These included Matice česká (The Czech Foundation), which was created in 1831 to maintain the Czech language and work towards better conditions for the publication of Czech books, and an independent Czech theatre. The Provincial Committee of the Czech Assembly, the supreme legislative body of the Czech lands, issued the privilege to establish the theatre in 1845 at Palacký's request. A symbolic location on the Vltava opposite Hradčany was chosen for its construction, which would become the future centre of Czech science and art.[14] Jednota pro divadlo české (Unity for Czech Theatre) was established in this year to assist in raising the necessary capital for the construction of a representative stage for the residents of the Czech lands and, eventually, Slovakia. In 1850, the group obtained permission to register Sbor pro zřízení českého Národního divadla (Committee for the Establishment of the Czech National Theatre), which one year later published the first call for contributions to a fund for its construction. In this context, Palacký emphasised not only the theatre's intellectual, moral and aesthetic functions, but especially its political dimension, in the sense of the theatre as the symbol of a free Czech nation, a "monument of acquired constitutional equality."

At this time, two camps existed in the Czech political scene and their feud concerning the degree of Czech representatives' political activism in the Reichstag was also reflected in the form of the National Theatre. In opposition to older national party, the so-called Old Czechs, was a new liberal national party, the Young Czechs. The more radical Young Czechs, who, in 1863, had founded Umělecká beseda with the involvement of titans of Czech art such as composer Bedřich Smetana and artist Josef Mánes, demanded a large, representative theatre from the beginning. However, the Old Czechs, largely due to concerns over the cost of its construction, agreed only to the alternative of a provisional theatre. The Provisional Theatre (Prozatímní divadlo) opened in 1862 and was

14. The Czech Academy of Sciences sits opposite the historic building of the National Theatre.

representative in content, if not appearance. Here the programme of the revolutionary generation was implemented; the repertory contained Czech comedies and singspiels, but contemporary European dramatists were also present, with an understandable departure from German pieces and an orientation toward French, Russian and Scandinavian drama. From its beginnings, the National Theatre was predestined to focus primarily on the practice of Czech drama, on the transparency of language and the actors' "efforts to play characters that fused the individual with socio-historic conditions". Characters, then, are real, but at the same time universal representations of man and the starting point for understanding theatre as "the primary carrier of some widespread national values, which it can effectively transmit"(Císař 2011, s. 7). It's therefore a paradox, that these ideas were more successfully implemented within the repertoire of the Provisional Theatre by opera productions, led by the entire Smetana repertoire.

In 1868, a celebration of the laying of the foundation stone of the National Theatre was held. It demonstrated the disunity of Czech society; twenty stones were actually laid, and the choice of speakers to represent Czech society was also controversial. Democratic principles manifested most strongly in the national collection for the national theatre as a "nationwide people's monument" (Císař, 2011: 10), but a substantial part of the funds were also provided by the National Treasury, Emperor Franz Josef I, the Czech nobility and other sources. However the theatre took a long time to build and the 1870s brought to Czech society a large disappointment from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, which constituted a fiasco for the efforts for autonomy of the Czech lands. The still-unfinished theatre opened in 1881 on the occasion of a visit from Crown Prince Rudolf with the première of Smetana's opera *Libuše*, a political move which did not pay off in the end. During the finishing work, a fire broke out in the building, which damaged the copper cupola, the auditorium, curtain and stage of the theatre. The fire was understood as a national catastrophe and the reopening of the theatre took place in 1883.

The representative building was built on the motto "Národ sobě" ("From the nation, to itself"), which is enshrined over its proscenium arch in neo-Renaissance, historicist style (designed by Josef Zítka), which stands out from the baroque architecture associated with the re-Catholicisation of the Czech lands[15] and depicts a glorious Czech past. The building of the National Theatre is also the theme of the curtain, which was made by Vojtěch Hynais. Apart

15. After the Battle of White Mountain, the re-conversion of non-Catholics to Roman Catholicism took place in the Czech lands controlled by Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemian, on the basis of the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle. Jesuit baroque theatre made a significant contribution to the re-Catholicisation process.

from the allegories of Tragedy, Comedy, Farce and, above them all, the floating Muses, individuals of different ages, who represent the unusual initiators of the construction – the common people – are also depicted. Here the nation is building a programme for the future and the instrument for its communication is this golden chapel, tabernacle or "cathedral", the "golden band of Czech society". Here would arise the cultured public opinion of the nation, as it was formulated, for example, by the well-known Czech writer and journalist Jan Neruda.

The first director of the National Theatre, František Adolf Šubert, conceived the artistic programme of the theatre on the basis of a multidimensionality repertoire, designed to serve all social and audience groups, whose access to the theatre was maximised by the means of afternoon performances and theatre trains, which lent a "chaotic diversity" to the theatre's productions (Česká divadla. Encyclopedie divadelních souborů, 2000: 320). The theatre was also blessed with other problems: though the theatre represented the urban bourgeoisie, it had to simultaneously fill a national educational function and an offensive, revolutionary mission; on top this, the long fundraising and building process had resulted in a "National Theatre a century too late". Thus, an idea, which had its roots in the 19th century, collided with the world of the twentieth century; in addition to which, the work was realised in the cramped conditions of a single building shared with songspiel productions.

Another challenge arose from the fact that Czech theatre was isolated, and until the creation of the Vinohrady Theatre (Divadlo na Vinohrádech) in 1907[16] had nowhere else "to test and implement different styles and poetics" (Císař, 2011: 14). A stronger artistic profile came only after 1900, when the Provincial Committee transferred the lease for the operation of the National Theatre from the Old Czech National Theatre Cooperative to the Young Czech National Theatre Society, thanks to which a new director, Gustav Schmoranz was chosen. Schmoranz brought with him to the National Theatre Jaroslav Kvapil, who, first as a poet and playwright, and later as chief director, promoted the modern art innovations of impressionism and symbolism in the theatre.

Only five years after the opening of the National Theatre, efforts to establish an independent theatre for Prague's German minority came to fruition. On 5 January 1888, the Neues Deutsches Theater opened with Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nuremberg*. While the Germans had their own representative theatres in other cities,

16. The Vinohrady Theatre became a municipal theatre of Prague in 1922.

the desire for their own theatre led in 1883 to discussions about the construction of a new theatre building for the German Theatre Association in Prague. The financing of the theatre also came from private donors. As Jitka Ludvová notes, it is possible to view this theatre as analogous to the Czech National theatre, particularly concerning the efforts of a united German minority, but there are also two differences: the German minority is sociologically distinct from the Czechs, due to its foreign background and possession of an uninterrupted cultural tradition, as well as professional stages in other Czech cities. The building transferred into Czech hands after the end of World War II and, as the State Opera, forms part of the complex of today's National Theatre.

Of a second National Theatre
The independent idea of national theatre in the Czech lands

The establishment and declaration of independent Czechoslovakia on 28 October 1918 redrew the political map as the Pittsburgh Agreement and Treaty of Versailles led to the annexation of the territory of today's Slovakia and Ruthenia.[17] On the new state's agenda was the establishment of a new relationship with its German-speaking inhabitants, who found themselves a minority in the newly constituted territory of Czechoslovakia and went on the cultural defensive, with some well-known individuals leaving Prague. "The rich, fruitful, but clearly not unproblematic coexistence of Czechs with Germans…dated from the High Middle Ages, but in the nineteenth century, its character significantly changed – it began to be…deliberately reflected upon" (Dějiny zemí koruny české, 1993: 128). Estrangement between both nations grew, which also expressed itself in the cultural sphere. "Prague German-Jewish authors were ostentatiously disinterested in Czech culture. Prague Germans even ignored Czech music, which in Vienna was met with enthusiasm. And Czechs behaved the same way. They treated the Prague German Theatre, which was one of the best in the entire monarchy, as if it wasn't there, or went there incognito" (Dějiny zemí koruny české, 1993: 129). Separation from the Austro-Hungarian Empire meant the independent cultural development of Czech and Slovaks and a plurality of directions and currents.

Until 1918, Czech theatre was predominantly itinerant, in part due to lack of access to permanent stages, and also because Czech companies didn't have licences for the German theatre buildings. After

17. Immediately after the declaration of Czech independence, German-speaking residents attempt to declare the independence of four autonomous provinces: Deutschböhmen (Northern Bohemia), Sudetenland (Northern Moravia and Silesia), Deutschsüdmähren (Southern Moravia) and Böhmerwaldgau (South Bohemia), which intended to become part of Austria. These attempts were stopped by the end of 1918.

1918, the original centres of permanent, professional Czech theatre (Prague, Brno, Kladno, Plzen, as well as the travelling Theatre of the Affiliated Cities of Eastern Bohemia, which was contracted to play predominantly in Pardubice and Hradec Králové) continued to function, but the 1920s saw the conquest of originally German theatres[18], as well as the construction of new theatres, in addition to the coexistence of Czechs and Germans in buildings where Czechification and nationalisation would be completed after World War II (e.g. Liberec, Karlovy Vary, Cheb, Most, České Budějovice, Opava, Olomouc, Brno, and Jihlava). Post-revolution enthusiasm resulted in the creation of numerous Czech and Slovak specialties: large-scale, multi-ensemble theatres (performing drama, opera and operetta), which appropriated the title "National" in cities such as České Budějovice, Moravská Ostrava, Bratislava and Košice.

This was a favourable time to expand the idea of national theatre. In 1918, on the thirty-fifth jubilee of the National Theatre in Prague, writer Karel Čapek argued for "a second national theatre" in an article of the same title (Čapek, 1918). Čapek made the case that Brno, the second largest city in Czechoslovakia, with a predominantly German population, was in want of "a spiritual and national centre", through which the capital city of Moravia could transform into "the capital city of the Czech nation of Moravia" and called for the establishment of "a fund for the National Theatre of Moravia." At the same time, in Brno from 1881 The Cooperative of the Czech National Theatre, Brno, had purchased the theatre and rented it to different theatre companies. The funds for the construction of a new theatre building were gathered through collections under the motto "Národ Moravě a sobě" ("From the Nation and Moravia to itself"), bazaars and lotteries. In 1904 the National Bank issued a government stamp in support of the construction of a National Theatre in Brno. The existence of the Cooperative and an independent Czech theatre was for many years connected to the efforts of building an original, permanent, independent and representative building. After the revolution of 1918, Czechs and Germans began to divide up the municipal theatres of Na hradbách and Reduta. The theatres came into state hands in 1947; from 1954 they operated under the name State Theatre of Brno (Státní divadlo Brno) in National Theatre Brno's current three buildings: the Mahen Theatre (originally Theatre Na Hradbách), the new Janáček Theatre (Janáčkovo divadlo) built in 1965 and Reduta. After 1989, this complex came into the hands of the municipal government of Brno and only at this time was it renamed National Theatre Brno.

18. In Slovakia, originally Hungarian theatres were also annexed. A scandal broke out over the annexation of the Estates Theatre, a measure opposed by President T. G. Masaryk, who refused to set foot in the National Theatre from then on.

In the Silesian metropolis of Ostrava, Czech theatre makers also competed with a strong German community. The National Theatre of Moravia-Silesia Association was founded in 1918 in Slezká Ostrava. As in Brno, it began with the dividing up of the municipal theatre building between Czechs and Germans; by 1920 it was occupied fully by Czechs. The theatre was nationalised in 1948 and was also nationalised in name (becoming the State Theatre of Ostrava, instead of the National Theatre of Moravia-Silesia) and received another National House, later The Jiří Myron Theatre (Divadlo Jiřího Myrona) for its use. In 1991 city took on management of the theatre and in 1995 returned it to its original name.

From 1921 director Karel Hugo Hilar worked in Prague's National Theatre, where he continued with the introduction of a modern artistic direction to the theatre's programme, and in his modernist productions, at first in an expressionist and, later, civilian style, utterly departed from the star system that characterised nineteenth century acting and instead emphasised ensemble collaboration. This period brought about a definitive need to reshape the idea of national theatre, to not only facilitate the building of national self-awareness, but also the promotion of self-critique and self-reflexivity. The 1920s also brought administrative and organizational changes: after the transition of the management of theatre under the Provincial National Committee, the conferral of statutes in 1924 and the formulation of the preamble in 1929[19], it was nationalised in 1930, and executive authority came into the hands of the Ministry of Education. The transition from the concept of nation to that of state, which applied not only to the National Theatre in Prague, went hand in hand with the artistic programming of the theatre, which, beginning in 1935, was formulated by dramaturg Otokar Fischer. Together with director Jiří Frejka and scenographer František Tröster, Fischer "integrally linked the existing trend for expressive, autonomous direction… in politically troubling times with an accentuated humanist message" (Česká divadla. Encyklopedie divadelních soubourů, 2000: 324) and defended Masaryk's liberal democracy, as represented – if we limit ourselves to considering domestic work – by productions of Karel Čapek's plays. This period of time, when burdensome non-artistic functions were finally removed from the National Theatre, and which lasted until the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, is considered one of its historic artistic peaks. After the declaration of the Protectorate in March of 1939, Czech theatre was confronted not only with censorship, but with the German occupation of some buildings, including the

19. "The National Theatre in Prague is a state institute. Its task is to cultivate, in the spirit of its founders, and in the service of the spiritual culture of the nation and state, both literary and musical dramatic art, in all its components, with special attention to domestic work" (Herman, 2007: 42).

Estates Theatre, which continued until 1 September 1944 when the theatres were officially closed.

Societal Geometry
The socialist idea of national theatre in the Czech lands

The post-war era brought to Czech theatre a number of groundbreaking changes as non-artistic functions again displaced aesthetics. After the end of the Second World War, the country's support for the Communist Party grew and in 1948, with the support of the Soviet Union, the Communists seized power. In 1948 the Theatre Act was issued, which had been under discussion since the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia. The theatre was managed by the Ministry of Education, but ideological oversight was exercised by the Ministry of Information. The communist government paid special attention to this kind of art, which was considered an effective instrument for the spreading of propaganda, as evidenced by Minister of Culture Zdeněk Nejedlý's statement: "There is no art stronger and more influential than theatre…the public in the theatre – that is the nation, collectively united by what they see and hear… from this we must create a school, an education of the nation" (Just, 1995: 34). From 1947, the communist concept of theatre was enforced by the Theatrical and Dramaturgical Board and the Theatre Publicity Committee, which decided all staffing, dramaturgical, stylistic and operational affairs of the theatre. For the purpose of spreading ideology, a theatrical network was created, which artificially filled the empty places on the map of the Czechoslovak Republic (e.g. Kolín, Písek, Slaný, and Trutnov), and dramaturgical guidelines came into force, which according to ideological and geopolitical criteria, determined the proportions of plays put on, giving preference to contemporary or historic themes and Soviet authors, followed by authors of other socialist countries.
The new regime also brought a new formulation of the status of the National Theatre. In 1949 the changes were still moderate, but from 1958 its role as a model for other theatres was emphasised, as well as its role in educating the people of the communist epoch, in spreading of the ideas of communism and as a paradigm for other socialist theatres. As a result of this cultural policy, in the 1940s and 1950s the repertory narrowed to classic and contemporary plays with socialist orientations, which were staged in the style of socialist realism, and the theatre – not for the first, nor for the last time – lacked original domestic work. An easing of ideological pressure in the mid-1950s

brought about the work of director Alfréd Radok and scenographer Josef Svoboda. When director Otomar Krejča became artistic director of the National Theatre's dramatic ensemble in 1956, he not only returned domestic work and reflections of contemporary affairs to the stage after a long absence, but specifically facilitated "a retreat from social geometry" and "humanisation" with productions featuring "the human being not as the object, but as the *subject* of action" (Grossman, 1958: 481). The texts of Josef Topol, Milan Kundera and František Hrubín were added to the repertory, thanks to which the theatre discovered poetic drama and established an "analytic style" (Česká divadla. Encyclopedie divadelních souborů, 2000: 326).

Beginning the mid-1950s, the National Theatre, like the rest of Czech culture, experienced another of its historic high points. It's no coincidence that Hrubín's *Sprnová neděle*, a definitive production in National Theatre's new style, premiered in 1958, in the same year that *Kdyby tisíc klarinetů* was staged in Theatre on the Balustrade (Divadlo Na zábradlí) as a definitive production of the so-called theatre of small forms. As Milan Lukeš demonstrates in his study *Idea malých divadel*, this was not about a sense of antagonism towards large theatres, but about access to work, where the subjective need to do theatre extricates itself from objective planning, about "the theatrical organism as opposed to the theatrical mechanism" because "…theatre for which there is no social demand loses its right to exist" (Lukeš, 1963: 5). Lukeš rightly senses the weakening educative function of theatre, which – apart from film and radio – was rapidly being overtaken at this time by television.

The 1960s was the culmination of the flowering of Czech culture in the areas of film, literature and theatre, with Prague's National Theatre contributing organically to the leading artistic initiatives, as did the State Theatre of Brno, which, in contrast to the lyricism of the National Theatre in Prague promoted the poetics of Brecht's epic and political theatre under the leadership of directors Miloš Hynšt and Evžen Sokolovský and dramaturg Bořivoj Srba, and, not least of all, the theatre of small forms. In 1968 on the 100th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone at Prague's National Theatre, a debate devoted to the idea of national theatre began again. Among others, the philosopher Jan Patoka became involved in it with his reflection dated 15 August 1968, which returns the debate to two ideas: the National Theatre, as subordinate to national interests and Palacký's own concept of national theatre, founded on the Enlightenment concept of the moral character of theatre emerging from Kant's and Schiller's philosophies. Patoka separated

entertainment and amusement from this concept of theatre and instead highlighted "living presence and opinion", thanks to which theatre, "breaks through the phenomenological surface, touches the metaphysical space and its mythic expression, crossing the borders of essential phenomenological thinking, and, eventually, rationality (Patoka, 1968: 2). For Patoka, such a theatre is in the service of "real, spiritual, ethical and intellectual education" (Ibid.), and does not accept the vulgarisation of Schiller's perspective with nationalist views. Indeed, in Schiller, is found only "the thought that nations are the 'natural organs' of humanity" (Ibid.). Therefore, nationality should be simply one aspect "in alignment with the moral duties of humans", not superior to that task. In this sense, Patoka contends that, "in the area of dramatic creation even though we have not arrived at a national theatre, we might have succeeded with the National Theatre. In the case "...of Smetana and Janáček, in their remarkable approach to national and popular singspiel, we have come close to [a national theatre]" (Ibid.), as has also been the case with the interwar work of the Čapek brothers and František Langr, as well as the absurdist and epic theatre of the 1950s. Patoka, in keeping with contemporary disillusionment with Stalinist socialism and in an atmosphere of efforts for socialism "with a human face", formulated a programme of national theatre, which would be adopted especially by the post-1989 generation of theatre-makers: "...the idea of national theatre in its two forms, original and derivative, objective and subjective, depicts today's major dilemma of our spiritual existence: our distinctive possibility and the small-mindedness which threatens it." Thus it is necessary "...to find our own historical, unique relationship to the universal, but without taking pride in the fact that it is ours, distinctive and individual, and without searching for it as such. Only in such a form will it have authenticity and lack all pomposity... avoid any falseness, any so-called national kitsch" (Ibid: 3).

On 21 August 1968, less than a week after the completion of the above meditations, Czechoslovakia was occupied by Warsaw Pact forces. The advent of the so-called era of "normalization" saw purges within the Communist Party, dismissals from employment, the reintroduction of censorship, the disbanding of many political and special interest groups and civic organisation. The oppression of the regime was implemented with more sophisticated, concealed psychological methods than those of the Stalinist terror of the 1950s. Theatres were again burdened with ideological demands and the need to represent the state; from the late 1970s, they were

also governed structurally, through the administrative affiliation of small theatres with state theatres in order to better control their activities. In Brno, Theatre on a String (Divadlo na provázku) and Brno Studio Theatre (HaDivadlo) affiliated with the State Theatre; in Ostrava the Puppet Theatre (Divadlo loutek) and the Petr Bezruč Theatre (Divadlo Petra Bezruče) merged. The signature campaign launched in the National Theatre by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1977, for the purpose of condemning Charta 77, can be seen as the antithesis of Patočka's mission statement for a national theatre. The so-called Anticharta was published and confirmed by the signatures of significant cultural figures of former Czechoslovakia with the goal of expressing loyalty to the regime and legitimizing the persecution of the signatories of Charter 77.
The celebration of the 100th anniversary of the National Theatre in Prague, on 18 November 1983, did not awaken new debates on its programme and mission, but brought substantial renovations to the building. Beginning in the late 1960s, reconstruction took place in all three buildings and in 1983 the National Theatre received a new administrative building and, most importantly, the New Stage building, the shape of which came from the impulse of scenographer Josef Svoboda and was modified for the needs of the Lanterna magika group, in addition to dramatic theatre, ballet and chamber opera. The aesthetic values of this monumental architectural creation neighbouring the historic building of the National Theatre and based on geometric construction with a visually dominant facade (the glass facade combines large glass panels with insulating glass shapes) still produces controversy in Czech society. However, the operational provision and technical backstage area of the theatre, the absence and insufficiency of which is have been discussed since its opening remain unresolved to date.

Our little golden construction[20]
The idea of twenty-first century national theatre in the Czech lands

The police massacre which ended the student demonstration in the centre of Prague at Národní třída on 17 November 1989 was observed first-hand by employees of the National Theatre from the windows of the historic building and The New Stage. Yet the transformation of this bastion of communist cultural policy into a participant in the theatre strike and a host of the democratic programme of discussion evenings, with which the Czech theatre

20. This title comes from Jan H. Vitvar's article of the same title, published in the respected weekly magazine *Respekt*.

community, together with Czech students, precipitated the start of the Velvet Revolution, was still a long way off. The impetus, particularly at the start, came from the small theatres;[21] the large theatres joined the movement only later. Nevertheless, 1 January 1990 delivered an emblematic image of the socio-political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe: accompanied by his wife, Václav Havel attended a gala performance of Smetana's opera *Libuše* as president of what was still the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. (See publication which maps the 1989 revolution events in Czech theatres *My jsme to nevzdali: příběhy 20. století: průvodce totalitními režimy / We did not give it up - stories of the 20th century*, Praha: Post Bellum, Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2009, chapter Theatre and Revolution.)

While theatre played a key role in the mobilisation of society during the Velvet Revolution, the post-revolution period ushered in a deep crisis in viewership. Communist ideology faded away after 1989, but in the case of Czech "national" institutions another factor became the crisis in identity after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in 1992. While Slovaks were committed to a new, independent state, Czechs were left with "posthumous" Czechoslovak ideas. For the twentieth anniversary of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, leading post-November politician Petr Pithart wrote: "For twenty years we have lived with faint-hearted motivations and phobias, some of which, on the Czech side, led twenty years ago to the splitting up of the country. In a sense, for us, nothing important has happened in these twenty years. We haven't faced a crisis, a difficult test…but nor have we had any catharsis…Czech society isn't a closed society, but nor can it be said that the past twenty years were somehow more open" (Pithart, 2013: 29).

In a time of freedom and democracy, "theatre does not create an integrated society, least of all the National Theatre. All that remains from that idea is the heavily state-subsidised, representative institution" (Hermann, 2007: 44). While Josef Hermann only wrote these words in 2007, they describe very well the declining prestige of theatre as an artistic genre in Czech society after 1989. The post-revolution period has not produced a contribution to debate on the artistic fulfilment of Czech theatre to match the importance of Patočka's above-cited remarks. Instead, the discussion of theatre in the humanities and social sciences was replaced with a debate concerning the operation and financing of theatres, and whether this responsibility belonged to the city[22] or the state. And of course, the issues the affecting the entire Czech theatre scene could be found,

21. The most significant of these in Prague were Realistické divadlo, Činoherní klub and the Theatre Faculty of AMU (Prague's performing arts academy). Other significant players were Palace Adria, where Laterna magika was based, which became the headquarters of the political movement and a platform for independent activities of the Občanské fórum. By sheer coincidence, Brno's Divadlo Husa na provázku was performing in Prague on 17 November 1989 and immediately "took" the revolution to Moravia.

22. The last unsuccessful attempt to transform the Prague theatre network from subsidised municipal institutions to other types of legal entities occurred in 2013 and failed due to the insufficiencies of Czech legislation, which is not equipped for these new forms of organisations.

in concentrated form, within the intricate National Theatre complex. Analyst Bohumil Nekolný references the fact that no theatre in the Czech Republic was transformed into a public service institution and demands "an assessment of the idea" of national theatre, including objective analysis of its financial problems, processes of creation, viability, social benefit and audiences, because "any idea of theatre is limited by the legislative environment, financing and models of governance" (Nekolný, 2010: 78).

At the conference "Models for Managing Multi-Ensemble Theatres" held in 2001 by Minister of Culture Petr Dostál, together with the director of the National Theatre, Jiří Srstka and Ondřej Černý, director of the Theatre Institute, there was no discussion of "the idea of national theatre". Instead the discussion focused on "a representative, state-subsidised institution", including the specifics of its multi-ensemble provision, qualifications, competencies, operations, and financing, as well as the function of bodies responsible for its governance. A particular priority was to prevent any individual from influencing the staffing of the organization, which is a problem connected with the legal status of subsidised institutions. At the conference, Milan Lukeš presented the national theatre issue in a broader socio-political context: "…representation can't be without pluralism. The necessity of maintaining it in institutions like the National Theatre (or, perhaps more so, in the National Gallery), is best demonstrated like this: whoever infringes on this pluralism acts against the public interest. A fundamental interest in the functioning and development of these institutions is roughly the same as a fundamental interest in the functioning and development of the democratic system. …The democratic system, however, threatens…the vested interests of power" (Modely řížení vícesouborových divadel 2001: 79). Recalling the words of Czech left-wing director Emil František Burian, "Theatre belongs to those who create it." The existence of theatre should therefore not be a matter of political decision-making, but of public interest. In the Czech Republic, however, its definition and legal standing are still entangled with cultural policy.

It cannot be said that any of the post-revolution directors of the National Theatre have not battled to fulfil the national theatre idea in new social conditions. From the beginning of the post-revolution period, efforts to return to a domestic dramaturgy have been visible; this was fully implemented under the leadership of director Jiří Srstka (from 1994) and artistic director of drama Josef Kovalčuk (from 1996) with the programme "Czech themes". Miss-

ing contemporary Czech plays were replaced with dramatizations of literary works, with uncertain production results, which in turn led to a demand for a more cosmopolitan theatre. Director Daniel Dvořák, who led the theatre from 2002 to 2006, began his tenure with the original project "The National Theatre Burns Again". The name refers to the burning of the theatre in 1881 and the intention was to trigger "fiery" discussion about contemporary theatre practice – the programme featured primarily dramatic pieces of political theatre and an opera repertoire supporting young artists. Director Ondřej Černý, head of the National Theatre from 2007 to 2012, instead focussed on the reformulation of the preamble of the National Theatre, the text of which is quoted in the introduction to this article, and professed Patočka's approach to national theatre, accentuating the value of freedom and the European context of the theatre's existence. At the end of his period of leadership, Černý also had to attend to the merger of the National Theatre and State Opera, which was initiated by the Ministry of Culture without proper preparation or detailed analysis as a cost-saving measure. This created a complex disproportionate to the conditions in which it functioned[23] and again revived discussion of the appropriate legal status for the theatre and its individual companies, the use of the buildings that the theatre had access to and the relationship between the theatre's internal leadership and governing body.

In the 2012/2013 season, an expert commission was established to select the Director General of the National Theatre. The call asked for "a radical change in the relationship of the state to the mission of the National Theatre" and conceived "a proposal for the transformation of the National Theatre as a task for the chosen Director General". It is possible to observe here the unsatisfactory state of access to the National Theatre in the whole period after 1989, which is created not only through bad communication between the governing bodies and the Theatre, but also the financial conditions of its functioning. The commission reformulated the mission of the theatre as follows: To function as the premiere theatrical stage, foster classical and contemporary work of Czech and international provenance, use modern language in communication with the public, and achieve the highest quality work, including international collaboration, artistic experimentation, and support for contemporary authors. It sets out three pillars for the conception of the national theatre: The management principle stresses the inadmissibility of direct intervention in the management of the theatre from the

23. The offer of 40 opera performances, or 45,000 seats per month does not correspond to audience capacity in a medium-sized city like Prague.

authorities and, in the absence of an alternative legal entity to the current form of subsidised organisation, proposes a joint stock company 100% owned by the state. A National Theatre Act, an act on public interest institutions or an act concerning public cultural and artistic institutions, would require significant preparation and a long legislative journey. Second is the one opera principle, which defined in opposition to the unprepared merger of the State Opera and the National Theatre's opera company. Third is the principle of autonomy, which poses a problem under the current management system due to excessive centralisation and unclear remits. Therefore the commission proposes the following reorganisation: "The opera and ballet companies of the National Theatre will work in the State Opera building. The National Theatre's dramatic ensemble will use the Estates Theatre and, following remodelling, also the New Stage space. Space in the Estates Theatre will be retained for musical theatre productions, such as Mozart's operas. The management of the individual buildings will be under the jurisdiction of the groups who work in them; in the case of the historic building of the National Theatre, management will fall to the Director General. The position of the historic building of the National Theatre will be specific and it can still be regarded as a symbol of national emancipation efforts and a symbol of Czech cultural identity. The direction of its programming is key to the perception of our cultural identity by the general public" (Hančil, Moša, Nekolný, Riedlbauch, Šesták, Uhde 2013: 4).

The commission proposed Jan Burian as director of the theatre. With his tender, "Transformation of the National Theatre as a precondition for its further development", Burian submitted an in-depth analysis of the "unsatisfactory" state of the theatre's programming, as well as its administration, financing and management. Thanks to his experience leading the multi-ensemble Josef Kajetán Tyl Theatre and role as director of the Association of Professional Theatres, Burian sees the National Theatre within the context of Czech professional theatre and considers its problem "the decreasing level of professional facilities and interpretation. The uniqueness of our view of the world, our sense of humour, our detachment from pathos, our skilful perception of reality through the blending of genres, has gained little ground in comparison with neighbouring theatre cultures, for the reason of insufficient artistic articulation. A decline in professionalism is a problem across society…it also manifests as poorly cultivated communication, the inability to carry dialogue, egocentrism and the use of collective irrespon-

sibility" (Burian, 2014: 7–8). Burian makes the attainment of the goal of transformation dependent upon a society-wide consensus: "the cultural policy of the state, which is, inter alia, carried out by the ND, should be...an example of the openness to collaboration (author's note: read international collaboration) and sufficient self-esteem" (Ibid: 17). The transformation of the National Theatre implements the findings which have already been clear to numerous generations, but were "always outweighed by the need for ideological control, which was replaced in the 1990s by economic dictates and apprehensions. However all of Czech society is in this situation, where its economic success is not accompanied by the satisfaction of its citizens. The causes at the small level of cultural development are those of the entire social environment" (Ibid: 17). The current dramaturg of Divadlo na Vinohradech, Jan Vedral, also makes a similar statement in his article "The National Theatre of Hanswurst" written for the international conference *National Theatre in the Twenty-first Century*.[24] Support from public means implies public service, the so-called cultural elevation of the citizenry, but in just 20 years, "we wonder in surprise at how easily the public returned to its old, uncultured interests" (Vedral, 2010: 227) and in market conditions we are witnesses of a mad rush for the scope, management and financing of the public sphere, even though "there aren't clear borders between the public space and the private hunting ground" (Ibid: 229).

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24. The conference *The Idea of National Theatre in the Twenty-first Century*, organised by the Association of Slovakian Theatre Critics and Theorists and the Institute of Theatre and Film Science SAV, took place from 3 to 5 June 2010 at the Budmerice Manor House. Proceedings were published in "Revue dramatických umení".

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Translated by Becka McFadden

HUNGARY

Very deep is the well of the past. Should we not call it bottomless?
Thomas Mann *Joseph and His Brothers*

Even the adjective in the subtitle could arouse suspicion as well as characteristic use of the plural.

Why Hungarian-language and not just Hungarian? The first National theatre – opened in 1837 as the Pest Hungarian theatre (Pesti Magyar Színház) – was built on the grounds of the multinational Hungarian Kingdom. After the peace treaty signed in Trianon in 1920 the country lost much of its territory, and as a result developed a serious historical trauma and became a roughly homogeneous nation-state. In the years 1949–1956 the first secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt) and the Hungarian Workers 'Party (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja) was Mátyás Rakosi, therefore this period is called the dictatorship of RákosI. However, a system of government formed after the suppression of the revolution in 1956 and continuing until 1989 – cannot be called homogeneous. János Kádár, the first and chief secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party led the country into the period of real socialism, when Hungary gained the title of "the merriest barrack" in the camp.

For the authorities theatre was an important tool of legitimization and representation, in particular the National Theatre. However, it would be too simplistic to write about it as the only "national" one and overlook multiplicity of such theatres (as well as integrating ideology along with political and cultural contexts).

The National theatre is a force defining and supporting cultural national identification of significance greater than occasionally subsidized theatres. Its implicit or explicit purpose is primarily (but not exclusively) the demarcation of cultural definition of a nation. Naturally, this "definition" has undergone changes heavily depending on the cultural, social, political context; in other words, immutability and unchangeable national identity it is not guaranteed by the static set of ideas.

It is hard to overestimate the representative importance of the theatre, which is why it has always been an excellent medium for the authorities, capable of successfully transmitting legitimacy, power, self-definition templates and axioms of the reigning system to the crowds.

The text is arranged chronologically: it begins with the Pest Hungarian theatre and ends with the National theatre built in 2002, focusing on the analysis of three periods: the circumstances and ideological foundations of the construction of a Hungarian-language theatre scene in times of Rákosi, the characteristics of the National theatre during the reign of Kádár, and contemporary discourses and trends of power. All three parts require an outline of theoretical context, which will be used to sketch the framework of interpretation[1], so that, emphasising the Hungarian social, political and cultural specificity, the concept of the National Theatre could be formulated and positioned.[2]

Beginnings

To be able to trace changes in the concept of the National Theatre it is necessary to examine its nineteenth-century origins. It is crucial to emphasize the political context, social and cultural development around the creation of the first National theatre in the inception of the Pest Hungarian Theatre[3] – as it is presented later in the article – to write about this extremely traumatic history.

The objective of sketching the context is twofold: firstly, it underlines the most important differentiators; briefly introducing broader European definitions (nationalism) and locates its genesis and formation of the teleology of the Pest Hungarian theatre at its inception.

In the nineteenth century, when the first important works on nationalism appeared, it was assumed that it was something emerging in the body of centuries-old history to finally unleash a cathartic, illuminatory era, become a dominant tendency, and let the teleologically perceived history reach its goal and final form within it. According to these beliefs the enlightened ideas of the French Revolution gained their final shape in the two-tier system of spreading nationalism-capitalism.

Liberty, equality and fraternity triumphed: "There is no longer rich and poor, nobles and commoners; only plain society and common decrees; there are no more social differences of opinion and disputes, enemies have reconciled; and hostile sects, religious people,

1. A comprehensive professional literature, which compiles the word „national" as a key concept suggests considering and applying all sorts of theories, but variety of interpretations and a sets of used terms is extremely confusing. The scope of the concepts of nationality included nationalism, the thought of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century – globalization. The ideology of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state was defined as an objective of History, or humanistic design which was developed as a "response" to the growing power of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century social and political phenomena. Structures of definitions created by historians act like constantly changing images in a kaleidoscope and at the same time none of them grant rights to exclusivity. Similar historical texts defining framework for research create a radically different relationships between phenomena and events, and – naturally – using different argumentative structures come to dissimilar conclusions. An inquisitive researcher immersed in a universe of conjunction variables makes a choice among the many and labile systems, making multi-temporality into singular temporality.
This text shall not make use of concepts with precision and consistency expected by the theory of history, because its purpose is not to determine (a) the system of concepts in a thicket of interpretation to determine "national", and only the use of certain relationships, abstracting cognitive schemas, observing patterns and applying them in a new context of national theatres.

philosophers, Protestants and Catholics [...] all see themselves as brothers." [4] Nationalist ideology could be the foundation of a nation as an independent, sovereign power that finds its identity in being different from others, in defining and manifesting its own values, de facto in a repeated schematic flaunting of the coat of arms and of course in the theory of civil equality, both appealing and excluding the foreign and the other.

In the nineteenth century's Central Europe buildings for such purpose armed with an adjective "national" popped up like mushrooms – museums, theatres (to mention just two examples) – to fight for the legitimacy of a new cohesive force. The main objective of these new institutions was the nation as a concept and the concept of organizing borders, as well as to display of the wealth of the nation:

> "Theatre is not a flower which grew in the midst of the Hungarian flora. It is a plant transplanted from a foreign land, like many institutions of our culture. It did not come from an inner artistic need, an instinctive desire for staging the Hungarian, but rather from an ambition of cultural assimilation with Europe, from aspirations to create institutions which are manifestations of high culture in enlightened countries. Be on a par with the West, nostrify its achievements, catch up with it – those were the ruling slogans since the end of the eighteenth century. [...] Our drama has also not evolved from the mysteries, morality plays or academic drama, mentioned in the history of literature, but from the nineteenth-century German repertoire, mainly Viennese theatres. [...] A small part of audience with a certain theatrical education received it in German theatres of Vienna or more often on the Pest side, that's where they learned to look at art."[5]

This preface to Aladár Schöpflin's review is instructive in many respects. On the one hand it indicates what social, cultural and political force field created the first National theatre, on the other hand – what is also the most important assumption of this text – it presents it as a specifically new and paradoxical concept, one of the "by-products" of nationalist aspirations spreading in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

> "The Pest Hungarian theatre as a multi-national phenomenon was created arbitrarily by «educators of the nation», the liberal reformers and members of the elite. They considered it to be

2. Although one of the goals of the dictionary is to interpret the ideas of the National Theatre in the period of socialism, in my opinion a detailed presentation of the nineteenth-century concepts cannot be avoided, and an analysis from today's perspective can produce numerous interesting conclusions.

3. In 1834 the county of Pest received a plot of land offered by Antal Grassalkovich in support of the construction of the National Theatre. Pest waited for the decision of the local planning authority, which suggested to build the theatre on the today's Roosevelt Square - count István Széchenyi enthusiastically responded to this plan. György Telepi, a jack of all trades and a comedian of Buda scene, prepared a plan for the Grassalkovich plot, modified later by Mátyás Zitterbartha. In 1836 Pest began construction. Collecting of donations for "temporary" National Theatre started, and public list of donors included aristocrats, dignitaries, guilds, wealthy townspeople and the city of Pest. Since 1840 the Pest Hungarian Theatre continued to operate under the name the National Theatre, as from the stage supported by the county turned into a theatre subsidized by the state, as well as by the court. The Management Board of joint stock company had the right to choose a theatre director. The first of them was József Bajza, and director Gábor Mátray-Róthkrepf was appointed as the music director. The Director accounted for relatively little scope: he could not allocate more than 50 forints, his personal powers were limited to the technical staff, and he was accountable for the repertoire and financial affairs to the company management.

> a semioticised being with political, cultural, social and moral functions, closely linked to the idea of national identity and the myth of «the survival» of the nation. The creation of the theatre was connected with modernist project of forming a nation which identified Hungarians with «essential features» of their collective culture and at the same time expressed their political separateness and uniqueness."[6]

Educating ethnically homogeneous nation-state was not possible neither in a multilingual, multinational kingdom, nor later within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The preferred language of solvent aristocracy – to highlight only the most transparent curiosities – was German, the society lacked the bourgeoisie (and if there was one, it spoke German), and in Pest a German- language theatre with 3,200 seats in the auditorium operated since 1812. Undermentioned quote from Schöpflin determines a travelling theatre as one of the problematic part of the tradition in terms of interpretation, indicating a lack of Hungarian literature on this subject, and highlights its distinctive use of Viennese standards.

These reasons, even taken out of a comprehensive context, convincingly explain that the first Hungarian-language theatre in Pest was a bastion of survival of the nation, and its creation, maintenance and repertoire policy became a national issue. Therefore the National theatre, as a people's theatre in the process of forming its significance, not only authorized or defined a new term in the authorities' dictionary, but also became one of the most important institutions and a symbol of the nineteenth century Hungarian-language nationalism. Its activities were shaped and defined by such axioms as "exemplary value", responsible "preservation of traditions," both in terms of dramatic literature, methods of acting and staging, and absorption of innovation recognized by "objective" standards worthy of imitation. (It is worth noting that these basic criteria sound familiar in the context of contemporary discourses on the National Theatre.)

The Socialist Past

Communist dictatorship forming after World War II sought to completely reorganize the social status quo, cancel the symbolic matrix of power prior to the historical cataclysm, and the create new, exclusive framework for interpretation. Ethnic homogeneity, nationalism and national self-awareness, symbols given by the leadership

What's more, Bajza was practically appointed after the actors had been employed. Generation change along with the change of style - key actors in travelling theatres, masters of ainging and lamentation were rarely employed - new theatre gradually supplanted the romantic canon.

4. Jules Michelet, *Historical View of the French Revolution*. London, 1890, p. 382–403., qtd. Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*. Princeton, 1955, p. 97–102.

5. Shöpflin Aladár, *A Nemzeti Színház története*. http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00022/00625/19966.htm

6. Imre Zoltán, *Nemzetiszínház-elképzelések európai kontextusban*. http://www.szinhaz.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35933:nemzetiszinhaz

that defined the 30s and 40s, "the base of legitimacy" for (in part) elective and incomprehensible murder of millions in the days of the communist dictatorship became not only outdated, but lost their raison d'être . Belonging to a nation or ethnic group lost its importance in forming the identity in indefinitely simplified axioms of internationalism, naturally only in the system of ideology rather than everyday life.

In this structure of power the sole purpose of art, as well as extremely theatrical new celebration days legitimizing the power was to confirm and support a new interpretation of political and socio-cultural order. In 1951 at the Second Congress of the MDP (Magyar Dolgozók Partja) Mátyás Rakosi said that art "must be put into the service of the socialist re-education of our people"[7]. The two main ideologists Révai János and György Lukács „instilled the ideas of Zhdanov socialist realism on Hungarian soil"[8]. Art – and thus theatre – became a tool of legitimacy of political ideology whose aim was to "eradicate the remains of the bourgeoisie" and "support the strengthening of the people's real socialism," so it was necessary to develop the normative canon and undeniable aesthetic ideology.

On the one hand nationalization of theatres in 1949 ensured the financial stability of these institutions (and of course their employees), on the other hand, however, the state was given unlimited power in terms of program policy and selection of staff. Soviet and Hungarian plays containing explicit content of propaganda played a significant role in the repertoire, and psychological realism of Stanislavski was adopted as an exclusive standard of acting.

Rákosi's dictatorship assigned the National Theatre representative role. Tamás Major, a former member of the Communist resistance was elected as its director. The National Theatre became a sort of palimpsest of time: it is difficult to deny that nineteenth century concepts (in Communist terminology the "bourgeois pride", "anarchy", "reactionary" etc.) occurred simultaneously with the new (formal) canon of communist dictatorship, creating constant tension.

A revolution and the liberation struggle of 1956 put an end to Rákosi's dictatorship, and if we accept the classification proposed by Hannah Arendt, the subsequent rule of Kádár can no longer be labeled a dictatorship, but a system of oppression.

More than thirty years of Kádár's leadership was quite heterogeneous. It started with the post-revolutionary repression, which lasted roughly until 1963. The following period was an experiment of building a "socialist welfare society", with "new economic mechanism" as its foundation. Since the early 70s the political leadership suspended

6. Burucs Kornélia, *Festett valóság?*, in: *História*, 5–6, 1987, p. 53.

7. Imre Zoltán, *A diktatúra teatralitása és a színház emlékezete: Rákosi Mátyás és a Nemzeti Színház* 1955-ös *Tragédia-előadása.* http://www.phil-inst.hu/recepcio/htm/4/405_belso.htm

economic reforms and chose the path of ideological isolation, and in the first half of the 80s the system faced numerous, worsening and unsolvable crises.

The dominant (with regard to our subject) character trait of the socialist system was, as originally claimed by Péter György[9], petrification in the present. What was the present moment detached from the future and the past in a world devoid of ambition, predictable and constantly reaching a compromise? Construction of continuous present was a basic need of authorities securing their power after 1956, as any questions about the past and the legitimacy of the system jeopardized its subsistence and survival.

That way a political, social and cultural structure was created where the present of everyday life found its "home base" and threatened any attempt to stretch these narrow spatial and temporal boundaries to gaze at it with 'outside' perspective[10]. A reality cut to the present was the only valid reality for Kádár's rule. At that time, the present also carried the concept of liquidation of the past and reducing the future to the present was central to life approach significantly affecting everyday life. One of the peculiarities of Kádár's system was thus closing in the present. "It was a world of continuous now, there was time for nothing."

On the basis of the above we can describe a political structure claiming the right to manifest a totalitarian present deprived of a past and a future. Common, historical account of the time, which arranges events linearly and according to the standards system of the Enlightenment and considers the consequences as predictable on a simple path of progress was threatening to the real prospect of socialism. Picture of the past and the future was the reduced, one might say, to the tableau power system and essentially served the sole purpose of formulating its indisputable legitimacy.

Real socialism, built on a foundation of nationalist ideology, appropriated its specifically Hungarian form with fundamental beliefs and expectations of the nation state. Computable present replaced teleology, common area of experience divisible at the national level replaced metanarratives involving nations after the obvious collapse of the ideology, and meta- and intersubjective objectivity was replaced by some kind of retiring personality.

Three basic types of theatre can be distinguished in the "bubble of the present" based on their relation to the discourse of power: naturalistic-realistic one corresponding with declared forms of aesthetics, one based on dialogue and an avant-garde one.

8. György Péter, *Kádár köpönyege*. Budapest, Magvető, 2005. p. 52.

9. "When someone looked at the social system from the outside, inevitably undermined the legitimacy issue, so in this respect the authority did not have and could not have mercy". Ibid.

Plays created according to the Stanislavsky system may be considered as representative of the formal language of the first type of, as not engaging in any discussion with arbitrarily imposed aesthetic standards.

In addition to performances supported by the government which embodied and depicted the world, stage productions of dialogic structure were also "tolerated". The main characteristic of this kind of theatre was the fact that its "free extratext presented something else than what was expected by the supported structure of the institution of theatre as reality."[11] In other words it created such a symbolic code that enabled dual interpretation. "Galilee", a cult play for the revolution of 1956 (premièring at the National theatre in the same year) was an example of a performance using abovementioned code. A question of how can a scientist respond to the pressures on authorities to deny his knowledge was raised from a historical perspective and appeared on stage with a system of symbols legitimized by the authorities, but current political content was obvious to the recipients.

Avant-garde performances were the other extreme – regardless of their purposes and aesthetic properties – they contributed a formation of perspectives not amenable to the rule of power. Avant-garde theatre appearing in the 70's Hungary – according to its most important creators – did not constitute a coherent formal language, but an attempt to show and introduce otherness to the scene. The National theatre productions – because of its representative function – fall into the first two groups.

A political, social and cultural status of the National theatre changed for the purposes of a concept of time modified by the power. For the political apparatus of real socialism the building was a sensitive point, the symbolic centre combining both national self-consciousness inherited from the nineteenth century, preserving a certain distance to any authority, accepting the past and the future as actual dimensions of time and though not confrontational – successively stretching the boundaries of the communist everyday, petrified in the present.

The ambivalent attitude of real socialism to the concept of nation is summarized in the history of the premises of the National theatre. A theatre standing on one of the most representative squares in the centre of Pest, on Blaha Lujza[12], was demolished in 1964 for the purpose of construction of the underground (which weakened its structure. It has not been confirmed by any engineering documentation from that time). The troupe was "temporarily" – as it

10. Jákfalvi Magdolna, *Kettős beszéd – Egyenes érté, in: Művészet és hatalom. A Kádár-korszak művészete*. Budapest, L'Harmattan-JAK, 2005, p. 95.

11. The troupe of Pest Hungarian Theatre and later the National Theatre, due to a fire hazard moved in 1908 to the People's Theatre at Blaha Lujza and that from that moment operated as the National Theatre until 1964.

turned out until 2002 – moved to the theatre on the Hevesi Sándor square, which is one of the smaller and less significant squares in Budapest. The aim as declared by the government was to build a new national theatre. A lot of ideas and concrete plans were conceived, and from time to time citizens had the possibility (or rather the obligation) to give a donation to a construction that seemed never to have begun.

The Present

A few episodes from contemporary "history" of the National Theatre are also worth mentioning , all the more because as I mentioned earlier, we can see many parallels instructive to the understanding of nationality in recent times. Although it is not the goal of the text, it may perhaps be an unavoidable duty to deal with relevant issues that become apparent when the study is focused on the present. Therefore, I will mention two major difficulties: a philologist or a historian cannot delude themselves that they can have an insight into the most important features and fundamental tendencies of some closed structure and on this basis seek to present it as fairly objective history. Contemporary events clearly and disturbingly show their shape and the responsibility of experts. The use of unreflective positivist outlook fails when analysing the present and partially exposes the fictitious nature of the work of historians and their subjective combination and selection.

Returning to the original aim, the text is intended primarily to determine the force field of the definitions of a nation and the national using a method already applied, in order to enable formulating statements about the National theatre. Historical studies of nationalism which were important for the second half of the twentieth century clearly show that the nation state is a humanistic construct trying to create an appearance of its legitimacy and necessity by using the "coats of arms".[13]

Central European countries[14], including Hungary, have had to face not only problems of redefining a nationalist ideology – from revisiting the concepts of nation and ethnos, to the necessary reorganization of the bureaucratic system – but with ambivalence and damning "heritage" of real socialism. The dilapidated power system, which in spite of its horror was the basis of divisible, common system of coordinates. Its collapse left a vacuum filled by disorientation, which resulted in quickly forming and crumbling communities and disappearing points of reference.

12. See. eg.: Rogers Brubaker*: Natiotialism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996., Elie Kedourie: *Nationalism*. London, 1960, especially p. 101, Eric Hobsbawn and Terrence Ranger: *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983., Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman: *Nationalism – a crtitical indtroduction*, SAGE Publications, 2002.

13. In this case serious geographical and historical disputes about which countries belong to the said region do not seem to be relevant. Since the only major country analized is Hungary to avoid unnecessary complications - and maybe a bit mindlessly - I accepted the terminology used by Hobsbawn. Cf.: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger: *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983, p. 102.

"Discourse" of „nationality " in the post-socialist societies [...] is a symbolic arena [...] where on the one hand one evaluates and re-defines specific events and historical figures, on the other hand deals with outdated social categories (e.g. national identity). A basic question, although often formulated in an outdated or non-direct form – thus always indicates the past in order to evoke an imaginary picture of the past – the 'straight path' to the present political system."

Quoted text appropriately illustrates how after the collapse of the socialist system, determining a definition of the word „national" gained a key role in the legitimization of forming social, cultural and political structures. It has become a kind of symbolic nodal point which shows existing and functioning relationships in the context of post-socialist societies, among world-views modelled by culture, symbolic structures, ideologies and processes in politics.

The history of the National theatre metaphorically describes the process in which power structures define the concept of nation and national and thus their cultural, political and social cohesion with these concepts.

In the year when communism fell MTI gave the following message:

> "May 16, 1989, Tuesday
> At Tuesday's press conference in Parliament, in the presence of the government commissioner Miklós Szinetára and numerous experts, a tender for the design of the new headquarters of the National theatre was officially announced. Indeed, the government decided – he said – that a tender for the architectural design should be issued and there is a need to determine where a new National Theatre is build. The idea is that it will be a centre of theatre culture, continued Miklós Szinetár, which will act as the headquarters of all Hungarian-language troupes from Marosvásárhely (Tirgu Mures in Romania – translator's note) to Toronto. He also expressed his belief that if construction does not start next year and ends in 1995 prior to the world exhibition, the matter of the National theatre will again fade into the background."

Above excerpt contains all the important issues that have a major effect on the "modern" history of the National theatre. On the one hand we have a declaration of intentions of a new power to create the exiled National Theatre again on the basis of its own structure, highlighting the relevance and domination of the symbolism it represented. On the other hand, it assigns the theatre a task of

symbolizing some unspecified "open" (although understood in the nineteen-century sense) national character.
Another contemporary chapter in the history of the premises of the National theatre – which were not built until 1995 – is the beginning of a terrible history of Erzsébet Square. Due to its length, amazing variations and instability of representations of the subject of the whole process, it is not suitable for reconstruction in the text, which is why I've included just a fact: works on the foundations that had started in 1997 were suspended after a change of government. The pit was intended to become an underground garage or a concert hall, in the end the club Gödör („a pit" – translator's note) (Today Akvárium) was built. New government began the construction of Milleniumi Kulturális Központot (Millennium Cultural Centre – translator's note) in the rarely attended side of Pest whose key building was the new National Theatre.
Construction of the National Pit and then the National Theatre revealed a pursuit of democratic power to take over part of the historical aura emanating from the latter idea, without simultaneously enabling multiple interpretations of the phenomena of the nation and nationalism. This attempt was inevitably connected with the renewed, the normative formulation of the past, interpretation of historical facts and formulating theses on the relationship between them, as well as verification of their emotional content, which enabled symbolic expropriation of the idea and the physical expropriation of the site and the building.
The National Theatre was opened in 2002. This time the building is not temporary. The most commonly used words in the reviews of the opening performance were: preservation of tradition, respect for the past, progressive tradition.

Appendix

Given the weight of the above statement this short article should be completed with a modern history of the National theatre – presented at least in outline. The new theatre was opened in 2002 with a performance of "The Tragedy of Man", directed by János Szikora. An undeniable advantage of this production was the fact that the nineteenth century dramatic text, belonging to the classic canon was not recognized as a subject to interpretation in the normative system of readership as carrying a "timeless meaning," but as a matter of renewed, contemporary reading. The performance referred to an indisputable influence of the socialist past and at the same time in-

dulged in homage to the history of theatre borrowing many elements of the first performance staged by Paulay Ede. "The Tragedy of Man" thus became a sort of theatrical palimpsest that portrayed and interpreted the past with a strong accent of today's perspective.
In 2003–2008, National Theatre was led by Tamás Jordán, then in 2008, Róbert Alföldi was elected the director. Both periods are worth looking at. This text will devote a few sentences to the times of Alföldi, as this period was characterized by the adoption of the perspective significantly deviating from the concept of nationality.
Evaluation of the National Theatre productions – as shown in this brief history – never took place at the level of aesthetic values alone. This is understandable: aesthetics are also a part of a wider discourse of power. The opening of the National Theatre in 2002 provided an opportunity to start a fertile and diverse discussion on the ethnic homogeneity of the nineteenth-century nation, and combined the creation of an artistic image of "national" theatre with re-thinking the matter of nationalism; a productive reanalysis. Róbert Alföldi – using perhaps excusable simplification – set the framework for the National theatre, mainly focusing on important issues of contemporary everyday life and responsive to its problems. The theatre, in its organization and choice of repertoire, followed the nineteenth-century tradition (foreign and Hungarian classics, foreign and Hungarian contemporary plays). At this time, the formal language of performances did not revolutionise the canon formed during the time of the first permanent theatres. Theatrical formal languages exploring new avenues in decades of systemic changes were defined only after more than 20 years on the stage of the National Theatre. The National Theatre – very simply – gave the importance of representation to languages already inscribed in the canon, but arguing with psychological realism, and used them to constantly revise events and changes relevant to a wider audience, while redefining the nineteenth-century concept of the nation. This theatre – in addition to many other components – through its brilliant communication strategy became extremely popular and functioned as a medium bonding audience and community.
A change of government in 2010 signalled that the new government preferred other possibilities for interpreting the concept of a nation and consequently expects something new from theatre. The coalition Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Party (since 2003: Magyar Polgári Szövetség) is explicitly trying to create and introduce an exclusive and normative definition of the term nation, basically failing to provide space for constructive and necessary debate or even an exchange of ideas.

Their understanding of the term nation by that authority – at least at the rhetorical level – is derived from the nineteenth century, as well as from a certain point of view from the inter war period, when the key objective was an ethnically homogeneous nation-state.
The ruling party has not distanced itself from the radical manifestos or statements attacking the sexual identification and descent of Róbert Alföldi. It outlined a concept of an exclusive, offensive, paranoid and populist nation, which not only does not respond to contemporary issues of the idea of the nation-state, but considers "deviant" any attempt to discuss its ideological assumptions.
Attila Vidnyánszky has been the director of the National theatre since 2013.

Translated by Tatiana Michałowska, Magdalena Bazylewicz

MACEDONIA

National Theatre: Characteristics, Influences, Distinguishing Features

Sonja Zdravkova-Djeparoska

Formation and development

The genesis of theatre in Macedonia is connected with theatre performances and artefacts which come to us from ancient times. In the Republic of Macedonia, four theatres were discovered from the Roman and Hellenic period – in Stobi, a theatre which could seat 7600 people, in the vicinity of the city of Veles; in Heraclea Linkestis (with 2400 seats, Bitola); Skupi (Skopje) and Lihnidos (Ohrid). The theatres are fairly well preserved, apart from Skupi. They have been used to date for events which are part of the cultural offer, among which is the Festival of Hellenic Drama (Stobi), the Ohrid Lake Festival (Lihnidos) and the Bitola Shakespeare Festival (Heraclea) etc. Taking into account this rich cultural activity in ancient times, it is assumed that the theatre in Macedonia had been exceptionally alive and active in the period to follow. However, the subsequent history dramatically influenced the development of the theatre. Five centuries of Turkish occupation, the annexation of Macedonian territory by the Balkan countries, and then its final partition with the Bucharest Treaty from 1913: all these events not only reduced the opportunities for the foundation of a National Theatre, but the theatre even became an instrument for assimilation, political agitation and affirmation of the current political, religious and cultural ideas of the oppressors. The first theatre in contemporary history was built by Turkish general Abdul Kerim, in Bitola in 1894. In the following period, the Turkish Theatre was built in Skopje in 1906. Despite the circumstances, a Macedonian, a teacher by profession, Jordan Hadzi Konstantinov-Dzinot, wrote play dialogues with his students (between 1848 and 1857 ten were performed) and stage dialogues performed on improvised stages (outside the constructed theatre), and performed them in the school. This was the first contemporary expression of a Macedonian national drama.

With the arrival of the Serbian government one of the greatest Serbian playwrights Branislav Nushich was appointed director of the theatre in "Southern Serbia" (which was the territory of Macedonia) in 1913. The first performance had a distinct political and agitating

character. During two years of Nushich's work, about 100 plays were staged and performed, half of which were by Serbian authors. Apart from the propaganda-related plays, the theatre's repertoire contained comedies, melodramas and playlets which included singing. Despite the tendencies of the theatre to have populist character, Nushich's work was exceptionally significant for setting firm grounds for the future art. During the period 1936–1940, for the first time plays by Macedonian playwrights were performed, such as: *Pechalbari* (*Fortune Seekers*) by Anton Panov (1936), *Lenche Kumanovche* (*Lenche, the Girl from Kumanovo*) (1936) and *Chorbadzi Teodos* (*Master Theodos*) by Vasil Iljoski (1937), *Parite se Otepuvachka* (*Money Brings Misfortune*) (1938), *Antica* (*Antica*) (1940) and *Milion Machenici* (*A Million Martyrs*) (1940) by Risto Krle. Beside the theatre in Skopje, there were also occasional drama ensembles in Bitola and Shtip.

Maybe the most indigenous form of the theatre were the travelling theatres which had the freedom to form their own repertoire, to perform plays in the Macedonian language and to promote ideas different from the official politics. One of them was Vojdan Chernodrinski's troupe called *Skrb i Uteha* (*Care and Relief*) performing 1901–1924. Its birth came directly from the success and response of the audiences to performances of the first play by Chernodrinski, *Makedonska Krvava Svadba* (*Macedonian Wedding with Bloodshed*), performed in Sofia on 20 November 1900. Pre-dating the 1903 Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia, when the first free territory of the Krushevo Republic was formed, the epic play promotes the idea of opposing the Turkish government with a call for "freedom or death". The troupe had guest performances in Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Greece. The troupe of the bard of Macedonia's acting, Mr Petre Prlichko's *Boem* (*Bohemian*) – active from 1930–1939 – also performed their repertoire in Macedonian and included in their programme plays by the Macedonian playwrights Chernodrinski, Krle and Panov.

During World War II (1941–1944) the theatre in Skopje came under Bulgarian supervision. The repertoire was predominantly oriented towards Bulgarian playwrights, with the exception of *Pechalbari* (*Fortune Seekers*) staged in 1942. The plays were performed in Bulgarian.

Macedonia under Socialism

After World War II and the victory won by partisans led and organised by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia headed by Josip Broz Tito, the socialist system was established and the new federation of

socialist republics was constituted on the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This imposed its own political, economic, ideological and aesthetic system and a system of values, which relied heavily on the experiences and norms of the eastern bloc countries, especially the USSR (at least until the break with the USSR). During that period Macedonia was for the first time recognized as an equal unit in the Federation[1]. It was then that a cultural revolution happened, which included the establishment of cultural institutions such as: theatres (for the first time the audiences were able to watch opera and ballet performances performed by Macedonian artists), museums, the philharmonic orchestra, the first professional ensemble for folk songs and dances, "Tanec", all of which were able to self-identify as "Macedonian". Gradually, theatres in Macedonia[2] in Bitola, Ohrid, Veles, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Strumica, Shtip, Kochani, Gjevgjelija came into being. Also, a Children's Puppet Theatre was opened in the capital of Skopje, which in 1960 opened its evening stage and gradually grew into what is known now as The Drama Theatre of Skopje. The Theatre of Nationalities was opened in Skopje in 1950, where plays by Turkish and Albanian authors were performed in Turkish and Albanian.

Since its foundation in 1945, the Macedonian National Theatre[3] was a proponent of national culture in stage arts, which as a phenomenon had a dual role: on the one hand it put MNT in a privileged position, and on the other hand put enormous pressure on the MNT and shaped it. It must not be forgotten that beside the drama ensemble, which began with its work in 1945, in 1947 the Opera[4] within MNT was also established, and later, in 1949, the Ballet. This artistic triad largely determined the type of production that followed. MNT turned into a national house by which the level of Macedonian culture was determined/measured. The task of such an organisation was serious and as such adjusted itself to the official politics of the regime. For the first performed playlet[5] with which MNT began to work, the theatre critic Jelena Luzina said:

> "The secret lane by which this by-product of ready-made Soviet playwriting unluckily arrived on Skopje theatre stage, most probably leads straight to the omniscient Agitprop: I suppose that the very choice of *Platon Krechet* speaks more of the aesthetic (and other!) criteria of the current members of this rigid party forum, rather than of the criteria of the newly created professional drama ensemble of the MNT, who were entrusted with the task of turning it into a play." (Luzina, 1996:105).

1. The Macedonians were recognized as a nation and became equal with the other nations and nationalities in the country, the Macedonian language became official at the territory of SR Macedonia.

2.As per the census from 1948, at that time Macedonia had 1 152 986 citizens.

3. Macedonian National Theatre - MNT was made up of drama, opera and ballet ensembles.

4. Opera performances or certain forms of opera evenings with performance of arias started in Skopje in 1922. In 1925 in Shtip, the operas *Paljahci* and *Kavalerija Rustikana* were performed. In the season 1931/32, the operas *Madam Butterfly* and *Traviyata* were staged in Skopje theatre.

5. The first official play performed on MNT stage on April 3rd 1945 was *Platon Krechet* by Alexander Komichuk.

Often the insufficiently defined criterion for choosing plays to perform was related to the idea profile, the cultural matrices, the national markers etc. In the repertoire, during the period between 1945 and 1948[6], Soviet, political and ideologically determined playwriting was obligatory – *Mister Perkins's Mission in the Country of Boljshevics* (1946), *The Story of Justice* (1946), *Somewhere in Moscow* (1947), *Russian Issue* (1948).

The introduction of a standard repertoire containing pieces by Western authors[7] started gradually. In addition, Yugoslav[8] and Macedonian playwrights[9] started to be performed simultaneously. In the pre-war period there were a few talented, dedicated actors who were part of the travelling troops or the Theatre in Skopje, but in the socialist period the troupe was staffed with Macedonian actors who became mainstays for making the first Macedonian cinema. Dimitar Kjostarov was the artistic director of the MNT and he directed the plays in the first two decades, but remained active until 1983. "Director's theatre began to prevail in the 20th century. And in Macedonia it was with Kjostarov's arrival at the head of the Macedonian Theatre" (Stojanova, 2013:219). He introduced Stanislavski's Method and practical drama aesthetics to the domestic stage. The lack of educated staff was solved with the opening of the State Theatre High School from 1947 to 1953. The Faculty of Drama Arts was founded in 1969 within the Faculty of Music Arts, and in 1979 it became an independent unit of the University Sts. Cyril and Methodious.

Following this, as well as the playlets of the first generation of Macedonian playwrights Iljoski, Panov, Chernodrinski, the development of the play included contemporary Macedonian playwrights: Kole Chashule, who is still permanently present on MNT stage; Tome Arsovski, and from the younger generation Rusomir Bogdanovski, Yordan Plevnesh etc. They began to introduce new topics in their plays, which were often associated with current happenings in the society. The Drama Theatre, which began as the Children's Puppet Theatre, apart from children's plays also performed comedies by Moliere, Fejdo, Goldoni and Popovski.

In 1974, Goran Stefanovski's script *Jane Zadrogaz* (*Yane Zadrogaz*) directed by Slobodan Unkovski was staged, with which another era in Macedonian Theatre began. Stefanovski is one of the greatest Macedonian playwrights who spread his work in Europe, too (in Great Britain, Sweden). Still, the largest part of his plays in Macedonian language were primarily connected to the stage in the Drama Theatre[10]. The greatest Macedonian and Yugoslav directors directed

6. During 1948, the Russian inform bureau adopted two resolutions against the Communist party of Yugoslavia. During 1949 the relations between Yugoslavia and USSR began to worsen as Yugoslavia started to run its own politics independent from Moscow.

7.*Voobrazen bolen* (*Allegedly sick*) 1952; *The Glass Menagerie* 1954; *Othello* 1954; *The Witches from Salem* 1955; *The Home of Bernarda Alba* 1956; *Nora* 1957

8. Nushich's plays - *Naroden Pratenik* (National Member of the Parliament) 1945; *Somnitelno lice* (Suspicious Person) 1945, *Uzalena familija* (The Bereaved Family) 1951, *G-gja ministerka* (Mrs. Minister) 1953, as well as Krleza's *Gospoda Glembaevi* (The Glembaevis) 1955

9. *Chorbadzi Teodos* (Master Teodos) 1945, *Begalka* (The Runaway Bride) 1948, *Pechalbari* (Fortune Seekers) 1949, *Goce* (Goce) 1951, *Vejka na veterot* (A Twig in the Wind) 1958

10. *Divo meso* (Wild Meat) 1979, *Hai fai* (High-Fi) 1983, *Duplo dno* (Double Bottom) 1984, *Tetovirani dusi* (Tattooed Souls) 1985, *Kula Vavilonska* (Babylon Tower) 1990.

Stefanovski's plays. These directors were Ljubisha Georgievski, Branko Brezovec and maybe the most consistent one, through a majority of plays directed by him, Slobodan UnkovskI. Three of Stefanovski's plays won an award at Yugoslav Sterijno Stage – *Jane Zadrogaz* (*Yane Zadrogaz*) 1974, "*Divo Meso*" (*Wild Meat*) 1979 and *Kula Vavilonska* (*Babylon Tower*) 1990.

Alongside the performances of plays within MNT, there were also opera and ballet. Starting from 1949, the Macedonian ballet was tightly linked with the Russian dancers' style and technique. Russian pedagogues and choreographers took an active role in the formation of the national ensemble, which was predominantly focused on the classical ballet aesthetics. These highly developed strong ties remain to the present day.

The Macedonian dance and educational section of the theatre, which significantly influenced the quality level of the ensemble, was directly connected to the founder of the Macedonian ballet, Gjorgji MakedonskI. He was one of the few who had the opportunity to acquire a ballet education and become a member of the ballet ensembles at theatres in Belgrade and Sofia, before the Macedonian ballet was established. His connection with the school of the Russian ballerina Jelena Poljakova influenced the profile of the Macedonian dance education. Another Russian prima ballerina, Nina Kirsanova, was sporadically engaged in the activities of the ballet performers. She was significant for the rise of the Yugoslav ballet on the whole. Kirsanova staged the most significant classical pieces on the Macedonian stage: *Kopelija* (*Kopeliya*) (1954), *Zaspanata ubavica* (*The Sleeping Beauty*) (1955), *Zizel* (*Giselle*) (1956), *Silfidi* (*Sylfids*) (1957) etc. This drastically raised the level of professionalism of the ballet ensemble. It is worth mentioning that these ballet performances were staged in their original versions, as they would be in other worldwide theatres. The national dancing identity in the Macedonian ballet was built through constituting and nurturing a sequence of pieces which were connected by the syntagm of national ballet performances[11]. The first national ballet, *Macedonian History*, was staged in 1953 with the music of the composer Gligor Smokvarski and was based on the script of the play *Pechalbari* (*Fortune Seekers*) by Anton Panov. In the beginning *Ohridska legenda* (*Ohrid Legend*) (1956) by the composer Stevan Hristikj and *Labin i Dojrana* (*Labin and Doyrana*) (1958) by the composer Trajko Prokopiev were also performed.

These three musical scores would present a basis for many choreographic returns in the following years. The period from the middle

11. The expression "national ballet" means performances which with their content implement a strictly national topic (legends, traditions or a piece by a Macedonian author), and in the music texture we can recognize Macedonian folklore tunes or certain distinguishing features (the specific 7/8, 9/8, 12/8 rhythm). That encouraged the choreographers (who have historically been mostly foreigners) to try to use in their choreography certain folk movements in order to achieve a style unity with the libretto and the music.

of the 1960s until the end of the 1970s brought three new edited versions of the ballet *Ohridska legenda* (*Ohrid Legend*) (1966, 1969, 1979) and a new national piece, *Odblesok* (*Glistening*) (1973), composed by Ljubomir Brangjolica. The 1980s reactivated the existing performances with *Labin i Dojrana* (*Labin and Doyrana)* (1980) and premièred the ballet performance *Kara Mita* (*Kara Mita*) (1982).
The opera in MNT, apart from the existing members who performed the first performances in the pre-war period, also included the available Macedonian staff. There is no doubt that one of the most significant persons who contributed to rise in quality of the opera was the conductor Lovro von Matachich, who was interned in Skopje. He stayed to work in the period between 1948 and 1952. Petar Bogdanov-Kochko, the director of the Opera and Ballet between 1957 and 1963, recalling this new beginning said:

> "There was a real danger from the preceding, although slight, musical traditions with insufficiently differentiated music audiences, who even at the beginning of the formation of the repertoire policy, indirectly insisted on so-called "academism", which was based on a non-critical approach to the musical traditions and blind following them, without a thorough insight into the idea content of the repertoire presented" (Bogdanov, 1985:12).

The "academism", despite the "insufficient insight in the idea content", began to rule the opera and ballet stage, which was quite natural, bearing in mind the profile of these art genres. All the most obvious opera pieces from the classic repertoire, predominantly those from Italian literature, were staged, supplemented with operas by French, German and Russian authors. In 1954, the first Macedonian opera *Goce* by Kiril Makedonski was performed. The trend to stage operas with a national content was particularly present in the 1970s and 1980s of the 20th century. *Car Samoil* (*King Samoil*) was another historical opera composed by Cyril Makedonski, staged in 1968. Makedonski also wrote the music score *Ilinden* (*Ilinden*) staged in 1973. Trajko Prokopiev composed two national operas, *Razdelba* (*Departure*) (1971) which used the content of the play *Pechalbari* (*Fortune Seekers*) and *Kuzman Kapidan* (*Kuzman Kapidan*) (1981). In 1983 the children's opera *Shekernoto dete* (*Sugar Child*) was staged, based on the eponymous novel by Slavko Janevski. The trend for producing national opera pieces, where people and events from the past were part of the content, was especially obvious in the period immediately before Macedonia's independence (1989 *Brazda* (*Plant Bed*) by Blagoja Trajkov; *Ilinden* (*Ilinden*)1989; *Car Samoil*

(*King Samoil*) 1990). These were mostly undertaken with the aim of strengthening national feelings and conscience before the forthcoming disintegration processes in Yugoslavia.

Independence

With the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 it became possible to stage work with a more recent aesthetic. This process developed in two stages, the first was concerned with stimulation of new production and its subsidy by state institutions – the Macedonian National Theatre, Drama Theatre, etc. The second phase was the establishment of independent citizens' institutions, which developed an independent stage, realised projects that contributed to networking with other centres, and the mobility of productions.

During 2004, MNT separated the ensemble of the Opera and Ballet, which now operates as Macedonian Opera and Ballet (MOB), from the drama ensemble. MOB continued to promote the achievements of the elite art genres, often including performances with emphasised national elements. The ballet from the group "national performances" remade the piece *Macedonian History* (1993, re-performed in 1998). This group continued to build itself and upgrade. An example of this is the ballet *Tashula* (*Tashula*)(2004) on the music of Stojan Stojkov, based on an historical event, with the intention of highlight certain national features. In 2005 the Opera ensemble staged *Lidija od Makedonija* (*Lidiya from Macedonia*) by Risto Avramovski (remade in 2012). This piece is about a legend for the first European girl Lidija who came from Macedonia and was baptised by Apostle Paul.

The Macedonian National Theatre, freed from the schematic and imposed aesthetics of the "most-exposed exponent" of culture, created its own productions introducing innovatively chosen new texts and aesthetics, as well as in shaping the stage text. Productions began to promote Macedonian authors from a new generation, such as Dejan Dukovski with *Bure Barut* (*A Barrel Full of Gunpowder*) (1994), *M.M.E koj prv pochna* (*M.M.E. Who Began First*) (1997), *Balkanot ne e mrtov* (*The Balkan Is Not DeadI*) (2001), *Prazen grad* (*An Empty City*) (2008), *Izgubeni Germanci* (*Lost Germans*) (2012). All these plays consider current issues of the disintegrated Balkans, the wars, the Balkan mentality, and new conditions. The language of the performances was intense and powerful and in many ways new for the domestic stage. On the stage of the Drama Theatre, beside

Stefanovski's plays, plays by Jugoslav Petrovski, Sashko Nacev and Venko Andonovski, were performed, too.

Recently, when many of the state's political analysts criticized the authorities for "Hellenisation" of Macedonia, several performances considering this issue were remarkable. The Drama Theatre staged the script *Alexander* written by the director Ljubosha Georgievski and performed in 2009. The script 2012 – *Poslednite Makedonci* (*The Last Macedonians*) by Sasho Milenkovski is a comedy for the last surviving Macedonians, which was also performed on the stage of the Drama Theatre. The topic Alexander was also considered in the latest ballet performance in MOB. The piece entitled *Aleksandar III Makedonski* (*Alexander III Macedonian*) was performed on April 9th 2013. The choreography was made by the well known Croatian choreographer Ronald Savkovik, on the music and libretto of the Macedonian composer with Croatian origin Ljubomir Brangjolica. The ballet described Alexander's life, presenting the key stages of his life – his father Philip's death, Alexander's wedding with Roxana, the battles and victories.

Macedonian Theatre reflects the general social, cultural and political circumstances. It proved again, with this piece, that it responds to the current events, MNT/MOB being the closest to the current officially available cultural matrix.

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POLAND

National Theatre: Idea and Institution

Danuta Kuźnicka

In Polish culture "National Theatre" is both a concept of theatre and concrete institution, the institution operating in a given historical context and aspiring to implement the concept. That concept, the idea of the national theatre, was born in the late eighteenth century along with the foundation by King Stanisław August Poniatowski in 1765 of the first public, permanent, professional company, performing the works of Polish authors in the Polish language. The objective of this theatre, based on the idea of Comédie-Française, was not only to cherish the beauty of the national language and culture, but also to promote "good taste". In accordance with the intention of the king, it played a crucial part in the reform and modernisation of Poland and promoted ideas of tolerance and social welfare. It was a theatre created as an institution of high ideological and artistic ideals, as well as fulfilling an important social function.

On the one hand, the National Theatre is a set of specific achievements of a particular theatre company; on the other hand, it is an area of social debate contingent upon history defining expectations about the role and place of theatre in the life of a country; and what this means for the social, cultural, and existential life of that country. In determining the functions and tasks of the National Theatre, outlining its program and organisational principles, it describes the state of consciousness and social attitudes, aspirations and concerns of citizens as defined the place of theatre in the national culture, and how it challenges those values.

Both theatre activity and the visions for a model stage were closely related to historic changes in the country and crucial stages of Polish history, such as the partition period of 1771–1795, and the ongoing loss of 123 years of independence, the subsequent 20 years of independence in 1918, followed by World War II ruining the country, and afterwards more than 40 years of communist domination, before the rise of Solidarity in 1980, the martial-law period of 1981 to 1983, and ultimately the development of a democratic society, ongoing since 1989. Since 1999, the Republic of Poland has been a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, and since 2003 a member of the European Union.

Regardless of the formulation of detailed demands and their implementation, the National Theatre was always expected to maintain a high intellectual and artistic level, cultivate the Polish language and national traditions, and to explore issues of topical import to society. The possibility of achieving these desiderata, due to the dependence on the public financing, has always been associated with the current political situation and frequently with the personality of the director appointed to run the institution.

Appointed by the king in 1765 a permanent, public, professional theatre company performing in the Polish language, was called "national" to distinguish it from Italian, French, and periodically German companies acting in the same period. Both the monarch and the community of reformers around him, expected that similar to Monitor magazine – established in the same year – public theatre would become a weapon in the fight to reform a failing state, threatened with foreign interference; that it would spread the word of tolerance, social consensus, and would also support the enlightened and reformist ideas of the king, against the wishes of the magnates.

In 1774 the parliament passed the constitution of a public theatre. The Office of the National Theatre was located in the capital city of Warsaw from the beginning. Initially performing in Operalnia, and then in the halls of the Radziwill Palace, in 1779 the company was located in a new building on Krasiński square, where, under the direction of Wojciech Bogusławski, the full ambitions for the theatre could be realised. Bogusławski, who is now called "the father of Polish theatre" was an extremely versatile and talented individual. An excellent organiser, entrepreneur, and theatre director, he could effectively compete with foreign language theatres, promoting quality acting, and developing an extensive repertoire consisting of translations and adaptations of foreign plays and native drama, alongside his own work. Comedies of Franciszek Bohomolec, Franciszek Zabłocki and Bogusławski, raised the value of tradition, but also looked at national vices, and shaping a civic attitude. During the break of state marked aspirations of the independent society. *Cracovians and Highlanders*, a very well received play by Bogusławski, helped to spur patriotic sentiments and contributed to the 1794 uprising against imperial Russia under the leadership of Tadeusz Kosciuszko. The impact of this performance was so strong, that the Russian authorities banned it after three evenings.

State collapse sealed by the third partition of the Poland in 1795 put the Polish culture in the role of the defender and custodian of fundamental national and social values: national identity and the

struggle for independence. In the light of Russification and Germanization implemented by the invaders, cultivating Polish language and historical memory became a primary goal of the theatre. The November uprising against the Russians in 1831, followed by its failure, led to severe repression from the Tsarist government. The National theatre, now led by Russian officials, lost its position among Polish society. However the Tsarist regime eagerly took advantage of the propaganda potential of theatre. In 1833 an impressive building designed by Antonio Corazzi was built in Warsaw. It was not called the National, but the Grand. The theatre had to entertain Russian soldiers stationed on the Vistula. An opera and ballet groups were established, and the drama stage located in the wing of the building was named the Variety in 1836. Tsarist authorities did not allow a Polish repertoire to be performed, nonetheless the actor's art flourished. During this regime, the stage was called "the stars theatre", as it was here where the talents of Helena Modrzejewska, Wincenty Rapacki and Jerzy Leszczyński and many others were shining.

In 1918, Poland regained its independence, but a year later the theatre burned down. It was rebuilt and opened in 1924, its name restored to the National theatre. Its director, a prominent actor and reformer of the art of acting, Juliusz Osterwa, returned the missionary function to the national stage. His inauguration speech had a form of an oath, which swore that the theatre would "becoming the most susceptible soil for Polish artistry, will be the common ambition of all the Polish stages, setting an example for fulfilling the mission," and that it would serve "the evangelists of the Polish Spirit: Mickiewicz, Slowacki, Krasiński and Norwid"[1]. He announced the introduction of the Polish Romantic repertoire to the stage. Created in exile, these works had been banned for decades by the censors. However, due to the broad philosophical horizons, the complexity of the issues, and artistic richness the plays rank among the greatest achievements of world literature. Osterwa acknowledged that the realisation of this ambitious task must be preceded by the training of relevant skills as an actor. The atmosphere of support was to be achieved by study and a well-considered repertoire, presenting the actor with increasingly difficult tasks: first the old Polish literature, then realism, and finally, the romantic drama. Osterwa served as the Director of the National Theatre for less than two years, fulfilling his ambitions mainly beyond its stage.

In 1924, the literary journal Warsaw Review announced an edition concerning the organisation of the National Theatre in Warsaw[2]. Notable artists and intellectuals outlined a vision of forming a "Polish-

1. Por. Jacek Popiel, *Zdrada Osterwy i Reduty?*, in: *W kręgu teatru monumentalnego*, ed. Lidia Kuchtówna and Jan Ciechowicz, Warsaw 2000, p. 90.

2. Wojciech Dudzik, *W poszukiwaniu kształtu sceny narodowej (Uwagi o realizacji polskiego teatru monumentalnego), w: W kręgu teatru monumentalnego*, ed. Lidia Kuchtówna and Jan Ciechowicz, Warsaw 2000, p. 97–98.

style theatre", discussed the idea of "a monumental theatre of the great Romantics", dreamed of "the theatre of the future". However, despite a decent level, solid work on the classics, and promoting contemporary art; between the First and Second World Wars, the National Theatre was not the first stage of the Republic. In Warsaw, outstanding performances originated mainly in The Polish Theatre, and the Bogusławski Theatre. Ambitious exploration of ideas were taken up by smaller scenes such as Ateneum.

The ravages of the Second World War did not spare the National Theatre. People died, the institution disappeared, the building burned down. It was rebuilt and reopened in 1949, now in a new Soviet-dominated reality. For the Soviets, it was essential to form model cultural state institutions, state-funded and run by a people appointed by the government. Theatres were run by directors appointed by the Ministry, with a prescribed budget. This meant both financial stability and more or less severe subordination to the will of the authorities, depending on the political climate.

The period of Stalinism meant the implementation of a repertoire which was imposed by frequently changing directors and foreign ideologies. It was important, however, to restore the classics. In 1956, after the strike in Poznań and a change of power at the top, there was a period of political thaw. Censorship eased, and Polish culture not only opened up to the West, but also could restore its own content, which had been eliminated or distorted by the censor. Although successive managers, prominent stage directors Erwin Axer and Wilam Horzyca represented very different ideological stances, they presented the National theatre with ambitious tasks. Axer's passion was contemporary drama, although he also reached for romantic works, absent for decades on the stage, yet paramount to Polish culture. *Emergency Room*, a contemporary play by Lutowski, staged at the National Theatre in 1956, publicly questioned the infallibility of the Communist Party for the first time. And *Kordian* by Słowacki, one of the most important Polish dramas, became a distinguished event. In 1957 Wilam Horzyca became a director of the theatre. His objective was to reform the theatre, whose company should be a model for all Polish stages. He believed that the National Theatre should stage the most important dramas, which most fully reflect the spiritual tradition of the nation; that is: the works of the Romantic period and Young Poland, which pertain to modernist works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He also included contemporary literature in the repertoire.

However, it was a distinguished stage director and theatre manager Kazimierz Dejmek who had the greatest impact on the fate and shape of the National Theatre in the second half of the twentieth century. He was in charge of the metropolitan stage between 1962 – 1968, but his work as a stage director and later actions as the minister of culture were also of a great historical significance. In the early 60s Dejmek faced the general problem of the appalling organisation of work and the poor condition of the theatre building: "Theatre operates without a statute or organisational structure; there are no work rules; no instructions; no internal rules governing the order of work, day and customs; no plans for the next and future actions"[3].

Not only did he put the temporary rules for the institution in order, but also, with the help of experts, including prominent theatre professor Zbigniew Raszewski, he led the development of the mission statement of the National Theatre and its approval by the Ministry. He recalled the noble traditions of the stage and its greatest achievements in the two hundred years of history. The purpose of theatre was to create sustainable ideological and artistic values, derived from the tradition, yet avoiding both the experimental, and archaic qualities. The programme formulated in a document was extensive and included a demand for nursing the beautiful Polish language and training actors, as well as an indicated the need to conduct publishing and documentation activities by the theatre.

Onlookers reluctantly accepted the word of Dejmek: "The National Theatre should be Polish, national, modern, socialist theatre"[4], but in 1962 he won Warsaw over with the insightful mystery play from 1580: *The History of the Glorious Resurrection of the Lord*. In traditional Polish plays he sought the origin of Polish theatre, and made them an integral part of a the proposed repertoire. A model list of works which should permanently be included in the repertoire of the national stage was created. It covered the greatest works in the history of Polish literature, foreign language classics and selected contemporary plays. Many of these ambitious, multi-directional intentions were fulfilled. The company was frequently on tour. A "performance inspection team" was brought into existence, who looked after the quality of the performances. The most important, however, were the plays of the director, characterised by the highest level of quality. He staged the works of the past eras as well as the present. His staging of Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* in 1967, a drama of a greatest importance to Polish culture, was read by the Warsaw audience as a statement about the current situation of Poland, corrupted by

3. After Magdalena Raszewska, *Teatr Narodowy* 1949–2004, Warsaw 2005, p. 105.

4. Kazimierz Dejmek, *Duchy i rzeczywistość*, „Polityka" 1963 no. 47.

communism, enslaved, and losing its identity. Accusations towards Tsarist regime included in the nineteenth century text were fervently applauded, which the authorities considered a manifestation of anti-Soviet and anti-Russian sentiments. In view of the rumours about the possibility of banning the play, Dejmek resigned. The rumours turned out to be a fact. The ban met with violent protest by a young audience and gave rise to demonstrations and the social unrest of March 1968. Dejmek and above all the political role played by the *Forefathers's Eve* in Polish history of the twentieth century, preserved the belief in theatre's weighty social mission, its meaning and the duties associated with it.

After Dejmek's resignation, the long, fourteen-year (1968–1982) management period of Adam Hanuszkiewicz began. This talented director and actor mainly focused on the young audience in his productions. They were critical to his image of national stage. His bold reading of classical works and numerous authorial adaptations of poetry and prose referenced popular culture, increasingly influencing the awareness of the audience and gradually transforming into a code between the stage and the audience. In the seventies such aesthetics raised many voices of opposition, but nonetheless the injection of many distinguished works into the bloodstream of the popular consciousness became a reality.

After the strikes of 1980 and the establishment of the first independent trade union, Solidarity, in 1981, the communist authorities introduced martial law. The theatre company began to disintegrate and the management was accused by the public of fulfilling the authorities' policy, as evidenced by a significant decrease in the artistic level and lack of thought in the program. In 1985, the theatre building burned down once again. Warsaw residents mockingly commented that burned "out of shame".[5]

A long, 16-year-period of reconstruction and organisational disruption followed. Initially, the company performed in a different venue, but in 1990 that was dissolved by a ministerial decision. For a transitional period a Little Theatre – National Theatre in reconstruction was established, and there were attempts to create a new institution, in which three stages of Opera, Ballet and Drama together would constitute the National Theatre. However, following the protests from intellectual and artistic circles who did not agree to the loss of autonomy of the dramatic scene, the plan was abandoned. A prolonged period of recovery and uncertainty about the fate of the National Theatre fostered discussion on the future functioning of the institution, its role in society and the program.

5. Barbara Osterloff, Magdalena Raszewska, Krzysztof Sielicki, *Leksykon Teatralny*, entry *Teatr Narodowy*, p. 235.

The first positions were revealed by the magazine "Theatre" in a 1990 survey[6]. Later, in 1993, the issue was discussed widely in cultural magazines, as the reconstruction was coming to an end and the opening of the theatre approached. Five major strands can be distinguished among the expressed opinions. First of all, most of the statements emphasised that the future National Theatre should function at the highest professional level, and even act as a "model" for other theatres (writer Paweł Herz).[7] However, further ideas were more varied. The supporters of cultivating the Polish tradition explicitly wanted the National Theatre to become a haven for Polish classics, and mastery of expression of universal human values. According to prof. Zbigniew Raszewski, who stressed the need for a debate about the theatre, its essence should be about returning to its origins, thus nurturing the Polish language and values.[8] Director Erwin Axer expanded the idea of the importance of language, claiming that the genius of the Polish nation had been manifested in literature and the word.[9] Actor Andrzej Łapicki demanded that the National scene staged a great Polish repertoire, as abandoning such works meant slow denationalisation[10]. In his view, the theatre should not always listen to the audience, but create their taste, by imposing its notions and sensibility. Some proposed that the theatre should help Poles interpret their history and bear testimony to their spiritual condition (actor Jerzy Stuhr).[11] It was emphasized that it should tie the crumbling Polish community into a self-conscious nation, capable of expressing itself in art (critic Jerzy Adamski)[12]. It was argued that in the age of global mass culture, nurturing national culture is revitalising the culture of the world (priest Janusz Pasierb)[13]. It was stressed that "national" cannot mean "parochial".

An idea appeared that the new scene be called the European Theatre (director Piotr Cieślak)[14] and its mission would be to watch the Polish culture from a European perspective. Developing this vision, director Jerzy Goliński designed the creation of the meeting place of various theatres and audiences, something like "a great melting pot" of values, forms and languages: theatre becoming "a hotel hosting the mighty minds of the world."[15] The idea to introduce the theatre into the European family also included combining opera, ballet and the drama scene into one body and inviting the best artists in Europe to work there.

The opinions of supporters who had close contact to the contemporary scene clearly stood out as well. It was recognised that the National Theatre should be "a mirror of contemporary Polish consciousness", that it cannot just be "a museum", but "a place where

6. *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no. 5 and 6.

7. Paweł Hertz, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?* „Teatr" 1990 no 5, p. 11.

8. Zbigniew Raszewski, „Goniec Teatralny" 1991 no 9.

9. Erwin Axer, *Przeszłość i przyszłość*, „Spotkania" 1993 no 10, p. 13.

10. Por. Roman Pawłowski, *Bojkotuję szmirę*, „Gazeta Wyborcza" 1994 no 262.

11. Jerzy Stuhr, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no 5, p. 12.

12. Jerzy Adamski, *Miedzy marzeniem a rzeczywistością*, „Wiadomości Kulturalne" 1995 no 1 p. 5.

13. Janusz Pasierb, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no 6, p. 5.

14. Piotr Cieślak, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no 6, p. 4.

15. Jerzy Goliński, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no 5, p. 10.

living contemporary dialogue happens, also about the past" (director Tadeusz Bradecki).[16] This idea was supported mostly by artists of the middle generation, demanding to be allowed to comment on current affairs (director and actor Krzysztof Zaleski, actor Jan Peszek).
A concept of an "authorial" theatre appeared, according to which the National Theatre would not be a quiet corner of the official art, but the artist's own theatre. Moreover it would be an aggressively artistic director, under whose leadership the stage could take part in the battle of beliefs, and opt for some kind of ideology (critic Stefan Treugutt).[17] The idea of the management in the hands of the most talented theatre director, was also not surprisingly supported by former director Adam Hanuszkiewicz.
There were also opinions doubting the sense of the existence of the National Theatre. Critic Tadeusz Nyczek acknowledged that the Poles for years harboured the belief that the National Theatre is undoubtedly designed for a higher purpose. This type of conviction being the remnants of partitions and years of communism was no longer meaningful with the advent of democracy. The National Theatre as an institution operating under special conditions was now unnecessary. However, he added, a real National Theatre in Poland had existed for a long time and was still excellent. It is the Television Theatre. The Polish phenomenon on a global scale, preparing special performances then broadcast nationwide.[18] It is worth noting that the Television Theatre was established in 1953, in the days before cable TV and digital platforms.
An eminent critic and long-time editor of the Theatre magazine Andrzej Wanat[19] proposed his own formula, close to the "European" model: first of all, he noticed that the formation of the new National Theatre was a great opportunity to reject the superfluous qualities and primitivism in the interpretation of the classics infamously practised by many theatres, ignoring contemporary Polish drama, with all their attendant linguistic sloppiness and chaotic action. The National Theatre should oppose the existing reality of theatre. Apart from the obvious requirement to meet a high level of professionalism, Wanat suggested a few directions of thought and action. First, he touched upon the problem of national identity. The nationality, in his opinion, is not an ethnic fact, but a voluntary and constantly renewable act. One which combines with self-awareness, a perception of history and place in the present. The resulting stage should also serve to explicate and expose weighty characteristics of European civilisation: should have a tendency to pose the eternal question, the continuous challenge of mental structures, the alternation of

16. Tadeusz Bradecki, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no 5, p. 9.

17. Stefan Treugutt, *Jaki powinien być Teatr Narodowy?*, „Teatr" 1990 no 5, p. 12.

18. Tadeusz Nyczek, *Nie wierzę w Teatr Narodowy*, „Gazeta Wyborcza" 1994 no 250.

19. Andrzej Wanat, T*eatr Narodowy jest potrzebny*, „Teatr" 1994 no 11, p. 6.

destruction and construction, and reflection on the ideas of society. Only this kind of work on ideas could lead to the emergence of wide European identity. Wanat emphasised that culture is not just entertainment, but is also related to an intellectual effort. The repertoire of the National Theatre should include Polish and world classics and exceptional contemporary works. He called for a variety of aesthetic approaches. The differences, contrasts, tensions and contradictions could provide the theatre with a new energy. He also saw foreign relations and visits of companies from other countries playing an important role in this area. The profile of the stage should be decided by the Council of the National Theatre, and the artists would gain from cooperation with theatrology experts and playwrights. The new stage could also educate young directors.

The most vague vision unexpectedly won – a vision of authorial theatre. The first director of the National Theatre after the reconstruction in 1997 was one of the greatest and most controversial directors in the history, Jerzy Grzegorzewski. His multi-dimensional, erudite adaptations of classic texts aroused admiration and fierce objections. More than half of repertoire consisted of pieces by Polish authors, sophisticatedly interpreted by Grzegorzewski, nonetheless there was no lack of world classics and carefully selected contemporary texts. The general opinion, however, was that the nature of the theatre was too elitist. Following the resignation of the artist and his death in 2005, a distinguished actor Jan Englert became the director and he still holds this position today (2013). Seeking to create a National Theatre where "living contemporary dialogue, also about the past"[20] happens, Englert invites leading directors including the young and controversial. The repertoire is eclectic with a distinct presence of contemporary art. Englert's primary concern is a high professional level, and the presence of many actor stars in the company encourages attendance in the audience.

Translated by Magdalena Bazylewicz

20. Bradecki, op.cit.

ROMANIA

Like many other European institutions that date back to the nineteenth century and encompass elusive concepts, "National Theatre" is written with capitals according to Romanian dictionaries. In common with all vague concepts, the emotional-symbolic burden is greater than the material weight of the described entity. In the 160 year span of modern Romanian culture, this emotional discrepancy is outright hyperbole. This small country, first established in 1859 through the lucky union of two mono-linguistic provinces, had from the beginning not one but two National Theatres: one in Iaşi and the other in Bucharest, the two former capitals of the provinces Moldavia and Wallachia. The national ideal of the Enlightenment turned these state-funded theatres into one of the fundamental symbols for Romanianization of a territory otherwise inhabited by populations with entirely different histories, despite the fact most of them spoke the same language.

In 1919 a third National Theatre was established in Cluj, the capital of Transylvania, overnight by the nationalisation of the town's municipal theatre building, formerly rented by a Hungarian company. After a short time, three more such theatres were established in Craiova (capital of the province Oltenia), Cernăuţi (capital of Bukovina, currently in Ukraine) and Chişinău (capital of Basarabia, the current Republic of Moldova). These last two provinces had been integrated into Russia for more than a century; they included, apart from the mostly Romanian population, significant Russian, Ukrainian, German, Polish, and Jewish communities.

Each of the important regions joined together under the concept of "the Romanian nation" was awarded a National Theatre. Some of them (Craiova, Cernăuți and Chișinău) were dissolved again just over a decade later because of an economic crisis, only to be founded once again, equally spontaneously, four years later. After the Second World War the Banat region in the west of Romania was also given a National Theatre in Timişoara – a multicultural city with significant German and Hungarian communities. In 1978, thanks to Ceauşescu's strategy of symbolic nationalist territory-marking, the stylish theatre of Târgu-Mureş, established in 1947 as a Hungarian

theatre – adding a Romanian department in 1962 – also became a National Theatre. It remains the only "National Theatre" with two nationalities: Romanian and Hungarian.

To the outside observer it may be strange to discover that a collective psyche concerned with the age-old longing for national unity was substantially more compelling than material considerations such as the need for a city, province or a particular community to have a theatre. The communist regime, from its first organisation-activist phase, had an accurate perception of this unabashed disproportion, rooted in frustration: they established – despite the awful shortages caused by the war and reconstruction debts – nearly forty "State" theatres, apart from the five National ones (Bucharest, Iași, Craiova, Cluj and Timișoara). Currently, there are National Theatres in Bucharest, Cluj, Iaşi, Craiova, Timişoara, Tîrgu Mureş and Sibiu.

The discussion of the use and role of a National Theatre has been going on in Romanian culture, like some sort of genetic, cyclically driven disease, since the second half of the nineteenth century. The successive platoons that participated in the debate include incontestable heroes, coryphaei, martyrs, as well as all sorts of demagogues, highfliers, poltroons, deceitful politicians, but also notable writers or artists. In the course of a century and a half, almost everyone has had something to say about the National Theatre. At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a director who replaced Alexandru Davila[1]. This newcomer, striving to make peace after what amounted to an artistic and political uprising against the courageous writer, wrote a text on the mission of a National Theatre. This text, written in 1908, became, to a certain degree, canonical. Its author was an academic specialising in French literature and literary history, Pompiliu Eliade. Like any respectful academic he stated that the purpose of the National Theatre is "to be a school for the many" who came through its doors. In the end, this definition of "theatre as school" became a commonplace, but each successive generation loaded the "educational mission" according to their own particular value systems.

So, what is a National Theatre in Romania? First, it is one of the tens of theatres funded from the public budget. Therefore, it should provide public services, shouldn't it? Next, perhaps we should also know what a "nation" and, corresponding to it, "national" mean in the twenty-first century. Here, we reach dramatic areas of discussion, where political theories, propaganda discourse, history, geography, anthropology, collective psychology, and symbolic imagery clash and rip into one another; because we have six national theatres and

1. Alexandru Davila (1862–1929) was a Romantic writer, but an innovative, pioneering stage director. He was the general manager of the National Theatre Bucharest between 1905–1908 and 1912–1914

only one nation (according to the constitution, the Romanian state is "national" and "united", even if it is inhabited by many minorities: Hungarian, German, Roma, as well as Turkish-Tatar, Ukrainian, Greek etc.) It is strange, then, that both in the collective imagination and in its artistic activities the Cluj Hungarian State Theatre is one of the most coherent theatres in Romania: in relation to language and national literature preservation, to the development of its own audience, and to education through culture. As the theatre of an ethnic community that strives to survive culturally, its national goals are – paradoxically – clearer and more coherently pursued.

Otherwise, at a conceptual level, unconsciously preserving its symbolic post-Enlightenment origins, a National Theatre is considered a "large" theatre, perhaps having several halls, which ingest capital, energy, and resources. Its duty is to deliver a finished product, which is... Which is what? A good performance? An exceptional performance? A performance of a standard required in school? The "mission" of these theatres is not the one of delivering good performances; that is the core duty of any state or private, independent or experimental, Romanian, Hungarian, or Jewish theatre, whether performing in Turkish, French, English, Swahili or whatever, whether in a backyard or in the basement of some building.

Perhaps, here and now, a theatre designated "National" should generate "national culture" in a wider sense: exemplary culture at fertile levels, using performance and more than performance. A National Theatre – and this practice has always been longed-for but never fully achieved here – should be a nursery of domestic dramatic literature through wide-ranging programmes designed to unearth talent, to inspire writers and to make the most of this literature. A literature about and for others, a literature that assists the audience in self-discovery and self-questioning.

Nonetheless, after 23 years of freedom, this happens only by way of exception. National Theatres do not commission dramatic texts and very few of them have encouraged continuing, coherent competitions for domestic playwriting. The two exceptions are the Bucharest Comedy Theatre and the Timișoara "Mihai Eminescu" National Theatre; the latter holds an annual competition at the same time as the Festival of Romanian Drama. However, in recent years, the festival has extended with an international section which swallows up and eclipses the importance given to dramatic writing. And in any case, the extensive results of this competition – quantifiable in degree of absorption and staging of the winning or nominated plays by other, state or private, companies – remain irrelevant.

A theatre funded from the public budget and ranked as "National" should be a sphere of cultural research through art, as well as one of public debate by the agency of art. Not only about dramatic art, but also the other performing arts. Sadly, this happens only rarely in Romania.

Post-1989 Landscape – an Agenda of Institutional Reform?

Naturally, the enthusiasm attached to the first post-1989 years extended as far as the theatre scene in Romania. The "need for change" was in the air like a thick cloud; menacing to some, enthusiastically hypnotic to others; turning normal activities into a disorganised, pathetic, sometimes brutal carnival. The obvious thing now, after more than twenty years, is the absence of an "agenda" of reforms. It is understandable that the mere collapse of a system does not instantly generate the optimal pattern for a new system. It is more difficult to justify the continuing resistance to change in Romania's theatre scene.

In a society where both education and subsidised culture have been founded on top-down rules throughout its modern history, "from the Ministry", "from the Government", rather than on the principles of a free undertaking of ideas and products, it is no wonder that the full burden of responsibility has constantly been on the "vision" and on the "strategies" projected from the centre to the base. Modern Romanian culture, more so the theatre which is more exposed and expensive, benefited for over a century and a half from the *homogeneity of official subsidies*. Everything or almost everything was expected to enter the official mainstream with the artists' naïve acceptance, as long as the state was the only (constant) source of funding.

Hence the massive crisis of perception and design at the time of actual reform. Few post-1989 ministries have seen more frequent and pointless changes of minister. In 23 years, sixteen ministers have succeeded one another at the ministry: six in first seven years after the change of regime. Politically speaking, the more peculiar aspect is that the 1992–1996 conservative nationalist dominant (which strived and often managed to produce disasters with a political undertone, precisely in the few theatre institutions where attempts were made at an internal reform) was not visibly counteracted or at least competed against by a radical effort of renewal of theatre policies in the ministry throughout the period of the Democratic Convention (1996–2000, while the actor and director Ion Caramitru [2], an icon of the Revolution, was constantly kept in the successive governments).

2. Ion Caramitru (b. 1943), founder and President of UNITER (The Romanian Theatre Artists Union, 1990) in office as ministry of Culture between 1996–2000. General Manager of the National Theatre Bucharest from 2005.

As such, a discussion on the becoming of the dramatic institutions cannot ignore these basic premises, which are inherently connected with the confusions and weak civic-political culture all across post-revolutionary Romania.

But let us look at the issue at several levels. A reform agenda should have had a series of fundamental principles. First, the (1) *principle of "liberating"* the cultural space, particularly the theatrical one, from the controlling intrusions of the political power. Secondly, the (2) *principle of opening the* communication *frontiers*, either literally, meaning the free exchanges between the Romanian artists and those from anywhere else in the world, or a lot more subtly, meaning the separation from the exclusive model of the subsidised theatre institution; a model not affected by the competition with any other structures that naturally validate their efficiency. The third principle to consider would have been the one of (3) *encouraging* ideas, forms of communication, any products and institutions that produce viable dramatic art, on a free market, based on *free competition*. Finally, I believe the fourth principle should have been the (4) *decentralisation of decision-making* in the field of culture financing, depending on the local communities' cultural priorities and corresponding policies.

In theory, almost all the governments and ministers, from the philosopher Andrei Pleşu[3] to date, may say that, one way or another, they were aware of these principles or at least bumped sorely against them, or even worked in their favour, more or less visibly. In practice, there was a single episode of quick and brutal decentralisation carried out under Caramitru's ministry, when the majority of the performing arts institutions in Romania were permanently passed under the administration of some local authorities most of the time confused, obtuse and completely ignorant in the field of conception of cultural policies. Aside from that, the political game combined, in the cultural field, a passivity constantly justified with cheap propaganda systematically invoking the lack of funds.

Thus, the original intuition, from the period of Pleşu's ministry, that in Romania a substantial reform should rely strictly on legislative instruments and arguments was (proven) accurate. And this happened despite the fact that – or precisely because – the theatre environment exerted, in its turn, a keen resistance to the liberalising shears of the law. While in Romania, at long last, industrial colossi were privatised, energy consuming and nearly impossible to revamp mines were closed, the banking system was fully reconstructed, the incredibly difficult and erratic field of primary, secondary and higher

3. Andrei Plesu (b. 1948), writer, philosopher, journalist but also a famous dissident in the 1980s. He was in office as the first Ministry of Culture after the 1989 revolution (1990–1991), then as Ministry of Foreign Affaires (1997–1999)

education was redesigned etc., the legislation on the operation and organisation of performing arts institution remains substantially, even at present, after five Parliament approved versions, tributary to the 1900 model. And the Romanian dramatic artist is still, overwhelmingly, an employee of the state, a poor one, but with a... guaranteed retirement scheme.
For example, since 2005, there has been a public institution, subordinate to the Ministry of Culture, the task of which was to finance, based on a competition of projects, the editorial production of independent cultural projects and projects of national interest. Despite the fact that, at the time the Administration of the National Cultural Fund was established, the law provided that its budget would be covered from a share of the sales of electronic equipment and from a fraction of the National Lottery profits, in fact, these provisions were never applied, most of the funds coming again from the state budget. This is how, in reality, in 2012, the entire amount awarded exclusively through ANCF to cultural projects represented approximately 7% of a single institution's budget, namely the Bucharest National Theatre.

Comparing Models, Canon and Counter-canon in the Evolution of the Performing Arts Institution

Therefore, in post-1989 Romania, there are more than forty dramatic or musical theatres, of which thirteen in Bucharest, all funded from the local budget or straight from the ministry (the National Theatres). Some of them have two departments (sections), either because there is also a Hungarian or German division, or because there is a separate department for the musical theatre. There are three autonomous Hungarian theatres (Cluj, Timișoara, Sfântu Gheorghe), a German one (in Timișoara) and a Jewish one (Bucharest). There are almost as many, about thirty, puppet and marionette state theatres, some of which also include Hungarian sections. Two more dramatic theatres with a repertoire for children and adolescents (Bucharest and Iași). There are five (National) Opera Theatres and a Hungarian one, as well as a National Operetta Theatre. There are also three or four more modest lyrical theatres, from among which the Constanţa company specialises mainly in ballet and holds great international achievements.
All these theatres operate in repertoire regime. In 1991, an attempt was made at the formula of the "project theatre", with the creation of the Urmuz Theatre – later to become Theatrum Mundi, originally

dedicated to original playwriting. For almost a decade, however, the system has been abandoned, and at present, the corresponding theatre hall is occupied by Metropolis Theatre, also a repertoire theatre, funded by the City Hall of the capital.

On the other hand, there are several cultural centres, in Bucharest and in Iași (ArCub, "Nicolae Bălcescu" Cultural Centre, Tătărași Atheneum), which develop various artistic projects and, every now and then, also produce theatre or opera/operetta performances; according to tradition, the performances take place, again, in repertoire conditions.

Of the many attempts made after 1989 to establish private theatre institutions, in the strictly commercial meaning of the phrase, in twenty-three years the only one actually surviving has been Teatrul Act, founded in 1997 in the basement of a building on a central road in Bucharest. Founded by a team of artists at the heart of which stands a famous stage and film actor, Marcel Iureș, Teatrul Act is also established in line with the repertoire formula, but it has also accommodated a coffee house-library on the premises. The secret of this survival consists, on the one hand, in the eclectic repertoire itself, targeting the contemporary playwriting, and, on the other hand, in the hosting of experimental performances by other independent companies, in co-production conditions; finally, its survival is also owed to an extremely careful management – a very small team, actors are not employed on an indefinite contract – and to ticket prices considerably higher than those of state theatres (with the exception of the Bucharest National). In any case, in fifteen years, Teatrul Act has grown a loyal, particularly young and educated audience.

This obvious homogeneity of the form and (imprecise) targets of the dramatic institution has been reflected, for a long time, in the aesthetics and styles of the performances provided by the public theatres. This aesthetics is, in turn, homogeneous, preferentially focusing on the director and on the appeal of the work "as such" for the community of critics: the metaphorical-visual performance.

Particularly after 1990, for nearly a decade, the core of the reputation of a theatre was the degree of recognition abroad of its "tour", "festival" productions. Most of the times, the productions would rely on free interpretations of classical texts, staged by "author" directors. Silviu Purcarete is, perhaps, the best known such example (with performances first put on stage in Craiova, then in Sibiu or at the Cluj Hungarian Theatre, or in international, sumptuous co-productions of these theatres with foreign companies). But in line with the same aesthetic canon (even if their stylistics are partially

dissimilar) and equally carrying the load of festival reputation we find Andrei Șerban, Tompa Gabor, Mihai Măniuțiu, Alexandru Darie or, in a more nuanced way, Victor Ioan Frunză. The aesthetic homogeneity of the "auteur" model has worn thinner, to a certain degree, after 2000, under competition from other anti-canonical directions, which target simplicity, focus on the social and political context, pay attention to the contemporary text and to some degree of austerity of the visual discourse, capitalising on the actor's creativity. These diverse directions – both in style and in motivations, most of them originating in the independent area, but also penetrating in the last decade the stages of public institutions – have not disturbed the hegemony of the metaphorical, bookish canon. At least according to the managers of important theatres and festivals or to the largest part of the reviewers, the model of the visual-metaphorical performance is the favoured one.

Questions on the functions of art in relation to the audience, to communities, and to society, are only accidentally answered (in press or civil society debates) and, most often, are formulated incoherently. What is the role of a theatre in the place where it exists (as a team or only as a facility)? What separates a community's theatre from another community's theatre? Which are the objectives it intends to support this year as compared to the last year? How do its projects and programmes combine with those of other artistic, social, educational, media institutions? These are only a few urgent and recurrent questions, which, even when raised by state funded institutions, are not answered through coherent strategies. But do the Ministry, the Town Halls, the County Councils ask them? After two decades, there is no visible sign of any such endeavour. Which explains the quiet and undisturbed stagnation of the entire mechanism, self-complacent even when it maintains, quite vocally, that it does not have sufficient resources.

At this level, the institutional landscape is still governed – in 2013 – by the rule of the "artists' social welfare" rather than by the rule of communication through art with the audiences who need or may need it.

The Management Problem

One of the blind spots of the Romanian theatrical life has been the constant management crisis. This stems immediately from the (innocent or guilty) incoherence and hesitations of the political decision-making, which also caused the weak legal backing of all

the attempts at internal reform. Although the 2004 law requires a management agreement and a detailed balance sheet at the end of a mandate, on which the extension of the mandate depends (to be granted by the Ministry in case of the National and of the Cluj Hungarian Theatre, or by the local authorities for the other theatres), reporting sessions are often delayed beyond the deadline, their transparency is rather formal. This is also true of the extension or suspension decisions.

An early attempt at settling the management crisis, in 1990–1991, was through repatriations. Essentially, minister Pleşu's idea of bringing established Romanian artists back from exile, particularly those who had worked a lot and successfully in Western countries, was not at all wrong. In principle, who else could have produced radical systemic reforms if not those who had enjoyed, famously, the fruit of their endeavours in differently shaped systems? Therefore, in the first two years, Bucharest and the rest of the country witnessed a new wave of more-or-less spectacular returns, the results of which turned out to be relatively beneficial.

Certainly, the most visible (and even today controversial and provocative) case is that of the Romanian-born American director Andrei Şerban, directing the Bucharest National Theatre. His three seasons presence as a manager at BNT, but most of all some of the performances he staged are still legendary. But he was an exception. Generally, this type of "coming back from exile experience" holds in itself a sort of sad regularity: with few exceptions, the directors cannot adapt to the new situation, the companies they have to manage are usually confused and reluctant. Thus, Vlad Mugur returned from Germany to the Giuleşti Theatre, which he renamed the Odeon, but left after less than two seasons; Lucian Giurchescu returning from Denmark went to the Comedy Theatre and was dramatically rejected by the team four seasons later; Liviu Ciulei came from the USA – but only as "honorary director" – to Bulandra; Iulian Vişa returned from Germany to Sibiu, was a successful manager, but sadly died after five seasons. Adrian Lupu came from Israel to Galaţi and had really fruitful activity as director and manager, but was wrongly dismissed in 1999 by the local authorities. Other directors returned later, but without taking over a theatre because the craze – and the enthusiasm – had vanished. Although Alexander Hausvater returned from Canada in 1992 and staged some of the most resounding successes of the decade.

However, aspects difficult to foresee at that time soon became obvious. Beyond the frenzy of the return, and despite good intentions

on both sides, the inherited system would be stronger than the one returning man's capabilities. Firstly, the reform could not be implemented through the mere production of good and very good performances by the "king director". Secondly, Western European competitive models could not be applied while the legal and economic principles stayed the same.

The repatriation experience, where it wasn't a failure, was at least a small drama. Not from the point of view of the artistic creations, which were often successes both at home and in the many tours during 1990–2000. The failure related to the targeted innovating management, able to reshape intrinsically the theatrical sphere, who had to fight a constant guerrilla war with slow and inconsequential change of legislation and with incoherent political intervention.

One would have expected the emergence of new strategic solutions to theatre management, apart from repatriations. The sympathy earned by the cultural – particularly theatrical – sphere in the eyes of the West in the first years after 1989 were important. Here, France and the UK were the pillars of hope. Both countries' embassies and cultural services enabled the provision of fast-paced management training programmes. Some of them took place in the UK, through the direct mediation of UNITER (the Romanian Association of Theatre Artists). Others developed owing to the direct endeavours of the first graduate of a specific MA, at Dijon, Corina Şuteu [4], aiming to create a European network of cultural projects and programmes (with support from European Expert Network in Culture), with a focus on cultural management.

After 1996, Romania witnessed the creation of several state-sustained cultural management classes. This specialisation also appeared in higher education. Nevertheless, while the decision-making structures remained essentially the same, little could be done. Some management training beneficiaries, graduating from courses followed at home or abroad, chose other fields than theatre, while others later pursued university careers. Many got lost along the way; others chose, with good reason, to steer their efforts towards emerging independent production sector. Even today, when the rule of competition for a management position is established (although often the authorities have a ready-made decision or the eligible competitors are too few), the prevailing aspect is the one of artist managers, preferably (stage) directors.

On the other hand, a working solution was the "ongoing adjustment" to the manager position: one example (perhaps an influential

4. Corina Şuteu is a researcher and an expert consultant in the fields of cultural policies, cultural management and international cultural cooperation. Formerly, she was Head of the Cultural Management Unit at the Institut de l'Homme et de la Technologie based in Nantes, France; President of the European Forum of Cultural Networks. Between 2008–2012 she was in office as director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York.

one) is Alexandru Dabija's management at the Bucharest Odeon (1991–1994; 1996–2002). He proposed a consistent reform system for the subsidised theatre institutions from within, even against the mainstream. And this method is still applied under the management of the actress Dorina Lazăr. The starting point of this internal reform was the idea that theatre must strive for more than the production as such; the theatre must also become a place generally open to culture and dialogue, to research, experiment and even to failure along the way. Thus, within Odeon, a "new philosophy" of the institutional image appeared, along with several programmes aiming to foster the opening of theatre toward dance, imitative arts, social debate, new playwriting and a new generation of directors.

Tompa Gabor at the Cluj Hungarian Theatre had similar vision from the beginning of his regime: a manager and a theatre institution which succeeded in working together for more than twenty years, in a sound state and with an artistic authority that many others could only dream of. The Cluj Hungarian Theatre also added to its portfolio several prestigious international festivals, and in recent years it has organised constantly a European festival called "Interferențe" (Interferences).

We also need to note several other successful, though considerably different experiences, on a longer or shorter term. One example would be the typical "export" repertoire policy, built on ample performance structures particularly targeting touring. Usually, this kind of policy was anchored by the organisation of equally complex festivals: the best example of that vision was used by the actor-manager Ion Borghină for more than a decade at the Craiova National Theatre and carried forward to date by director Mircea Cornișteanu. Another would be the experience of more than a decade (1993–2003) of the dramatist Radu Macrinici at the Andrei Mureșanu Theatre in Sfântu Gheorghe, relying on the alignment of the repertoire to an international festival of experimental theatre, called "Atelier" (Workshop).

Nevertheless, the most spectacular management formula is the one of the Sibiu "Radu Stanca" National Theatre, following the tragic and unexpected loss of director Iulian Vișa. Here, in a National Theatre funded from the local budget and not from Bucharest, actors Constantin Chiriac and (the late) Virgil Flonta have changed, through the International Festival, more than the theatre; they have changed the city itself. In 2007, Sibiu was the first Romanian city designated European Capital of Culture, and this is undeniably due to the management model of the theatre and the great theatre

festival – a festival so impressive that later its model spread to a multiple network of other successive festivals and events in the city, throughout the year.

Between Export Theatre and the Theatre of Efficient Communication

The model of the ample performance, the theatricality of which relies on visual metaphor, which is able to transcend language barriers, and which is well served by refined choreography and music, seems to have lost, at least partially, its weight, given the subsidised institutions' financial situation in the last decade.

There are multiple causes for this: firstly, after the year 2000, production costs became increasingly more challenging to sustain, while financial rationalisation got considerably more difficult. Financing sources through sponsorship and public-private partnerships were few and unreliable. Secondly, "exportability" to Western festivals has decreased, starting around the same period: the interest in the "exotic virtues of universal reflection of the great Eastern Europe production" has shrunk, other topics and (experimental) visions have conquered the market of great cultural tourism. At the same time, the market itself is antagonised by dilemmas and contradictions: consider the 2005 debate about the Avignon Festival, when lots of critics and artists accused the festival's management of incoherent selections and cloudy concepts on "experiment values"[5]. The time of large movements of artistic companies – Andrei Șerban's *Greek Trilogy*, in 1991–1992, had almost one hundred actors and technicians, Purcărete's *Phaedra* (1993) more than fifty, his *Danaïdes* (1995) more than one hundred, Mihai Măniuțiu's *Richard III* (1994) more than fifty etc. – has been left somewhere behind, even if the dream of it is not fully extinct (see also the favourable promotion and success of Purcărete's *Faust* at the Edinburgh Festival, in 2009).

However, despite the fact the system was not reformed, *per se*, despite the fact that, at the level of the policy-makers and a large proportion of the critics, the canonical model of the performance is still the one of the 1990s, the landscape seems to change naturally.

Mutations have occurred with the generation change among the directors and the actors. Through their productions, young directors have produced long-term fractures in the theatre mentalities and praxis, opposing – some of them overtly, others discretely – the homogeneous model of metaphorical and universal aesthetics. Some of the directors who entered the scene between 1991 and 2000 have

5. Cf. Olivier Neveux, *Politiques du spectateur. Les enjeux du théâtre politique aujourd'hui*, Paris, La Découverte, 2013

shown substantially more interest in anchoring the performance in contemporaneity, particularly by using foreign or recent Romanian texts, on challenging topics and structures. Such an example is Theodor Cristian Popescu, a cosmopolitan director, constantly interested in the promotion of contemporary texts; or Vlad Massaci or Cristian Juncu – both already recognised for their productions that focus on the actor's flexibility and creative, participatory strength; or Radu Alexandru Nica, a director with a very dynamic programme, who relit the debate on the relationship among film, theatre and dance, particularly by rewriting and adapting, in his initial years of creation, a series of famous films (Kaurismaki's *I Hired a Contract Killer,* Scola's *Le Bal*, von Trier's *Breaking the Waves*...)

Alexandru Dabija, was a director from the generation of the 1990s celebrities, author of a series of famous metaphoric-allegoric stage productions (*The Orphan of Zhao*, 1995, *Saragossa 66 Days*, after Potocki, 1998) who later proved his extraordinary versatility, by combining cyclically the performance of reinterpretation of the classics (Chekov, Caragiale, Büchner) with minimalist projects of rewriting and reinterpretation of the fairy tale, in contemporary key, for adults (Nikolaj Nosov's *Dunno* – 2005, *A Phone, an Omelette and a TV Set* – 2006, *OO!* 2009, *Absolut!* – 2011 and *The Goat and Her Three Kids* – 2012, the last three based on famous stories of the Romanian classic Ion Creangă).

Radu Afrim launched in 2000 and quickly obtained both fame and his own – mainly young – audience, irrespective of the city where he chose to direct. His dramatic aesthetics does not counteract, for that matter, the metaphoric-visual model, which had prevailed throughout the previous decade, but his productions, most of the times relying on very recent contemporary texts (Vișniec, Vîrîpaev, Berfuss, Dorst etc.) stand out through the harmony of the topics (heroes' fragility, violence, marginalisation, fracture in communication) and through a lyrical approach of the stage image and of the actor's potently emotional performance.

At present the landscape of the publicly funded productions at national level is more aesthetically varied than a decade ago and, almost involuntarily, this landscape has attained a deeper interest in the efficiency of communication with actual local audiences rather than in exportability, which I think is a sign of vigour.

It is, however, equally true that, in most of the large cities, particularly those with national theatres, that the establishment and development of these audiences depends directly on the festival system, which has grown into a major goal and an additional ele-

ment of encouragement for each theatre. In Bucharest, apart from the National Theatre Festival funded by the Ministry of Culture, but managed by UNITER (a festival constantly subject to controversies and polemics), FestCo, organised by the Comedy Theatre, has also known a bold growth. In Timișoara, the Festival of Romanian Playwriting extended with a section on the European performing art. Iași boasts a festival of theatre schools. Oradea hosts a Festival of Short Plays. Craiova has a Shakespeare Festival. In Cluj, there are the National Theatre "International Meetings" and the Hungarian Theatre "Interferences". Finally, the reputation of the Sibiu FITS has exceeded, deservedly, the Romanian frontiers.

All this had happened even though in the last years the funds granted from the centre or by the local authorities for such events have decreased considerably, bringing about the disappearance of an entire series of smaller, but traditional festivals. It seems that, at least for the time being, even though unaware of it, theatre production in Romania (in Romanian or not) is reformed from within, in spite of the absence of a prospective cultural policy.

SERBIA

National People's Theatre Playhouse

Igor Burić

When defining a certain concept, as in any serious business, one always ought to be doubly vigilant; this applies to the concept of national/people's theatre as well, in fact – especially to this concept.

Designation – definition, a valid method to determine a concept, ought to aim towards a general meaning which applies in all particular circumstances. In this particular case, that kind of task would lead to a paradox in many different ways. At the very beginning, when it comes to Serbia, we could assert that the concept of national/people's theatre cannot be fully grasped, primarily due to its content which must be filled with particular history, depth and clarity of vision – of grasping the matter one is dealing with.

Basic dilemma when it comes to defining the concept at issue, this coinage, is substantially based on a linguistic, ideological, historical and political, and a scientifically grounded difference between the concepts of people and nation. The concept of people (ethnos) historically and politically means something quite different than the concept of nation. While the concept of people is inextricably linked to the common habits, needs, or in short, a culture, nation is a concept related to the formation of the state as we more or less know it today, with its power concentrated in the sovereign and the ruling apparatus.

Due to the above-mentioned distinction, the difference between theatre viewed as people's games (in today's words: plays for the crowd), and theatre as a field of struggle for higher purposes of both national and artistic significance has never been lost. Analogous to the original, antique theatre, these goals have always been regarded as a thing of great importance.

An additional trouble is that Serbia, as a national/ethnic community, existed in different political forms and under various government frameworks. It is a well-known fact that modern states in Europe that emerged after the French Bourgeois Revolution (1748) practically unified peoples (ethnos) into nations. Modern Serbian statehood came into being first under Ottoman and then under Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it first achieved its independence as a supranational state, as a unified state of South Slavs. This form

remained still vital after the World War II, and historically speaking Serbia has only recently become a completely independent and autonomous state – mostly according to the will of the nations-peoples that were established by the never-truly-actualized identity of Yugoslavia.
Of course, one could object that concepts of nation and people have gradually become intertwined through history and that dealing with this issue today is not only difficult, but quite unnecessary. The Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, since its foundation in 19th century, has been one of the crucial cultural institutions of national importance, could be annulled by equating the concepts of people and nation; however, it is not that simple, for many more reasons than it appears at first glance. All these reasons are crucial for insight into the essence of what our language, in this case the phrase national/people's theatre, is telling us in Serbia.

Introducing the Theatre

In our analysis of the concept of national/people's theatre, one shouldn't lose sight of the philosophical thesis that the theatre par excellence originated in the (anti)political practice of the ancient world, primarily ancient Greece. The theatre was not the place of gathering (agora), it was place where the unthinkable was said out, a place of strife that always generated new dynamics between reality and the possibilities of experiencing it.
Until the medieval defining of the Serb community in the 13th century, brought together by the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the playhouse had used to function only as the theatre. This is another terminological difference we encounter, which tries to tell us that pozorište (playhouse, but also synonymous with theatre in general) is a word of Slavic origin that is etymologically related to the word pozor (attention, something intended for the public view) and –ište, a suffix that used to denote a place.
Word gluma (acting) is also a word of Slavic origin. Its meanings used to be joke, game, play, laughter. Also, it used to be synonymous with the word licepodhodnik, in its distinctive semantic connection with impersonation, false representation, pretence or hypocrisy. This made the playhouse/theatre "institutionalized" among Serbs – placed it in its time-space, labelled as something that was not meant to have seriousness. (In Lacanian terms, the theatre never had its unification, residing somewhere among ritual, liturgy, tragedy, comedy, folklore, though not only in Serbia…[1])

1. We will stop with the double appointment "playhouse/theatre" here. It was only used to point out that the theatre with its amalgamation of various artistic disciplines has always been *more than real life*. Ironically, it has also meant a lot more for those who have a lot less in life.

The people, and therefore, the theatre, haven't been treated more seriously even a few centuries later, even though it was a part of religious and school education. In the meantime, Balkan Peninsula wasn't left unaffected with the epoch of humanism and Renaissance, which primarily occurred in the Republic of Dubrovnik. The legacy such as the one of Marin Držić, a Renaissance writer of Dubrovnik, due to the "invisibility" of the difference between people and nation, has remained a subject of a lively dispute about the copyrights between Serbs and Croats, who share a common language, though their nationality is mainly identified with their religious affiliation to Orthodox or Catholic Church. Even here, the theatre has had its role, since, from a historical perspective, many nations have emerged by affirming their language and their culture through the institution of theatre, and Serbia is one of its striking examples. Practice of institutionalizing theatre occurred almost side by side with the creation of an independent state and its institutions, at that time with a monarchical structure.

"Theatre" practised by the Church, which portrayed a certain religious content, whether Catholic or Orthodox, also developed in schools, and it was the only autonomous theatrical practice before the mundane (people's) theatre, in the form of theatre troupes, started to emerge in the more developed areas, particularly Vojvodina – part of the country north of the Danube, located in the Pannonian plain, where a large number of Serbs had migrated during the Ottoman rule, and had become close to the great educational and cultural centres of what they now tend to label as the "Middle Europe". Unlike the Oriental South, Mediterranean West, the northern part of modern-day Serbia was under a strong Hungarian and German political and cultural influence. In Vienna, the reformed national language of Southern Slavs was affirmed, and in Hungarian capital, on the basis of the migration legacy of Szentendre, first plays were performed in Serbian language and Matica srpska, Serbian literary and cultural institution, was founded in 1826.

With the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from Serbia in 19th century (aphorists would call that the moment when Serbia came out of the Medieval Period), under the rush of another Empire – Austro-Hungarian, an aspiration arose among the South Slavs to live freely like other European nations. Suffering and false hope have never made a good polity, as confirmed in the later and more efficient geopolitical times, with its elaboration of rights rather than obligations.

Before the foundation of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad in 1861, the town which gained the status of Serbian Athens after the relocation of Matica srpska (although Novi Sad didn't formally belong to former Serbia, which was an autonomous principality under the Habsburgs), only Knjaževsko-srpski teatar existed in Kragujevac (1835–1836), while somewhat later the theatrical culture in Serbia was represented by the Flying Amateur Theatre. The Flying Amateur Theatre was formed in 1838 in Novi Sad, signing its first professional contracts with the Germans in Zagreb, at the time when theatres and theatre halls were being built in other places as well.

Initially, quite in accordance with the eternal antagonistic duality within the very nature of the theatre, Serbian National Theatre functioned thanks to the wealthier and more educated citizens. Here, "National"[2] had to be related primarily to the language that was spoken. At the same time, the common people weren't familiar with that language, since a high percentage of them were illiterate.

It was immediately evident that, regardless of how much art can be the Zeitgeist of an epoch, Serbian National Theatre was a part of a broader political project. Here is another testimony of the equation of national and ethnic question: "Among you, Serbs, theatre is not some kind of a wandering troupe that wanders out of survival need to earn its bread, but it is there to inspire chivalrous and heroic spirit among the people, to be its consciousness and pride, and to give enthusiasm for all that regards Serbs as a people, and which is not allowed to be!"[3] Franz Joseph, the monarch, nevertheless indicated that it has to be, and Serbian National Theatre continued to perform Serbian patriotic historical and didactic plays and also the so-called "posrbe", which were mostly Hungarian folk plays with singing.

In Belgrade, which had meanwhile become the capital of the Kingdom of Serbia, a strong demand had arisen and projects had been established, however, a theatre building hadn't seemed to appear yet. Nevertheless, only one guest performance of the ensemble of the Serbian National Theatre was enough to initiate the political leaders' will, and in 1869 Belgrade and (the official) Serbia established their National Theatre. It was a true curiosity that the entire ensemble of the Serbian National Theatre got engaged in Belgrade, which made the theatre life of Novi Sad to practically start over from scratch.

It is necessary to realize that in this moment the fate of people's/national theatre in Serbia that we are interested in (its modernity in Serbia) has been determined.

2. The author here uses the term "narodno" equivalent with "people's", in light of the previous distinction between the concepts of people (narod) and nation (nacija), although the most common ("official") translation of "Srpsko narodno pozorište" is Serbian National Theatre. (Transl.)

3. Count Coronini (Timisoara, 1859), quoted from: Petar Marjanović: *Mala istorija srpskog pozorišta* 13–21. vek, Novi Sad, 2005.

The Transitional Period

Specific characteristics of discourse on nations and peoples, and therefore the people's/national theatre, would appear in the South Slav territories in its full extent only after the war and, from a historical point of view, after forming the first and fully national and at the same time "people's" republic, since the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, that was formed after the First World War, included Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.

Although the war was victorious, the theatre was practically lost. Just when the audience became tired of patriotic feelings, though the theatre started to develop, the entire infrastructure was destroyed and poverty became an everyday phenomenon. It was noted that the National Theatre in Belgrade started its work as late as 1922, while Serbian National Theatre conjoined with the National Theatre in Osijek in 1934. National theatre in Serbia was to wait its final definition until after the Second World War, in another "episode" in which it lost an already weak identity and continuity towards the totality to which it aspired. The divisions were inevitable and they had a general importance for the theory of art. While on one side, in the middle of the war, the theatre was evolving as a centre of humour, on the other side, equally understandable, there was a need for the theatre to become revolutionary again. Interestingly enough, there is one contemporary work of the Serbian theatre with an independent production, though on the national scene, that thematises precisely the revolutionary achievements of the so-called national liberation struggle, through poetry and theatre of movement.[4]

The concept of national/people's theatre in Serbia wouldn't have been complete without the fact that the communists have persecuted and even executed the actors that were employed during the occupation by the Nazi Germany. The communists, however, were also the ones who systematically supported theatrical artists, mostly by the act that declared them as the public servants, in 1946. The revolution was over, and they were able to return to the creation of the conventional repertoire, of which artists principally took the advantage for professional training and regaining the courage for bigger challenges, such as Beckett or Ionesco, that were completely unexplored at the time.

Besides the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad and the National Theatre in Belgrade, the Yugoslav Drama Theatre appeared, after the Second World War, which can, in the present context, tell us a lot about the complex significance and intertwining of the con-

4. The play *Not Red, But Blood!* which was based on the motifs of the Yugoslav communist, revolutionary and Partisan Poetry, directed by Bojan Đorđev (*Walking Theory*, Belgrade).

cepts of nation and people in Serbia, and now former Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Drama Theatre has almost automatically assumed the role of leader in the theatrical life and culture, since by the cultural politics of Yugoslav self-management socialism it had to bring together the best of the theatre lives of the republics and provinces that formed Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija). Unburdened by the needs of national repertoire that ever since has developed through the classics, domestic drama and comedy, Yugoslav Drama Theatre has shown, ironically enough, a supranational tendency which in present-day's geopolitical space shows itself as international. Serbian translation of the word international – međunarodna (which literally translates as „between the peoples") – only further contributes to the confusion about these concepts.

The Fall of the Wall

Although the "fall of the Berlin Wall", a term used to euphemistically disguise capitulation of the communist ideology in Eastern Europe, the rise of capitalist liberal ideology could not hide its antagonism – the growing nationalism. Thus, the theatre returned again from the universally artistic and supranational divisions and operational structures to its national idiom. It is not a coincidence that the Yugoslav Drama Theatre was the first to have suffered a debacle in 1990, at the very beginning of the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, when the staging of the play "Saint Sava"[5] was interrupted by political activists for "insulting religious and national feelings".

However, there have been problems during the age socialism as well. It was almost a commonplace that a work of art had to pass a number of commissions and boards in order to be approved on the basis of its being in accordance with the spirit of the revolution. It is also a well-known fact that Yugoslavia fostered a soft kind of totalitarian ideology. Despite the guaranteed "freedom of creation" there were reported attempts of belittling of some artists, even by the former sovereign Josip Broz Tito, and it is no secret that something similar is happening now, with the dominant figure in the government of Prime Minister Vučić.

Still, the half-century of continuity, foundation of significant institutions such are Sterijino Pozorje Festival, Yugoslav Theatrical Games in Novi Sad (1956), inclusion in European integrations at the professional level – symposiums of critics and theoreticians within the

5. A play about the life of the first Serbian saint and one of the founders of Serbian medieval statehood, written by Siniša Kovačević and directed by Vladimir Milčin at the *Bosnian National Theatre* in Zenica.

Sterijino Pozorje Festival, establishing The Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF) in 1967, theatrical museums of Serbia in Belgrade and Vojvodina in Novi Sad, proved to be more than fruitful for the theatrical culture, not only in Serbia, but Yugoslavia in whole. Regardless of how much we protested against the procedures of communism, it is starting to look much lighter compared to the harsh conditions of the private ownership economy.
Cracking at the seams of the concept of a federal state, a return to the old divisions once enabled by the freedom of association, which was later interpreted as imposed, was not painless. The idea of Yugoslavia has been executed, just at the time when the idea of the community of European nations began to spread. People's theatre became national once again, just like the festivals, in the time when the only international things in Serbia were the sanctions. Though this time, the propaganda that was rather a nationalist one, didn't need the theatrical stage. New and reliably established media mechanisms that were used in virtually every 20th century war – newspapers and television, were quite sufficient.
In complete isolation, the hard-won positions of cultural institutions were starting to collapse. In the early nineties, during the successive wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, BITEF was based on the domestic production, as well as Sterijino Pozorje Festival, which was drastically minimized since it no longer represented and gathered the entire cultural elite of a large and pretty powerful country. The space has become narrowed and inhibitory for the events of theatrical life – repertoires, theatre periodicals and publications, etc. On top of all the wars and political tensions, in year 1999, Serbia was bombed by the NATO and that was the point that actually marked the beginning of the end of the socialist regime that was inherited from Yugoslavia. Consequently, it was the end of the ideological and political changes in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall to the current war in Ukraine. The artist was again on a tightrope.

Theatre Strikes Back

For cultures that are small and weak, such as Serbian, Croatian, or any other that belong to former Yugoslavia, remains nothing after the Cold War but to regain their role that was mentioned in the beginning of this conceptual declaration about national/people's theatre in Serbia: (anti)political. To escape from the agora again. Theatre on the margins once again sparks with the possibility of playing something important, of saying something important and

thus, in the manner of Sophocles' Antigone, burying at least some of the bones of past wars.

With the introduction of the multi-party system, especially after the democratic changes in 2000, Serbia felt the strong impetus that everything should be restarted, which has finally happened. The system with an error was reopened.

The parties did nothing else but set up jobs, trying to govern more or less successfully, in the old populist form which cared more, though, about the fact of illiteracy among half of the population (people, nation).

Theatre, however, renewed vitality, among other things, paradoxically, thanks to the inertia of the previous period. Although from an organizational perspective completely social realist, especially in the hands of some more skilled theatre managers, theatrical institutions are mostly managing entirely pursuant to the requirements of the moment – they are "floating". Finally, a series of ambitious projects despite being under by the cultural expectations of the public, still manage to provoke the very essence of theatrical creation – public speech in a certain place, which is worthy of (aesth) ethical evaluation that is directly connected with the modes of government. There are many concrete examples, plays and authors who have stirred up the areas much wider than those that are left available for them in contemporary Serbian society, which very well describes the "concern" for the culture and the arts. And now we arrive at the last premises for our currently final thesis regarding the concept of people's/national theatre in Serbia, within the East European Performing Arts Dictionary.

Nowadays in Serbia there are several theatres of national importance. Most of them are situated in Belgrade and in the northern part of the country. It would be cynical but true to say: too many theatres of national importance. Being under the patronage of the state in Serbia is more of a curse than a blessing. Unless it means a state job, a powerfully crafted idiom that also stems from a sort of theatre; a humorous TV sitcom in Serbia of the same name.

BITEF has never been and never will be, or more precisely doesn't have to regain its role in the development of national/people's theatre, but also the world theatre. Sterijino Pozorje Festival has returned to the increasingly frequent connection with the concept of Yugoslav Theatrical Games. Logically, the festivalization of culture went in favour of the festival, as a process that is indisputably documented in the transition from the subsidized work to its

labelling as a luxury, commercialism and excess. Luckily, excess is the only thing that matters.

Every important social phenomenon occurs in a particular social context. The very context, in turn, gives rise to a situation in which an individual sometimes, like Hamlet (to stay close to the theatre), has no way out. He must carry things through until the end, regardless of the tragic consequences. Such individuals in this region are born and "formatted" just in time to be politically partly composed of Yugoslav, part of national self-determination. Still often under the threat of war or any other patriotic and pseudo-patriotic temptation, they decided to act socially beneficial and dispel the clouds of mist over the heads of those who think it's not their fault. That everything around them, sometimes even the theatrical art of Serbs themselves, is a part of an international conspiracy and attempted denial of the centuries-old sacred traditions.

With the exception of alternative independent theatres which based on the experiences of artistic collectives of neo-avant-garde troupes paved the way of contemporary theatre trends, in the last decade it were the people's theatres in Serbia that longed for and that were given recognition beyond the borders of ethnic and national. References for further exploration of these initiatives, if not rebellions, are the plays such as *Cowardice* by Oliver Frljić and *Koštana* written by Bora Stanković and directed by Andras Urban, both of the National Theatre in Subotica.[6] They represent at least the very minimum of established positions that, subversive or not, disturb the established order of classics, comedy and domestic drama – in a word, the traditional characteristics of the "well-crafted repertoire" of the Serbian people's and national theatre.

Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad and National Theatre in Belgrade are the only theatres of national importance where the drama, ballet and opera are all still staged. The magnitude of these cultural institutions in a powerless state administration with a weak will for a more specific cultural politics is largely just a burden, and their management, especially the National Theatre in Belgrade, undergoes frequent changes. Serbian National Theatre during the last decade has still managed to remain more relevant and very often even risky, engaging in dialogue with tradition, not only at the level of homage, but at the level of a serious relationship that creates a new distinctive cultural quality. Frequent promotion of younger generations of playwrights, directors, actors, search for new performance practices in all genres, opening up new experimental areas such as the Forum

6. "Cowardice", among other things, directly thematized the transition from the ideology of brotherhood and unity to the ideology of the civil war, with the Srebrenica massacre as the last marker of crimes of the 20th century Europe, while "Koštana" through a classic of Serbian dramaturgy, portrayed the horror of modern manipulation of the concept of national values.

for New Dance, to some extent still maintains the vitality of this cultural institution in Novi Sad.

Of course, one should mention once again the Yugoslav Drama Theatre, which, despite the attacks for its name, to paraphrase the playwright Martin Crimp, endures it all with a reputation of a promoter of the most important theatre artists and works, among which are those by Biljana Srbljanović, who is certainly the most famous female author in this region, among no matter what nation/people. The play *Born in YU* by Dino Mustafić, a project whose creation, under the dramaturgical leadership, involved different generations of actors, shook up the "new national revival" in the region once again.

The impression that self-management socialism and a decentralized form of some kind of federalism, is much better suited for the term "people's theatre". Some more exclusive, richer nations and cultures, on the other hand, can afford to keep even a royal, not only national theatre names.[7]

Translated by Branko Latinćić

7. Finally, to justify the fact that English term *national,* which is used to translate the term *narodno* (Serbian National Theatre), is not satisfactory like the German term *Volk*, which in German culture and language in turn has its intertwining and interweaving with today's term *national*. Thus, maybe one could try with the term *people*, because it is closer to the spirit of the idea of the "free proletariat", which was promoted in the communist society.

SLOVAKIA

The Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava

Ľubica Krénová

The Slovak National Theatre (further the SND) with its seat in Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic, originated as the result of a nation-building movement, an instrument in developing awareness of the nation's own identity and a means of crystallizing and cultivating the Slovak language. The founding law of the SND does not contain a preamble[1] which would define its contemporary function intellectually; it can be stated, however, that in terms of its focus and effort it takes on the same role as other representative theatres in Europe. Today the SND is no longer an instrument for the creation of a national identity, but an instrument for maintaining awareness of it in the nation and one of its primary symbols. At the same time, however, it is a means of shaping a new national awareness as well as expressing feeling of fellowship towards the larger supra-national whole, to the world and to the universe.

Distinctive features of the SND

The SND was formed on Czech foundations and thus automatically took on the heritage of the past, a model of a multi-ensemble theatre, which in both countries persists up to the present as a so-called "Czecho-Slovak speciality".[2] The more commonly occurring European models of top representative establishments of its type – independent national dramatic theatres and equally state subsidized opera and ballet ensembles which also bear the word "state" in their name – are more relevant in terms of their specific roles. The model of the three-ensemble national theatre thus today represents a traditional historical anachronism; however, its persistence in Slovakia – aside from the long-term tradition – is conditioned by a key particularity, which is the new SND building. While the National Theatre in Prague, under a single and unified banner, makes four independent artistic ensembles available and administers to five buildings and therefore could be more easily divided into independent economic, administrative and artistic units, the SND, by putting the new SND building into service in 2006, has further strengthened the common foundation and practical indivisibility –

1. Currently Act no. 385/1997 Code of Laws (Act on the SND).

2. Bohumil Nekolný, *Idea národních divadel v Evropě v úhlu pohledu od Lipan*, in: Slovenské divadlo. Anthology of contributions from the conference "Idea národného divadla v 21. storočí" (The Idea of a National Theatre in the 21st Century). Bratislava: Institute of Theatre and Film Research Slovak Academy of Sciences, Edition 58, 2010, no. 3, p. 256.

concentration – of nearly all artistic and non-artistic activities in a single mechanically unifying building.[3]

The SND has a particular exceptional position in both the country and its capital city. If, according to sociological understanding of democracy and prosperity progress is only possible thanks to systemic competition and conflict of opinion, then the SND works in a very harmonic and non-competitive external environment. Its harmonic development is ensured primarily by the protective cover of its promoter (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic) and the highest state subsidy assigned by it. At the same time it is legally the only national theatre in Slovakia. The harmonic and largely uncompetitive environment is also the creation of the contemporary Bratislava theatre network of so-called stone repertory theatres with permanent ensembles, which is today nearly identical with the state described seventy years ago by the versatile Slovak playwright Peter Karvaš, when he warned against stagnation in the development of the Slovak theatre as a consequence of non-existing smaller and varied theatres.[4] The myth that has arisen that a national theatre is the best is also artificially supported by the fact that the relatively young theatrical tradition in Slovakia does not have conceptual cultural-political support for its development, and unfortunately, sufficient pressure of young theatre people or generational groupings "from below" do not exist.[5]

The oversized capacity of the halls at the new SND building – in comparison with many national or representative theatres in the other European – it is impossible to understand as a mere statement of "socialistic megalomania". In contrast, they are the norm; more precisely, they only approach the norm. The expression of ill-considered megalomania is indirectly proportional to the number of residents of Bratislava and Slovakia (Bratislava has 411,000 residents, which is approximately one-third as many as Prague, which is smaller than Budapest, which is smaller than Warsaw).[6] Although the new SND building is no longer a topical subject, it is impossible to say that it is only "sound and fury, signifying nothing", because a building so conceived " stands in the way" of the formability of creation in the sense that its immutable parameters condition it (the selection of productions for the number of spectators, a change of paradigm in scenographic designs, possibly the need for spectacularly attractive productions).The dramatic hall limits staging designs due to its semicircular seating stalls and the excessively wide stage without the necessary depth. The opera and ballet hall is an architecturally better solution, but the capacity is

3. Aside from the original, today the Historical Building of the SND.

4. An exception is the so-called Independent Stage, which in the course of development of Slovak theatre and theatrical presentation at present is the most progressive component.

5. In recent years this has been shown in the selection proceedings for Divadlo Pavla Országha Hviezdoslava obtaining the freed-up space after the SND moved into the new building. The battle of non-tendentious, non-ideological projects ended without a victor. This was also shown in the selection process for the post of director of Nová scéna, a second theatre in Bratislava in the competence of the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic, the winner of which was a commercially thinking theatre person with a focus on mainstream theatrical aesthetic (musicals and popular comedies) who abdicated even before the end of the period following the nomination (in 2015). The future of that theatre is currently unclear.

6. For comparison: The hall for Drama SND = 649 (Bratislava has 400,000 residents); the hall for Opera and Ballet SND = 861; Historical building of the SND = 611; National Theatre Prague = 996; State Opera = 1041 (Prague has 1,200,000 residents); Nemzeti Színház = 619 (Budapest has 1,700,000 residents); Teatr Narodowy: 600 / 200 / 80 viewers (Warsaw has 2,000,000 residents).

still over-sized. On the other hand it is necessary to emphasise that SND artists and SND collaborators themselves are today honestly attempting to create in themselves a positive relationship toward the building, primarily through creation and acting in the sense of an unparalleled theatrical "art of the moment".

Historical basis of the SND and the history of its development prior to 1989

Slovak professional theatre originated on the threshold of the first Czechoslovak Republic. However, Slovak theatre prior to the year 1919 had for nearly nine decades evolved exclusively as an amateur activity. The originally small provincial town today known as Bratislava, due to its location, was a natural crossroads of three ethnic units – German, Hungarian and Slovak – which was also reflected in its three names: Pressburg – Pozsony – Prešporok. Although the Mestské divadlo (Town Theatre) in Bratislava was built in 1776, it primarily served German and later Hungarian theatre people. Only on the initiative of Slovak-conscious cultural staff, politicians and amateur theatrical groups was the Družstvo Slovenského národného divadla (Slovak National Theatre Association)[7] founded in 1919 specifically for the purpose of laying the foundations of professional theatre. The beginnings of Slovak professional theatre, however, were reliant on help from practising Czech theatre people for several reasons. The main problem was there was no professional experience with operating a theatre or even a capital fund in Slovakia at the time. Therefore, when on 1 March 1920 SND artistic activities commenced, its first director was Czech theatrical manager Bedřich Jeřábek and the basic ensemble was made up of his then Východočeská divadelná spoločnosť (Eastern Czech Theatrical Company) from Pardubice. Awareness about the establishment of a Slovak professional theatre, which would function as a travelling theatre, began with the founding of the Slovak-wide Vidiecka divadelná činoherná spoločnosť SND (Country Theatrical Drama Company of the SND) – the so-called Marška – in which two-thirds of the actors were also Czech actors. The remaining third was made up *de facto* of the founders of Slovak professional theatre recruited from among amateurs, however – Ján Borodáč, Oľga Országhová-Borodáčová, Jozef Kello, Andrej Bagar and prompter and stage manager Gašpar Arbét. SND drama was performed in the Czech language, as Slovak was still only seeking and verifying its theatrical form. Until 1932, when independent

7. On 8 November 1919.

Slovak drama originated under the leadership of J. Borodáč, only one-third of the repertoire was presented in Slovak. The division of the dramatic ensemble into Czech and Slovak groups lasted until 1938. Czech theatre people helped the development of Slovak professional dramatic arts mainly in the 1920s and 1930s. Many, however, didn't perceive it only as help but often as an interesting, even significant work opportunity. Many Czech artists (Drahoš Želenský, Viktor Šulc, Jozef Budský and others) connected their professional lives to the Slovak theatre in a large measure. Some, however, predominately directors, opera singers and composers, had to leave the SND involuntarily as a consequence of the origin of the first Slovak Republic – primarily for racial reasons. Many productions of the major Slovak director Ján Jamnický became artistic gestures of discontent with the Slovak state. During the post-war development the epochal year of 1948 brought a class-based perspective on the assessment of productions and at the same time the censor's scrutiny. Drama in particular found itself under the ideological microscope of real socialism – in the sense of its original application to the creative method of socialist realism. The dramaturgic selection of titles was greatly influenced by sovietisation and original work written on the subject of building socialism. A partial relaxation occurred after 1956, and thus the most progressive creative period came during the 1960s. The Europeanization of drama provoked an original directorial vision (Jozef Budský, Pavol Haspra, Jozef Palka) and both stimulated a whole line of exceptional acting performances. The period of so-called "normalization" in the 1970s again subjected theatre to censorship, with a preference for the Soviet repertoire. Directors found an opportunity for metaphorical expression of the lack of freedom and ideological subjugation in productions of world classics. The likes of Pavol Haspra, Peter Mikulík and Ľubomír Vajdička, and by the end of the 1980s Miloš Pietor and Vladimír Strnisko, inventively worked with encrypted allegories in sub-texts and stage images, which brought a cathartic effect to the spectator. If the non-artistic functions of the SND (nation-building, Slovakization and professionalization) in drama at first fulfilled a more important role than artistic and aesthetic functions, this changed with the founding of the opera and operetta ensemble. Internationally renowned names were linked with its beginnings – Czech composer and the second director of the SND Oskar Nedbal and his nephew Karel Nedbal, who in contrast to others gave preference to artistic questions. However, for nearly twenty years Opera SND remained in fact Czech. Since opera is

overall the triumph of the culture of the 19th century, when the Slovak nation was only forming, Slovakia does not have its own opera tradition. Awareness about Slovak opera on the international scene grew, however, with the opus *Krútňava* (1949) (often presented as *Katrena*) by Eugen Suchoň only a quarter-century after the origin of the first Slovak opera work *Kováč Wieland* (1926) by Ján Levoslav Bella. Later the operas of Ján Cikker – *Vzkriesenie*, *Mister Scrooge and Hra o láske a smrti* – achieved international renown. From the 1970s the so-called Slovak school of opera also began to become established internationally. A new generation of fine Slovak opera singers (Adriana Kučerová, Štefan Kocán and others) was and still remains linked to the success abroad of individuals (Lucia Poppová, Edita Gruberová, Gabriela Beňačková, Magdaléna Hájossyová, Peter Dvorský, Sergej Kopčák, Miroslav Dvorský). The iconoclastic contribution in the staging level of Opera SND came only shortly before the political-social changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. The staging of *Faust a Margaréta* (1989), directed by Jozef Bednárik, has not been surpassed until today.[8] The building of an SND ballet ensemble was dependent on Czech artists for even longer. The first artistic heads were Czech dancers Václav Kalina and Marta Aubrechtová. After them, the Italian Achille Viscusi played a crucial role with stabilizing the ballet ensemble and in building up a solid repertoire. After eight years Viscusi's pupil, dancer Ella Fuchsová-Lehotská took an interest in his position. Her short era was also linked again to Czech choreography. The period from 1940 through 1945 is linked with the name Maximilián Froman, a representative of the Russian ballet school, a pupil of the world-renowned Sergej Diaghilev. No school of dance existed in Slovakia institutionally; therefore the ensemble was built mainly by recruitment of Czech and Russian ballet dancers. Two other Czech ballet artists, Rudolf Macharovský and Stanislav Remar, alternated in the posts of artistic heads up to the 1960s. The ballet *Orfeus a Euridika* to the music of Slovak composer Tibor Andrašovan from 1949 is considered to be the first Slovak ballet.[9] The first Slovak choreographer was Jozef Zajko, who introduced the ballet *Z rozprávky do rozprávky* in 1956. Thanks to the origin of an artistic school, the ballet troupe within the SND was significantly Slovakized in all creative elements from the 1960s. Despite this fact, however, other Czech choreographers – Boris Slovák in the 1970s and Libor Vaculík in the 1980s (first as a dancer, then as a choreographer) – both obtained major positions here.

8. The staging obtained in 1990 at the prestigious theatre festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, the main critics' prize, which is still an unsurpassed success of Slovak opera internationally.

9. Later, in the estate of composer E. Suchoň the score for a ballet pantomime titled Angelika from 1926 was found, which he composed as a seventeen-year-old student; this is considered historically the first Slovak ballet. Ballet SND gave it its world premiere in 2015.

Drama SND, Opera SND, Ballet SND after 1989

The first post-revolution director of the SND, dramatic director M. Pietor, died suddenly after several months, but it was as if he had left the stamp of his ethical concept of theatre on his successors. These were his most important actor, who by then had become an established director, Martin Huba and his most talented pupil – director Roman Polák. The free 1990s, under the long-term management of actor Dušan Jamrich, enabled the practical application of more progressive opinions on directing, but also more open dramaturgy. Obligatory pro-Soviet "simplicities" were replaced by previously taboo absurd or existential drama, but also by simple-minded comedies or even musicals. The pressure of nascent capitalism on the crucial criterion of commercial success affected the SND. The theatre confronted it by enhancing its repertoire with various important examples of contemporary world drama and with a gradual generational turnover of actors as well as directors (Roman Polák, Martin Čičvák). It is possible to state with satisfaction that Drama SND at present, since 2013 again led by director R. Polák,[10] represents a primary driving force of theatre and has an outstanding ensemble of actors of all ages. Since the opening of the new SND building, in the sole creative space of the building – the Studio which serves Drama SND – the most surprising productions in terms of staging and differentiated in terms of form have taken place: *Stalo sa prvého septembra, Holly Roth*[11], *Pohania*[12], *Mobil mŕtveho muža*, *Bratia Jurgovci*, *Rechnitz – Anjel skazy*, *Karpatský thriller*, *Ilúzie*, *Láskavé bohyne*[13], *Mojmír II.* and others. Drama SND is also credited with launching the chamber space Modrý salón (Blue Salon) into operation as well as initiating the international theatre festival Eurokontext.sk. Director R. Polák artfully named the first practical season the "season of sin" (*Karpatský thriller*, *Madame Bovary*, *Leni*, *Láskavé bohyne*, *Desatoro*). The second, on the occasion of the jubilee the 95th season, was dedicated to productions of Slovak classics and at the same time original drama inspired by the foundation of the theatre. The dramaturgy of individual seasons is conceptual and does not present the usual eclectic mix. The circle of regular guest directors from the ranks of the middle-age generation is enhanced by diverse talents such as Marián Amsler, Rastislav Ballek, Eduard Kudláč, Michal Vajdička and others. The calls of past years for young directors are no longer necessary. In recent seasons fifteen young directors were given an opportunity and half of them made their debuts. The most marked proof is

10. R. Polák was director of Drama for the first time from 2006–2008, when he voluntarily resigned after disagreements with then general director S. Hroncová.

11. The production was awarded the prestigious Slovak Theatre Prize DOSKY 2010 in two categories – best production of the season and best performance by an actor, i. e. Robert Roth.

12. The production was awarded the prestigious Slovak Theatre Prize DOSKY 2012 in two categories – best director, i.e. Marián Amsler, and best performance by an actress, i. e. Božidara Turzonovová.

13. The production was awarded the prestigious Slovak Theatre Prize DOSKY 2014 in three categories – best production of the season and best director, i.e. Michal Vajdička, and best performance by an actor, i. e. Ľuboš Kostelný.

Desatoro[14] (2014), a project of ten mini-productions on the subject of the ten commandments, which is performed in non-traditional parts of the new SND building.

Slovak opera as a staging art began to assert itself more notably at the end of the 1980s in parallel with a generational shift. Traditional approaches with an emphasis on quality of the music and singing reflected the directorial values of Miroslav Fischer, Július Gyermek and Branislav Kriška. These have gradually been replaced by the more modern approaches of Marián Chudovský, Martin Bendik and Pavel Smolík. The publication of musicologist Michaela Mojžišová, *Od Fausta k Orfeovi*,[15] takes an expert look at the different production poetics in the post-revolution development of Opera SND. Development of Slovak ballet as an independent art is presented in detail by the professional publication of Emil T. Bartko, *Podoby slovenského tanečného umenia 1920 – 2010*.[16] He himself, working in several positions, shaped Ballet SND, especially in its post-revolution development, and he is credited with the establishment of new Slovak choreography talent (Ondrej Šoth, Igor Holováč, Juraj Ďurovčík and others) in the early 1990s. An important milestone in the history of the theatre was the opening of the new SND building in 2006, or more precisely, moving into it under the management of general director Silvia Hroncová.[17] The most significant change occurred in the ballet ensemble. Thanks to his experience abroad, the director of Ballet SND Mário Radačovský managed to push through a contemporary view on ballet; however, at the expense of classic ballet. He preferred contemporary trends in the sense of a specific intellectual response to our world through a physical theatre which transcends dance genres and ideas about the possibilities of movement. After the resignation of S. Hroncová in 2009 following a no-confidence vote from the opera and drama ensembles, perhaps the most critical period in the history of the SND occurred, when the theatre was dominated by the newly nominated general director Ondrej Šoth (2010 – 2011).[18] The situation stabilized upon the arrival of Marián Chudovský as the general director and the new ensemble directors – Roman Polák (Drama SND), Friedrich Haider (Opera SND) and Jozef Dolinský (Ballet SND). In the productions of Opera SND a qualitative shift can be felt in the musical works, credit for which goes to internationally acknowledged director F. Haider, this time working as musical director of Opera SND.[19] Among others, a major step was taken with the original opera of Ľubica Čekovská *Dorian Gray* (2012). In its contemporary work Ballet SND attempts to maintain a balance between two lines, those of classical and neoclassical ballet,

14. The production was awarded the prestigious Slovak Theatre Prize DOSKY 2014 in the category of discovery of the season for drama, i.e. Daniel Majling and Miriam Kičiňová, and the Grand Prix of the international theatre festival Nová dráma / New Drama 2015.

15. For more detail, see Michaela Mojžišová, *Od Fausta k Orfeovi*. Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2011, 222 pp.

16. For more detail, see Emil T. Bartko, *Podoby slovenského tanečného umenia*. Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2011, 260 pp.

17. However, thanks to her personal contribution another iconoclastic production originated in the new history of Opera SND – *Orfeus a Eurydika* (2008) directed by Mariusz Treliński – bringing to the stage an inter-medial theatrical aesthetic.

18. The director of Ballet SND was Andrii Sukhanov, under whose leadership older productions of O. Šoth were predominately recycled. Peter Dvorský was named the director of Opera SND and Vladimír Strnisko director of Drama SND. For more details, see: Krénová, Ľubica. *Víťazstvo Coriolana a porážka coriolanovského dobyvateľa a pomstiteľa alebo Poučenie z krízového vývoja*, in: KØD /konkrétne o divadle/, 2011, year 6, no. 9, pp. 27 – 31.

19. In 2015 Slavomír Jakubek took over the post of Opera SND.

and further to lead a dialogue with the developmental tendency in a broader international context.
Despite the above-mentioned determining features which the new SND building represents, it is necessary to state that new and unique productions are continually appearing that not only overcome these features but often creatively transform them to their advantage (e.g. the dramatic productions of *Anna Kareninová, Oblaky, Električka do stanice Túžba, Veľa kriku pre nič, Aj kone sa strieľajú, Madame Bovary* and others.; the operatic productions *Lohengrin, Rigoletto, Bohéma, Piková dáma, Romeo a Júlia* and others; the ballet productions *Spiaca krásavica, Sen noci svätojánskej, The Tempest, Angelika* and others).

National, multicultural and universally humanistic

A national theatre, just as a nation, is an entity which does not have a definitive form and is subject to development. It is impossible to constrict the mission of a national theatre in the 21st century to a programme of presenting national, i.e. original literary work. If in the given understanding we look at the national opera or national ballet at the SND, neither the composers nor the librettists, nor often even the directors, choreographers, conductors and interpreters, fulfil the condition of being "national". The worldwide phenomenon of "the purchase of players for the national teams" long ago caused a major shift in the understanding of opera and ballet between the concept of national and its contents, and thus the impasse of a "national" opera or a "national" ballet – anchored in the name of the theatre – is more evident in this regard. Contemporary opera and ballet productions in the SND, in parallel with international practice, are also multicultural works. This applies equally to the general effort at obtaining the most prestigious artistic casting possible in all creative elements; therefore, the fact that the multicultural works created belong to the environment in which they originate and operate aesthetically primarily makes the resulting productions opuses of a national character.
Drama SND understands the mission of a national theatre in the sense of an institution serving all of Slovakia and at the same time as a key cultural establishment which is responsible for forming the idea of the nation and supporting its humanistic pan-European awareness. Through the staging of works as well as in its programme, it confronts the current consequence of globalization, such as global dehumanization and the depletion of moral and social responsibility.

Evidence of free thinking and free creation, for example, is the politically open production *Karpatský thriller* (2013), which originated on the model of domestic dramatist Eugen Gindl and which reflects the social-moral impact of corruption in Slovakia in the 1990s. Another season, titled Morálka 2000+ (Morality 2000+), is also devoted to support of generally ethical positions.

On one hand the SND attempts to preserve and develop authenticity, but at the same time it also tries to achieve artistic and cultural-social resonance in the wider European space. The Eurokontext.sk[20] festival in particular has the ambition of opening doors to Europe as well as brokering a direct confrontation of domestic issues in a wider European context, which may in future years inspirationally influence the artistic level of the SND itself.

Translated by Ivan Lacko

20. It was held for the first time in 2014 and was through presentation of a selection of current European theatrical productions in drama, opera and ballet. In 2015 it was held for a second time, focused exclusively on drama. The 2016 festival will be devoted to opera and ballet productions. Afterward, the focus will then alternate every two years between drama and opera and ballet.

SLOVENIA

National Theatre: Between "nationalising" of culture and "culturalisation" of the nation

Aldo Milohnić

Usually, the emergence of national theatres in Europe is explained as a historical-cultural phenomenon coinciding with other simultaneous social developments on at least three levels: enlightenment at the level of ideology, an emerging bourgeoisie providing its social and material background, and political processes establishing nation states (Pušić, 1997: 68). In practical terms, a national theatre is often identified by its visible components, such as monumental buildings, permanent ensembles of actors with an excellent training in diction, and its role as a meeting-point of national, cultural, political and economic elites.

And just as there are different views on the role and image of today's national theatres in Europe, this is also true of the way they have developed over the last 200 years. Within theatre historiography, however, there is a widely accepted general division between an early (aristocratic) period in the 18th century and a more developed (nationalistic) phase in the 19th century (Wilmer, 2008; Carlson, 2008; McConachie, 2008; Kruger, 2008; Tőkei, 2006; Sušec Michieli, 2008a, 2008b, Milohnić, 2011). The first example of a national prototype of European theatre was the Comédie-Française, established in the late 17th century (1680) in Paris. The theatre was a model for establishing other monarchical theatres in 18th century: the Burgtheatre in Vienna (1741), the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen (1748), and the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm (1788). A second wave of national theatres emerged in 19th century in association with a strengthening of nationalistic movements throughout Europe. Institutions like the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen, the National Theatre in Helsinki, the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and the National Theatre in Prague, among others, arose from this process. These two types are rather conceptual abstractions and some examples demonstrate various combinations, such as in the case of the Polish National Theatre. Another interesting exception is the National Theatre in Hamburg, established in 1767 and financially supported by the rich merchants and bankers of the free trading city-state of Hamburg. This theatre experiment lasted only two years but it had important consequences for the further

development of national theatres in Europe, especially of course in German-speaking *Länder*.

Paradox of the national theatre

The playwright and critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was also an important supporter of the National Theatre in Hamburg, he contributed drama texts and one hundred essays on theatre. In the very last essay of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, he writes resignedly about the rather difficult mission of 'getting the Germans a national theatre, while we Germans are not yet a nation'. This sentence is usually quoted in order to illustrate the situation in Lessing's Germany, where people were not yet (sufficiently) acquainted with the ideology of national unity, so that an attempt to establish a national theatre was not supported by a ruling ideology providing fertile ground for that type of theatre to flourish.

Some 15 years after the publication of Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Friedrich Schiller propagated the idea of a national theatre as a co-creator of a nation in a public speech later on published under the title *The Stage as a Moral Institution*. According to Schiller, as one of the most influential engines for encouraging national sentiments, a national theatre institution has a moral obligation to participate in co-creating a German nation. As we can see, Schiller tried to shed a more optimistic light on Lessing's rather pessimistic perception of the national theatre as a quixotic idea in a social environment not yet constituted as a nation. In his romantic attitude, Schiller calls for unification of all artistic forces (poets, painters, etc.) in an attempt to found a national theatre as an indispensable attribute of the German nation: 'in one word, if we had a national stage, we would also become a nation' (Schiller, 2005: 106; English translation in Wilmer, 2008: 15).

Lessing's lament about problems with a national theatre without a nation was theoretically grasped by Slovenian author Zoja Skušek in her book *Theatre as a Form of Spectacular Function* (1980). 'How to make theatre, which would grow up from a nation and would address itself to a nation, if that nation doesn't exist yet?' asks Skušek (Skušek-Močnik, 1980: 26). She explains that Lessing's statement is trapped in a paradox: national theatre without a nation is, according to Skušek, a 'paradox of self-referentiality': 'if one says that the theatre is heteronomous (i.e. it derives its existence not out of itself but out of something else, in that case of 'moral character' of a nation), it will appear that it is autonomous (i.e. it

is precisely theatre which makes possible that 'character'); in other words, if we say that the theatre is autonomous, we have to say at the same time that it is heteronomous' (Skušek-Močnik, 1980: 27). We can add that Skušek's conclusion about Lessing's paradox of self-referentiality also holds true for Schiller's statement ('if we had a national stage, we would also become a nation'): a simple rotation of premises cannot solve the paradox. *Stricto sensu*, once the nation is established, the national theatre becomes obsolete (i.e. its "historical role" is fulfilled). Nevertheless, social reality shows a rather different picture: although modern nations emerged many years ago, national theatres have persisted from the late 18th century till today.

Emergence of national theatres of south-Slavic nations

Some hundred years after it was formulated in the writings of Lessing and Schiller, the above mentioned paradox of self-referentiality has found a rather late echo in a pamphlet written by Slovenian writer Josip Jurčič. The elements of his "formula" were not completely the same as in Lessing's and Schiller's versions but the very logic of the argument was quite similar. In his contribution, published in the journal *Slovenski narod* in 1868, Jurčič offered a patriotic *plaidoyer* for Slovenian national theatre. Precisely the national theatre, insists Jurčič, is a precondition for dramatic masterpieces to emerge: 'Isn't it so that the old Greeks made their theatres before they got Sophocles and Aristophanes? Isn't it so that Germany had its theatres before Lessing, even before Chronegk and Gottsched? Isn't it so that all these distinguished men came out of their time, national necessity, visible assignment, and existing theatre? (...) We shouldn't hesitate to say directly to those people that in Ljubljana, main city of the province of Carniola, we need a Slovenian theatre due to political and national reasons.' (Jurčič, 1868; quoted in Pušić, 1997: 103)

As we can see quite clearly, Jurčič's position is that – as well as "national necessity" (*narodova potreba*), *Zeitgeist* and other ideological preconditions – the national theatre is an infrastructural fundament and a *sine qua non* for dramatic poetry with "national character" to flourish. An inherent paradox in his thesis, namely having a national theatre with only rare examples of drama plays representing that same nation (its "national character"), is veiled by Jurčič's ad hoc solution to patch up the repertoire with 'German, French and English drama plays' as well as with 'Slavic literature'.

The roots of the national theatres of all three constitutive nations of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes date from 1860s: national theatres were established in Zagreb in 1860, in Novi Sad a year later, in Ljubljana in 1867[1] and in Belgrade in 1869. As we can read in the founding documents, all these south-Slavic national theatres were grounded on similar principles, such as raising national consciousness, moral education and the glorification of national history.

As stated by theatre historian Barbara Pušić, in the 19th century Slovenian theatre – like many other theatres of non-German nations in the Habsburg monarchy – was "an important substitute for political activity, statehood, and educational system. It also served as a space for linguistic, cultural, and national identification and an area of distinction from dominant neighbouring cultures, particularly German and Italian" (Pušić, 2004: 66). Being part of many different supra-national state structures until the end of 20th century, Slovenian nationalism was always related to culture, especially to the Slovenian language and printed culture.[2] According to the same author, the type of nationalistic ideology prevailing among Slovenes in the last two centuries is cultural nationalism: 'The thinking that culture is the basis, aim, justification, and main purpose of national existence was predominant in the public from the beginning of the nationalist movement at the end of the eighteenth century right up until the day Slovenia became independent. Within this there was the gradual emergence of the ideological phenomenon that the "nation" is the central, fundamental, exclusive, and key bearer of cultural production.' (Pušić, 2004: 65–66)

National theatres in "old" and "new" Yugoslavia

Until the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy, Slovenian theatre production was marginalised in comparison to German-speaking theatres, which were generously supported by the economically powerful minority German population. After the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, however, this situation was radically changed: German theatres in Ljubljana and Maribor were closed and their buildings were taken over by two professional Slovenian national theatres. In 1919 the Council of Ministries of the Kingdom SHS proclaimed a profound theatre reform. National theatres were arranged in three categories: firstly national theatres (Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana); secondly, subsidized regional theatres (Skopje, Novi Sad, Sarajevo,

1. Foundation of the Dramatic Society (Dramatično društvo) – this event is nowadays interpreted as the beginning of the Slovenian national theatre.

2. The first book in Slovenian appeared in 1550 and the first newspaper was published in 1797.

Split, Osijek); and thirdly, municipal and travelling theatres (Niš, Kragujevac, Varaždin, Maribor).

After the Second World War, socialist Yugoslavia was established as a federal state consisting of six federal republics and two autonomous regions. Federal entities had their national cultural institutions, including national theatres. They performed in the official languages of their respective republics, in two autonomous regions also in Hungarian and Albanian. It was, of course, a fruitful situation for writing new drama plays in national languages. Statistical data for Slovenia speaks for itself: from 1867 (foundation of the *Dramatic Society*) until the end of the Second World War (almost 80 years), approximately 220 new Slovenian plays were staged in Slovenian theatres;[3] on the other hand, from 1945 to 1985 (i.e. in only 40 years of its existence as a federal republic within the Yugoslav federation), approximately 420 new Slovenian plays were shown on professional stages in Slovenia (Lukan, 1998: 65–66).

By 1954 as many as 18 new national theatres had been established across Yugoslavia: eight in Serbia (of which four were in Vojvodina and one in Kosovo), seven in Macedonia, two in Croatia and one in Montenegro. The number of national theatres was constantly increasing and in 1990 there were as many as 35 national theatres in the former Yugoslavia. This trend of establishing new national theatres persists even in the 21st century. For instance, in the Slovenian city Nova Gorica, the theatre previously known as Primorsko dramsko gledališče (Primorska Drama Theatre)[4] was renamed the Slovensko narodno gledališče Nova Gorica (Slovenian National Theatre Nova Gorica) in 2003.[5] It is significant that this symbolic shift of the theatre in Nova Gorica from one among many regional theatres to third Slovenian national theatre (and the first new national theatre in Slovenia since 1918) occurred only half a year before Slovenia entered the European Union and the border between Slovenia and Italy was symbolically removed precisely between Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Gorizia (Italy).[6]

Slovenian national theatre after 1991

In the years preceding the collapse of federal Yugoslavia, and for various reasons, the prevailing political atmosphere in Slovenia pulled the country away from the community of Yugoslav nations. At a certain moment, even the economic sphere started to behave in the manner of "national economies", preaching "national interests" and introducing protectionism in trading with companies

3. Until the end of the First World War professional theatre productions were mainly based on the texts written by German dramatists – 40% of all works staged until 1918 (Pušić, 2004: 87). Even the first secular play performed in the Slovenian language was a rewriting of Josef Richter's *Die Feldmühle*.

4. Primorska is one of the regions in Slovenia.

5. In the last two decades (i.e. in the first 20 years of Slovenia as a sovereign country), three new municipal theatres were established: in Ptuj, Koper and Novo Mesto. Several commercial theatres were also opened towards the end of the 1990s.

6. The Paris Peace Treaty created a new border between SFR Yugoslavia and Italy, leaving Gorica (Gorizia), the traditional regional centre of the Soča and Vipava Valleys, outside the borders of Yugoslavia. Due to these geo-political reasons, a completely new town called Nova Gorica (New Gorizia) was built on the Slovenian (Yugoslav) side of the border after 1948.

from other federal republics. As a consequence of radicalisation of inter-republic relations at the political and economic level, national and cultural stereotypes gradually penetrated the public sphere. The shift away from south Slavic culture is traceable in repertoires of Slovene professional theatres, as clearly demonstrated by Slovenian theatre historiographer Barbara Sušec Michieli: '[T]heatre analysis in the 1980s and 1990s shows radical changes within the programming strategy and reveals an interesting analogy among the political, economic, and cultural systems. (…) The political shift away from Yugoslavia led to the rejection of plays by authors from other Yugoslav republics.' (Sušec Michieli, 2008c: 40–41)
In fact, by abandoning Yugoslav drama production in their programmes artistic directors of Slovenian professional theatres were practising the same "protectionist" politics towards other federal republics as was carried out by sales managers in Slovenian (and not only Slovenian) companies and, at the political level, by political elites and various national "associations of writers". On the other hand, it seems plausible 'that this radical break with the Yugoslav cultural space occurred only within the institutional theatrical system, and not also within alternative, independent theatre and popular culture.' (Sušec Michieli, 2008c: 41)

National theatre as a useful object of revisionist theatre historiography

It is an obvious fact that all European national theatres have specific and unique histories. On the other hand, there are also some similarities among them, such as a very strong emphasis on performing in national languages, staging traditional repertoire and plays by national dramatists, supporting rather than opposing the ruling ideology (or ideology of the ruling class), substantial financial revenues from public budgets, and respectable buildings representing the economic and political power of the national bourgeoisie.
All these elements can be traced in the history of Slovenian national theatre from its early manifestations in the 19th century up to recent developments in the early 21st century. Nowadays the defence and building of the nation are no longer its main functions, although the national theatre is still an important engine for constructing national and cultural identities. This operation is often highly problematic in terms of supporting political fantasies through one-sided selection of historical facts. For instance, in the period 1892–1914 'as much as half the entire acting company in Ljubljana was com-

posed of Czech, Croatian, and Serbian actors, although in studies it is normally only the Slovenians that are dealt with and not the "foreigners".' (Pušić, 2004: 73) Since 1991 national theatre historiography has not been immune to general revisionist tendencies to rewrite Slovenian history in the socialist period. It manifests itself in selective memory of the recent past, neglecting or even erasing the federal context of production and regular collaboration among theatres across the federal republics' boundaries 'as if the Slovenians had never had anything in common with the Balkans'. As if further stated by the same author, 'there appeared the tendency for Slovenian theatre and culture to be tied to the traditions that existed prior to the founding of Yugoslavia. In the 1990s the notion of "Central Europe" became fashionable, and this supposedly revived the importance of links with the nations of the former Habsburg monarchy.' (Pušić, 2004: 81)

One of the biggest changes in the Slovenian theatre of the late 20th century is that the national theatre still possesses an immensely strong position within the system of state cultural policy while, on the other hand, its real influence on different cultural identifications (including national identity) is rather limited. On the other hand, national theatre is still an important symbol of supposed identification with traditional culture and national *ressentiment*. As we tried to demonstrate in this paper, the concept of national theatre and the construction of cultural identity related to that concept, could have different ideological presuppositions: from the "nationalising" of culture (Lessing's option) to the "culturalisation" of the nation (Schiller's option). However, no matter which option prevails, the paradox of the national theatre remains active – and it holds true also for Slovenia and other newly established nation states of the former SFRY.

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UKRAINE

The initial stage of the formation of the concept of a Ukrainian national theatre occurs in the first three decades of the 19th century, a time when the literary arts were under the sway of romanticism. Captivated by folklore, this idealisation of peasant life organically resulted in the first professional Ukrainian playwrights Ivan Kotlyarevsky and Hryhoriy Kvitka-Osnovyanenko fashioning comedic work in accordance with the romantic tradition and all its attendant sentimentalism. Kotlyarevsky's 1819 comic opera *Natalka Poltavka* and his vaudeville of the same year *Moskal'-Charivnyk* both written for the Poltava Ukrainian-Russian Company, as well as Kvitka-Osnovyanenko's *Shelmenko-Denschyk* (1832–37), *Svatannya na Honcharivtsi* (1836) evidenced their zeal to sing the praises of natural characters, untainted by civilisation. These dramatic works gave rise to a stylised "stage" Ukrainian: one who lives by the laws of his ancestors, is guided by native, traditional wisdom, and who will never forsake his native soil.

Even the title of Kotlyarevsky's *Natalka Poltavka* (Natalka from the Town of Poltava) underscores this pristinely rendered Ukrainian locus, this love and ache for the fatherland, which would become the prime motif not only of the majority of musical drama, but would also lay the groundwork for national theatre and the first national classical opera as well, Hulak-Artemovsky's 1863 *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* (A Zaporizhian Cossack Beyond the Danube). With their patriotic fervour, the works were unfailingly popular with audiences, and remain so even now, a century-and-a-half later.

The concept of a national theatre in the romantic ideal reached its fullest embodiment in the work of Taras Shevchenko. His 1843 Cossack-era, patriotic melodrama, period piece *Nazar Stodolya* marked the next stage in the development of Ukrainian theatre, when amateur and professional productions became more than just dates on the cultural calendar, but events which bore deep socio-cultural significance. The daring warrior, a Cossack defender named Nazar, his beautiful bride Halja, their classic love, able to overcome any obstacle, the cunning and hypocritical elder Cossack Khoma Kychatyi – this entire system of images and interplay among the

characters was emblematic of Ukrainian romantic theatre of the mid-19th century.

The subsequent stage in the development of national theatre is connected to the creative work of figures from the late-19th century Ukrainian theatre known commonly as "the Coryphaei". These "Coryphaei" of the Ukrainian stage include dramatists Marko Kropyvnytskyi (1840–1910), Mykhailo Starytskyi (1840–1904), Ivan Karpenko-Kary (1845–1907), actor/directors Mykola Sadovskyi (1856–1933), Panas Saksahanskyi (1859–1940), and Maria Zankovetska (1854–1934). These men and women led Ukrainian professional theatre in Great (Central) Ukraine in the second half of the 19th century: pioneers of the musical-drama stage, and founders of the national school of the performing arts.

A social agenda lay at the heart of their ideation of a national theatre in the 1880s. In the absence of an independent state, the Ukrainian political and cultural elite had largely disappeared or been incorporated into the elite of other nationalities and states. The peasantry rose to dominance in the Ukrainian nation, occasioning the formation of a peasant culture. Correspondingly, the nearly constant oppression of the peasantry, which constituted the majority of Ukrainians, and the egregious social imbalance, compelled the national theatre productions to advocate for those on the lowest rung of society. This theatrical limitation was taken even further with a Russian government enforced ban on performances in the Ukrainian language, plays reflecting the life of the upper classes, and plays in translation.

The primary creative objective of the Ukrainian Coryphaei became the production and promulgation of national theatrical modes, that is, theatre nearer and more accessible to the people – the typical peasant, the educated, and the middle class. The visual style of this type of theatre was rooted in the folkloric, ethnographic codes of Ukrainian ethnicity, and it expressed itself overwhelmingly in visual media drawn from native artistry. The mimetic encapsulation of the Ukrainian macro- and micro-cosmos was being recreated on the stage, requiring significant and scrupulous attention to ethnographic and quotidian detail.

Those Ukrainian Coryphaei productions which best captured the language and ritual of folklore were deeply symbolic acts, acts which were moreover representative of pressing, socially-relevant issues of Ukrainian life in the mid-to-late-19th century. This bent toward the folkloric and ritualistic imagery was reflected in stagings which reproduced a visually arresting Ukrainian landscape and the incor-

poration of authentic articles – embroidered blouses, weapons, everyday items – in place of ordinary stage props, and a mise-en-scène which faithfully rendered the movements of ritual practice.

In addition, Ukrainian national theatre had taken the form of the musical drama, with music, song, and dance freely interwoven with the dramatic action. The music and choreography was not merely integral to performance, but also the canvas on which the drama was built. Distinctive from the function of music and plastic elements in contemporary stage productions, the scored and choreographed scenes in the Coryphaei performances slowed the pace of the action, complicating and expanding upon it, developing it visually.

Other development meaningful to the concept of national theatre occurred in Austro-Hungarian ruled western Ukraine. An identity manifested in exceptionalism, an "otherness", was central to the mindset behind the formation of the Ruska Besida Society, the first professional Ukrainian theatre in Galicia. Established in L'viv in 1864, predominate in its conceptualization and expression of the national idea was the autochthonous, i.e., 'native', Ukrainian, living an archaic lifestyle, possessed of a consciousness yet untouched by the societal processes of his day.

Ivan Franko, pondering the situation through the eyes of a critic and dramatist, perceived the flaw in this state of affairs and formed his own concept of "national theatre". His thinking, expressed in a series of critical articles, envisioned the active cultivation of a Ukrainian nation by theatrical means. With this objective in mind he reworked and translated European drama prolifically, and imbued his own plays *Ryabyna* (1893), *Stolen Happiness* (1893), and *Teacher* (1894) with this didactic spirit.

The administration of the Ruska Besida Society's theatrical activities – the company for whom Franko wrote – were complicated by more than just the difficulties of constant touring and budget shortfalls. Advocacy for the concept of national theatre depended also on the political debates of the day, debates in which theatre activists frequently found themselves involved. As the various Ukrainian political parties in Galicia went about defining the future of the "native Ukrainian", one necessarily engaged with either the cultural *milieu* of Muscovite Russia or that of Galician Europe.

A rational extension – and simultaneously, culmination – of the work of the Coryphaei came at the outset of the 20th century, and was centred around the activities of the first fixed Ukrainian theatre established by Mykola Sadovskyi in Kyiv in 1907. The theatre's repertoire included dramas and musicals (both opera and operetta),

with its artists participating in both these and other performances. Ukrainian classic works were also performed here, as well as a string of productions from western Europe, including works by Polish writers Bolesław Gorzcynski, Juliusz Słowacki, Lucjan Rydel, and Gabriela Zapolska. Russian writing was represented in the works of Gogol, Ostrovsky, Chekhov, and Andreev. Plays by Jewish authors were also performed.

Keeping in mind what was available to the Coryphaei Theatre, where all performances of translated work were banned, the production of their given repertoire was a significant accomplishment. The primary achievement, however, of Sadovskyi's theatre was the paving of the way for new – and modernist – Ukrainian plays. In the dozen years of the theatre's existence, plays by Vynnychenko, Oles', and Lesya Ukrainka's *Kaminnyi Hospodar* (The Stone Host) were produced, the majority as début performances.

The highest artistic achievements of the Sadovskyi theatre were realised in its musical productions, including *Rizdvyana Nich* (*Christmas Night*), *Natalka Poltavka*, *Eneida* by Mykola Lysenko*, Kateryna, Cavalleria rusticana, Prodana Nerechena*, et al. Dedicated to creating high level synthetic performances where Ukrainian folkloric metaphor was wed to the latest in technological advancement in the theatrical arts, and where the acting would not pale when compared to musical or dance performances, Sadovskyi engaged the leading masters of related artistic disciplines – artists, choir masters, and ballet masters – for his theatre.

In the years of the establishment of a Ukrainian state – 1917–1918 – Mykola Sadovsky declined to nationalise his private theatre. Accordingly, beginning in the spring of 1917, the work of the National Theatre fell under the oversight of the Ukrainian National Theatre Committee, an extension of the Central Council, the executive body of the Ukrainian People's Republic. In the fall of 1917, the first Ukrainian state theatre – the Ukrainian National Theatre (UNT), premièred the Vynnychenko drama *Pryhvozhdeni* (*The Nailed)*. Ivan Mar'yanenko headed the theatre whose acting troupe included L. Linytska, H. Borysohlibska, K. Luchytska, N. Doroshenko, I. Zamychkovskyi, F. Levytskyi, S. Karhalskyi, I. Sahatovskyi, and director H. Haevskyi and the theatrical scholar M. Voronyi, et al.

In a departure from the conventional repertoire of the day, the core of the UNT credo was distinguished by its accommodation of the best international and contemporary Ukrainian dramaturgy. This aesthetic platform, envisaged as distinct from the quotidian realism and ethnographic theatrical repertoire, was intended to respond

to the new socio-political and socio-cultural inquiries arising in Ukraine in connection with radical historic and political transformation the nation was undergoing. The sole, extant Ukrainian theatrical construct of the day (the national 'everyday' theatre) ceased to meet general aesthetic expectations, failing to satisfy a nation striving to modernise itself. Terminological permutations like "Europeanisation" and "Theatre of the European Repertoire" were brought forward, evincing a departure from the traditional repertoire and the folkloric/ethnographic manner of staging, and the adoption of the conceptually European "director-centred" theatre.

The greater part of the approaches conceived during the formation of the UNT – fully financed by the State, freeing the theatre from dependence on the taste of the wider public – were however never realised on account of the insubstantial designs, the absence of a fully-articulated creative strategy by its directors, and the endless internal creative conflict at the theatre. The UNT Company was simply unprepared to realise the replacement of a writer/actor-centreed theatre with a director-centric model. Moreover, the institutionalisation of the National Theatre in itself was no guarantee of the company's compliance in implementing programmatic objectives intended to lend credence to the policies of the newly-formed State.

Fittingly, the statist objective which the theatre was compelled to depict, was realised exclusively through the incarnation of historical plays like *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*, Starytskyi's *Oborona Bushi* (*The Defense of Busha*), and Starytska-Chernyakhivska's *Hetman Doroshenko*. Traditional Ukrainian classics continued to define the majority of the theatre's repertoire, with plays like Molière's *Tartuffe* demonstrating its European leanings. The theatre's reorganisation was rendered inevitable during the government Administration of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskyi. In the summer of 1918, the UNT's activities underwent reconfiguration resulting in the restructuring of the company into the State National and the State Drama Theatres.

During the Soviet period, the idea of a national theatre was completely excluded from the socio-artistic context, as a violation of the central, pro-governmental ideology, defined largely by internationalism and the emphasis on the creation of a new society – a "Soviet people". The concept of national theatre would have reanimated inevitably traditional Ukrainian values, already classified by the Soviet authorities as bourgeois nationalism. To a certain degree, the functions of the national theatre were borne by the company led by outstanding Ukrainian director Les Kurbas. In spite of the fact that the task of the director was to create a politically-relevant theatre,

Kurbas's creative theatrical efforts embodied his own understanding of "the Ukrainian notion" as a contemporary political entity and nation. Naturally, when his directorial work received recognition and publicity, the auteur who had advanced the cause of national theatre, (albeit indirectly via his political perspective), was rendered dispensable by the Soviet authorities and suffered repression.

Following Ukrainian independence in 1991, the first theatre to receive the "National" designation was Kyiv's Shevchenko Opera and Ballet Theatre. This theatre (descended from the Ukrainian SSR Liebknecht State Opera Theatre which débuted in 1919 following the nationalisation of the commercial operatic enterprise performing at the Kyiv City Theatre since 1867), marked its official opening on October 1, 1926 with a performance of Verdi's *Aida*. At that time operas began to be performed in Ukrainian.

At present, the National Opera Company is staffed by representatives of the older and middle-aged generations – L. Venedyktov, L. Zabilyasta, L. Yurchenko, M. Whopsha, V. Pyvovarov, S. Dobronravova, O. Nahorna, M. Didyk, R. Mayboroda, O. Mykytenko, T. Biletska, T. Borovyk, and H. Kushnirova. Recent Company premières of Verdi's *Nabucco*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Puccini's *Turandot* have met with high praise from audiences both domestic and international. The theatre's administration is currently composed of M. Dyadiura – principal conductor, L. Venedyktov – choir master, M. Levytska – principal designer, principal director – A. Solovyanenko, and general director – P. Chuprina.

In 1994 further two leading Ukrainian dramatic theatres in Kyiv received "National" status: the Ivan Franko Theatre and the Lesya Ukrainka Theatre of Russian Drama. The Ivan Franko Drama Theatre was established in January 1920 as a collaborative effort in the city of Vinnitsia by an acting troupe led by H. Yura from the Molodyi Theatre, and actors from the New Lviv Theatre led by A. Buchma.

The first years of the theatre were spent on the road, touring in the Cherkassy, Vinnitsia, Kamyanets-Podilskyi, and Kremenchuk regions. In 1922, it was made a State theatre, and by autumn 1923 it was working from a fixed location in Kharkiv. In its Kharkiv Era it produced international classics like Lope de Vega's *The Dog in the Manger*, Carlo Goldoni's *Mirandolina*, Mykola Kulish's *97 and Commune in the Steppes*, and Gogol's *The Government Inspector*.

In the autumn of 1926, a governmental executive ordered that the theatre be moved to Kyiv, where it continues to reside. Beginning in the late-1930s the make-up of the theatre's acting company would undergo significant change, adding former "Berezil" actors and

protégés of Les Kurbas, A. Buchma, N. Uzhviy, and others. Classic Ukrainian works and contemporary Ukrainian drama, in particular plays by O. Kornichuk, comprised the bulk of the venue's repertoire in the 1930s until the 1950s. Stagings of Kornichuk's work included productions of *Platon Krechet, In the Ukrainian Steppes*, and *Bohdan Khmelytskyi*. Also produced where *Khazayin* (*The Master*) by I. Karpenko-Kary, and Ivan Franko's *Stolen Happiness*, all expressing authentic local color while also conforming in their staged incarnations to the diktats of socialist realism.

It was a Les Kurbas disciple, Marian Krushelnytskyi, who led the troupe in 1953, replacing Hnat Yura, an advocate for everyday-realist theatre. Directors who staged plays at the theatre in the 1950s and 1960s include Krushelnytskyi (*Nad Dniprom*), V. Ohloblin (*King Lear*), H. Yura (*Svichyne Vesilya*), L. Varpakhovsky (*Optymistychna Trahedia*), and D. Aleksidze (*Patetichna Sonata*). In the 1970s the theatre was headed by S. Smiyan, whose repertoire featured plays predominantly by Ukrainian playwrights of the day O. Kolomiets and M. Zarudnyi, and whose acting company included leading thespians O. Kusenko, Y. Tkachenko, N. Koperzhynska, M. Zadniprovskyi, M. Kramar, and V. Plotnikova.

Between 1979 until 2001, the Ivan Franko Theatre was led by celebrated Ukrainian stage director Serhiy Danchenko. His directorial oeuvre on the Franko stage included Franko's own *Stolen Happiness*, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, Kotliarevsky's *Eneida*, *Tevye the Dairyman* by Sholem Aleichem, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and *Hunting Two Hares* by M. Starytskyi. During Danchenko's administration the theatre stressed and refined the best techniques of the Franko School of acting, and a new generation of leading Ukrainian actors developed: B. Stupka, B. Beniuk, A. Khostikoev, N. Sumska, L. Kubiuk, L. Smorodina, and O. Zadniprovskyi. From 2002 through 2012 the Ivan Franko Theatre has been under the stewardship of noted Ukrainian actor Bohdan Stupka. In his capacity as artistic director of the theatre he has introduced the practice of inviting internationally renowned visiting directors from other countries to produce performances. Acclaimed directors who have realised plays at the Franko include Georgian director Robert Sturua who produced Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; Ukrainian-born Canadian immigrant Gregory Hladiy, who directed Terry Johnson's *Hysteria*; Lithuanian Linas Zaikauskas handling Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; Poland's Krzysztof Zanussi directing Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt's *Partners in Crime*; and Lvivite Volodymyr Kuchynskyi with *Posered Raiu, na Maidani* (At the centre of Paradise on the Square), by Klim.

Today the Franko Theatre, considered the nation's leading stage, is led by artistic director Stanislav Moyseyev. His repertoire includes selected pieces from Danchenko's productions and features the varying styles of middle period Ukrainian directors including Petro Il'chenko's production of *Kaydasheva Simya*, Yuri Kochevenko's *Nazar Stodolya*, Andriy Prykhodko's *Faust*, and Yuri Odynokyi's *Marriage of Figaro*. The most recent première at the theatre was a banned production from the 1930s, the Mykola Kulish play *Maklena Hrasa*, adapted for the stage by Natalia Vorozhbyt as *Thistle Blossom* (Kvitka Budyak), and produced by Stanislav Moyseyev.

The Lesya Ukrainka National Academic Theatre of Russian Drama, (as the collective has been named since 1994), rooted in an earlier private theatrical enterprise, was founded in 1926. Actors joining the company came from the Solovtsov Russian commercial theatre which had been nationalised in 1919. Mykhailo Reznykovych has directed the theatre from 1995 until the present day. In recent years, the theatre's repertoire has expanded to include plays from *School For Scandal* by Sheridan, *The Government Inspector* by Gogol, *My Lady, Minister* by B. Nushych – featuring the leading actors of the theatre Tetyana Nazarova, Yuri Maxhuha, Larysa Kadochnykova, Natalya Dolya, Yuri Hrebelnyk, and others. In addition to productions by Reznykovych and resident theatre directors Lonid Ostropolskyi, and Iryna Barkovska, visiting directors who have directed plays here include H. Ziksin from Canada, and A. Katz from Russia.

In 2002 Lviv's Maria Zankovetska Academic Theatre was afforded national status. The theatre's official founding date is considered to be 1922 when, by executive order, the Kyiv Troitsky National Theatre was renamed the Zankovetska Theatre. Contemporary theatre historians have traced its beginnings to 1917 – the time of the establishment of the Ukrainian National Theatre, reorganised in 1918 as the State National Theatre, of which the Zankovetska of today is the direct descendent.

The original theatre administrators in 1922 were Boris Romantskyi and Oleksandr Korolchuk. The acting company included M. Zankovetska, I. Mar'yanenko, S. Pankivskyi, L. Linytska, V. Liubart and others. Since 1987 leading actor Fedir Stryhun has served as the theatre's senior director and artistic director. Over the last decade, productions at the theatre have included Bureviy's *Pavlo Polubotok*, M. Kulish's *Narodnyi Malachi*, Kotlyarevsky's *Natalka Poltavka*, I. Karpenko-Kari's *Khazayin and Sava Chalyi*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Lesya Ukrainka's *Orgia*, R. Lapik's *Derzhava Zrada*, Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, Lev Tolstoy's *Story of a Horse*, and F. Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*.

In addition to Fedir Stryhun's work which is featured prominently, the theatre stages shows and productions realized by Alla Babenko, Taisia Lytvynenko, and Vadim Sikorskyi. On occasion, politically "hot", and enigmatic treatments reach the stage, of which "UBN" – "Ukrainian Bourgeois Nationalist – is just an example.

Since 2010, ten national theatres have been working in Ukraine, in addition to the preceding, this includes theatres in Lviv, Odessa, Kharkiv, and Donetsk, the Kyiv Operetta Theatre, and the Donetsk Musical-Drama Theatre. The creative work of the majority of these venues is afforded an elevated status; in these theatres the interpretation of the concept of a "national stage" is solely the prerogative of their individual artistic directors, reflecting that director's particular aesthetic.

Determinative in the activities of any dramatic theatre is its aesthetic orientation and singular approach to performance, whether everyday/realistic, psychological, experimental, or romantic. In certain circumstances the concept of national theatre is affected by a regional hermeneutic and performs a representative function, in demonstration of the cultural-artistic processes of that region and its terrain, physical and metaphorical. The current state of affairs is yet further testimony to the truth that when considering the development of the concept of national theatre over time, and that development in its various manifestations as realised in the work of its creative talent – in Ukraine, the definition of National Theatre remains open to debate, characteristically equivocal.

Translated by Joel Rakoš

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BELARUS

The notion of independent theatre in the context of today's Belarus can be approached from two perspectives. On the one hand, 'independent' means absolutely autonomous from the state, both in terms of finance (operating without the governmental support) and ideology (pursuing its own repertoire policy, operating beyond the framework of the contemporary Belarusian state ideology). A theatre company of this kind can either be overtly oppositional (Belarus Free Theatre) or refrain from expressing its civic position (Korniag Theatre, SKVO's Dance Company, InZhest Physical Theatre).
On the other hand, 'independent' may be understood as alternative in terms of aesthetics and form. That is: using an experimental form which is uncommon in the context of state-controlled Belarusian theatre. (The notion of 'experimental' in this case is heavily context-dependent, because what has already become part of repertory theatre in the West, still remains experimental in Belarus.) It is not uncommon that 'independent theatres' of this type, while standing away from the official theatrical process, nonetheless receive government grants. The activity of the Centre for Belarusian Drama (CBD) affiliated with the Minsk-based Belarusian Drama Theatre (RTBD) is a case in point. Being a government institution, the Centre is concerned with providing support for and fostering development of the contemporary Belarusian drama, runs playwriting laboratories and organises public readings. However, not unnaturally, being aesthetically independent, it remains dependant in terms of ideology, not allowing itself any criticism of the authorities and avoiding pressing social and political problems.

The first circle. Studio theatres of the 1980s

The conventional starting point of independent theatre in Belarus may be set in the 1980s which witnessed the upsurge of the experimental theatrical studios movement in the country (primarily in Minsk) with dozens of projects, quite different in terms of form and ideas. Sure enough, some particular theatre productions standing out of the mainstream Soviet Belarusian theatre, dominated by

psychological realism, had appeared even earlier. Just to give an example, it is a unique fact in the history of Belarusian theatre that the celebrated play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett was staged as early as 1968 in Minsk, for the first time in the Soviet Union (!), by the Belarusian artist Uładzimer Matrosaŭ. It is not unnatural that the performance was met with hostility and banned shortly thereafter. (Matrosaŭ returned to Beckett in twenty years, in the late 1980s, when he founded, together with a group of professional Minsk-based actors, the Lik studio theatre). But it was the 1980s when these piecemeal one-time initiatives merged into a powerful movement to be noticed and discussed. This growth of activity was undoubtedly associated with the political processes in the country: such phenomena as perestroika, glasnost, growth of civic and national awareness contributed to changes in the theatrical process.

Starting with 1980, in Belarus there appeared in sequence unique theatre groups, both professional and amateur, which commonly operated from the premises of community centres where they found necessary rehearsal facilities. In her little monograph *Studiynye teatry Belarusi 1980–1990 godov* (*Studio Theatres of Belarus of the 1980–1990s*][1], the Belarusian theatre director and academic teacher Halina Hałkoŭskaja makes the observation that these theatrical studios started their activities mainly with exploring Western European intellectual drama (S. Beckett, E. Ionesco, S. Mrożek and others) which was unofficially banned in the USSR until perestroika. Around this time, the ban was also lifted from many Belarusian dramatic works which had been labelled by Soviet ideologists as 'nationalistic' (e.g. the play *Locals* by Y. Kupala or works by F. Alachnovič), and stage directors started to resort to these plays to raise the issue of national self-awareness before their audience. It was essential that every studio aspired to elaborating its own unique language. This made it possible within a decade to master diverse theatrical forms and methods, starting with conceptual issues and finishing with performance techniques.

One of the most significant theatrical formations was the Gesture physical studio headed by Vyacheslav (Slava) Inozemtsev. Classic pantomime, clowning, commedia dell'arte and – later – studying the non-conventional Japanese Butoh dance made the Gesture studio unique on a national scale. Their entire creative development was a continuous state of exploration, ranging from preoccupation with the theatrical traditions of the past (street theatre, the culture of folk humour) to studying contemporary physical theatre forms. The eclecticism of the Gesture studio has become their signature style

1. H. Hałkoŭskaja, *Studiynye teatry Belarusi 1980–1990 godov*. Minsk: Belorusskaya gosudarstvennaya akademiya iskusstv 2005, p.152.

and contributed to the company's uniqueness, not only in the Soviet Union (and later in the post-Soviet space), but also abroad. Ryd Talipaŭ, who established On the Victory Square studio in 1988, tried to implement the idea of conceptual theatre. By relying on the practice of European stage directors, Talipau merged performance and audience spaces in his productions, which was a daring innovation for the theatrical Minsk of the time. The studio gained prominence due to their performance *Strip-Tease* based on Sławomir Mrożek's play known for a stylish artistic solution (which would become later Talipaŭ's signature mark) and featuring naked bodies of the actors as the logical finale of the total psychological 'undressing' of the play's characters according to the director's design.

The Dzie-Ja? theatrical studio[2] headed by Mikałaj Truchan and Vital Barkoŭski was another bright phenomenon of Belarusian theatrical scene. In his production of V. Seglinš' *Illusion*, Barkoŭski employed the method of physical impulse theatre. In later productions staged in his own Act Studio, Barkoŭski, being influenced by the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, extensively used the naked body, figurative signs, monotony and repetitiveness. Truchan's performances based on F. Alachnovič's *Ghost*, U. Karatkievich's *Grief* and N. Gogol's *Dead Souls* which he staged in the Dzie-Ja? Minsk Drama Theatre (the studio was awarded this status in 1992) became legendary in the history of Belarusian theatre. Critics emphasise the inimitable style of his productions: classical texts were boldly re-interpreted, completely submitted to the director's plan, and became screenplays for performances on stage. Disturbing linear-time narrative, exploring archaic types of Belarusians, rethinking classical texts in the context of the day, emphasizing the bonds between the performance and its environment – these are peculiar features of Truchan's creative work. His performances were repeatedly included in the programme of the Edinburgh Festival (1995, 1996, and 1997) and acclaimed by English critics[3].

The theatrical studios "Dialog" (which grew later into the Alternative Theatre) headed by Vytautas Grigaliunas, "Kruh" headed by Natallia Mickievič, and "Abzac" headed by Alaksandr Markievič and Uładzimer Savicki were also known for their original theatre programmes.

In view of the growth of these studios' popularity, not only in the Soviet Union, but also abroad, their leaders strove for official recognition of their activity which would result in these studios being provided with support including funding. In 1989, the Association of Theatrical Studios was established, which provided the auspices for several editions of the Studyjnyja Kalady Festival. All the necessary

2. The name of the studio is based on a word play of the Belarusian дзея (act) and дзе я? (Where am I?). (Translator's note)

3. *The Scotsman* daily newspaper, for example, gave four stars to Truchan's production of the play *The Devil and the Old Woman* by F. Alachnović (1995) and five stars to F. Alachnović's *Ghost* (1996) and *Collapse* based on Shakespeare's works (1997).

conditions were present for these studios' experimental activity to become part of the professional Belarusian theatre scene. Most of these projects, however, have not survived due to partly economic and partly political reasons, and since the mid 1990s the theatrical studios movement has significantly declined. For the time being, Slava Inozemtsev's project has been the only one which held true to its aesthetic values. Despite its poor material conditions and using solely its own resources, the theatre (under its new title of InZhest) not only continues to perform on the stage, but also runs a studio that provides it with its own pool of trained actors. Following the death of M. Truchan, the Dzie-Ja? Theatre has lost its one-of-a-kind vibe and is now part of Belarusian repertory theatre under the name of Novyj Teatr (New Theatre].

The root problem with these companies now, however, is not that the experimental activities of these theatrical studios ceased, but that they were forgotten. Until recently, no paper had been published in Belarusian theatre studies dealing with that period. For all the attempts to record the names of those theatre workers and to restore the chronology of their activity, it is too early to say that their experience is fully appreciated.

The second circle. The echo of experiments

The theatrical studios experimental movement of the 1980s, however, has influenced to a certain extent repertory theatre in the independent Belarus (especially in the pre-Lukashenko era between 1989 and 1994). This may be exemplified by the Volnaja Scena (Free Stage] Theatre-Laboratory which was founded by Valery Mazynski in 1990 and turned into the RTBD Theatre in 1993, whose objective was to support and develop contemporary national Belarusian drama. The Dzie-Ja? Studio was granted the status of Minsk Drama Theatre in 1992.

The first attempts at public staged readings of experimental foreign drama in Belarus took place in the late 1990s. The first dramatised stage readings of contemporary German plays, performed by Belarusian actors and directors, happened in February 1997 through a joint project between the Goethe Institute in Minsk and the Volnaja Scena Theatre, which resulted in the First Festival of Contemporary German-Language Drama in November 1998. The Belarusian playwright, Prof. Siarhiej Kavaloŭ emphasised the experimental and laboratory character of this project, which provided new conditions for Belarusian directors' activity, such as encountering another poetics, going

well beyond accustomed practices, searching for alternative means of staging drama, and a different stage existence[4]. V. Mazynski, who was one of the project participants, spoke of improvisation as a basis for staged readings. It provided a unique experience for him. Now he "is not afraid of experimenting, trying to do something while not thinking about the result"[5]. Similar readings of contemporary Polish plays were held in cooperation with the Polish Institute in Minsk.

The 'new drama' movement, which emerged in Russia in the early 1990s and amassed young authors from around the post-Soviet space, became an object of discussion in the Belarusian theatre world in the early 2000s. The almost decade-long delay on the part of Belarusian playwrights in joining the movement was primarily due to the problem of national awareness (bringing back history, the return of national heroes and affirmation of rights of the Belarusian language). The issue of "the nation" that dominated not only the public discourse in general, but also theatrical one all through the decade following the Belarus' national independence. The early 1990s witnessed a boom in staging plays exploring patriotic themes. The productions of *Locals* by Y. Kupala and *Idyll* by V. Dunin-Marcinkievič (staged by M. Pinihin at the Yanka *Kupala* National Academic *Theatre* in 1990 and 1993), *Like It or Lump It, One Should Kick the Bucket*, and *The Ghost* based on F. Alachnovič's *Fears of Life* and *Shadow* (staged by M. Truchan at the Dzie-Ja? Minsk Drama Theatre in 1996 and 1995), A.Dudaraŭ's *Duke Vytautas* (staged by V. Rajeŭski at the Yanka *Kupala* National Academic *Theatre*), and others, were landmark performances of the period.

But as late as the early 2000s, a new generation of Belarusian authors and directors for whom the problem of national awareness was no less acute, joined their Russian counterparts in speaking of a crisis and stressing the necessity of changes in theatre. They acknowledged that "theatre has lost its social, ethical, and moral positions in the society. It by no means influences our life" (such was the statement made by the director Michaił Łašycki during a round table held by the Kultura weekly)[6].

Belarusian authors started to be actively engaged in the festival movement in Russia. In 2002, Andrej Kurejčyk became the Debut International Literary Award winner for his plays *Blind Men Charter* and *Illusion*, while his *Piedmontese Beast* won the contest organized by the Ministry for Culture of Russia and the Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre as the best contemporary play. The winning plays of the 2003 Eurasia Contest included *Nicolai* Khalezin's *Here I Come*, Pavał Pražko's *Serpentine* and Andrej Kurejčyk's *Three Giselles*. The next

4. S. Kavaloŭ. *Novaja belaruskaja dramaturhija*, "Mastactva" 2001, no. 1, pp. 14–16.

5. T. Ratabalskaja, *Belaruska-niamieckija teatralnyja suviazi*, "Mastactva" 1998, no. 12, pp. 35–38.

6. A. Hančaroŭ, *Belaruski teatr: iluzija zhytsia ci pryvid pospiekhu? Kruhly stol "Kultury"*, "Kultura" 2005, no. 5, pp. 9–10, 15–16.

year, *Here I Come* made the top ten of best plays at the All-Russian Dramatis Personae Drama Contest and won a prize at Theatretreffen in Berlin. The plays *A Man, a Woman and a Firearm* by Kanstancin Sciešyk and *A Stage Play* by Andrej Kurejčyk's joined the winners of the Eurasia Contest. The long-list of the 2005 Eurasia Contest featured six plays by Belarusian authors including *A White Angel With Black Wings, or Vain Hopes* by Dzijana Bałyka; *A Stage Play* by Andrej Kurejčyk, *And so It Is* by Pavał Pražko, *A Man, a Woman and a Firearm* by Kanstancin Sciešyk (short-listed); *White Umbrellas* by Andrej Ščucki and *Thanksgiving Day* by *Nicolai* Khalezin (Kurejčyk's and Khalezin's plays were eventually selected to participate in the twelve-hour Theatrical Marathon on the awards presentation day). This was the widest representation of Belarusian authors in the contest's long-list in its history. The years 2002–2004 were in fact a starting stage for contemporary Belarusian playwrights – since then, not a single Russian contest or festival has been held without them being included amongst the winners.

The appearance of new authors was accompanied by attempts to start laboratory work on new plays. One of them was the Theatre of Play project of stage readings of contemporary Belarusian plays launched in 2002 under the auspices of the Yanka *Kupala* National Academic *Theatre* and initiated by Maryna Bartnickaja, the then literary director of the theatre. The main objective of the project was to promote contemporary Belarusian drama and to interrelate playwrights and stage directors. On the one hand, as Bartnickaja noted, it was a perfect occasion to present the works of young authors to a wide audience of theatre enthusiasts, and on the other hand, it was a crash test for the new Belarusian drama. The potential of the "Theatre of Play" stemmed from the fact it did not require heavy spending. The project attracted the audience's attention at once (the very first reading gathered full house even though admission was by ticket only), but was stopped after only a few years' existence. The plays read under the project included A. Kurejčyk's *Piedmontese Beast*, H. Cisiecki's *Silent Poet* and *The Web* as well as the documentary play *In the August of 1936* about the Belarusian national poet Yanka *Kupala* (directed by U. Savicki). The latter play, written by the historian Vital Skałaban, was based on NKVD interrogation protocols of the poet, which had been preserved in the archives. Maryna Bartnickaja was also the originator of the Kupalaŭskija Daliahlady Play Contest whose winning plays included *Nału* by Yana Rusakevich and Viktar Lubiecki[7] (it was produced by V. *Shcherban* in 2003 on the Small Stage of the Yanka *Kupala* National Academic *Theatre*).

7. At the time, Yana Rusakevich worked as an actor at the National Academic Janka Kupala Theatre. After she started her cooperation with the Belarus Free Theatre, she was dismissed from the Kupala theatre (as well as Vladimir Shcherban who was a stage director there). Today, Yana is a lead actor of the Belarus Free Theatre.

A number of projects for promoting new plays were proposed by the newly acclaimed playwright Andrej Kurejčyk. In 2003, he announced the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Drama and Stage Direction at the premises of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts. The Centre formally existed for some time, but has never been put into practice. In 2003, the Theatre On-line project initiated by Kurejčyk was accomplished as part of the Open Format International Festival of Contemporary Theatre (since 2004, the Panorama International Festival of Dramatic Art). Under this project, young stage directors prepared stage readings of contemporary plays they had chosen in just a few days. In spite of the earlier experience of stage readings under German projects and the Theatre of Play project, the Theatre On-line was a discovery for many participants and viewers – draft readings turned into real mini-performances. Later on, the Theatre On-line project became a permanent part of the Panorama festival being absent from its programme only in 2011.

In April 2003, the Centre for Belarusian Drama was open under the auspices of the Belarusian State Institute of Culture Issues which organized discussions on the problems of development of contemporary Belarusian drama and published two drama collections; apart from that, creating a database of plays and playwrights was in the planning stage. In 2005, the Workshop of New Stage Direction project was launched as part of the M.@rt.contact International Youth Theatre Forum in Mahiloŭ, which featured staged readings of plays written by young Belarusian authors including V. Krasoŭski, T. Łamonava, P. Pražko, P. Rasolka, M. Rudkoŭski, and K. Sciešyk. The 2010 workshop dealt in fact entirely with P. Pražko's works. In 2007, the Centre for Belarusian Drama was established at Belarusian Drama Theatre. The projects of the Centre gathered young playwrights, directors, actors and Academy of Arts students, and were focused on support and development of contemporary Belarusian play.

A fundamental role in promoting new drama and developing new dramatic genres in Belarus belongs to the Belarus Free Theatre and the Free Theatre International Contemporary Drama Contest (officially announced in 2005). The contest was a stepping stone for a number of Belarusian authors. The Belarus Free Theatre was probably the first in Belarus to establish a laboratorial cooperation with Belarusian playwrights, that is to stage performances based on purpose-written texts exploring particular themes (e.g. the 2005 project *We. Self-Identification* and the 2007 performance *Childhood Legends*). Apart from that, the theatre organized a series of playwright seminars in Minsk participated by foreign experts including,

among others, Pavel Rudnev, Maxim Kurochkin and Sir Tom Stoppard. The theatre troupe was among the first to realize the necessity of an alternative theatre methodology for work with new plays and introduced a new understanding of theatricality which is relevant to the present day. The director Vladimir *Shcherban* claims that his first experience in working with documentary theatre was based on the play *Cards ad Two Bottles of Bum-Wine* by the Belarusian author P. Rasolka which gave him the task of seeking for adequate stage solutions for rendering the virtuosic language of the play[8].

As can be seen from the above, in the mid 2000s, a burst of activity (the second circle) took place in the theatrical space of Belarus: there emerged a new generation of playwrights, the first attempts were made to conduct drama labs, and small dramatic genres (staged readings) were actively utilised. There emerged independent theatre troupes: apart from the Belarus Free Theatre, these were the Kompanija Theatre headed by Andrej Saŭčanka, Arciom Hudzinovič's project "View Soul Theatre"; the New Theatre of Aleh Kirejeŭ, Artur Marcirasian and Taciana Trajanovič, the Contemporary Art Theatre of Uładzimer Ušakoŭ, and the D.O.Z.SK.I Modern Choreography Theatre headed by Dzmitry Salesski and Volha Skvarcova.

However, despite the enthusiastic response from critics, these initiatives have failed in general to influence the revision of theatre aesthetics in repertory theatres. The plays of playwrights who had won awards at international contests were unclaimed by repertory theatres, and there was no call for young directors[9]. As far as regards independent theatre troupes, only the very few managed to survive in terms of both finance and aesthetics just as it was ten years before: some of them were forced to deal with exceptionally commercial theatre, some other were seeking ways to survive while not compromising their artistic standards, but the majority of initiatives were just disappearing.

The third circle: starting over?

In such a manner, Belarusian theatre entered 2010s starting from point zero once again. As regards the existing independent projects, those which went on functioning included the InZhest Theatre (in 2012, V. Inozemtsev initiated and held the first Belarussian Forum of Physical and Dance Theatres PlaStforma Minsk-2013[10]), the Kompanija Theatre (whose performances had been regularly staged until 2011) and the Contemporary Art Theatre which adopted a commercial strategy. The earlier experience of stage readings, the activity of

8. V. Shcherban, *In between: opyty prochteniya*, "Novaya Europa", Minsk 2011. Available at http://n-europe.eu/tables/2011/12/07/between_opyty_prochteniya.

9. The young directors who made name for themselves in the mid 2000s include Kaciaryna Aharodnikava, Michaił Łašycki, Andrej Saućanka, Pavał Charłančuk, and Vladimir Shcherban. Of all the mentioned, only Shcherban is now a full time director working at the Belarus Free Theatre. The rest, even if they were occasionally invited to direct a performance on the stage of a state-run theatre, did not develop such a collaboration and basically disappeared from the theatrical map of Belarus. As a result, one of the key problems of today's Belarusian theatre is the absence of the middle-generation link, which has a negative impact on the theatrical process.

10. T. Arcimović, *"PlaStforma-Minsk-2013": na plechakh odinochek*. "Novaya Europa", Minsk 2013. Available at http://n-europe.eu/article/2013/02/22/plastforma_minsk_2013_na_plechakh_odinochek

M. Bartnickaja and the Belarus Free Theatre's experiments with documentary theatre were—consciously or not—forgotten, which created an impression of lack of any continuity in Belarusian theatre and prospects for its development. None the less, new independent artistic unions were organized and new initiatives implemented with renewed energy.

In 2010, Evgenij Korniag, a young director and choreographer, made a name for himself through gathering young actors and students into the physical and dance theatre project titled "Korniag Theatre". Within a few years, Korniag staged about a dozen dance and physical performances (*Not a Dance*, *Café Absorption*, *Play Number 7*, *Latent Men* and others), of which each one was an aesthetic challenge to Belarusian repertory theatre[11]. In autumn of 2010, the amateur theatre movement "Dveri" (The Doors] was launched which, apart from staging performances, holds the regular Amateur Theatre Festival "The Doors", conducts workshops and publishes The Doors e-almanac[12]. In 2011, Volha Skvarcova and a group of actors left the D.O.Z.SK.I Theatre to found the SKVO's Dance Company.

The Belarus Free Theatre remains one-of-a-kind – as of today, it is the only continuous theatre project in Belarus which deals with political and social documentary theatre. Following the repression of the December 2010 protests in Minsk (concerning violations at the presidential election in Belarus), the theatre leaders *Natalia Kaliada*, *Nicolai* Khalezin and Vladimir *Shcherban* emigrated from the country. But the theatre, apart from going on tours, continues to regularly give performances in Minsk and to stage new shows[13]. Their 2011 performance *A Reply to Kathy Acker: Minsk 2011* received the Award for "Innovation and Outstanding New Writing" at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2011. The Fortinbras theatre studio founded at the theatre in 2008 continues its permanent activity.

Within the second wave of the CBD's activity during the last few years, a series of major projects and drama labs were held (the PONTON *German-Belarusian Theatre Meetings*, 2010; the MidOst Dramatic Laboratory, 2011; the International Dramatic Laboratory conducted by M. Durnenkov, 2012; the SYPEMEDA International Creative Lab conducted by curators from Switzerland, Germany and Belarus, 2012 and others). The Centre also supported the Studio of Alternative Drama / SAD established in 2011, which is a non-formal association of young Belarusian playwrights, directors and actors with interest in contemporary Belarusian drama founded by S. Ancalevič, D. Bahasłaŭski, V. Krasoŭski and P. Rasolka). In 2011, Kaciaryna Avierkava, the then theatre director of the Mahiloŭ Drama

11. While studying contemporary world theatre and dance practices, Evgenij Korniag developed his own style and physical language which make his performances unique on a national scale.

12. Available at dverifest.org/almanah/. As of today, eight issues of the almanac have been published.

13. In 2012, the premiere of K. Sciešyk's play *Near & Dear Ones* directed by V. Shcherban took place. The rehearsals of the performance were held via Skype.

Theatre, initiated the Stage Readings project which included eight presentations of contemporary Belarusian plays. She also staged the play *Coffee House Owner* by Pavał Pražko. It was at the Belarus Free Theatre that his plays *Bellywood* and *Panties* were noticed and stage for the first time in Belarus (2006), but *Coffee House Owner* was the first full-fledged production of a Pražko play on the stage of a repertory theatre[14]. (Another premiere of *Coffee House Owner* took place in 2013 in Minsk as an independent initiative, the performance was directed by Taciana Arcimovič). In 2012, the independent information theatre portal ArtAktivist.Theatre was launched. In 2013, the "ЗЕрне" [Ziernie] Performative Practices Platform made its appearance. It is to serve as a basis for writing a history of contemporary Belarusian theatre, forming a library of new play, and conducting workshops and educational seminars.

Concluding, one can state that yet another wave of activity (the 'third circle') has been observed recently on the part of both independent initiatives and state-run theatre. A definite breakthrough – which clearly resulted from the alternative theatres' activities – was activation of the CBD as well as adding new plays to the repertories of state-run theatres (apart from Pražko's play being produced in Mahiloŭ in 2013, some state-owned theatres, for example, are preparing premieres based on D. Bahaslaŭski's plays). And lastly, a whole block of the International Theatre Forum TEART, held in 2012, deals with Belarusian drama.

Translated by Andrij Saweneć

14. In 2010, V. Anisienka put P. Pražko's play When the War is Over on the stage of the RTBD Theatre. But the playwright himself considers this play an 'odd' one as it does not comply with his artistic aims and tasks which have already become his signature mark.

BULGARIA

This text does not aim to cover the historical facts, personalities and artistic events related to the development of independent theatre in Bulgaria, but rather to broadly outline some crucial trends by focusing on the processes related to the hesitations about defining the very concept of "independent theatre" in the country's cultural and political discourse. This is a subjective approach and the observations are associated with my first-hand experience. The point of departure is the political conditions in which this type of practice exists, how it is viewed by the state, and how the independent stage itself treats its own situation within the state's cultural policy. The main period of time covered by this text is restricted to the years between 2007 and 2014, which mark the beginning of an important trend in the development of the young alternative theatre stage and the awakening of its political and civic self-consciousness.

By speaking mostly about one organisation – Association for Independent Theatre, ACT – in this text, I do not intend to discount the active participation of a number of artists and groups in the political and aesthetic processes that have been underway in Bulgaria over the past years. The particular case of ACT is used for convenience rather than as an exemplary case. The reader should not forget that all reactions by the official authorities, as well as all ACT's actions, are a result of the existing field created by the efforts, talents and accomplishments of a number of artists from various generations and sectors in the performing arts.

I should emphasise the development of contemporary dance and performance and the relevant critical writing that has finally begun in Bulgaria; the increasingly bold attempts in the field of borderline forms and interdisciplinary projects as well as the interest in contemporary drama and in-rehearsal text developments. As a whole, the stage is alive and dynamic despite the harsh working conditions, and its face is quite different from the one of state theatres that are still working mainly into the mainstream of traditional dramatic and puppet theatre.

Historical Background and History of Independent Theatre in Bulgaria After 1989

One could say that before the fall of socialist rule in Bulgaria only state professional theatre existed. Private initiatives were rare, sporadic, and very often frowned on by the Communist Party, especially if they contained notes critical of the regime. Healthy and controlled political criticism was allowed only within the framework of state institutes, which, thanks to such criticism, experienced an exceptionally strong period of blossoming in the 1980s. After 1989, private initiatives in theatre art were allowed for the first time in 45 years, as they were in other spheres. The first private theatres and freelance actors emerged. The conditions of the savage Post-Soc capitalism turned out not to be favourable for private cultural initiatives. Most private theatres quickly failed in financial terms and ceased to exist. Even the purely commercially-oriented productions had a hard time making a profit, while it was impossible for those positioning themselves as elitist or experimental to pay back the resources invested. It is worth mentioning the exception of the theatre laboratory, Sfumato, that managed to survive, becoming the only state theatre laboratory.

In the 1990s, the state attempted to modernise the structure and management of its theatre institutes, which resulted in a brief renewal of theatre language, the emergence of a number of brilliant theatre events and names, a good communication between institutions, and independent theatre companies and actors. This new policy did not turn out to be sufficiently well-conceived or convenient for the government, and in only a couple of years the centralised management model of state theatre institutes re-appeared in its most retrograde form: an exact copy of the socialist pattern. Many actors who had gone freelance either went back onto the pay-roll of state theatres or changed profession, or else they emigrated in their quest for self-realisation.

Independent theatre productions from the period until Bulgaria's accession to the EU (2007) were financed by small grants from the Soros Foundation, the Pro Helvetia Foundation and other foreign foundations as well as by minimal support from the Ministry of Culture's non-regular competitions of projects (called "sessions"), in which state and private cultural institutes competed on an equal footing. Business supports theatre initiatives mainly in the form of sponsorship, mostly achieved on the basis of good personal contacts, or, in some cases, of commercial actions of a larger scale.

The only place where independent theatre productions happen regularly is the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate in Sofia, established in 2000 with a seating capacity for about 45–50 people, which is still one of the few alternatives for presentation of artistic productions targeted at experiment and innovation.

After the withdrawal of Soros and Pro Helvetia, the independent performing stage was left to exist almost entirely on a free-market basis, without any infrastructure whatsoever. Independent initiatives were carried out most often in partnership with the state theatres and were often promoted as performances of the theatre itself, wholly dependent upon the respective director's will and benevolence.

The independent stage consists of a number of individual artists, several small formations, some of them quite experienced but lacking any great prospects for either development or stabilisation. By the time of Bulgaria's EU accession, the financing of international Balkan initiatives had almost ground to a standstill and exchange with neighbouring Serbia and Macedonia, which had been quite active beforehand, gradually stopped. European programmes for financing require too many resources and are impossible to administer for artistic teams. They are tools virtually unfit for the development of an independent performing arts stage in Bulgaria.

After 2007

In 2007 the Sofia Municipality set up a Culture programme for annual financing of projects in the field of culture with a budget that far exceeded the Ministry of Culture's budget for funding theatre projects. For the first time it was possible to implement a project almost entirely on the basis of municipal funding after an open competition. This motivated a great deal of actors to register their own cultural organisations in order to apply. The legal form commonly used is an association or a foundation. The independent stage started to develop its own administrative capacity and develop a need for "cultural managers".

In 2008, the Arts Patronage Act was passed but, unfortunately, it has not started to operate so far because of its contradictory wording. Thus, businesses still have no economic incentive to support culture and art. Their only motive to do so remains the largely defunct arguments of corporate social responsibility, expressed mainly though touching social causes accompanied by excessively expensive advertising campaigns.

In 2008, Alexander Opitz, at the time president of the Association of Independent Theatres of Baden-Württemberg (Landesverband Freier theatre Baden-Württemberg], who subsequently went on to chair the Federal Association of Independent Theatres, delivered a lecture in Sofia. After lively discussions with independent artists from Bulgaria he encouraged them to join together and set up a joint organisation to defend their interests on a political level. After a year of hard work on the organisation's concept and functioning, eight independent artists established the Association for Independent Theatre (ACT), an association of freelance professional theatre companies. Their preferences for the German tradition determined their choice of name, i.e. "свободен" (free] rather than "независим" (independent] theatre[1]. One of ACT's first tasks was to define what "independent theatre" meant by clearly distinguishing it from the amateur or commercial types of practice. Here are the four sentences of the definition put forward by ACT:

1. Independent theatre is a form of professional practising of theatre.
2. Independent theatre is research rather than commercial in nature.
3. It relies mainly on the team principle by developing flexible artistic, organisational, administrative and management work models for maximum efficiency.
4. Independent theatre makes a crucial contribution to defining the face of contemporary performing arts stage in Bulgaria along with state, municipal, and private theatres.

— The main demands made by ACT in 2009 to political authorities on both state and municipal levels, and are still valid to a great extent, were as follows:
— to encourage independent theatre and dance production and free implementation of theatre and dance projects by separating the competition quotas for their funding from the ones for state and municipal cultural institutes
— to develop spaces for creation and presentation of independent theatre in Sofia and across the country
— to activate cultural life in the field of theatre and performing arts on regional, national and international level
— to support young artists, new forms, experiments and innovations in theatre art
— to promote theatre's role as a political and social corrective.

In 2010, the Ministry of Culture announced a separate competition session only for independent projects in the field of theatre

1. In Bulgarian the name of the Association is "Асоциация за свободен театър" meaning literally "Association for free theatre" where "free" is borrowed from the German "freies"; however, the Association itself has translated its name in English as "Association for Independent Theatre," which is used throughout this translation.

(until then there had been only two similar sessions in the history of the Ministry, during the reformist wave in 1990s). In the same year the new government started to talk of a theatre reform in preparation and of passing a Performing Arts Act, without announcing any objectives or specific intentions or holding a public discussion. In an open letter to the Parliament[2], the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Culture and the media five organisations including ACT stated the following demands:

1. That the independent sector should take part in all working groups on the preparation of the strategy and the new Performing Arts Act and in other activities concerning the sector of performing arts. That the composition of working groups should be publicly announced.
2. That the future Performing Arts Act should be grounded on the categorisation of the different types of participation in the field of performing arts by creating a separate category for the independent sector entitling it to 10 % of the total structural budget for music, dance and performing arts and to a regulated separate access to the project sessions. This should also be clearly outlined in the proposed 2011 budget of the Ministry of Culture.
3. That the freelance artist's status in the welfare and healthcare systems should be reconsidered and that the specifics of his/her activity and employment should be taken into consideration in regard to his/her social security, health and pension insurance.
4. That an effective financial calendar should be created to ensure and regulate the project subsidies within each calendar year. Thus, by means of regular project, long-term and structural financial support for independent productions and artistic groups some real conditions for planning and development of the sector as well as for the improvement of the quality of its production will be set up.
5. That a policy should be created for development of spaces for independent theatre, dance art and alternative forms in the capital city, and across the country, such as rehearsal halls and stages for presentation of productions as well as an opportunity to rent basic equipment and facilities at preferential prices.
6. That there should be a clear strategy and an efficient programme in the field of decentralisation and triggering of cultural dialogue in the field of theatre and performing arts at regional, national and international levels through the creation of programmes for dissemination of theatre production nationally and abroad

2. http://actassociation.wordpress.com/2010/10/08/the-second-declaration-of-the-independent-organizations-in-the-sphere-of-performing-arts/

as well as programmes to stimulate the creation of international projects and exchange of theatre productions.

7. That well-functioning alternative sources of funding of the independent stage should be ensured as they have been everywhere in Europe. This is explicitly necessitated by the cutbacks of public expenditure for culture, a manifestation of the state's current restrictive financial policy. Thus, we demand a functioning Patronage Act. In that sense, on the grounds of the decision of the Ministry of Culture of September 2009 on the establishment of a working group on art lottery we urge that it start to operate.
8. That the Bulgarian independent scene should be supported as a strategic investment in the Bulgarian society, in Bulgaria's European image and in putting Bulgaria on the map as a destination for cultural tourism.

The Draft Performing Arts Bill as initially proposed by the Ministry of Culture was rejected by the entire guild. A working group was set up to rework the Bill in which two representatives of ACT participated while working in cooperation with their colleagues. As a result the independent performing arts sector came up with a comprehensive reworked version that also included directions for the development of the independent sector, which was missing from the initial draft. The Ministry rejected the proposed draft and six months later abandoned the law altogether. Instead the Minister of Culture passed an ordinance on the delegated budgets of state theatres under which they are subsidised on the basis of tickets sold for their productions. This ordinance virtually blocked the access of independent theatre to all state stages and also rendered any co-productions with external groups economically unprofitable for the theatres. Several letters from ACT to the Ministry followed to no effect. The government announced that the theatre reform was successfully completed and all the theatres were happy. The Minister of Culture was given a pat on his shoulder by the Union of Bulgarian Actors.

In the autumn of 2011, the Ministry of Culture announced it had developed, for the first time in the history of the country, a long-term strategy on the development of culture that it intended to put to vote. The proposed document was severely criticised by all guilds and in 2012 the Ministry of Culture proposed that working groups – with broad participation of citizens – should be set up by sectors working under the methodology proposed by the non-governmental organisation, the Observatory for Cultural Economics, which was also the external coordinator of the project for development of

the document. ACT had representatives in the sectors of Theatre, Dance, Festivals. They managed to get the political demands of the independent stage into the draft strategic document. The first stage of work ended after six months as the Ministry of Culture and the Observatory for Cultural Economics had to gather the text together into a single document. From then (June 2012) until the change of the government (February 2013) there was no official announcement pertaining to the strategy. The Minister of Culture in the new government, elected in May 2013, announced that passing the National Strategy on the Development of Culture would be one of his priorities. And this has been all the information about the document so far.

There have been some individual sessions for the creation of projects by independent organisations in theatre and dance after 2010 as well, although the Ministry of Culture has hesitated every year whether to announce any. This is the only state aid with respect to the independent stage in the country, i.e. the only tool available for the Ministry of Culture to get in touch with such types of practice. The national budget has allocated BGN 800,000 per year to the Ministry of Culture for competition sessions. These are the parameters of sessions for creation of "independent theatre" productions and the definitions over the years:

2010 (April)

— session for subsidising new theatre productions (*private theatres*) – total amount: BGN 100,000 (EUR 50,000);

2011 (February)

— session for funding of projects for realisation of new performances in the field of drama and puppet theatre art (*only for the private professional cultural organisations* within the meaning of article 3, paragraph 2 of the Culture Protection and Development Act registered with the Information Register of Cultural Organisations kept by the Ministry of Culture – total amount: BGN 150,000 (EUR 75,000)
— session for financial support for creative projects in the field of professional music and dance art in the following directions:
  1. Professional music performance art: concert and performance activities.
  2. Professional dance art: performance activities.
  3. Music work: publication of music literature and audiovisual products.

The support is determined by competition on the basis of qualification in which only private professional cultural organisations within the meaning of article 3, paragraph 2 of the Culture Protection and Development Act, registered with the Information Register of Cultural Organisations kept by the Ministry of Culture may participate – total amount: BGN 150,000 (EUR 75,000)

2012 (August)

— session for financial support for creation of non-profit theatre performances realised by independent professional organisations – total amount: BGN 120,000 (EUR 60,000)
— session for financial support for non-profit dance performances realised by independent professional organisations – total amount: BGN 120,000 (EUR 60,000)

2013 (August)

— session for financial support of projects to produce performances in the field of theatre art realised by *independent professional organisations* – total amount: BGN 60,000 (EUR 30,000)
— session for financial support of projects to produce performances in the field of contemporary dance realised by *independent professional organisations* – total amount: BGN 60,000 (EUR 30,000)

This summary of statistics shows a lot of things. Here we will consider just two of them:

1. The Ministry of Culture tries to specify its focus and target the sessions not only towards private cultural organisations, but also towards "professional" "non-profit" productions. We can see the difficulty in the wording of the definition in purely legal terms as well as the odd blend of legal definitions, qualification-based eligibility, and aesthetic quests in the identification of the possible beneficiaries of the competition. We see how the wording of the independent stage given by the stage itself as if approximates its definition by the Ministry of Culture as in both cases it is difficult to differentiate between private cultural productions of aesthetic worth and artistic quests, and productions serving the popular taste aiming mainly to attract as many spectators as possible. Obviously, the presence of a great deal of subjectivity in ACT's self-definition impedes the wording of political documents concerning the independent stage. On the other hand, the consolidation and self-determination of independent artists as a lawfully registered group with a common type of theatre

practice and interests greatly contributes to the visibility of the stage itself on the level of political decisions and instruments.

2. The Ministry of Culture uses the same instrument to support the creation of independent theatre productions and independent music and dance productions as an interesting process in Music and Dance direction can be observed. Over the past two years the Ministry has been focused on dance – the most recent session in the field of music and dance was closely targeted at "contemporary dance." This process has no analogue in the Bulgarian reality where contemporary dance and performance stage develops slowly and under extremely unfavourable conditions, which force most of those trying to work in that field to leave the country. I am tempted to assume that this process is a result of the activity of a united group of artists and organisations active in the field of contemporary dance, some of whom are members of ACT and UBA[3], who, for the past two years, have been looking for a dialogue with the Ministry regarding the need of the development of contemporary dance stages in Bulgaria. The group continues to exert efficient pressure, insisting on the urgent need for setting up real conditions for the existence and development of that kind of art in the country. One of their solid arguments is that Bulgaria has no state or municipal structure presenting those genres of performing arts so if the state wants to have that kind of art it must invest in the independent dance and performance stage.

We see that the actions of the artists and organisations committed to the independent theatre have had varying success in their negotiations with the Ministry of Culture. They have some minimal, influence. The support received by independent theatres under these competition sessions is about 20–30% of the entire budget on average. No monitoring of session results is carried out, however; neither are any general statistics of independent stage productions being kept. ACT has repeatedly insisted that the Ministry of Culture start to keep a single register with basic information regarding the activities of independent theatre. The Ministry of Culture does not consider that to be among its duties and responsibilities and has stated that freelance artists are the only ones interested in the existence of such register, i.e. that they should create such information generating tool themselves. No official analysis of the sector has been carried out either. It is interesting – given the official arguments for the announcement of annual sessions for supporting the

3. UBA stands for the Union of Bulgarian Actors, the official branch organisation in the country, which includes 10 guilds in the field of theatre and which has, partly, the functions of a trade union without officially being one. Although a major part of its members are freelance actors the Union has no official position on the independent stage. In 2010, ACT asked for UBA's partnership for the preparation of a common opinion regarding the independent theatre and in response UBA proposed that ACT should become UBA member, which was rejected by ACT. Only the newly-formed guild of Contemporary Performing Arts at UBA, which is oriented, to a great extent, to contemporary dance and performance has been ACT's partner alongside other dance companies on matters pertaining to state policy with respect to the independent dance stage.

creation of independent performing art projects with public funds given – that no one is interested in what has been achieved by spending such funds and whether and how the "competition session" instrument could be optimised in view of the state's cultural priorities. At this point, what makes the existence of these sessions possible is probably the Ministry of Culture's socialist style of spending public funds.

It might be expected that the dialogue on a municipal level would be much easier and more flexible, however, the case of Sofia, where 90% of the independent stage is concentrated, suggests the exact opposite. The municipal administration considers that by formally granting equal opportunity in the Culture programme to the projects of all cultural organisations (including municipal and state-funded institutes) it has fulfilled its commitment to everybody. In the field of performing arts the local authorities have demonstrated, for the past 4 years, that their focus is mainly on their administrative activity of processing the forms for the culture programme and the annual cultural calendar and that they are openly unwilling to conduct real cultural policy. It is praiseworthy that, at least on the face of it, Sofia Municipality allocates the greatest amount of funds for culture and that the independent stage has access to two financial instruments supporting project work. It is also praiseworthy that in the end of 2012 Sofia Municipality adopted its own Cultural Strategy for the next ten years, under which the independent cultural organisations should start to play a crucial role in the city's cultural development. However, it is symptomatic that this strategy contains neither a two-year action plan, nor even a figure or specific commitment. Its implementation has not commenced yet.

ACT has sent 6 letters to the municipality and has received no written response; ACT has requested 4 meetings with the mayor and none has been held. The lack of experts in the performing arts at the municipality, as well as the lack of sufficiently qualified staff in the field of cultural policy, has played its role in the city's refusal to engage in a dialogue with the independent stage.

Meanwhile, ACT has 50 member organisations and artists working in the field of theatre and contemporary dance. Since 2011, an ACT Festival for Independent Theatre has been held; its third edition took place in November 2013. The association is member of the biggest international network for performing arts, IETM, and will be the main organiser of IETM's plenary meeting to be held in Bulgaria in the autumn of 2014. One of the main objectives of the active international connections of the independent stage in the person of

ACT is, in addition to the exchange of professional experience and information and sharing of common values and objectives, to join forces and knowledge with respect to political pressure in the name of the development of independent stage in Bulgaria and the country's way out of the cultural isolation in which it takes place to be to a great extent.

The emergence of an organisation such as ACT is symptomatic of the development of performing arts sector in a post-socialist country and is a clear indication that the stage has not only realised its own political role but that it is ready to take a social position by uniting around a common cause. The artists' commitment to cultural and political activity in the name of the common environment for the existence of independent theatre in the country not only now but also in the future is a new phenomenon for Bulgarian reality. Although the way ACT functions has been the object of quite a few internal criticisms, and although the objectives set in the beginning are yet to be attained, the main advantage gained by the establishment of the association is that the independent stage now has a politically legitimate organisation that can negotiate with the politicians and defend the interests of independent theatre as a part of the professional performing arts stage in the country.

Appendix

Some names and links:

Veselin Dimov (director, Theatre Company MOMO, http://theatre-companymomo.blogspot.com/, https://www.facebook.com/TheatreCompanyMOMO?fref=ts)

Ida Daniel (director, Her Majesty the Mighty Mighty Pressure Cooker, http://ohpressure.tumblr.com/, https://www.facebook.com/groups/238589649617251/?fref=ts)

Gergana Dimitrova, Vasilena Radeva, Petko Stoyanov (directors, organisation for contemporary alternative art and culture 36 Monkeys, http://36monkeys.blogspot.com/, https://www.facebook.com/groups/167525371233/)

Katrin Hrusanova (cultural manager, 36 Monkeys)

Svetlozar Georgiev (writer, http://psychobaiko.blogspot.com/)

Mladen Alexiev (director)

Ognyan Golev, Irina Goleva (actors, Association Based on Actual Events http://pds-org.blogspot.com/,

https://www.facebook.com/basedonactualevents?fref=ts)
Galina Borisova (choreographer, dancer, Nomad Dance Academy Bulgaria, http://galinaborissova.blogspot.com/)
Willy Prager, Iva Sveshtarova (performers, dancers, choreographers, foundation Brain Store Project, a warehouse for creative concepts, Antistatic dance and performance festival, http://www.antistaticfestival.org/, https://www.facebook.com/Antistaticfestival?fref=ts)
Petar Meltev (actor)
Zdrava Kamenova (writer, actress)
Kiril Boyadzhiev (actor)
Alexander Manuiloff (writer, http://manuiloff.com/english/)
Yulia Dencheva (cultural manager)
Bilyana Baleva (cultural manager, Culture Desk Foundation, http://culturedesk.com/, http://www.letsplayculture.com/)
Derida Dance Centre (http://www.derida-dance.com/qs/en)
Atom Theatre (https://www.facebook.com/ATOM.Theatre)
Garage Collective, a collective platform for contemporary dance and performance (http://garagecollective.com/en/garage/who-are-we)
Theatre A (http://theatrea.dir.bg/_wm/basic/?df=466359&dflid=3)
Miroslav Yordanov (psychologist, choreographer, Kinesthetic project)
MM Theatre (http://www.mmtheatre.com/en/home)
Ani Vaseva (director, http://desorganisation.org/)
New Dramaturgies platform (theatre and dance criticism, http://www.dramaturgynew.net/)
A25 Cultural Foundation (http://www.a25cultfound.org/en.html)
Red House Centre for Culture and Debate (http://www.redhouse-sofia.org/Default.aspx)
Art Office (http://artoffice.bg/en/index.php)
Violeta Vitanova, Stanislav Genadiev (dancers, choreographers)
Vox Populi (http://studiovoxpopuli.org/)
Mariy Rosen
Valeria Valcheva
Valeri Parlikov (Kerigma Foundation, Via Negativa studio, http://tmetaezik.ovo.bg/)
Atelie 313 Theatre (puppet and movement theatre http://www.atelie313.com/new-main.html)
Rosen Mihaylov (choreographer, Heteropodes dance company)

Translated by Atanas Igov

CROATIA

Independent Performing Arts Scene: Almost but not quite arbitrarily chosen key moments (1990 - 2010)

Una Bauer

Rather than providing an overview of independent performing arts in Croatia since the beginning of the 1990s and attempting to provide the taxonomy of names and events, this text will focus on selected examples of what I find to be particularly valuable and relevant (sometimes prophetic) practices and tendencies in the mentioned period. This results in a somewhat specific narrative, influenced by particular value systems and conceptual and affective preferences.

Avoiding a discussion on what the adjective "independent" really means, I will apply the term to those performing arts companies which do not receive continuous support from the State, but have to apply annually with specific project in order to receive any kind of funding. These are also companies which do not own their venue but consistently have to rent different venues in order to present their work. As a result, there are relatively few opportunities to see their work, which creates additional precarity, vulnerability and temporal and spatial contingency. The other criteria that I have somewhat arbitrarily applied to my selection is to present those companies and artists who have been oriented towards group practices, collaboration and collective activities. Last but not least, I tend to focus on those independent performing art practices that are, in various ways, engaged with post-dramatic understanding of theatre.

The history of the development of independent performing arts scene in Croatia after the breakdown of Yugoslavia is the story of intense antagonisms.[1]

The general cultural and political polarisation between two spheres, the dominant and oppositional culture, strongly represented, reinforced and reflected in the media, was extreme and total, as Dea Vidović explored in detail in her thesis.[2] Institutional, dominant culture was presented in the media and financially supported by state funding, while independent culture was treated as irrelevant, even though it was precisely in that space that a re-thinking of art and culture took place, focusing on the analysis of contextual surroundings and political implication of art works.

1. Due to spatial limitation, this text will focus specifically on the period after the breakdown of Yugoslavia and establishment of the independent state of Croatia. The period before 1990s can, anyway, only be thought through in the context of a wider, Yugoslav cultural space.

2. *The development of newly emerging cultures in the city of Zagreb from 1990 till 2010*, PhD thesis, University of Zagreb, 2012.

According to theatre director (at the time theatre critic) Ivica Buljan, "official" theatre in Croatia in the 1990s was "a conservative mix of national romanticism and a twisted imitation of bourgeois theatre with a dash of contemporary trends".

This text will thus mainly offer depictions of performative practices, artists and companies engaged with "oppositional culture" which have been problematising the context and conditions of their existence, as well as the idea of cultural representationalism. It will also focus on those companies and authors which were attracted to, what Dean Zahtila called "social sculpture", or rather those companies with an active interest not in the fetishisation of an art work, but in social dynamics, modes of decision making, practices and context in which the work is created.

During the '90s there were a few non-institutional institutions that provided access to and circulation of international productions, which also presented local instances of "new theatre" to a wider audience than these works could normally attract, due to the fact that they were not allowed access to official performing spaces. The key one was Eurokaz festival, founded in 1987 (in the framework of Summer Universiade in Zagreb), led by Gordana Vnuk, presenting the works of (at the time not nearly as established) companies and authors such as Societàs Raffaello Sanzio, Jan Fabre, Robert Wilson, even during war-time and in adverse conditions. Eurokaz festival provided some sort of focused, intense spatial and metaphorical gathering of oppositional forces in Croatian theatre and performing arts. It was also, in the '90s, the only framework in which Croatian theatre director Branko Brezovec – with his intense, densely-packed, larger than life performances which juxtaposed radically different texts, procedures, languages, media in a theatrical polyphonia (Marin Blažević) who was mainly in the artistic exile in Macedonia, Italy and elsewhere – could perform in Croatia.

A similarly important conceptual space was later provided by the theoretically highly sophisticated performing arts magazine Frakcija (its first edition dating from 1996). Frakcija, as articulated by Goran Sergej Pristaš, was driven by the idea to affirm the poetics of "new theatre".

One of the theatre companies (although they prefer to understand themselves as "a complex machine to investigate different characteristics of media and pop culture") that rose to prominence during those war times and acquired a cult following was Montažstroj, founded in spring 1989 by a student of comparative literature and philosophy, Borut Šeparović, and his collaborators. Šeparović, whose

name remains synonymous with Montažstroj to this day, was firstly interested in the idea of creating an authentic Croatian or Eastern European theatre. Inspired by historical avant-guarde, especially Artaud and his athleticism of the heart, fascinated with theatricality of Zagreb's Dinamo football matches and collective sports, the sense of community and identification, drawn towards an authentic bareness and cruelty of performing material, Šeparović initiated and implemented concepts rather than taking on a role of a theatre director in the conventional sense of the term. Montažstroj performers were expected to be complete performers, capable of a variety of tasks as well as operating inside a collective.

The artistic action, *A Spike in the Gallery* in December 1989 – a ritual performance in the framework of Kazimir Maljevič's retrospective – was their first performance. *Achtung Alarm!* (1990), an action announcing their first evening-length performance *Vatrotehna*, a one hour drive on a fire truck through the city centre announcing through megaphones to the citizens how to behave in the case of emergency, seemed to be creepily prophetic of the events that were to follow. *Vatrotehna* was named after their sponsor, a factory for fire extinguishing equipment, performed in the derelict space of abandoned distillery Badel in Zagreb, and concerned the imprisonment and death of Vsevolod Meyerhold.

Soon after the beginning of the war in Croatia, Montažstroj's patriotic video clip *Croatia in Flame* (one in the series of works dedicated to the trauma of war and occupation of Croatian cities), shot in a humid and claustrophobic atmosphere of bomb shelter, not unlike those where citizens of Zagreb spent a lot of time during the autumn of 1991, appeared on MTV as the first Croatian music video ever to be presented by the network, and as Montažstroj's work mostly recognised by the wider public. *Croatia in Flame* was however not their only work dedicated to the war trauma.

Named after the main sponsor Radio 101, *Rap Opera 101* was an attempt at a gesamtkunstwerk, a mythical, Sophocles-inspired, rap opera about the creator of the first Slavic machine-gun, Kalashnikov, fuelled by music video aesthetics.

Although it was always in the interest of Montažstroj to communicate with those who knew nothing of theatre and to question pretentious hermeticism, one of their most interesting performances was *Fragile* (1999); a fascinating story performed, literally, on top of 300 books. Inspired by Bible and the writings of Wittgenstein and Malevich, it observed the zealous Pharisee Saul's conversion to Paul after Christ's crucifixion, invoking contemporary identity

and nationality issues in ex-Yugoslavia. *Fragile* was also significant as the first guest performance from Croatia to the Serbian festival BITEF, after ten years of no cultural collaboration.

Interested in worker's rights and social policies, but somewhat insensitive in terms of feminist issues, Montažstroj is today mainly focused on a form of community art projects operating in different media, working with the young, homeless, retired and unemployed, living below the poverty line. Each project is very specific, and unique in its methodology and modes of production, ranging from minefields, terrorism, crime, lack of political representation of older citizens, football, theatrical identity-theft and a variety of other issues. Their projects, often starting from loud, well-organised e-mail and press campaigns, and an open call for participation for members of a particular community (such as unemployed women, unemployed young managers and entrepreneurs, retired persons over 55 etc.) are usually controversial. The company always emanates a seductive air of absolute urgency, operating somewhere between extremely controlled and directed performative practices and the attempt to initiate various forms of cooperation and different communities in the decision-making processes.

At the time of the famous Montažstroj's performance *Everybody goes to Disco from Moscow to San Francisco*, Boris Bakal, Nicole Hewitt, Nataša Lušetić, Ela Agotić, Stanko Juzbašić, Tomo Savić Gecan, Katarina Barić, Aleksandar Acev worked on a series of performances that took place during 1994 and 1995 in banks of Zagreb under the title: *The Order of Bank and Money Worshippers*. The basic performative principle was, what Bakal calls, *fade in / fade out*. The transforming of normalised gestures such as queing in a bank, filling forms or writing cheques, through radically slowing them down, or combining them with gestures which look strange in that context, only to return to normal as if nothing extraordinary happened. They also did things like trying to exchange golden coins with Tito's image for those of the same value, with Tudjman's image on it. This political action/performance was a reaction to what was happening in Croatia, as a country that was at the time already completely stolen from its citizens. The performance was alluding to the economic basis behind the official patriotic mask that Croatia was wearing at the time. Banks were playing a huge role in this perverse privatisation of Croatia, allowing a particular group of people to profit while others were losing their lives in a bloody conflict, not only preventing the Serbian occupation, but also, unknowingly, inflamed by nationalistic rhetoric, being used as a pretext for smash-and-grab at a national level.

The experience of this and other performances was used in the "company" Shadow Casters that Boris Bakal founded in 2001 together with Katarina Pejović. Shadow Casters approached every situation as a performative, creative act, developing high risk dramaturgy. Engaging both local citizens and visitors in a psycho-geographical, situationist, urban research of a particular city (such as Zagreb, Belgrade, Bologna, Ljubljana, New York). Shadow Casters were attempting to function without the safety net of art, trying to stimulate the situation where the idea that they were only making art would not protect them. The entire existence of participants during these projects seemed strangely dislocated, to the point where they were not sure whether the entire project was a kind of weird deceit, taking them all for a ride, both literally and metaphorically. Their project *Ex-position* (2004) pairs each member of the audience with a performer who blindfolds her and takes her through an abandoned factory, or a similar place (depending on the location), telling her various stories, engaging all her senses. In *Explicit Contents* (2010), a similar journey happens throughout the entire theatre building, again absorbing the audience in a blend of fiction and truth.

Near the end of the 90s, in 1998, Transitive-Fiction Theatre (TRAFIK) was founded in Rijeka with the performance *The Walker*, in honour of Croatian poet of the early 20th century Janko Polić Kamov. This highly physical theatre, operating somewhere between dance, mime, visual theatre and site-specific theatre was providing an alternative to a rather centralised independent theatre scene, focused on the capital of Zagreb. TRAFIK was also an alternative in terms of its camp and somewhat surreal aesthetic and a particular kind of pop nostalgia (for instance in the performance Destination Trafik: Deer (2009), which was rather unusual in Croatian context.

Schmrtz theatre, an extremely young, very loosely organised company, combined cabaret, performance, happening and similar forms, inspired by punk ethics of self-organisation. They were amongst a number of theatre groups such as Théâtre des femmes, Le Cheval that were founded in the second half of the 90s and performed in various non-theatrical spaces, such as clubs, their own homes, or on the street. One of their most famous performances/actions was *Book and Society – 22%* (1998), an initiative of the artist Igor Grubić, with the aim of problematising the implementation of 22% VAT on books. Members of Schmrtz, one by one, took books from the bookstore Algorithm in the city centre, and left the premises refusing to pay for the books, which resulted in the activation of alarm, and the arrival of the police. The books were returned to the owner, and the action

was recognised in public, as it was dealing with a traumatic event: an attack on a weak publishing and educational sector through taxation of books. As a part of another action, on International Day of Police Brutality, they attempted to mark with blue lines the spot where a year earlier, in February 1998 brutal violence occurred between the participants in social and sindical demonstrations on the main square in Zagreb, which resulted in several arrests. Their performance from 1999, *Out, demons, out*, the action of exorcising evil demons from the building of Croatian national theatre by throwing eggs, or practicing karate moves, questioned the stale politics of the main national theatre house.

Amongst these often formed *ad hoc* theatre groups, Le Cheval, founded by Oliver Frljić (today a renowned and extremely busy theatre director), attempted to reduce expression to its very minimum. Their most interesting performance was probably the one in which they paid the audience to watch them, in a disturbing gesture which questioned the performative economy and the contract between the audience and the performers.

In terms of alternative, non-hierarchical decision making processes, the most successful was EKS scena (Experimental Free Scene), founded in 2001., a group of women choreographers (Selma Banich, Sandra Banić, Silvia Marchig, Maja Marijančić, Željka Sančanin, Zrinka Užbinec and Petra Zanki) who were attempting to affirm and promote contemporary dance practices, but through the creation of a platform that would promote horizontal responsibility, openness and collaboration. They did not work as a collective, in terms of their artistic practices (as they had different aesthetical and formal preferences), but collectively enabled each other to work on what interested them.

Founded in 2000, BADco were not allowed to give their legal company an English name (according to Croatian law), so they transformed the name BADco into an acronym of Bezimeno Autorsko Društvo (Nameless Authors' Society), in a gesture of naming that un-names itself.

Their first production, *Man Chair* was a choreographic re-interpretation of a historically and theatrically significant performance *Man-Chair* (1982) by Damir Bartol Indoš. It was a rare example of a re-enactment of Croatian performance art from the past. In BADco.'s interpretation, the focus is on a more formal relationship between the body and the object whilst Indoš was focusing more on a ritualistic rehabilitation of a child on the autism spectrum. This was the beginning of what has proved a consistent interest in BADco.'s

work: the attempt to disturb the mechanisms of representation. *Diderot's Nephew or Blood is Thicker than Water* (2001) based on the writings of Denis Diderot for the play on Socrates' death which he never wrote, functioned as a structured improvisation based on the personal input from the performers. Socrates' death was used as a basis for the search for meaning in gesture. BADco. members refer to *Diderot's Nephew* as 'a serious dance buffoonery', but it was in fact a juxtaposition of philosophical reflections and silly dance routines, which commented on the nature of the theatre medium, the authority of the director, and the discomfort of representation. *Ribcage* (2003), based on a stage play by Ivana Sajko – probably Croatia's most important playwright of the younger generation (who was also a member of BADco. for the first several years of its existence) – subsequently turned into a radio drama, and then transformed into a performance (with excerpts from the radio drama used in the performance). It tried, like all the company's work, to avoid the possibility of its interpretation. It attempted to function as a performance machine which digested and spat out the conceptual similarities between the war in Croatia and the war in Iraq.

In *Deleted Messages* (2004), BADco's first international co-production, the production's attempt to delete its own message follows a similar pattern to the company's 2006 work, *memories are made of this*, which dealt with imagining of that which hasn't even happened and yet, somehow, should be forgotten.

BADco. productions attempt to produce work that is both intellectually complex, puzzling, and physically challenging for the performers. Their productions are constructed through the denaturalisation of movements and are directly trying to oppose the idea of dance as a flow of movement. The movements of the dancers in their performances are interrupted, broken and partially automatised because they are constantly trying to work against the natural inclinations of the body, even against their own training as dancers. This is evident in works such as *2* (2001), a dance experiment of sensorial deprivation (where Nikolina Pristaš and Jelena Vukmirica dance blindfolded).

BADco.'s focus is on the investigation of the protocols of performing and on the problematisation of communication structures in performances. They have developed a particular type of discourse around their work characterised by the use of highly abstract notions to describe what they are doing. They refuse to engage with the elaboration of their performances on the level of what they are 'about'. BADco. performances are dense: literally packed with

theories, concepts, quotations and graphical representations. For instance, the production *League of Time* (2009), combines a Fordist mechanics of production as a consequence of the perception of an objective social time, the beginnings of film art and industry, slapstick comedy routines, Laban's research on body mechanics, futurist projections of Soviet visionaries and Mayakovsky's poem *Flying worker* on the final battle between the bourgeois USA and Soviet Russia in 2125. The affective production in their performances resists those mechanisms which result in emotional bombardment from the stage, and offers a different emotional re-organisation.

Damir Bartol Indoš, whose work from the 80s inspired the first BADco performance, remains a productive artist to this day. The author of the syntagm "a meritous theme", which means that the author needs to be worthy of the theme he is engaged with through attempting to act constructively in the community, Indoš has always, in his numerous performances, affirmed the vulnerable, children, elderly, animals, ill or differently-able in his fragmented, non-linear performances. With his specific way of intensive being on stage, always taking on a role of, or possessing a particular Indoš stage persona characterised by convulsive repetitive movements and deep broken voice, during his independent career, Indoš was dealing with ontological injustice of the world on all levels in performances such as *Rocking* (2001), *Horse Tail* (2003), *School Bus* (2003), *On Pain and Chess* (2004), *Chinese Rulet* (2005), *War Kitchen* (2005), *Cefas* (2010) and many others. His ethico-aesthetical approach results in a particular ready-made scenography, a recycling process of using various metalic, wooden and plastic objects which have a very precise function in everyday existence (usually as tools or factory workers equipment) as musical instruments.

Selected artists and productions with their aesthetic, political, social and affective concerns, in their diverse and often conflicting conceptual positions, stand for a continuous questioning of the idea of what constitutes theatre practice, and as such I find them to be particularly relevant for independent performing arts understanding of itself, both locally and internationally.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Independent Theatre

Martina Musilová

The seminal year in the formation of the independent post-war Czech theatre is 1957; strictly speaking the 1957/58 theatre season. This was when the foundation of independent theatres, which were formed in several generational waves and have not lost their continuity to this day, took place. The formation of the first independent theatres was facilitated by the political liberalisation after 1956 – the year when the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was held. Its programme was reflected in the positions of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. However, this customary classification of the post-war development of Czech theatre is rendered more difficult by political developments in post-war Czechoslovakia. If we accept 1957 as the founding year of independent theatre, we only refer to the period from 1948, when the Communist coup d'état took place. After this year, all the activities of independent experimental theatres were being constrained for their "formalistic" character and a connection with the interwar avant-garde. However, it was exactly during the war and post-war years that marked the activity of a number of theatres that on the one hand were associated with interwar avant-garde authors, and on the other hand were the source of inspiration for the following generation in 1957. The most important young troupes of the period between 1945 and 1948 definitely includes *Divadlo Satiry* (Satire Theatre), (1944–1948, Pelhřimov, later Prague) and *Divadlo Větrník* (Pinwheel Theatre); the word pinwheel refers to a children's toy and highlights one of the main characteristics of the theatre – accentuated play and playfulness (1941–1946, Prague).

The ban on avant-garde, independent and experimental theatre after 1948 (especially in the first half of the 1950s: the period of the promotion of Socialist Realism), the discontinuity of its development and subsequent efforts to return to the domestic tradition at the turn of the 1960s still causes problems when trying to conceptually understand the phenomenon, which, based on the inter-war period, we could term the theatrical avant-garde. However, in the Czech society the term avant-garde has only been historicised in reference to the 1920s and 30s, and is excluded from discussion of the contemporary by theatre theorists. This has resulted in an inconsistent conceptual

grasp of independent theatres in all the major generational waves – 1950s/1960s, 1970s/1980s, and after the year 1989. In none of these periods can the critics, the theatre theorists, nor even the authors themselves find a term that would fully and concisely define such theatrical forms.

In the 1950s and 1960s, they are most commonly referred to as the movement of small theatre forms, but also as the so-called movement, the small theatre forms, alternatively the term is put in quotation marks. This is the period when the term "authorial theatre" is first coined. It is used also of the subsequent period. The same conceptual inconsistency also regards the theatres operating in the Normalisation period of the 1970s and 1980s. The majority of the theatre companies active in this period were founded at the end of the 1960s. This is the reason they were initially also referred to as "authorial theatres". However, these companies were also trying to define themselves, albeit with little success. Following a discussion of the terms with which the critics referred to them – the new, open, generational, young, different, alternative, irregular, non-interpretive theatre – the term studio theatres (stages) was adopted, again referring back to the inter-war avant-garde and its experimental studios.

The same struggle for the definition of independent theatres then took place at the turn of the millennia, or rather after 2000. Authors associated with independent theatres in Prague again tried to address the need to conceptually differentiate their work – again without much success – as even here the authors and production teams were confronted with a fragmentation of terms that only loosely defined their output (interactive, movement, experimental, authorial, performance, cross-over theatre etc.).

It is a possible to dissociate the term avant-garde from its historicised meaning and use it as it is used in theatre theory elsewhere in Europe and in the USA, i.e. to denote theatrical forms that do not conform to the conventional, traditional understanding of theatre. However, it is questionable whether the reluctantly adopted term avant-garde should, just as reluctantly, be introduced into current discussion.

The period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in the years 1939–1945

The war period for the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia can be characterised by a heightened interest in theatre. Even independent, usually left-wing theatres marked an increase in visitor numbers. In

addition, independent theatres in a country occupied by the Nazis became a sort of haven (while official companies, especially the drama and opera ones, collaborated with the Nazi authorities to a certain extent). The cultural climate of the Protectorate was also influenced by the fact that the Nazis had closed Czech universities in 1939. Many avant-garde authors reacted to this situation by increasing their lecturing activities, organising debates as part of their theatre programmes, and opening up the theatres to the younger generation so that they could pursue their education without impediment. Emil František Burian, one of the three most important avant-garde directors, founded a drama school in his theatre D 40 in 1939. After Burian and his associates were arrested in 1941 by the Gestapo and imprisoned in a concentration camp, and his theatre and school were closed down, a group of Burian's students led by Josef Šmída founded Divadlo Větrník. The group decided to continue production in the spirit of Burian's Divadlo D and carried on like this until the end of the war and the return of their teacher. From the beginning of the war, Josef Šmída was working with two other figures of the inter-war avant-garde: he was assisting the director Jiří Frejka at the National Theatre in Prague, and helping out as a lighting technician at Jindřich Honzl's Divadélko pro 99.

Artists grouped around Josef Šmída adopted the name Větrník for their theatre referring to a accentuated playfulness. The ludic manner would remain a dominant feature of a number of independent theatres in the post-war period. Only the turn of the 1960s and 70s will see the appearance of companies with a different direction – towards anthropological theatre and theatre-ritual.

Větrník's output during the Protectorate represents a transformation of the pre-war leftist avant-garde – which based its artistic programme on political and ideological ideas – into a movement that was still leftist, but which substituted the ideological concept of building a new society with an interest in the individual, thus acquiring existential traits. While pre-war independent theatre took its inspiration from Russian Constructivist theatre and French Dadaism and Surrealism, and was based on ideological constructs of new art for a new person in a socially fair society, the period just before and during World War II sees the appearance in the Czech culture of traits of Existentialism and an existential attitude to life. This attitude rejects the ideologisation of life and art, and promoted a new idea of sincerity and inner authenticity.

Divadlo Větrník found premises at the *Salón u Topičů* in the centre of Prague, i.e. at the *Divadélko pro 99*, whose director Jindřich Honzl

was forced to leave for political reasons. Originally a non-theatrical space, it was part of a gallery.

Divadlo Větrník's first two seasons are characterised by attempts to build on the work of the interwar avant-garde. However, the theatre's production style gradually begins to emerge, culminating at the end of the Protectorate period in a unique genre of the "stage short story". *Divadlo Větrník*'s output was influenced and determined by the intimacy of the premises (*Divadélko pro 99* [Little Theatre for 99 – meaning, 99 viewers]) and its literature licence, which allowed only literary events to be held on these premises. Thus the theatre escaped the scrutiny of the German theatre censorship. The auditorium's constrained space and the limited number of viewers resulted in an intimate, even communal character of the productions. During the war years, the theatre's uncensored, cultured atmosphere was perceived by young viewers as an oasis of freedom. In spite of the initial limitations posed by the literature licence, *Větrník*'s production style gradually developed into a richly metaphorical theatre with minimal technical support, and a great emphasis on superior acting. *Divadlo Větrník* found its essence in comic theatre, spontaneous and unleashed. The theatre's style of humour – healing and self-preservatory – was much needed in Prague during the Protectorate period.

The stage short story is a specific type of storytelling theatre. It is based on a literary text, which is given a new structure through montage. It is partly told and partly acted. When creating his stage short stories, Josef Šmída was inspired by traditional storytelling settings in popular folklore, both rural and urban. The storytelling theatre, developing in intimate surroundings, built on the Czech tradition – the tradition of neighbourly meetings to talk, strip feathers or spin, and the tradition of the blind man's holiday. One of the most popular productions of this theatre, *Přiďte pobejt* (Come Linger, 1943) was based on folk stories collected by J. Š. Kubín in Podkrkonoší. Other equally famous productions *Romance* (Romances: *Sentimentální romance*, A Sentimental Romance, 1943; *II. sentimentální romance*, Second Sentimental Romance, 1944; *Romance nesentimentální*, An Unsentimental Romance, 1945) were based on František Němec's courtroom stories. This is a specific journalistic genre, inspired by stories told in court, a kind of urban folklore.

After 1956 – The movement of small theatre forms

1957 was a crucial year for postwar Czech theatre. The end of the year marks the beginning of Ivan Vyskočil's and Jiří Suchý's "text-appeal" performances in the Reduta club auditorium in Prague. "Text-appeal" became a genre specific to this period. The term stems from the expression "sex-appeal", at the time a novelty in the Czech language. Hence the connotation of teasing, provoking, challenging, and appealing with text. Structurally, it somewhat resembles a literary cabaret, but differs from it in its relationship with the audience, who are not merely shown scenes and sketches. In text-appeal, the viewer is invited to interact and participate in developing the topic. Text-appeal shows can more accurately be referred to as encounters. Text-appeals staged at the Reduta brought a new quality to the theatre scene, an element of challenge, of appeal to the viewers. This was pure authorial theatre, purposefully anti-dramatic. Besides a new form of communication with the viewer, text-appeal introduced the term "appealability" into theatrical thought. This had already been used in 1940 by Jan Mukařovský, a Czech Structuralist and theorist of the inter-war avant-garde, in his lecture *K dnešnímu stavu divadla* (On the Current State of Theatre) in Burian's *Divadlo D 40* (Theatre D 40). However, after the introduction of the text-appeals, it crystallised into an important concept in Czech theatre and became a variation of engaged theatre. It was defined as a term by director Jan Grossman, following his cooperation with Ivan Vyskočil at *Divadlo Na zábradlí* (Theatre on the Balustrade) in the beginning of the 1960s.

A text-appeal evening (session) would normally consist of jazz and rock & roll songs and of spoken or read text in a ratio of 3:1. In the course of one evening, 5 to 7 new texts or new variations thereof would usually be presented. Jiří Suchý composed, played and sang the songs, while Ivan Vyskočil delivered, read, improvised and made variations of the texts. At first, Vyskočil's stories were fully improvised, but following intervention from the censors he was forced to submit his texts for approval. However, this allowed him to partly standardise a large part of the story, and then use improvisation to develop it in variations. The text remained a challenge: it was developed with the participation of the audience, with their attention and with the awareness of feedback when opening up new possibilities for it.

Jiří Suchý and Ivan Vyskočil worked together at the Reduta and later at the *Divadlo Na zábradlí*, which they had founded together,

for two years. Their break-up demonstrates not only differing personality traits of both artists, but also inclinations toward diverging sources of inspiration. While Vyskočil's inspiration came from the atmosphere of productions staged at *Divadlo Větrník*, which he had experienced as a teenager, Suchý referred to the tradition of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich's avant-garde *Osvobozené divadlo* (V+W, Liberated Theatre) and longed to create a similar comic duo with his acting partner. Burian's *Divadlo D*, alternatively *Divadlo Větrník* and *Osvobozené divadlo V+W* actually reverberate as a paradigm in most independent theatres founded during the postwar period. These either emphasise theatre with high artistic value, which is at the same time perceived as a cultural hub (Burian's D), or accentuate Dadaist humour, the liberating power of words, freedom of speech and play with words (V+W).

Just like at the wartime *Divadlo Větrník*, the atmosphere, community spirit, contact, spontaneity, openness and authenticity were paramount at the text-appeal evenings at the Reduta. And what topics were the viewers encouraged to share in the text-appeals? Vyskočil's texts on bizarre and absurd topics were conceptually close to Existentialist philosophy, postwar Neohumanism and Dialogical Personalism (Vyskočil studied philosophy with Jan Patočka). The main topics of Vyskočil's stories included mechanisation and alienation of modern people, consumerism, everyday stereotypes and masks, and the empty, dehumanised world.

Text-appeal shows at the Reduta were staged from December 1957 to July 1958. They soon gained an audience and became a spark of inspiration for the output of the whole generation of young theatre professionals. There was a boom of this type of show between 1958 and 1962, with the phenomenon spreading throughout Czechoslovakia like wildfire. Whether these shows were based on text-appeal, cabaret, short stories, poetry, story-telling or on songs, the main characteristics of the shows at the Reduta – the authorship, the sharing of personal narratives, the direct communication with the audience, the atmosphere of meeting and sharing, the thematic focus on the alienation of modern people, the critique of consumerism and everyday stereotypes – remained. These new theatres were expressing their connection with the inter-war avant-garde through their anti-illusive methods or the rejection of the fourth wall. Some of them openly acknowledged their predecessors in their names (*Divadlo X 59,* Theatre X 59 in Brno, *Kladivadlo*, and duo S+ Š).

New companies were usually founded on an amateur basis (often as student companies) although some later became professional.

Many of the artists had other artistic backgrounds – J. Suchý and Jan Schmid from the visual arts, J. R. Pick and Josef Škvorecký: literature, and Jiří Melíšek from radio. Companies staged shows in non-theatrical premises, such as basements, bars, pubs, warehouses, attics, corridors, libraries, agitprop and cultural centres and branches of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth. Many were founded within military units, where "artistic" activities were supported: this enabled rank-and-file soldiers to partially avoid regular service.

In non-theatrical premises, companies often even refused technical equipment. The emphasis was on verbal expression, which dominated over the visual or physical aspect. At the same time, authors diverged from large-scale traditional dramatic texts to write short stories, poetry, short scenes and sketches, which were combined into compilations, pastiches and collages. This inclination toward small forms and operation in small, intimate spaces are probably the reasons why theatre critics termed the output of these theatres the movement of small theatre forms. This was based on the term "small theatre forms", used by the Communist critique in the period of 1948–1953 to describe cabaret shows.

Already in 1958, the theatres *Rokoko* (Rococo) and *Divadlo Na zábradlí* are founded in Prague, along with *Kladivadlo* in Broumov. In the following year, *Divadlo poezie X 59* and the cabaret *Večerní Brno* (Evening Brno) appear in Brno, and the theatre *Semafor* in Prague. Subsequent years mark the foundation of *Paravan* (Partition, Prague), INKLEMO (Prague), *Zápalka* (Match, Olomouc), *Divadlo pod okapem* (Theatre under the Eaves, Ostrava), *Docela malé divadlo* (A Really Small Theatre, Litvínov), *Kruh* (Circle, Mariánské lázně), *Experiment* (Pardubice), *Sirka* (Match), *Divadlo pod loubím* (Theatre under the Bower) etc. These original theatres of small forms were markedly based on their own authorship. Among their teams and on their stages, there was at least one author who would create, write and act for them.

Besides cabaret-type theatres (cabaret *Večerní Brno*), there were the so-called poetry theatres (*Divadlo poezie X 59*, R. Vašinka's *Takzvané divadlo*, So-Called Theatre), whose output represented a return to imagination, playfulness, inspirationality, and as such had strong connotations with Poetism – a Czech avant-garde movement of the 1920s and 1930s.

The movement of small theatre forms was developing parallel to the revival process on the political scene, which culminated at the end of the 1960s in the Prague Spring. Many artists from these theatres, and of course a large part of the audience, were active participants in this process in the 1960s.

The second wave of the small theatre forms – authorial theatres

In the early 1960s, the movement of small theatre forms established itself despite the negative attitude of officialdom, mostly thanks to the enormous interest on the part of young audiences. There was no choice but to accept this spontaneous phenomenon. This lead to the first official festivals and many of the new theatres being professionalised. The year 1962 saw the foundation of *Státní divadelní studio* (State Theatre Studio), an umbrella organisation determining the legal status of the theatres. From 1963, a monthly *Repertoár malých scén* (Repertory of Small Scenes) was published, which also printed play scripts from theatres. Gradually, the poetics of individual companies and authors began to differentiate. In this sense, the development of *Divadlo Na zábradlí* can serve as an example. This theatre was founded in December 1958 by five artists – Vyskočil, Suchý, Fialka, Vodička and Phillipová. Their first show, a pastiche *Kdyby tisíc klarinetů* (If a Thousand Clarinets), featured the whole large company of this theatre together. In the two years that follow, Jiří Suchý and Jiří Šlitr broke away to found theatre *Semafor*. Afterwards, Ladislav Fialka's pantomime group (influenced by Marcel Marceau's French pantomime) separated itself and staged its own shows in this theatre parallel to the drama productions. Vladimír Vodička giving up as a composer to become the director of the theatre. Ivan Vyskočil left the theatre in 1962 and returned to Reduta, where he founded his *Nedivadlo* (Non-Theatre). Slightly earlier, *Divadlo Na zábradlí* hired an emerging playwright Václav Havel and director Jan Grossman. However, after Vyskočil's departure the theatre followed a more traditional direction while maintaining the focus on original authorial work.

Jiří Suchý decided to focus on cabaret shows in his theatre *Semafor* (an acronym based on words *SEdm MAlých FORem* - seven small forms). The most successful show in this period was the cabaret *Jonáš a tingl-tangl* (Jonas and Tingl-Tangl) from 1964, where he managed to create a comic duo with Jiří Šlitr (S+Š, reminiscent of V+W). The poetics of this theatre was close to V+W's Dadaist and absurd humour.

After his return to the Reduta, Ivan Vyskočil chose to focus on permanent experimentation and exploration of the possibilities inherent to a specific poetics in the open play. He further developed anti-illusionary principles already used in the inter-war period, concentrating on a new attitude toward the relationship with the viewer.

In his play *Mezičeči*, together with Leoš Suchařípa, he the matises the audience itself. He draws the viewers into the play as partners and makes them a key topic of the play. He talks to them and about them; he ridicules them but also encourages them as an audience. Many traits of this play are reminiscent of Peter Handke's play *Offending the Audience*, or of even earlier events held by the Austrian literary group, Wiener Gruppe in the early 1950s, that served as Handke's inspiration.

Variety is a fundamental trait of the movement of small theatre forms, as these were authorial theatres and the author's style determined the shape of individual scenes. It is therefore impossible to describe all its forms. Moreover, after the initial boom, companies that were tried to imitate the poetics of the originals, resigning their own authorship. Since the mid-1960s, characteristic traits of authorial theatres also spread into drama companies which also split from the official theatres, operating – at least until the early 1970s – as independent theatres: *Činoherní klub* (Drama Club) and Otomar Krejčí's *Divadlo za branou* (Theatre beyond the Gate); were both founded in 1965. (*Divadlo za branou* was forcibly closed down by a decree issued by the Ministry of Culture in 1972).

Approximately from the mid-1960s, new theatres of the authorial type are being founded, and their output culminates only in the following period after 1968. This second wave most notably includes *Studio Ypsilon* (1963, Liberec, later Prague), *Divadlo Husa na provázku* (Theatre Goose on a Leash, 1967, Brno), *Divadlo Járy Cimrmana* (Jara Cimrman's Theatre, 1967, Prague), but also artists and groups from the second postwar generation of Czech pantomime – Ctibor Turba, Boris Hybner (*Pantomima Alfreda Jarryho*, Alfred Jarry's Pantomime, 1966) and Bolek Polívka. In addition to these, we should also mention new puppet theatres, which were gradually freeing themselves from the influence of the Soviet indoctrination and also emancipating themselves from the forms inherent to traditional Czech puppetry (*Divadlo DRAK*, Theatre Dragon; Karel Makonj's *Vedené divadlo,* Guided Theatre).

Understandably, not all the theatres have managed to maintain their independent status, not only in the operational sense, but most importantly in the sense of creative independence. Obviously, only a few did not resign from their experimental roots. Despite that, the whole movement – both in its progressive and less progressive forms – participated in the creation of the cultural climate. This positive development was halted in 1968 as a result of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the military forces of the Warsaw Pact

on 21 August. The three subsequent years marked renewed reprisals; many artists emigrated and others were ostracised from cultural life. Some independent theatres were closed down. The year 1970(71) started a twenty-year period of the so-called Normalisation, which created unfavourable and very specific conditions for independent theatres.

Studio theatres in 1968–1989

After 1968, the regime – newly reinstated by Soviet powers after the Prague Spring – returned to repressive practices from the early 1950s. Professional, political and cultural posts were cleansed of those who participated in the revival process of the 1960s, the *de facto* cultural elite of the society. Many drama artists were forced to leave cultural centres for the periphery, and were not allowed to work in large towns. At the same time, all the theatre periodicals, except for amateur ones, were either banned or closed down, so the theatre lost a platform for self-reflection for ten years (a similar, if not worse situation affects literature and the majority of humanities).

The personnel changes in the early 1970s; the closure of professional periodicals; the closure or dissolution of trade unions and associations and the foundation of new ones with different staff; the repeated rupture of natural development; and the return to the dogmatic practices of the 1950s (a renewed promotion of Socialist Realism) all influenced the activities of independent theatres in the Normalisation period until 1989.

Strictly speaking, in this period we can consider as independent only those theatres connected with dissident circles. Underground shows mostly took place in flats in front of a very limited audience, and were usually performed by non-actors. A specific phenomenon in 1976–1978 was the theatre in the flat of Vlasta Chramostová, an actress who was forced to leave the *Divadlo na Vinohradech* (Vinohrady Theatre) in Prague after 1968. Shows in this theatre were staged with the participation of famous artists: director František Pavlíček, playwright and writer Pavel Kohout, actor Pavel Landovský or singer Vlasta Třešňák. The latter three were forced into exile in 1978.

In 1975, director Andrej Krob founded *Divadlo na tahu* (Theatre On the Move). In this theatre, he produced and publicly staged V. Havel's *Žebrácká opera* (The Beggar's Opera) in Horní Počernice (a village near Prague). This was the only public staging of Havel's play during the Normalisation. This staging became the pretext for a large-scale police operation against the author, the performers and some of

the viewers. In 1976, *Divadlo na tahu* staged another one of Havel's plays, *Audience* (Audience), in a barn in Hrádeček in eastern Bohemia, where V. Havel and his friend A. Krob owned their cotteges.

Some creative space for independent theatres was provided by amateur theatre, which has traditionally had a strong position in the Czech culture. This milieu produced companies operating in the 1980s, which after 1989 became professional and are now part of the postmodern theatre wave (Petr Lébl's *Doprapo/Jak se vám jelo*, Doprapo/How Was Your Journey; *Nepojízdná housenka,* A Stationary Caterpillar; *Tak-Tak*, Almost; J. A. Pitínský's *Ochotnický kroužek*, Amateur Circle; Jaroslav Dušek's *Divadlo Vizita*, The Visit Theatre; companies of the *Pražská pětka,* The Prague Five – *Sklep,*Cellar; *Mimóza,* Mimosa; *Baletní jednotka Křeč,* Ballet Unit Cramp; *Recitační skupina Vpřed,* Recitation Group Forward; and *Kolotoč,* Merry-Go-Round). Various displays and workshops held in amateur theatres established cooperation with theatre professionals. However, not even amateur theatre could be considered completely independent, as even that was controlled and misused by the Communist regime for its propaganda.

Most companies approaching the phenomenon of independent theatre are operating in the so-called grey zone (an expression defining the area between the forbidden and the allowed). This was a certain cultural area in which some artists on the one hand made contact with the underground and the dissent; and on the other hand, many artists crossed the imaginary borders of the grey zone into the official culture sanctioned by the state, or started collaborating. This crossing of borders happened in both professional and amateur theatre.

The most important point in the development of independent theatre during the Normalisation period is the year 1977, Charta 77, and the reaction it provoked on the part of the Communist authorities. On the one hand, a great majority of artists discredited themselves by signing the so-called Anticharta (*Za nové tvůrčí činy ve jménu socialismu a míru*, the so-called Anticharta, was a petition campaign organised by famous cultural figures in order to condemn the contents of Charta 77; it took place at the beginning of 1977 on the initiative of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia), these artists essentially denied their independent attitude. Less palpable was another negative personnel effect. As Charta 77 marked another wave of emigration, the third since 1948, lasting until the early 1980s. The last interference by the authorities, which *de jure* cancelled any kind of independence, was the new Theatre Act of 1977, which

became effective on January 1, 1978. From this day a new theatre – whether dependent or independent – could not be founded (the last theatre to be founded was the *HaDivadlo* in 1974 – first operating in Prostějov as *Hanácké divadlo*, Hanácké Theatre, later in Brno), existing companies of independent authorial theatres, which until then had a separate legal status, were assigned to bricks-and-mortar theatres, usually large drama stages. This way, independent theatres lost any kind of legal or organisational independence.

Even in this climate the companies tried to maintain at least partial artistic freedom. At the same time, putting independent theatres under the auspices of state-controlled drama companies also caused changes to the big theatres. During the 1980s, progressive groups emerged within these theatres (this model was first implemented already in the 1960s), creating side programmes in the theatres. In a sense, these were off-programmes at large theatres, taking place in rehearsal rooms, on studio stages, in the lobbies, clubs or bars within the traditional theatre buildings.

The majority of companies operating in the so-called grey zone expressed themselves dynamically during the so-called Perestroika period, taking a bolder approach to dissent, most notably during the November Revolution of 1989, which, in its first days, was able to rely on a long-standing network of relationships in all the offshoots operating as borderline independent theatres – originally independent companies allocated to large drama companies, and studio stages created within drama companies and amateur theatres.

The basic difference between the authorial theatres of the 1950s and 60s (the movement of small theatre forms) and those of the 1970s and 80s (studio theatres) is the transformation of the relation to the text. While the first wave of authorial theatres is characterised by an emphasis on the text and trust in verbal expression – its ability to provoke, inspire and challenge the viewer to take part – artists in the second wave renounced this strong bond with the text. Studio theatres put greater emphasis on movement and on developing all aspects of the production. Thus on one hand they adopted stimuli from international non-verbal and movement theatre. On the other hand, they were reacting to the domestic political situation, the intensification of censorship control and to the general devaluation of verbal expression in Czechoslovak society at the time. They often resorted to associations, deformations, and coded images as a reflection on the period. The author's statement is veiled or expressed through scenic rather than verbal means. This shift later manifested itself in the development of the relationship with the

audience. *Divadlo Husa na provázku* (Goose on a String Theatre, after 1969; just *Divadlo na provázku*: Theatre on a String), performing in a non-theatrical room in *Dům umění* in Brno, e.g. changes the position of the stage and the audience in each mise-en-scene, thereby establishing a relationship with an expressive value between the actor and the viewer. Most companies performed in small auditoriums, which allowed a direct contact between the actor and the viewer, allowing specific interactions between the stage and the audience. While in the first wave the viewer was being attacked with text, in the Normalisation period he or she is physically drawn into the performance and might take part in the play. This also expanded the understanding of performance space, e.g. in the productions staged at *HaDivadlo* in Prostějov.

At the same time a transformation of the general position of independent theatres in society was taking place. For a certain part of society, they become a refuge from the negative social and political situation. Especially Moravian theatres (*Divadlo Husa na provázku* and *HaDivadlo*) are considered cultural movements promoting principles of community and collectivity. At the time when the society lacks generational periodical, club and associative platforms, the artists offer their theatres as an open space in which the actors create a community with the viewers and enable dialogue.

A trait common to all studio theatres forming at the end of the 1960s and reaching their creative peak during the Normalisation period, is the collective creation of productions, the elaboration of a given topic through etudes and improvisations and self-presentational acting. In this respect, they resemble devising theatre. A starting point for the creation of a show could be a text, usually non-dramatic, but also a more general topic, a key historical figure or even an opera.

Divadlo Husa na provázku devised a programme with "irregular dramaturgy", drifting away from traditional drama and looking for textual inspiration in poetry, prose, journalism, non-fiction or in film scripts. *HaDivadlo* was creating drama scripts based on original texts by Arnošt Goldflam and elaborating on them in collective improvisations. *Divadlo na okraji* (Theatre On the Margin, Prague) was inspired by poetry theatres and worked with poetic and later also narrative texts. The resulting output was then arranged using the montage method.

The principle of montage was flourishing under the directorial leadership of Jan Schmid at *Studio Ypsilon* also in acting. The technique of "montage acting" is based on an associative development of the

situation. The actor does not identify with the role, but rather plays with it in a postmodern way. The character is viewed from various perspectives, and performed in various ways and styles. Logical and illogical naive associations are tied in to the character and the given situation by the actor. The actorship at the *Divadlo Husa na provázku*, after the initial inspiration by B. Brecht and E. F. Burian, absorbs stimuli from street theatre and commedia dell´arte. In the mid 1970s, M. M. Bachtin's book *Rabelais and His World* was translated into Czech, and simultaneously, the first exhaustive publication on commedia dell'arte was published in Czech.

Divadlo Husa na provázku at the same time focuses also on paratheatrical events and events outside the theatre (*Divadlo v pohybu*, Moving Theatre) and as such represents a significant resurrection of street theatre with circus elements. These influences manifest themselves in more traditional production types through inclination to a grotesque performative expression, the use of circus and acrobatic elements and physical theatre in shows directed by Peter Scherhaufer and in movement metaphors in poetical collages by director Eva Tálská.

The gradual liberalisation of the political climate during Normalisation enabled studio theatres to establish contacts with companies and schools from abroad. Divadlo Husa na provázku participated on international projects *Vesna národů/Wiosna ludów* (The Spring of Nations, 1978), *Together* (based on Comenius's *Labyrint světa,* Labyrinth of the World) (1983), and *Mir Caravane* (1989). International cooperation was likewise cultivated by puppet theatres (*Divadlo DRAK* z Hradce Králové, *Naivní divadlo Liberec,* The Liberec Naive Theatre, and others) and members of the second generation of Czech postwar pantomime (C. Turba and B. Polívka).

Besides studio theatres of authorial type, the early 1970s see the emergence of non-verbal and movement amateur theatres influenced by Polish alternative theatre – Václav Martinec's *Křesadlo* (Tinder-Box; after its closure V. Martinec and Nina Vangeli's *Studio pohybového divadla*, Studio of Movement Theatre), and later also *Bílé divadlo* (White Theatre) in Ostrava.

Translated by Blanka Zahorjanova

HUNGARY

The Independent Theatre

Noémi Herczog

The term "independent" refers first and foremost to a structural category in Hungarian theatre. It describes the artists, ensembles, venues and production companies with no state or municipal owner and therefore no normative subsidies. These three-hundred organisations of the independent scene – a steadily growing number – are typically NGOs or nonprofit companies, entitled to apply for operational and project grants. This process – along with an elected and ideally authentic committee – is supposed to provide quality assurance. As far as genres go, the independent scene is a colourful spectrum, which – beyond the mostly Budapest-based companies – comprises almost the entire modern dance scene, as well as representatives of theatre-in-education, puppetry, circus, music and interdisciplinary movements. Though traditionally it was mostly performing arts workshops with more experimental topics, language and audience relations and hardly profit-oriented that used to be categorized as independent, this aesthetic distinction has now disappeared and, due to the above structural conditions, some classical ballet companies, as well as commercial private theatres and quite a few enthusiastic amateurs, consider themselves "independent theatre". About a hundred experimental groups, which distance themselves from state and city theatres both in their mission and the way they operate, form the Association of Independent Performing Artists (FESZ).[1] Most Hungarian directors with any international reputation (e.g. Viktor Bodó, Zoltán Balázs, Gábor Goda, Kornél Mundruczó, Béla Pintér and Árpád Schilling) work in the independent field today.

Dictatorship and Counterculture

Independent theatre has a great tradition in Hungary, although the groups used to be called "amateur" and later "alternative". After the nationalisation of theatres in 1949, a structure of Hungarian public theatre was fixed, which continues to the present. Under this shadow the first underground companies surfaced as a result of the '68 movement, typically balancing on the thin line between the

1. The mission statement of the association reformed in 2011 reads as follows: "AIPA's mission as facilitators and multi-leveled union representatives is to inspire theatre-in-education, puppetry, circus, dance, theatre and music, thereby forwarding a constant modernization of the field in accordance with the changes in society. Its social mission is to improve relations between performers and communities on the one hand, and performers and training institutions on the other. AIPA's task goes beyond fighting for the rights of its individual members, it represents the entire independent scene and its policies. Its annual programs and the individual projects within serve that purpose too. AIPA considers independence to be a special way of operating, as well as an artistic standpoint, an aesthetic concept and program."

banned and the tolerated, as defined by the cultural policy of György Aczél[2]. In what used to be the only higher education institution for theatre-makers, performers of amateur groups were automatically rejected, cf. Péter Halász, founder of the only banned and exiled theatre (The Squat). In these ensembles, which could not controlled from above (e.g. Universitas, Studio "K" etc.) thoughts and ideas undesirable to the regime could easily surface.

> "The characteristic phenomenon that has described modern theatre since Antoine's Théâtre Libre, namely that next to state and city theatres the scene is constantly shaped by amateur groups, whose intense and genuine performing reveals the loss of artistic temperament in public theatres, but on the other hand they keep inspiring and fertilizing them, so both their provocation and certain achievements become part of the culture, thereby proving to be an effective engine behind and factor in national theatre culture. In modern theatre history Halász's studio played this significant role, as did Studio "K" (Tamás Fodor) an the Monteverdi Wrestling Circle (András Jeles) later on."[3]

So Géza Fodor, the renowned opera critic, aesthete and dramaturg links Hungarian independent theatre before the fall of the Berlin Wall to Antoine's Théâtre Libre: independent theatre-makers are artists or groups that define themselves as a counterculture to the state theatre despite the fact that the latter also often offered their audiences productions with obvious *readings-between-the-lines*. This could mean aesthetic difference, but frequently it also meant open criticism of the regime – a tool state or city theatres never used.

After the 1956 revolution, the social-political consolidation of the sixties saw the gradual thawing of the dictatorship. Political censorship was still being exercised in culture, based on three ideological categories: banned, tolerated and supported (see above). Since artistic experiments were being watched by censors, the ones not complying with the cultural political directive could be banned by the police. Experiment was regarded as deviation even in the seventies. The projects created in the amateur workshops despite the censorship, stayed in the counter-cultural field and did not seep through to the mainstream, "professional" theatre or dance scene.

The companies working on the borderline of banned and tolerated functioned as a political valve and were allowed to stage plays that a state theatre would not be allowed to program. One such "valve" was the University Stage. Its relatively free atmosphere produced several amateur and professional artists of the era. An autonomous

2. György Aczél was the Kádár regime's key cultural politician, who often decided about life and death in cultural issues. His infamous policy in the sixties and seventies was determined by the three "T"-s: banned, tolerated and supported – the Hungarian equivalents of which words all start with a "t". (Translator's note)

3. Géza Fodor, *About Péter Halász's Péter Theatre*, in: *Péter Halász double number*, Színház, 1991, October-November.

workshop, it became a kind of channel controllable by the authorities, through which the regime tried to broaden publicity toward the intelligentsia and Western Europe.

After the 1956 uprising the Kádár regime needed legitimization and they wanted to show that Hungary was a democracy. Beyond the resident company Universitas recitals, concerts (including those of the regime-critical Illés and Omega) and folk music events found their home on University Stage. After a while renowned professional actors in discord with the regime were also welcome here. Since students only belonged to this particular community as long as they did not graduate, each generation has its own University Stage. The first golden age of Universitas was under József Ruszt and the second under István Paál. Ruszt's company had two major European tours, once with a production of *Mrs. Karnyó*[4] and once with *The Eight Circle of Inferno* by Péter Halász, which made it to the Wroclaw Festival in 1969. After the Prague Spring of 68 was crushed and its aftereffects cooled down, a stricter censorship was introduced, Ruszt got fired on charges of perverting the youth with his homosexuality.

After the dissolution of Universitas, Tamás Fodor got in trouble after founding Studio "K", in 1974. While Halász pretended to work in a democratic milieu and intentionally disregarded the political atmosphere around him, Studio "K" was a political theatre in open rebellion (e.g. *Woyzeck*, 1977). After the regime change Tamás Fodor served as an MP in the early nineties as a member of the Association of Liberal Democrats (SZDSZ). After several venue-changes Studio "K" is still an important experimental familiar workshop.

Independent existence is key to András Jeles's Monteverdi Wrestling Circle in the eighties. In his company the well-known film and stage director prefers working with amateurs, rather than trained actors. The three shows they produced offered an important alternative to Hungarian, mostly realistic play-acting.

In the balancing-act between the categories of banned and tolerated, unique combinations evolved. In 1970 a subsidized-yet-independent experimental workshop, the naively romantic 25th Theatre was formed and found itself in a uniquely divided position. Their intention to improve the system was clear, and yet they were continuously scorned as amateurs and dilettantes while official critics had to defend them.

The only banned theatre in Hungary was Péter Halász's. After Universitas was dissolved Halász founded the Kassák House Studio in a cultural centre and was later forced to continue in his own flat. The illegal flat theatre was regarded as one of the centres of

4. A classic Hungarian comedy in verse with songs by Vitéz Mihály Csokonai from 1799.

Hungarian oppositional thinking, but to quote Géza Fodor this is not a rational ethos: Halász's audience representing numerous and versatile world views was bound by the common sentiment against the regime. "The magic of belonging to good company." Halász's flat was a gathering forum. Though his shows were thematically apolitical, Fodor found this irrational feature made the flat theatre politically dangerous: those in power at the time did not understand avant garde aesthetics, but kept stubbornly looking for it to no avail. This company which produced work that could not be interpreted from a political standpoint was more irritating for the regime than any direct criticism. Even though back then Halász was not a fully conscious actor, being a layman did not diminish his gift or the power of his stage presence, in fact many credit this unique presence to his layman's persona. The theatre was finally forced into emigration in 1976 and Halász did not return to Hungary until 1985 touring with a production of Love Theatre. He directed his last performance, his own funeral, when fatally ill in Hungary.

Another avant garde artist banished from the country was Tamás St Auby, the initiator of Hungarian fluxus, happenings and environmental art. In 1974 he was arrested for his participation in the samizdat movement and charged with instigation, then banished from Hungary. He returned in 1991.

In dance, only folk dance and ballet were tolerated. Any modern initiatives were blacklisted and eventually died out. In Universitas, which was the cradle of many independent groups, mostly pantomime companies worked. But for a few exceptions ballet was almost the only alternative dance form in Hungary until the sixties, the modern dance experiments that started in the twenties stopped altogether. Ballet versus folk dance amateur versus professionals were the dichotomies that best describe the dance trends of the era.[5] The cleft between professional (ballet) and amateur (creative) training in the fifties was so great that most of today's leading alternative dancers went to amateur jazz classes, as well as the dancers from the Opera House fed up with the only option of ballet.

The other possible path was folk dance, but in the fifties the regime tried to make the tradition uniform by erasing national characteristics, for even the dance-house movement that started in the seventies was considered nationalistic in the internationalist-socialist milieu: this Hungaro-hippy movement was somewhat less anti-regime than the underground movement of the time. Authentic folk music and folk dance samples were being collected, but it was

5. For the dance chapter I relied mostly on Lívia Fuchs's basic work: A Hundred Years of Dance, L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2007.

considered nationalistic, though it had none of that sentiment. The genres still survive (Ferenc Novák, Honvéd Dance Group).
The renewal of dance life came from the choreographers who started after World War Two. It was primarily ensembles far from the capital that were allowed to work, since they did not have to rethink their non-existent past (Zoltán Imre's experimental studio, the Szeged Balett and the more spectacular trend of modern ballet: the Béjart-disciple Iván Markó and the grand scenic designs of Judit Gombár in the Győr Ballet).

Regime Change and Independence

Although the significant moments in theatre history do not necessarily coincide with the great turning points of Hungarian history, it is quite clear that after censorship ended with the regime change, independent theatre ceased to be defined as counter-culture. The term "alternative" had negative connotations, since independent companies were often descendants of amateur groups with no institutional background and often no formal training (some even called them dilettantes). The lack of formal training is still often associated with the independent spirit, but having no diploma does not necessarily mean that a director cannot work in the public theatre, a good example being János Mohácsi.[6] At the same time theatres still depend on state subsidies. Paradoxically, so do independent groups. The state theatre structure survived the regime change with no perceptible alteration despite the fact that the independent theatre had started growing even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, and offered an alternative to state and city theatres, bringing in new audiences from the nineties onwards. By this time there were several factors that would require a structural change in the theatre field, professional autonomy and freedom from politics being most important. This is the most valid, most important and broadest interpretation of the term "independent" to this day.[7]
In 2002, partially in reaction to the uncertain existence and the structural issues above, Krétakör Theatre (1995–2008) refused to accept the award for the "Best Alternative Show of the Year" (called the "Best Independent Show" today) for its production W – Workers' Circus.[8] This would have been the second time for the company to win the award of the Theatre Critics' Guild, but the artists turned it down in protest against the term "alternative".

6. János Mohácsi started as a props manager in the legendary Kaposvár Theatre and quickly rose through the ranks to become one of the most prestigious Hungarian stage directors, for whom the best public theatres fight.

7. Structural debates inspired the almost non-existent genre of documentary theatre. (The only Hungarian documentary and verbatim theatre to date is the independent PanoDrama, founded in 2008.) In 2008 Gábor Máté (artistic director of the renowned Katona József Theatre - the translator) staged an important show in the studio space of Katona entitled "Debating structure". A quote from the verbatim performance: "...the reform must bring about a program-based planning and the moneys trickling to state institutions must be redirected into a public foundation, which the film profession set up an example for. This would also bring about the very much desired autonomy everybody speaks about, and finally we would be free of politics' embrace. This is the job cut out for us and no small task at that." (Máté Gáspár, managing director of Krétakör speaking of an independent body to distribute monies).

8. Based on Büchner's *Woyzeck* and the early 20th century brilliant Hungarian workers' poet, Attila József's poems directed by Árpád Schilling.

"For years we have emphasized that we are no alternative theatre. This word means nothing to us (...) Our gesture is not meant to turn down the acknowledgment or the people behind it, we reject the category that robs us of a professional future. We do hope you understand our meaning and will help explain it to the cultural politicians, whom the fate of our theatre depends on."

In 2004 Krétakör offered a specific proposal about restructuring the field. This proposal, which was never realized, served as the basis for an important episode in the structural debate: a tender for the open call of the National Theatre's new management. In 2007 the independent director László Hudi (Moving House Company) and theatre historian and independent dramaturg Zoltán Imre (Collective of Natural Disasters) submitted their tender under the title "National Theatre for Everyone!" Coming from an unusual segment with an independent and a theoretical background respectively the couple stood out among the more traditional applicants, and offered the committee and the political decision-makers a model significantly different from Hungarian practice, but made of familiar and well-functioning building blocks and therefore professionally acceptable. According to their concept the National Theatre should not be a company to produce shows, but one that commissions them, within a system where each innovative theatre company has an equal chance to perform on its stages.

"If the plan was taken seriously, the present vertical and horizontal lines of the theatre structure would become meaningless, regardless of whether an institution is a state, city or private theatre, whether it has a commercial, public, art house or experimental profile. The entire theatre world would have to be regarded and operated as one. Since Imre and Hudi did not differentiate between the companies they wanted to invite to their National Theatre based on their place in the theatre structure, but based on the artistic quality of the productions alone – meaning that each would have started with an equal chance in this collaboration – the decades-old frozen and by now anachronistic proportions in subsidies would have had to change as well. Until now, state and city theatres were given a lot of money regardless of their achievements, while everyone else got very little"

— thus concludes the theatre historian István Nánay in his analysis of the proposal, emphasizing its significance beyond the

scope of the issue of the National Theatre.[9] This alternative tender brought about another novelty, namely that it did not believe in permanent ensembles as the only solution for state theatres. The winner was Róbert Alföldi's excellent concept, however, which left the structure in place.

Independent and private companies continue to get but a fraction of theatre subsidies, while in the capital they provide almost half of the program choices on any given day. "If we compare independent and state theatre numbers regarding spectators, performances and box office revenue, and then compare their state and municipal subsidies, they prove to be grossly disproportionate" – writes István Nánay in 2007.[10]

The same progressive independent company, Arvisura, served as an early home for two of the most important figures of the present independent scene, the writer/actor/director Béla Pintér and Árpád Schilling, founder of the most significant independent group since the regime change. The two have different relationships to institutional training: while Pintér never pursues formal studies, Schilling graduated from directing at the Academy of Theatre and Film.

Béla Pintér's Company (1999-) is the key repertory ensemble at one of the oldest independent venues with a great history, Szkéné (located in the University of Technology). His theatre is a one-man show in many respects: there are no guest directors and even though he has a steady ensemble with some key actors (he kept only two of the original amateur company and engaged trained actors instead), Pintér writes and directs his plays for the members and plays in all of them himself. His shows are strongly based on the knowledge of Hungarian culture and its familiar elements, while often providing a satire of nationalism. He is also a renewer of Hungarian music theatre. For a long time many critics failed to understand his unique, stylized, ritual language forged from amateur and commonplace elements and so different from the psychological realism dominating the Hungarian theatre of the time. He is not acknowledged as a playwright either, criticized for literary quality and the lack of adaptability by other companies and other directors. But it does not take Pintér long to find his audience, who understand his humour, his political criticism and in whose eyes he cannot fail. Even though by now his company has long been considered one of the best by the pickiest of critics, Pintér is struggling for survival just like most of the others in the independent scene.

9. István Nánay, *A Chance Missed*, in: *Egy elszalasztott lehetőség*, Színház folyóirat, 2007.

10. Ibidem.

An important alternative to management was offered by Krétakör, led since 1998 by the founder and artistic director Schilling and the managing director Máté Gáspár, who remains one of the most important representatives of the – in Hungary – still rare and only slowly growing breed next to György Szabó (Trafó) and Viktória Kulcsár (Jurányi Incubator House). The Schillling-Gáspár tandem was key to Krétakör's survival and autonomy. Their lobbying was crucial for the small changes in the position of the independent companies, as well as for the growing state subsidies. For a few years Krétakör ends up getting substantial state support, but half of its budget still comes from international grants, touring and box office revenue. Guest directors include Kornél Mundruczó[11] and Sándor Zsótér[12], but one of Hungary's leading directors, Viktor Bodó also started here as an actor.[13] Krétakör was an independent repertory theatre with a steady ensemble. Schilling often worked with the playwright István Tasnádi and next to the new and often revelatory productions of classics their original works play a key role, as indeed the pieces devised by the ensemble with Schilling at the helm, like *BLACKland*, a political cabaret which remains a point of reference in Hungary's post-dramatic theatre.

In 2008 Schilling unexpectedly dissolves the repertory company of Krétakör, which enjoys both critical and popular acclaim, questioning what producing shows one after the other does to artistic quality if carried on for too long. He does keep the brand name though and launches a project-based production team with only four collaborators. In 2009 he receives the New Theatrical Realities Award in Wroclaw. The new Krétakör's most significant activity is promoting the common good of the arts, as a result of which the work of theatre-in-education companies becomes more visible in Hungary (Round Table, 1992, KÁVA, 1997).

Dwindling funding and an ever decreasing number of venues for independent theatre-makers are problems only partially solved by state and city theatres offering studio spaces to them (only if their target audience is not essentially different from that of the company they invite there). The Katona József Theatre was one of the first to offer space to directors coming from or also working in the independent scene including Yvette Bozsik, Árpád Schilling and Viktor Bodó. Some members of the Katona ensemble on the other hand, who do not find complete fulfillment in the repertory framework join the actor Vilmos Vajdai in his successful endeavour to create a popular postdramatic underground cabaret/performance art company name TÁP Theatre as a sort of second life next to their work at Katona.

11. The award-winning young filmmaker's first major theatre staging is a modern Niebelung-story by the Hungarian playwright, János Térey, produced by Krétakör, featuring its company. This is followed by another production, which survives the ensemble and transfers to Alföldi's National Theatre, where it keeps playing to sold out houses and touring internationally crowning a seven-year repertory run.

12. Zsótér trained as a dramaturg, rather than a director, and has been one of the most sought-after and most knowledgable theatre artists for over a decade. He is one of the still not too numerous Hungarian theatre-makers whose style is anything but Stanislawskian, rather formal and stylized.

13. A brilliant young actor, Bodó toured as Baal in Schilling's groundbreaking production of Brecht's masterpiece all over France and elsewhere, but he performed in other key works of Krétakör for many years. One day he decided to give up acting for directing and has since become one of the household names of European festival programmers and German-speaking theatres, where he is a regular guest director, allowed to bring some of his independent company.

It is in the theatre's studio space that Viktor Bodó, with a diploma from the Academy of Theatre and Film in his hand, stages his legendary production Rattledanddisappered, after Kafka's Trial. For a long time after that though critics often find his works based on a post-dramatic dramaturgy incoherent, while his world – evoking crazy, drug-induced visions – are better acknowledged internationally. Since 2006 Bodó has been staging at least one show a year at Schauspiel Graz. In 2008 he founded the Sputnik Shipping Company and Modern Behaviour Research Institute, for which he writes plays working with his dramaturgs, he also designs sets, directs himself and invites guest directors while also running the company. Since 2010 he has been co-mentoring the directing class at the University of Theatre and Film. The second breakthrough in his Hungarian reception is the 2010 Graz production of Franz Molnár's Liliom. A frequent writing collaborator is the playwright, András Vinnai, whose surreal language and unique humour are easy to recognize.

Faced with the danger of getting no contracts in state or city theatres another group of professional actors, the 2007 graduates of the University of Theatre – a class mentored by Tamás Ascher and Eszter Novák – decide to stay together and form an independent company called HoppArt. Their language strongly builds on music and even though most members of the class end up employed by the best theatres in Budapest, a small team stays together and the others keep coming back to join them for individual projects. HoppArt's artistic director is the actor Tamás Herczeg, its resident-director is the leading young actor of Örkény Theatre, Csaba Polgár. A melting pot of amateurs and professional actors is the Maladype Company, which started as a gypsy theatre, but can today be described through its founder, Zoltán Balázs' work of visually alert, ritual and physical forms – a great challenge to his actors.

The most important independent venues are Trafó, MU and the new Jurányi Incubator House, where audiences can often see interdisciplinary work, moving along the borders of text, fine arts, theatre and dance. MU houses dance and theatre-in-education programs. Jurányi opened last year, thanks to the manager Viktória Kulcsár and serves as a life-saver to many indies forced on the periphery for financial reasons. In Trafó one can see – among other things – the works of the outstanding physical theatre director Csaba Horváth and his FORTE Company, as well as the political theatre-choreographer Krisztián Gergye. Besides Trafó is the only Budapest venue to show the expensive productions of Kornél Mundruczó's Proton Theatre and works of its director, Joseph Nadj.

The same venues present representatives of modern dance, many of whom started well before the fall of the Berlin Wall with experimental, financially risky endavours. They come from unique marginal amateur workshops, where thinking is not bound by ideological rules: from jazz dance(Pál Frenák, Kati Lőrincz), pantomime training (Joseph Nadj, Gábor Goda) and from the then pioneering workshop of Studio "K", where tools of expression of the body were also researched (Iván Angelus). In 1991 Angelus becomes one of the founders and the director of the Budapest Dance School, which trains professional modern dancers. The only professional among the then new alternative dancers is Yvette Bozsik, who after graduating at the National Ballet Institute joins the Budapest Operetta Theatre, but also dances in the fine artist György Árvai's Collective of Natural Disasters. Her independent work is connived at, but it takes a long time before she can become truly independent financially.

About the Present Structure

The old theatre structure survived the regime change, but the independent scene and its new audiences become stronger from the mid-nineties on. Today it boasts of an audience between one hundred fifty and two hundred thousand annually. The key moment of official recognition came with the performing arts law, which – after years of thorough negotiations – took effect in 2009 and which guaranteed independent companies and venues a minimum of 10% of municipal operational subsidies. After the 2010 elections, the new government got rid of the majority of the committee which decided about independent subsidies, in a manner whereby the curators only learned that they had been fired from a call for proposals on the websites of the ministry and the National Cultural Fund. The performing arts law was modified in the centralizing spirit of new public policies, strengthening the status of city theatres as "national" or "special" institutions (by now led by political cronies of ther governing party) and throwing independent companies into the ever-growing cauldron called "others", now including many more applicants in a most heterogenous mix. All these have to fight for the same amount of money, as defined by the Ministry of National Resources every year (in 2013 about three million euros). Today independent theatres receive 50% less than they did in 2010.

The main reason for these substandard subsidies is a policy stating that artists who critical of the government in any way do not deserve taxpayers' monies. Several ensembles including Krétakör

have criticized the government's measures, their cultural policy and the democratic deficit in shows or performance events, as well as at rallies. The minister in charge of culture Zoltán Balog proclaimed on a TV show, "wherever we could, we stopped these sacred cows (i.e. critical artists) from getting funding." He asserts that these artists should not be supported with taxpayers' monies and doesn't. He also eagerly agreed with his interviewers' standpoint that "they should support themselves and not beg those for money from those whom they then try to overcome, or have fired, who they demand should resign. They should not even ask."

Political loyalty clearly reaps financial support. A good example is Iván Markó's company, which in 2013 got an extra 130 million forints (about €410,000) from the government, while in the same year operational grants for all independent dance companies amounted to 212 million forints (about €731,000) and had to be divided between almost fifty companies.

As stated above, most Hungarian independent groups are based in Budapest. This is partly due to Hungary's infrastructure, but it also reflects a lack of mobility. This is one of the reasons why provincial social layers are often secluded from culture. Venues in the country are particularly rare, while independent companies have no chance to regularly tour outside of the capital.

Hungarian cultural policy regarding financing the independent scene resembles the German model most: they are supported by the state, which would rather not leave them entirely to live off off the market. (There is no private or corporate sponsorship of the arts in Hungary.) Therefore the term "independent theatre" is under constant debate, with many finding the term misleading. The term does not signify an independence from public resources, but the autonomy, the intellectual freedom of the groups. Politically motivated appointments are of no concern for instance, they cannot be controlled from above and even though their – financially not entirely independent – existence is in grave danger, they enjoy the greatest artistic freedom.

Translated by Anna Lengyel

MACEDONIA

Independent Performing Arts Scene

Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski

When talking about the "independent scene" I have to be precise with the explanation of its meaning because "independence" is prone to misinterpretation and misuse. On several different occasions I have explained to the representatives of public institutions in Macedonia: independent doesn't mean that state shouldn't support the sector financially, but the contrary. Statements such as: "Since you are independent, why do you ask for financial support from the state?" or "How you are independent when state gives money for your programs?" etc., explain the existing division between sectors that should be collaborating. In such an atmosphere, the independent sector justifies its work, ethics and goals, in the hope of equal treatment and better working conditions.

In this text I will describe the landscape in Macedonia in which the contemporary performing arts scene, as part of independent sector, exists. This document doesn't describe the official viewpoint, but that of someone working in the field for more than a decade.

Who we are, the independent performing arts scene?

In this article, the "independent performing-arts scene" I discuss are the organisations in the civil sector working in the field of the contemporary performing arts (theatre and dance), which are a) the initiatives based on new models of management, or practise democratic models of governance; are established bottom-up, on the initiative of a certain group of people and not by the government, state or any external structure; b) initiatives with their own systems for decision making, again independent of any external influence on the structure, management procedures or other internal organisational matters; c) organisations which depend solely on their own decisions in matters of finance and programming.[1]

To explain what the contemporary performing arts in Macedonia are, we should compare them to the classical, traditional, or mainstream performing arts scene that they are not. Mainstream institutions are characterised by a hermetic approach. They are closed to new tendencies, theories and to deliberation of their art system. Their

1. For more on independent culture, see Emina Višnjić and Sanjin Dragojević (eds.), *A Bottom Up Approach to Cultural Policy Making*, Zagreb, 10p.

protocols of governing and producing are obsolete; the budgets for their performances are large or even huge (compared with the rest of the sector); they also represent a vast machinery which supports their production apparatus.

Contemporary theatre and contemporary dance is the opposite of all this. The contemporary scene is characterised by small and adaptable productions, a critical overview of the context and the art system, flexible scene and costume design, and orientation towards contemporary cultural theory that offers critical reflection on the models of institutions and modes of production; adaptable production conditions and mechanisms of support. It is not always oriented towards product as performance, but instead a focus on the working processes, knowledge production, and transfer of knowledge; as well as new production approaches and principles in the creation process. There is a tendency towards experimentation. Research and new models of collaboration are also characteristics of contemporary performing arts. The above aims to distinguish what represents the independent contemporary performing arts, and is done with respect to the practices of the mainstream approach described.[2]

However, the institutional structure of contemporary dance in Macedonia today, within cultural policy, includes jazz ballet, modern, neoclassical, etc.[3] This grouping or distinction is not effected to effect the above-mentioned the criteria but rather is a complete mish-mash. One can see is that the Ministry of Culture has simply grouped all existing initiatives that work in the field of dance under the umbrella of contemporary dance. When I talk about independent contemporary performing arts in Macedonia, I expressly mean my own definition given above, as well as the frame of policy in which these arts are treated and communicated by the state.

The beginning of the development of contemporary dance in Macedonia is associated with the democratisation phase of the programme policies (1990-present) of the Macedonian Opera and Ballet (at that time the Macedonian National Theatre). This initial democratisation of the repertory occurred primarily when the employees of this institution enrolled in the west-European and east-European educational centres, and began to present new choreographies and approaches to dance within the institution.

However, this is incidental programming, or ad-hock attempts to include something outside the “iron repertoire” performances and the institutional dance scene in Macedonia, as embodied by the Macedonian Opera and Ballet, which continues to operate in a closed frame, oriented largely toward its own choreographic personnel

2. Check also Milena Bogavac text in Raster 1, an annual journal of contemporary performing arts, in the edition *Teorija koja hoda (Walking Theory)* and her distinction between mainstream and alternative, or contemporary performing arts in Serbia, p. 13–20. I'm relating the mentioned in this with Bogavac text since it is talking about the theatre scene and its problems in Serbia in more elaborated way, and depicts the relation between mainstream, contemporary or alternative in Serbia, which I find very similar with the Macedonian context.

3. A statement issued by the Ministry of Culture regarding support of the independent scene, says, «The Ministry of Culture made extensive analysis of the degree to which the contemporary dance is present in the independent cultural scene. Professionally, contemporary dance is the primary activity of the cultural centre Interart and Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture, whereas the amateur and semi-professional group includes the following subjects: Rebis, Break a Leg, Tutu, Mak Models, Bulforg Ballet.» Expressing their commitment to improve all segments of art, the Ministry of Culture, regularly, in the programs of national interest supports the subjects whose primary activity is contemporary dance, emphasized Kancheska-Milevska.» This statement listed *Rebis, Break a Leg, Tutu, Mak Models* and *Bulforg Ballet* as amateur and semi-professional contemporary dance organizations, although these subjects do not practice contemporary dance, but offer programs for jazz ballet, modern ballet, neoclassical, classical ballet for children, etc. For these…

(even though the dancers in the ensemble have been educated in west- and east-European centres), a standardised creative process focused on the final product, mimesis, regional cooperation with professionals from institutions of former-Yugoslavia and predominantly classical ballet repertories. This is a legitimate institutional policy, but not a stimulating policy for developing an institutional framework to support new dance language.

Due to this institutional policy, but also the need to innovate, in the early 2000s pioneering steps were taken in formation of the independent contemporary dance scene. Organisations such as Interart (1996) and MTC (2002) both lead by the choreographer Risima Risimkin and Lokomotiva – Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture (2003) were established. Interart established the model of a dance productions by the choreographer who ran these centres, an international Dance Festival with diverse performances, and trends which followed the preferences of the audience. They also organised several regional conferences (2004–2005 and after 2007). At the same time, NGO Lokomotiva – the Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture in Skopje – opened offering a continuous programme of workshops related to education in the field of contemporary dance, co-producing works by Macedonian authors and establishing the international festival of contemporary dance and performance, Locomotion. This festival exhibited clearly profiling content and managed to grow its own audience. [4]

Nevertheless, despite a critical mass of people who worked on creating conditions for the development and promotion of contemporary dance as a recognisable and independent art since the early 2000s, it seems that no serious impact was made on the development and establishment of an independent contemporary dance scene in Macedonia. There was a lack of initiative by the younger generation of dancers, choreographers and cultural workers to develop an independent contemporary dance scene, perhaps due to apathy stemming from unsystematic and ad hoc policies of the Culture Ministry. The younger generation are aware that the numerous, decades-long efforts by their older colleagues to change the conditions in the field in which they work did not achieve a positive outcome, and so they decided to pursue their careers outside the country where working conditions are significantly better. [5]

The independent theatre scene has enjoyed a growth in recent years, with the appearance of series of independent theatre groups, such as Theatra, Wonderland Theatre and Buden Theatre among others. These groups actively contribute to a new landscape and the creation

...groups there should be a separate treatment and a different approach. However, this raises the question of the relevance of this in-depth analysis of the Ministry of Culture of the degree of presence of contemporary dance in Macedonia taking into account the inaccuracies made in the most basic division and mapping of the subjects from this field. The abovementioned extract is taken from the article titled *Support the Independent Dance Scene* at: http://www.kultura.gov.mk/index.php/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/544-poddrska-na-nezavisnata-tancova-scena

4. This is taken from the presentation on the subject of *Modern Macedonian Dance Scene* by Sonja Zdravkova-Djeparoska, PhD in theatre studies, Assistant professor of the academic programs for ballet pedagogy and contemporary dance at the Faculty of Music Arts at the University Ss. *Cyril and Methodius*, Skopje. For more information see the notes of the conference on www.lokomotiva.org.mk

5. Biljana Tanurovska Kjulavkovski and Milka Ivanovska, *Cultural policy reforms of the independent contemporary dance and contemporary theatre scene* (Report on the situation, conclusions and recommendations), www.lokomotiva.org.mk

of another theatre language. This new growth resurrects initiatives for the development of independent theatre in the 90's (associated with Aleksandar Popovski and Darko Mitrevski) and the opening of *Mala Stanica* as an independent centre after years of a vacuum. In 2009, there was an initiative for establishing organization named Theatre kaj *Navigatorot Cvetko* three prominent directors – Slobodan Unkovski, Ivan Popovski and Aleksandar Popovski. With its infrastructure this would have supported the new and young authors, but, unfortunately, this project seems unlikely be realised. Today in Macedonia there is a clear interest in independent performances. This has been demonstrated by audiences' obvious interest and last year's inclusion of independent theatre productions in the country's leading international theatre festival – *Open Youth Theatre* (2011)[6]. Despite the intensive growth of the scene for contemporary theatre, it seems that the lack of financial and infrastructural conditions seriously threaten its ongoing viability, however.

Future?

One of the crucial dilemmas in debates about the development of contemporary performing arts is whether these practices can be supported by institutions, and if the old institutional models meet the needs of the scene, or it is necessary to introduce new models, post-institutional solutions/practices.
Bearing in mind how the mainstream institutions or the only models of cultural institutions in Macedonia work, one can easily believe that the existing models do not correspond with the needs of the contemporary performing arts in Macedonia.
The necessity of non-bureaucratic and flexible forms of organization for easier identification of the needs and the way of production require new models of institutions, rather than re-establishment of the already long time ago instituted models.
For example, there is a proposal to open a Dance Theatre and Dance Company in Macedonia: an institution that would broadly operate along the lines of a modernist dance institution, which would facilitate the development of dance companies which do not conform to the model or aesthetics of the contemporary dance scene an could represent a variety of different authors' choreographic approaches, ranging from the older generation: Iskra Sukarova, Risima Risimkin, Sasa Eftimova, Olga Pango, to the emerging: Kire Miladinoski, Aleksandar Gergiev, Viktorija Ilioska, Dragana Zarevska, Ivana Kocevska etc.

6. Open Youth theatre program 2011: http://mot.com.mk/

What is needed is an institution that will offer another type of governing and decision making as well as programming that will enable the development of different author approaches. What has been detected by many different talks, debates and other discursive programs over the years is that authors in Macedonia need space and programs for research, programs for mobility of local and foreign professionals, programs that support collaboration and production, programs for temporary employment of young professionals, and so on.

There are specific differences between the production and governing processes of the independent performing scene and the institutional scenes for dance and theatre. The public institutional scene is large, monolithic and unresponsive to the demands of the contemporary performing arts for flexibility and openness. The indifference and apathy arise from the *partization* which has been dragging out in the Macedonian cultural institutions for years, and can be detected as a major problem. Cultural institutions in Macedonia are still largely led by leading party-nominated figures, and rarely by professionals suitable for the job. In the new strategic document from the Ministry of Culture for cultural development 2013–2017 we can see that one of the strategic priorities is formulated: De-etatization and deconcentration in the governing of culture. This priority is aimed at decentralisating the power of decision-makers in the Ministry of Culture and other political organs, empowering the Council of Culture as well as giving financial and programming autonomy to the managers of public institutions through the implementation of new financial mechanisms. Beyond this, transparent new mechanisms will be implemented that will enable selection of professionals for the governing positions.[7]

Another problem that the contemporary performing art scene faces is the significant number of young people educated in performing arts who study in western-European centres after graduation and do not return to Macedonia. In dance, the reason for leaving in the past was the lack of higher education programs. But now there is the Department of Ballet Pedagogy at the Faculty of Music Arts, University St. Cyril and Methodius Skopje; the Department of Contemporary Dance at Skopje Dance Academy; the Faculty of Applied Music at the private University of Audiovisual Arts European Film Academy ESRA Paris – Skopje – New York and/or Nomad Dance Academy – a regional platform for contemporary dance that offers innovative educational programs.

Before higher education was established in this field, those who wanted to continue their education or work in contemporary dance,

7. Национална стратегија за развој на културата 2013–2017 (http://www.kultura.gov.mk/index.php/odnosi-so-javnost/2011–03-04–10-39–07/883-nacionalna-strategija-za-razvoj), p. 19.

decided to leave and stay in western-Europe. Today, the main reason for not returning and not contributing locally is the lack of feedback and interest in exploiting the potential that these individuals have in terms of new knowledge, experiences and new designs of work and production on the part of local organisers. The lack of education has been overcome, but the question arises: what next after the education?

Since there is no meaningful support for the independent sector, and while there are no jobs in the public institutions, infrastructure or finance – i.e. while there are no conditions for professional development in the field of contemporary dance – young professionals are forced to search for an open space for creation, communication and application of their acquired knowledge in contemporary dance.

This is the shared experience of performers from Macedonia who have had the chance to work on different stages in Europe. Reasons to work there include: the possibilities for collaboration, the availability of funds, conditions for professional development and the existence of openness and initiatives for cooperation with foreign performers.

In the Republic of Macedonia, in the Strategy for Cultural Development 2013–2017, in the concerning chapter international collaboration, there is nothing aimed at encouraging the mobility of young professionals working in contemporary culture and art. A program for mobility should be an important aspect, to be treated with the separate instruments and not only through international annual program. Thus, instead of being stimulated, the international cooperation has regressed, and with the measures mentioned in the strategic document, representation is supported instead of collaborations.

Regarding contemporary theatre, students from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts and ESRA, as well as Macedonian students studying at universities in Sofia are the core of young people who after finishing school are searching for employment opportunities. Although the Macedonian National Theatre in Skopje and other Macedonian cities and the Drama theatre in Skopje employed a number of actors in the past few years, this number is significantly smaller than the one generated by the academies as trained professionals.

Young theatre directors have some opportunities to direct certain performances in some of these institutions. The situation with young drama writers is even more difficult, since their work is freelance and not regulated and there are few opportunities for their plays to be produced in public institutions, or within the independent sector.

In this landscape young people are creating their own independent theatre groups as means of self-employment where they can enable their creative autonomy. These independent theatres are registered as 'associations of citizens' (civil society organisations) since they have no other legal option. Advocating for a common position in order to obtain certain basic rights, such as a separate budget, status, working spaces, etc. that will enable continuous work should be one of the prior actions to these initiatives. In this landscape, where these small but vivid scenes exist, real changes are needed to enhance the growth of these heterogeneous sprouts.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that we are witnessing the slow death of the independent cultural scene, and contemporary culture and art in Macedonia. Without support on national level or from international funds, which are currently withdrawing from the country, the scene is collapsing. Some groups are changing their direction towards profitable programs, others are reducing their activities, and some are being forced to close.

This is a product of many years of non-dialogue between the establishment and civil society, which still does not recognise the independent sector as valuable part of society or the necessary boiling point where critical thought and new work is produced.

A dialogue is needed. It is an emergency because the scenes are starting to disappear the moment they emerge. A bottom-up approach in the development of cultural policies to draw a new map of development is a priority. Scenes are vivid, and organisations are very different in their aesthetics, programming and governing. Therefore more effort is required to analyse needs qualitatively, in order to define the mechanisms of support.

Such an approach would encourage the development and sustainability of these scenes. It would prevent the brain-drain, establish mechanisms that would stimulate mobility: research, production projects, international cooperation, residential and educational programs. It would ensure the existing of a young, brave, critical body full of new ideas.

POLAND

Independent, Alternative, Experimental, Underground?

Joanna Krakowska

Since the 1989 fall of communism, no concept has undergone such a significant re-evaluation and critical rethinking as the concepts of freedom and independence. Under the communist government, these ideas seemed perfectly simple and obvious: They remained in the sphere of dreams and aspirations that had no chance of coming true. The country was subject to an outside power. Institutions were subject to settled restrictions and restraints from the side of the governing apparatus, and citizens enjoyed neither freedom of speech nor freedom of conscience. Still, even though it was censored, art remained to a certain degree a space of freedom and self-realization, though this required an incredible variety of refined artistic strategies. One way or another the way of understanding the question of "independence" was unambiguous, and its absence was identified with censorship and political oppression. But this does not mean that at the time there was no theatre on which we could place the label "independent" – quite the contrary. And the forms it took, how it carried out its mission and what its independence meant can be seen on several planes: ideological, organisational, artistic and political.

Still, it's important how we define the concept of "independence" today. Since after almost three decades of national independence, democratic governments and a market economy, "independence" seems to be a greater fantasy, a chimera, than it was in communist times. The distributed authority that decides on public activity (the organs of authority are today the market, the media and benefactors, and the most widespread mechanisms of power are conformity, rivalry, fashion and commodification) ceases to be transparent and easy to define, and thus to challenge. For in this system of distributed authority, it is difficult to develop systemic strategies for defending independence.

Thus, today the question of independence refers not so much to a situation of an ideological framework and limitations on form guarded by state institutions, as it was in the past, but to the whole tangle of administrative-environmental-economic-media conditionalities. So in contemporary theatre we speak, in the best case,

about “non-institutional” theatre rather than about “independent” theatre, which results partly from disbelief in “independence” as a formula for existing in the world and treating it as an idealistic (and thus somewhat naive) concept.
Thus, independence can be discussed on various levels of discourse. To specify the subject, and simultaneously to demonstrate its paradoxes, traditional concepts that refer to the theatre, such as “alternative” or “experimental” may be useful. We can be convinced of this most easily by asking the key question: theatre that’s independent from what? From the administrative authorities? From money? From artistic circles? From the mainstream? From the audience?
If in the past the answer to the question of independence caused no difficulties, today it illustrates the scale of the Utopia to which it unwillingly refers.

Censorship and its various forms

This can be demonstrated by the example of censorship and the cases of it that came to exist in Poland after 1989, and more precisely after April 11, 1990, when the Parliament of the Republic finally eliminated the Central Office for the Control of Publications and Spectacles, one of the bastions of communist power. From that time, the history of theatre has witnessed a variety of pressures and actions of censorship or para-censorship. Most often they related to moral or religious questions, when right-wing politicians attempted to exert pressure on theatres in relation to particular performances or sections of them. The pressure most often consisted of threats to cut off public financing and reduce the theatre’s budget. This happened in the case of *Shopping and Fucking* (1999) in Teatr Rozmaitości in Warsaw, and Anthony Neilsson’s *Stitching* (2004), in the same theatre. From time to time such disputes have broken out in many theatres in Poland, in which local-government officials, MPs or associations of citizens have attempted to interfere with performances, or at least to protest against content they find blasphemous.
Still, in all honesty it must be said that conflicts based on worldviews and censorship after 1989 happened more commonly, and were more harsh, in the visual arts than in the theatre, including the closure of exhibitions, physical attacks on artworks in galleries and court sentences for “offending religious feelings”.
The best-known case of limitation of creative freedom in the theatre occurred during the Malta international festival in Poznań. In 2014, as a result of pressure from the local bishop and Catholic groups,

and the passive behaviour of the administrative authorities and police in response to threats directed at the organisers, the Rodrigo Garcia performance *Golgota Picnic* was cancelled. Still, this event has entered the history of the theatre not so much for the act of censorship but for the protests that this act drew. As a result of widespread outrage and social mobilisation, screenings of the performance and readings of the text took place in many cities in Poland, in public squares and theatres. It can be stated that this was the strongest manifestation yet of the independence of art and theatre: independence from administrative limitations (censorship) and from institutions (a protest organized by social forces).
But this was also a manifestation that played out in the symbolic sphere, not the artistic one, and de facto did not have any long-term consequences either in the theatre or in social life. And most importantly from the point of view of standards of independence, the conflict surrounding *Golgota Picnic* did not move the artistic world enough to spark further actions of solidarity and self defence to shield the independence of the theatre as a principle and an idea. The artists did not suspend the festival in solidarity with the cancelled performance, nor did they refuse to work with the organisers on later editions. Nor did they develop any kind of strategy for defence in similar situations in the future. It seems that the defence of independence is not currently a matter of common concern for the theatre world, and in general all actions are determined by individual interests.

Copyrights and their usage

Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the area of how author's rights work: seen as a means, not an end, they are used repressively to limit freedom in a way that is sometimes shocking, raising fundamental questions. One factor limiting independence may be the claims of authors, their heirs and the corporations that have bought up the rights to certain works. The first dramatic example of such a restriction was the 1999 performance in Warsaw's Teatr Studio of a show titled *Kubuś P.* (*Winnie P.*), telling the contemporary story of a certain apartment building whose residents' names and characters referred to heroes of the A.A. Milne story. The show was cancelled as a result of a claim from the Walt Disney corporation, which holds the rights to *Winnie the Pooh*.
Another well-publicised case of a production being halted because of similar claims took place in 2015 and concerned the performance

Teren badań: Jeżycjada (Research Area: Jeżycjada), referring to a well-known series of novels, in the form of a poetic-musical polemic. The author of the novels, to stop the performance, took steps to register the word "Jeżycjada" (an informal name for the series referring to the Jeżyce district of Poznań, where they are set). The court ordered the performance to be suspended until it ruled. Still, regardless of future court decisions, it can be stated already today that creative freedom and the right to creative re-workings of cultural heritage is limited in the capitalist system by the abuse of property rights. Too often they come into conflict with artistic independence (in the context of inspiration, polemics, references – in a word, freedom of movement in the area of common cultural heritage), and even – which is more dangerous – with the right to criticise.

Taxpayer money

The question of freedom is of course also related to all market mechanisms, which demand that a theatrical work be treated not as a common good, but as merchandise, and thus a source of potential profit. The requirement of profitability is the most important limitation on creative independence, though today it is articulated in the orthodox way only by extreme neo-liberal politicians. The expectation that "theatre should support itself" has been discredited as a neo-liberal doctrine, but it's certainly possible to use this slogan to manipulate opinions during artistic or social conflicts. Such a conflict took place in 2011, when in the face of an economic threat to one of the best theatres in the country, a broad social campaign was launched under the slogan "Theatre isn't a product; audiences aren't clients."

Still, this doesn't mean that the social consensus acknowledging the need to designate public funds for art – and thus for theatre – doesn't bring with it other kinds of dangers and limitations. In the neo-liberal system, which as a matter of principle limits niche and experimental theatres' access to taxpayer funds, it is possible to speak of economic censorship, dictated by a simplistic economic philosophy. While at the same time, under governments that are more socially orientated but declaring, for example, strong allegiance to national-Catholic values, the instrument of economic censorship is transformed into an even more dangerous tool of cultural policy, an ideological and political one.

This is the situation we may face in Poland and Polish theatre today, as the new government chosen in the October 2015 elections declares clearly that art that does not fulfil social and national in-

terests and values will not be financed from public funds. In other words, "destructive" art – as understood by the authorities – must finance itself. Thus, independent theatre – critical, experimental, seeking – must be sentenced to de facto independence from the state administration, meaning simply a lack of subsidies. And that must, or may, mean its decline.

Independence

As we can see, the basic tools for limiting creative independence in a liberal democracy may be: the marketisation of art, manipulation of public subsidies, the selective use of authors' rights and pressure from politicians or bishops. Using any of these tools can lead to political or economic censorship, and thus to making theatres dependent on authority in all its forms. Thus, the questions return with full force: What does independence mean today? Independent from what?

Today it would be necessary to speak of independence in three aspects: organisational, economic and artistic. Independent, meaning non-institutional? Independent, meaning non-commercial? Independent, meaning experimental? Though it turns out that these types of independence too often rule one another out or hamper the pursuit of certain values at the cost of others. It is easy to visualise these paradoxes.

In recent years, the place in Poland for the most important artistic experiments, particularly those on a larger scale, requiring time and appropriate working conditions, has been repertory theatre. In this case, a public institution was and is the guarantee of artistic independence. On the other hand, non-public theatres are to a large degree private theatres that engage in commercial activity, not artistic explorations. Thirdly, independence from the laws of the market can be achieved more easily in the public theatre – subsidised and repertory. Alternative theatres or collectives carrying out artistic projects outside institutions, to gain independence from the requirements of commerce, must seek various kinds of grants. And the grant system places on them a range of substantive and bureaucratic restrictions.

Thus, institutional independence leads to privatisation and dependence on the market; independence from the market leads to dependence on grant-givers; and artistic independence must be supported by public funds, i.e. those allocated by politically appointed officials. This vicious circle destines us either to treat independence

as a Utopian category, or to work strongly on behalf of mechanisms that would guarantee, in the organisational and budgetary fields, the greatest possible transparency and fairness in management, funding and evaluation. It may thus turn out that paradoxically, the most artistically independent theatre in Poland today is repertory theatre, financed by local governments, in with the director is appointed via a competition, for a multi-year contract.
Thus it is all the more clear that the way of understanding the question of independence has become significantly more complicated since we stopped identifying the lack of independence solely with state censorship and ideological oppression. Today it would be difficult to point to unambiguously "independent theatres" – for it would always be necessary to specify: independent form whom, and from what? In the People's Republic of Poland such mental exercises were not conducted, though the way of understanding "independent theatre" has changed here in successive decades.

A brief history of independent theatre in the People's Republic of Poland

After the end of the Second World War, when the new communist authorities nationalised the economy and introduced governance modelled to a certain degree on the Soviet system, in theatrical circles, despite fears and concerns, there was great hope. It sprang from the state takeover of the theatres, which was to guarantee them stability and the ability to carry out ambitious artistic plans. Thus, before it turned out that the price for this independence from cashflows would be the restriction of creative freedom and the need to meet ideological demands, the nationalisation of the theatres was treated as liberation from the dictates of the demand for easy, lowbrow productions. But in light of political oppression, this independence was highly questionable. For it soon turned out that all official theatrical activity in any form was subject to strict ideological and propaganda control. Which doesn't mean that theatrical art, even in the years of Stalinism, didn't manage to escape from it, reaching an agreement with the audience over the heads of the authorities…
Nonetheless, it was only after Stalin's death and the liberalisation of the system in the mid-1950s that the first theatres began to emerge which are customarily referred to as independent, alternative and avant-garde. Successive decades brought their development and evolution. Thus it can easily be stated that the 1950s, '60s, '70s

and '80s were shaped by their specific forms of structural and artistic independence. Each of these decades had its own type of independent theatre, which was strongly conditioned by the political and historical context.

After 1955, small satirical theatres such as STS and Bim-Bom began to appear, using their free, poetic, cabaret-style and metaphorical form to give voice to their engagement in the matters of the world surrounding them. Most of the performers were students and young actors. It can be said that from them began Poland's alternative theatre movement, which on the one hand was a movement of contestation, and on the other offered its own ethical and ideological program.

Still, in the 1960s the most important independent theatres emerged from the arena of professional theatre, and placed great emphasis on professional standards, both in the art of acting and at the visual level. The most important artist of this stream is universally held to be Jerzy Grotowski, who in the 1960s founded and led Teatr Laboratorium. The culmination of his theatrical explorations, the crowning achievement, and simultaneously his last theatrical performance, is *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (1969) – the quintessence of independence with regard to traditional methods of work, the method of leading the company, treatment of the text, relations with the audience.

In the 1960s Tadeusz Kantor also conducted independent theatrical activity, testing in his Cricot 2 theatre various forms and new languages of theatre. And although he didn't create any method or system, he did develop his own particular innovative language of theatre, without which his later masterpieces would not have emerged: *Dead Class* (1975) and *Wielopole, Wielopole* (1980). Thus, the 1960s brought in and developed theatre that was experimental in artistic terms, though not necessarily theatre strongly engaged in public affairs. This was more a time of formal alternatives, and of seeking independence from the structures of repertory theatre and its working practices, aesthetics and routine, than of theatrical contestation.

That was to come in the following decade, which can certainly be called the decade of student theatre, clearly articulating its political engagement, and with time simply conducting opposition activities, which was supported by the appearance in Poland of a democratic opposition in the mid-1970s. The most important companies with a student heritage, such as Teatr Ósmego Dnia, which was formed earlier, or Akademia Ruchu (Academy of Movement), founded in 1974, consciously treated theatre as a mechanism for social change

and for struggle against the system. They established their independence by denying the political order, exposing the social malaise on the one hand and the falsity and superficiality of public life on the other.

In the 1980s, after Martial Law was declared, independent theatre blossomed as never before. Productions were staged outside the system and outside censorship: in homes and underground theatres. Performances happened in churches and church halls. Theatre independent of the authorities had social support, and a large audience seeking in it consolation and confirmation of its convictions. Thus, it was a theatre without grand artistic accomplishments, but with great affective power. Truly independent theatre, and simultaneously deeply intertwined with social expectations, and attempting to meet them.

This brief overview of independent theatre in People's Poland (1945–1989) thus shows its various forms, tightly connected to the context in which it operated. Thus the 1950s, as a decade of reaction to Stalinism, brought theatre-cabarets. The 1960s, a time of stabilisation of the system, delivered experimental theatres, seeking ways to break away from routine. The 1970s, the period of growing consumerism, and simultaneously growing social rebellion, brought politically engaged alternative theatres. The 1980s, the decade of opposition, shaped underground theatres, making the final break with the authorities. But if we examine all these variations of independent theatre closely, we can be convinced that none of them was truly and completely independent. For possibly the question of independence is relative, and independence from something must always lead to dependence on something else. The one thing that can be independent is the choice.

Translated by Nathaniel Espino

ROMANIA

A Short History of Independent Theatre

Iulia Popovici

"Private", "alternative", "experimental", "underground", even "new theatre" – all terms used to denote a type of artistic practice outside the mainstream public repertory theatres that form the core of the performing arts system. All of them mix production conditions (public subsidy vs. public project grants and private financing) and aesthetic positioning (traditional vs. experimental, large vs. small audience etc.). At some point in its evolution (in the years 2002–2004, when it started to grow into an articulated sub-system), the artists involved in this non-mainstream theatrical practice opted for the term "independent". It is more neutral but at the same time a stronger statement of their innate incompatibility with the public/state theatre.[1] The next best option, "underground" – still in circulation – has much to do with the first independent venues being actual basements; and it is used in a derogatory manner, suggesting a kind of theatre lurking in the darkness. So the artists prefer now to consider that they've moved "above the ground".[2]

The first attempts at "independence" appeared on the Romanian scene straight after 1990 as a reaction to the sudden drop in popularity of the type of theatre practised before the revolution (stylised metaphors constructed upon classical plays of a-temporal value). "The theatre was in the street", according to the famous phrase, and Romania was discovering the pleasures of active citizenship[3]. Those attempts came from actors of the repertory theatres who were looking for more freedom and were confident in the possibility of replicating the model of the interwar private theatre companies[4]. Of course, their experience in the state theatre didn't match the challenges of the post-communist market economy and these endeavours ended in financial disasters. (Weirdly enough, even today, many artists working in the subsidised theatre don't have a clue about how expensive performing arts really are.) The 'second phase' of this primary independence dealt with the generation of artists who grew up amidst protests and had problems in adapting to the metaphoric, apolitical, exclusively middle-class subsidised theatre, with its stiff actors, and personnel in general. Their theatrical approach was bold, but in the absence of independent venues and with limited financial resources

1. I alternate the words public, state, subsidized and sometimes mainstream because all and only the public theatres are subsidized, the subsidies come from public money, not only are these theatres state-owned but they also tend to be controlled by the state in terms of the values and ideology they reflect, and their innate fear of risk makes them reluctant in producing outside of the mainstream aesthetics, the one that most of the artists and members of the audience adhere to.

2. "Underground" is also the name of a pioneer project in the Romanian independent landscape – a venue in the... basement of the Ariel Puppets Theatre in Tîrgu-Mureș (a public institution), where the author Alina Nelega has developed a playwriting programme.

3. Roughly until 1992, the country and especially its capital were living a time of unprecedented restlessness, with mass protesting and violent conflicts, which paradoxically gave the theatre the needed respite to reinvent itself.

4. As everywhere in Europe, Romania had a respectable number of such private companies before 1945, and due to the fame of the actors that founded them, their memory was very cherished – in a legendary manner.

in a chaotic economy, they depended on the public theatres for space and therefore they also failed; even if some productions are considered even today as theatrical accomplishments.[5]

Financial resources have remained limited, and there are still enough holes in the legislation to make the mere idea of independent company a sort of chimera[6], but around 2000–2002 the basic conditions were met for the emergence of a stronger, more lasting independent movement. What were the basic conditions? First, the ground had been prepared by the previous phase of independence, so the artists knew what they wanted and what to expect. Then, there was a high degree of discontent among the youngest artists about the coercive, reproductive strategies of the subsidized system, which expected them to be clones of their predecessors. They were in a rebellious mood that the 'elders', the gatekeepers of the public theatre, couldn't understand; especially since it took took the form of disrespectful language on stage. A 'manifesto' in this direction was Sex, Drugs and Rock'n'Roll, a one-man show in 2002 based on texts by Eric Bogosian, performed and directed by an actor, Florin Piersic jr., who could have easily found a place in the mainstream theatre, but didn't want to[7].

There was also a third condition: a lack of pressure on young artists to start earning on the same terms as their parents; the beginning of a certain economic prosperity at a national level; and the emergence of potential venues, artistic spaces (not exclusively theatrical) willing to give them the freedom to take risks. "Risk" is actually the word that the whole idea of independent theatre is based on.

Going back to the first basic conditions for the emergence of a new wave of independence: at the core of Romanian independent theatre is the break with the long tradition of text-reinterpretation, according to which directors and actors alike proved themselves through the 'original' staging of a canonical play, preferably a drama or tragedy – Shakespeare, of course, but also Chekhov, Ibsen, and Ionesco. The first attempts towards this break had been made by directors like Theodor Cristian Popescu and playwrights like Alina Nelega. Nelega's Dramafest – a new drama festival in the Transylvanian city of Tîrgu-Mureș – which had only two editions in 1997 and 1998, was instrumental in legitimising the practice of new playwriting in Romania.

Andreea Vălean, author, director, and one of the founders of the dramAcum collective – arguably the most influential group in the Romanian independent theatre after 2000 – made her début as a playwright in the framework of the Dramafest; as did Cristi Juncu,

5. For the ups and downs of the independent theatre in its childhood, see Theodor Cristian Popescu, *Surplus de oameni sau surplus de idei*, Eikon, 2011. Popescu's own staging of *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner, in 1999, is one of the accomplishments of that time.

6. There have never been a specific form of organization for the activity of 'producing art', so producers, venues and artists alike work either as a non-profit NGO or as a commercial company, a system that leaves the people involved in the field with very little protection in terms of social security or healthcare.

7. The other 'manifesto' is Gianina Cărbunariu's *Stop the Tempo* (December 2003), a climax of minimalism that used three flashlights and no other stage equipment in order to tell the story of three young people on an anarchistic trip of disconnecting clubs, bars and supermarkets.

later known for translating and staging plays by David Mamet, Neil LaBute and several contemporary Russian writers. The festival in Tîrgu-Mureș marked the beginning of the collaboration between Royal Court Theatre (with its residencies) and the local playwriting scene, which had a huge impact on Romanian new drama. Dramafest helped forge the idea of playwriting for stage as a collaborative practice, with emphasis on the text rather than the director as author of the performance. After 2000–2002 it also became the centre of dramAcum activities – a playwriting contest followed by a period of development of the winning texts, staged readings, etc. The emergence of author-directors like Alina Nelega herself, or Gianina Cărbunariu and Bogdan Georgescu, is a by-product of this rehabilitation of the playwright as creator. dramAcum was founded by a group studying stage directing in Bucharest – among them, Andreea Vălean and Gianina Cărbunariu. It defined itself as dedicated to sustaining and promoting the new drama. Without being activists, their focus on topicality has led them towards a socially and politically engaged theatre, addressing difficult or taboo issues like social marginality, Romanian-Hungarian relations, and people trafficking. Issues unlikely to enter the official public theatre.[8] Their survival in the independent world by taking necessary risks was inspiring for most of the artists now active on the independent scene (Bogdan Georgescu, David Schwartz, Mihaela Michailov, Peca Ștefan, Ioana Păun), artists who have moved forward, in the fields of community theatre, documentary drama, theatrical intervention, site-specific performances.

Multiple definitions

The Romanian independent theatre is still hard to define because as its chief characteristics are freedom of expression, youth rebellion and high quality. Taking into consideration most of the festivals and venues that self-identify as independent[9] we might suggest it is usually:

— a performance of a contemporary text (not necessarily Romanian, not necessarily a first staging);
— involving young artists and/or not in the mainstream circuit and/or exploring new territory (i.e. a known actor turned director);
— a minimalist production in terms of cast, set design and stage equipment used.

All these features are interconnected and dependent on several pragmatic conditions: the choosing of a contemporary play is mo-

8. Their working strategy was a long time a form of partnership with public institutions, especially Theatre Foarte Mic in Bucharest, a secondary stage of a theatre subsidized by the City Hall that made its repertory out of experimental performances by independent artists. This way, the theatre could claim little responsibility for the performances if they failed but also praise itself in case of success.

9. The Undercloud Independent (of Everything...) Festival, the Independent Theatre Marathon – both in Bucharest, etc.; Theatre LUNI at the Green Hours and Godot Café-Theatre in Bucharest, Theatre FIX in Iași, Theatre 74 and Yorick Studio in Tîrgu-Mureș, etc.

tivated not only by the desire to reflect topical issues, to which artists and audience can both relate, but also by shorter rehearsal periods and scarce technical means, common in the venues where independent productions are performed[10]. At the same time, it has to do with the need of finding a 'place under the sun' – so, the independent theatre exploits the lack of interest on the part of the public theatre in new, unknown and non-traditional authors[11], being, as a rule, more interested in the theatre writing than the director-driven mainstream theatre.

The minimalist set and necessary technical equipment also make the production more versatile, offering more opportunities for touring, since the main tool of survival for most independent venues is diversification and the number of performances of the same production in the same venue is extremely limited. Even in Bucharest, it is common now to see the same production travelling from one location to another, usually for only one performance, which is not an inspired strategy, audience-wise.

Since the financial crisis, a new phenomenon has appeared in Bucharest: both dramatically hit by the drop in consumption, the restaurants/bars/cafés and the independent theatre have 'joined forces'. The pubs and other establishments have become interested in offering their clients new forms of entertainment, such as theatre, which has ended up in an increase of the number of available venues. (At the end of the 1990s this was the 'magic formula' of the Theatre LUNI at the Green Hours: a bar and a performing venue.) At the same time, the closing of the public theatres, unable to bring new people in their companies and with big cuts in their budgets, leading to productions closing, has pushed the young artists towards the alternative of independence. The real estate crisis has made possible for them to look for and found their own (very small) independent theatres such as, in Bucharest, the Art Theatre, UNTEATRU, Theatre in the Wings... The years after 2008 amplified the distinction between two subtypes of independent artists – the independents by choice and the independents by necessity, with important differences in their theatrical practice.

The fact that this kind of theatre works with young artists is also – but not only – a question of money and mobility. The programming of independent productions is unpredictable, they tour more and in more precarious conditions than the repertory productions, and, logically if taken into consideration the young age of the independent theatre as we know it in Romania (about 15 years), it has grown with its artists. The older generation of artists (especially actors) doesn't

10. The precarious technical equipment available to artists schooled in a system lavish in theatrical lighting devices, sound-mixing desks etc. was, for one of the directors/playwrights most involved in the independent theatre (Bogdan Georgescu), the main reasons why, at least in the years 2004–2008, many people working independently were actually looking for gigs in the public theatre. (B.G. in conversation with Iulia Popovici, *Observator cultural* no. 686, August 2013)

11. All of these being very relative terms. For years, Neil LaBute and David Mamet (who are neither new or unknown) were shown exclusively on the independent scene, and were introduced in the repertory theatre by the same directors that had first staged their plays independently. In general, introducing a playwright for the first time on the Romanian stages is something that happens in mysterious ways.

share with their younger colleagues the same experience of social and professional precarity, and very few of them resonate with the aesthetics of the independent theatre (especially its more direct acting and everyday language)[12]. On the other hand, it is obvious that for the generation, now in their late 30s or in their 40s, that grew up, artistically, with the independent theatre and entered the 'hall of fame' of the mainstream, the independent stage offers a form of professional experience that complements their work in the public theatre[13]. This middle generation might be the last one to benefit from both the public/mainstream and the independent aesthetic practices (we will discuss later the role of the independent theatre as a 'waiting room' for the repertory system).

Production conditions and the lack of empathy for independence are not the only reasons for the young age of artists in the independent theatre: it also reflects the type of audience that these productions attract and its expectations.[14] It is often also a mark of the status of independence as a 'waiting room' for the public theatre, usually for the independents by necessity.

Many of the festivals, venues, and artists self-identified as independent leave aside, as less important in the definition of the above-mentioned independence, elements like:

— the independent, non-public status of the producer (for instance, ArCuB – the centre for cultural projects of the Bucharest City Hall that has its own stage, but doesn't work as a typical repertory institution, as it does not have its own company of actors, and does not call itself a theatre – qualifies in many occasions as an 'independent producer').
— the experimental or unconventional, original nature of the theatrical language and/or the themes/issues addressed;
— the social, political and/or aesthetic stance and relevance of the given performance;
— the possibly unconventional production conditions/ original forms of relation (for example, devised theatre or collective creation or broadly public-independent co-production).

With the exception of the first element (dealing with specific production and working conditions – hierarchical and disengaged in public productions where artists are either employees of or 'service providers' for the owner of the means of production, non-hierarchical and collaborative in independent productions, where the artists actually own the final product of their work), everything else comes down to the one magic word: risk. This is from where the independent thea-

12. The independent theatre has though brought notoriety to a number of older actors (Coca Blood, Emilia Dobrin, Constantin Drăgănescu...), giving them a framework for fulfilling their potential in a way that the mainstream public theatre had failed to provide. This only proves the risks, for individual artistic personalities, of a theatre system generally governed by the accidental.

13. Despite appearances, there are not many high-profile actors of the public theatre that work on a regular basis in independent productions – of course, usually they prefer the commercial theatre and/or the television. In many occasions though, they see the independent stage as a testing ground (with less pressure for success in a system downright obsessed with it) for new approaches, especially when they want to undertake directing (something that the actors *don't* do in the Romanian theatre).

14. This is more or less an empirical observation, based on elements like personal experience, the specifics of the venues, the performing hours (many times, very late at night) and the profile of the generic theatre audience, as presented in research studies made by public institutions. For lack of money and interest (the independent theatre is seen as very marginal and irrelevant in terms of number of audience members), there is no reliable study about who goes to see independent productions.

tre feeds its duality (ending up in a bizarre duet with its evil twin brother, the subsidised public theatre). Depending on the degree of risk it assumes, the independent theatre relates differently to the state theatre. In its soft meaning, it is either a waiting room or a playground where one plays and polishes his/her manners before being allowed to enter the nice grown-ups' ballroom. It takes advantage of the less pressure on success on the non-public scene to exercise the mastering of the mainstream theatrical language. In its stronger meaning, it deals with testing bombs that could never find their place in the mainstream subsidized ballrooms, either because there's an inherent risk of failure (as in commissioning/ first staging of contemporary Romanian plays or in applying strategies of collaboration – interdisciplinary, multicultural, in co-production, etc.) or because the approach goes well beyond the production practice of the public theatre, as in:

— experiment and innovation in addressing social/ political/ community issues;
— interest in atypical performing spaces (i.e. the 'apartment theatre', an otherwise 'ancient' practice rediscovered in Romania after 2005, initially as an anthropologic experiment[15]);
— audience development (either developing an audience for the independent theatre in places where it hasn't existed beforehand, even if a public theatre and a general theatre audience do exist, or working with groups or communities with little/no theatrical experience).

If the "soft" independence is a form of diversification of the public theatre offer, the 'strong' independence has to do with the theatrical evolution – but this is sort of a vicious circle: the public theatre cannot afford the trial and error logic of evolution for ideological reasons, and the independent venues cannot afford only risky performances for financial reasons[16]. The long-term ideal would be an integrated system of public-independent theatre where there's a sharing of resources and risks and a negotiated working ethics.

15. The Bucharest-based Iorgean theatre, founded by the writer Jean-Lorin Sterian in its own studio apartment.

16. The only one that allows itself to work this way is the Cluj-based Brush Factory but it is an artists-run multifunctional venue, where a number of artist studios, galleries and NGOs share the space and the risks.

SERBIA

Independent Theatre: The Varying Contexts of Avant-garde Theatre and Performance Arts in Serbia

Ana Isaković

There are two distinct problems in retrospectively overviewing the development of independent theatre in Serbia. The first is the temptation to analyse artistic movements and phenomena in Serbia in separation from their Yugoslavian cultural, social and political contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the shifting art currents, the changing cultural settings, as well as the varying social and political contexts in outlining the history of independent theatrical practices in Serbia. The other is overlooking the variety of meanings that the adjective "independent" can have, as well as its closeness or even interchangeability with other determinations like "non-institutional" or "alternative". The adjective "independent" is used here less in the sense of financial independence, and more of not being budgeted by the state administration. Therefore, the term "non-institutional" refers to the field of artistic production that is developing outside the official cultural institutions. Moreover, the closeness of "independent" and "alternative" or "avant-garde" (although the last one has a definite meaning in the art history) is to be found in the socio-political sense of being not obliged or – as often was the case – forced to operate within or comply with given frameworks of governmental structures and dominant ideologies. It is this opposition to the official, institutional and ideological culture that represents the real tradition of alternative theatre in Serbia over the years.

The international art movements such as Surrealism, Dadaism and Futurism – as well as Zenithism, a specific local combination of the avant-garde tendencies – inspired the development of various avant-garde practices in Serbia during the 1920s and 1930s. The main centres of the independent avant-garde art were Belgrade, Novi Sad and Subotica, as well as Zagreb, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Zadar and Osjek – that belonged to the broader space of the then existing Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes or, a while later, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. There was interdisciplinary merging and counter-posing of different art practices and media with socio-political actions – all of which was typical for avant-garde art in general. The avant-garde movements were born in the struggle against traditions

and conventional artistic canons, against bourgeois society and its norms, against the placid developmental tendencies of European modernism. Their goal was to change radically the values of artistic and cultural, as well as of social, scientific and technological progress.[1] In the same vain, the local avant-garde movements were actively involved in instigating and articulating an oppositional attitude towards the ruling monarchical political system as well as the patriarchal traditional social and cultural system. The Yugoslav political circumstances in the 1920s and the first part of the 1930s were characterized by King Alexander I Karađorđević's efforts to establish a unitary absolutist monarchy. The cycle of events started with the 1921 Constitution culminating with the introduction of a direct dictatorship in 1929 followed by a new administrative division of the country and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This was met with strong oppositional movements with different backgrounds (national, economic, revolutionary), and resulted in King's assassination in 1934.

An overview of the existing art historical sources and discourses points to the conclusion that least of all the avant-garde artworks made in Serbia were realised in the field of performing arts. This is especially evident in the cases of avant-garde public actions, since those were conceived not as artworks that would become an integral part of a civilizing cultural legacy, but as temporal and even excessive interventions in the then existing structure of social relations. Nevertheless, there were a number of particular instances important for the avant-garde performing arts, such as the Small theatre that was supposed to open for the 1924/25 season in Belgrade, as well as the activities of Dragan Aleksić within the Yugo-Dada movement and of the Zenithists like Ljubomir Micić, Ve Poljanski and others.

Dadaist vs. Zenithist Perfomances

The majority of studies from the field of art history as well as of other humanities regard the avant-garde art practices in Serbia between the years 1922 and 1925 as the outcome of almost exclusively two artistic movements, as well as of their mutual differences and confrontations.[2] One was Dadaism – as articulated and circulated by Dragan Aleksić – while the other labeled itself Zenithism – devised and propagated by the brothers Ljubomir Micić and Branko Ve or Vergil Poljanski. While Dadaism was very influential in the field of performing arts, especially through the activities of Dragan Aleksć

1. See: Miško Šuvaković, *Avangarde u Jugoslaviji i Srbiji: mapiranje vremena u razlike prostora*, as well as Irina Subotić, *Istorijske avangarde: dadaizam – zenitizam – nadrealizam*, http://www.arte.rs/sr/1573-istorijske_avangarde_dadaizam_zenitizam_nadrealizam/.

2. Gojko Tešić, *Srpska avangarda u polemičkom kontekstu* (dvadeste godine), Svetovi, Novi Sad, 1991.

within the Yugo-Dada movement, Zenithism had less of an impact on the actual staged performances, but was more effective in coming up with some new and original conceptualizations and theoretical insights into the existing theatrical practices.

The Zenithists tackled theatrical topics through the *Zenith* magazine – founded by Ljubomir Micić as the inaugural act of the Zenithist avant-garde movement – published in Zagreb in the period 1921–1923, and subsequently relocated to Belgrade in the years 1924 to 1926. It is through their texts and illustrations published in the magazine that a platform was made for a new and revolutionary Zenithist Theatre. Ljubomir Micić[3] and Stanislav Vinaver[4] have developed its fundamental tenets through the pieces in theatre criticism analysing the repertoire of the day – the plays of the Zagreb National Theatre and of the Belgrade Royal National Theatre in Belgrade, as well as the guest performances by the Moscow Art Theatre.[5] The concept of Zenithist Theatre was paramount in Vinaver's revolutionary late-expressionist play *Gods in Danger*[6] epitomizing the critique of actors' education and formation.[7] Other important texts adding to the concept were Boško Tokin's speculative essay on a possible Futurist "Aeronautical Theatre"[8] as well as various translations – on the Russian avant-garde theatre (such as Alexander Tairov's essay on theatre as a collective art[9] or the prologue for Alexander Kruchenykh's opera *Victory over the Sun*[10]) or of the Futurist texts on theatre, especially those of Marinetti.

Among the many Dadaist public actions, one is of a particular importance – a big activist Dada-matinée entitled *The Concert of Scent and Light*[11] that held in the Subotica film theatre *Corso* at the beginning of the November 1922.[12] It was supposed to be a collective event that would gather as many Yugoslav avant-gardists and activists as possible. The matinée took a form of a multimedia performance that featured simultaneously speech, sounds, fragrances and visual stimuli. The program revolved around the readings of texts by Micić and Poljanski, as well as those by Richard Huelsenbeck, Fritz Lang, Lajos Kassák and Sándor Barta – the last of whom was a close collaborator of the Subotica Dadaist circle.[13] The aim was to displace the audience's perception by mixing media, therefore inducing sensory confusion and synesthesia.

The opening of the Small Theatre was planned for the season 1924/1925.[14] It was supposed to be an experimental theatre with a repertoire dedicated to promote theatrical pieces by local authors, as well as to open novel approaches in theatre directing and stage designing. An important instance of Dadaist theatre was the prepa-

3. *Narodno pozorište, Zenit* no. 34, Belgrade, 1924, p. 15.

4. Stanislav Vinaver, *Beogradsko pozorište, Zenit* no. 2, Zagreb, 1921, pp. 16–17.

5. *Hudožestveni teatar* (The Moscow Art Theatre), *Zenit* br. 1, Zagreb, 1921, p. 14.

6. Stanislav Vinaver, *Bogovi u opasnosti, Zenit* no. 4, Zagreb, 1921, pp. 3–5.

7. *Glumačka škola, Zenit* no. 6, Zagreb, 1921, p. 11.

8. Boško Tokin, *Pozorište u vazduhu, Zenit* no. 2, Zagreb, 1921, pp. 11–13.

9. Alexander Tairov, *Pozorište je kolektivna umetnost, Zenit* no. 17–18, Zagreb, 1922, pp. 55–56.

10. Alexander Kruchenykh, *Победа над солнцем, Zenit* no. 17–18, Zagreb, 1922, p. 49.

11. A detailed account of the event could be found in: Marija Cindor, *Aktivistička dadaistička matineja u Subotici*, in Dragomir Ugren and Miško Šuvaković (eds.), *Evropski konteksti umentosti XX veka u Vojvodini*, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, 2008, pp. 471–511.

12. Two main anonymous accounts of the event published at that time were: *Koncert mirisa i svetla u našem gradu, Hirlap* II/254, Subotica, 4. 11. 1922, p. 4; *Aktivistički dadaistički matine, Hirlap* II/258, Subotica, 11. 11. 1922, p. 3 – translated in: Vida Golubović (ed.), *Dada u Subotici, Književnost*, no. 7–8, Belgrade, 1990, pp. 1397–1398 and 1400–1403.

13. It is not entirely clear if the Zenithist texts have actually been read at the event or they were just planned to be.

rations for play *Marionettes Demand Death* in the Small Theatre. It was based on a Dadaist piece *The Butler's Broom* by Dragan Aleksić that was a part of a larger ballroom-spectacle entitled *The One Thousand and Second Night* held at the Belgrade's hotel *Casina* on the 16th February 1923. The event was conceived by the organizers as a form of the "ballet grotesque", while it could be defined nowadays as an experimental avant-garde dance performance. Marko Ristić scripted it, Miloje Milojević wrote the music and Klavdija Iščenko choreographed it, while Aleksandar Deroko made the scenography and the costumes. The plot was entirely non-realist, taking place in "the poet's head". According to Marko Ristić this was a "psychological ballet happening between the dream and reality". This statement certainly points to its Surrealist inspiration by Freudian psychoanalysis, but it also draws upon the Expressionist strategies that deconstructed social reality by introducing irrational, dream-like and transgressive elements. The dance happening was organized by the Association of Art Enthusiasts "Cvijeta Zuzorić", and it was meant to be a fundraising ball for the construction of an art pavilion. Judging by the poster made by Dušan Janković and by the abovementioned conceptions, the ball had a form of a participative performance – since it was expected for the audience to take an active part in the event.

Those examples of staged events or public actions can be described today much better in terms of the performance art practices, rather than in those of developing, innovating or revolutionizing the traditional theatre, including opera and ballet, too.

Theatrical (Neo) Avant-Garde of the 1950s and the 1960s – The Atelier 212

The Atelier 212 theatre was established in 1956. A chamber theatre became an avant-garde theatre with only 212 seats in the audience, and named according to that. In the first 20 years or up to the mid-1970s this theatre played an extremely important role in bringing the avant-garde approach to theatre closer to a broader public attention.[15] It introduced in the local theatrical context a novel drama setting that featured a more intimate staging by bringing closer or even mixing the actors with the audience. From the very beginning until the 1964 production of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, the repertoire was structured around one of the main currents in French drama of that time – the theatre of the absurd. To counterbalance this emphasis on contemporary international dramaturgy, the repertoire

14. See: Beogradski *„Mali Teatar"*, *Comoedia*, br. 17, Belgrade, 27. 04. 1924, pp. 26–27. The *Comoedia* magazine featured throughout the 1924 not only the plans for the Small Theatre, but also some illustrations of scenography for a couple of plays – *Marionettes Demand Death* and *a bajadera-ballet in one piece entitled the Sulamit* as well as an open call for local play-writers.

15. In this case, the adjective "avant-gardist" refers less to the historical avant-gardes and more to a general term designating something that is new, modern or modernist, and also experimental.

also featured playwrights by local, often marginalized or dissident authors. According to the Atelier 212 concept, there were no full-time actors and therefore no permanent ensemble. This suited the theatre's primary task to enable productions that could not have been realized in the main theatres because of their small-scale or they represented a possible box-office risk.

The New Theatrical Tendencies: BITEF

The Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF) established in 1967 is one of the oldest and most permanent European theatre festivals that managed successfully to survive through the past two turbulent decades. The founding idea was to organize an international theatre festival with an aim to support innovative and experimental artistic practices, as well as to present and promote them to the wider audiences. At the beginning, the program aimed at revealing and presenting the then evolving new theatrical practices, while it subsequently mostly featured new unconventional theatre plays from all over the world. During the Cold War period, owing to the non-aligned status of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and the openness of its cultural policies, the BITEF was an important meeting place for experimental and dissident theatre artists from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Hence, the history of BITEF features many of the most important theatre artists of the late 20th Century – such as Jerzy Grotowski, the Living theatre, Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba, the La Mama theatre, Arianne Mnouchkine, Joseph Chaikin, Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, Samuel Beckett, Tadeusz Kantor, Yuri Lyubimov, Pina Bausch, Jan Fabre, Meredith Monk, Wim Vandekeybus, Michael Nyman, etc. At the beginning the festival was under direction of Mira Trailović, and later under Jovan Cirilov – a true moving spirit of the festival for decades – joined by Anja Suša in 2007. Since the decade of 1960s represented a period in the history of Socialist Yugoslavia characterized by opening to the West, settling accounts with the Eastern bloc and promoting the idea of Non-alignment countries, the festival could not avoid being political. The ideological function of the BITEF was to conceal social and political constraints by the virtue of being allowed to publicly celebrate a total theatrical freedom, and, on contrary, to publicly disclose the lack of political freedom by virtue of being constricted to theatre stage.
Most commentators and researchers of BITEF have questioned the impact that the festival has had on the local theatrical scene. Since

BITEF promoted almost exclusively the contemporary practices of the international theatre production, many authors claim that some kind of a "BITEFian tradition" never actually took hold in the local theatre setting, therefore failing to contribute to it with significant and practical changes in theatrical strategies.

The Art of Performance: From neo-avant-garde to conceptual art

Numerous forms of art performances – in relationship with various global artistic paradigms – have been developing in Serbia over a long period. They span from the 1920s Zentithist and Dadaist public actions held in Subotica, Novi Sad and Belgrade all the way to the neo-avant-gardist performing art practices of the 1960s throughout the former Yugoslavia. Among others, the latter involved multimedia performances such as the verbal-vocal-visual performances by Vladan Radovanović that started already from the mid-1950s,[16] the actions and para-actions of Leonid Šejka throughout the 1960s,[17] the painting happenings by Olja Ivanjicki in the Atelier 212 (1965) and in the Zagreb's Students' Cultural centre (1966), as well as the body art painting events that she did with Leonid Šejka (1968).[18] Similar events featured the poetic-activist performances by Vujica Rešin Tucić,[19] the happenings by the Slovenian art group OHO within the BITEF festival (1968–9),[20] and the poetic-theatrical performances of Katalin Ladik.[21] It is only from the beginning of the 1970s that a number of artistic groups started defining their work as the art of performance, developing their artistic practices alongside with new musical tendencies – especially the so-called new wave music.[22] Usually, such groups were connected to certain events or institutions. The Belgrade Students' Cultural centre (SKC) housed an informal group of artists – Marina Abramović, Gergelj Urkom, Zoran Popović, Raša Todosijević, Neša Paripović and Era Milivojević – while regularly cooperating with the KÔD group, Miroslav Mandić, Slobodan Tišma, Katalin Ladik, Bogdanka Poznanović, Vladimir Kopicl, The Bosch+Bosch group, Tomislav Gotovac, Radomir Damnjan, as well as the A3 (the Alternative Artistic Attraction). The Belgrade Salon of the Museum of Contemporary art featured the 143 group, the Opus 4 group, Zoran Belić Weiss, Nenad Petrović and others, while the significant art performances by Vesna Bulajić and Kosta Bunuševac were produced in the Belgrade House of Youth.

The art performances and public activist actions regain their significance during the 1990s in the context of civil wars and the

16. Jelena Novak, *Izlasci iz muzike* and Miško Šuvaković, *Autorefleksija u polju čula: Vladan Radovanović*, in *Konceptualna umetnost*, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, 2007, pp. 88–99 or Miško Šuvaković *Istorijski, kontekstualni i strukturalni aspekti «Pričinjavanja» Vladana Radovanovića*, in: *Asimetrični drugi*, Prometej, Novi Sad, 1996, pp. 22–31

17. See Irina Subotić and Miodrag B. Protić (eds.), *Leonid Šejka - Retrospektivna izložba* 1952–1970, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 1972.

18. Dejan Đorić, *Leonid Šejka*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrade, 1968, p. 156.

19. Vujica Rešin Tucić, *Moje menstruacije*, Rok, no. 2, Belgrade, 1969, pp. 120–128.

20. *Hepening grupe OHO*, in: Pasija, katalog Galerije 212 '68, Galerija 212, Belgrade, 1968, pp. 30–31.

21. Miško Šuvaković, *Slučaj Katalin Ladik: ka performansu ili govoru u prvom licu*, in: Miško Šuvaković and Dragomir Ugren (eds.), *Evropski konteksti umentosti XX veka u Vojvodini*, The Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, 2008, pp. 250–252.

22. Lidija Merenik, *Beograd: osamdesete – nove pojave u slikarstvu i skulpturi 1979–1989 u Srbiji*, Prometej, Novi Sad, 1995.

nationalist authoritarian rule of Slobodan Milošević. Various artist and art groups staged numerous public actions and performances that questioned and criticized the given political situation, often realized in conjunction with the ongoing public events (mainly the protests). Such performances were realized by the LED Art group, Nikola Džafo, the Magnet, the Škart group, the Apsolutno group, the Mimart, Bálint Szombathy, Saša Stanojević, Nenad Racković, Milica Mrđa-Kuzmanov, Nikola Pilipović, Marija Vauda, Zoran Todorović and others.[23]

The Conceptual Art Performances in Serbia: Forms, Poetics, Discourses

The local as well as the international historical framework of the conceptual art – and the various performing arts practices that developed within it – clearly points out to the decade of the 1970s.[24] The local context of the conceptual art performances can be demarcated by, on the one end, the establishment of the KÔD group in 1970 and, on the other, with the theoretic performances of Zoran Belić Weiss as well as with the "anthropological performance" phase in Marina Abramović's work at the beginning of the 1980s – that already belonged the postmodern paradigm. During this period, the Novi Sad Youth Tribune and the Belgrade Students' Cultural Centre were getting themselves established as the main hubs for art performances, opening paths for various artists and hosting numerous artworks.

The groups January and February were active in Novi Sad and Belgrade from the very beginning of the 1970s. They were informal and ad-hoc groupings – characterized by a stark critical and subversive attitude towards the dominantly moderate modernist and bureaucratically managed culture – that aimed to initiate a short-term political protest movement. The February group organised a happening entitled the *Appetizer for the New Art* held in the Belgrade House of Youth in 1971, and featuring an *Open Letter to Yugoslav Pubic*.[25] The aim of this neo-avant-garde happening was the creation of a "free zone in culture" in the midst of a repressive social system. The artists provoked the audience by writing slogans such as "I am an Enemy of the State!" and by their post-hippie and neo-anarchist conduct in making installations, micro-performances, poetry readings and discussions. These provocative artistic performances, as well as the content of the open letter led to the conflict between the alternative art and the state-sponsored

23. See Branislava Anđelković, Branislav Dimitrijević, Dejan Sretenović and Borut Vild (eds.), *O normalnosti: umetnost u Srbiji, 1989–2001*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, 2005.

24. See Miško Šuvaković, *Konceptualna umetnost u Jugoslaviji*, in: *Conceptual Art*, op. cit., p. 231.

25. *Otvoreno pismo jugoslovenskoj javnosti* (1971), in: Miško Šuvaković (ed.), *Grupa KÔD – Retrospektiva*, Galerija savremene likovne umetnosti, Novi Sad, 1995, p. 69.

mildly modernist concept of art and culture. The main protagonists of this struggle were the Novi Sad Youth Tribune, as well as the magazines such as the *Polja*, the *Új Symposion* and the *Index*. As this conflict escalated, the Belgrade press, mainly the *NIN* magazine and the *Vecernje novosti* daily, prompted a wave of pro-bureaucratic critique of this "new kind of art" – as articulated in the texts by Savo Dautović or Bogdan Tirnanić.[26] On the other hand, Jovica Aćin in Belgrade, Zvonko Maković, Hrvoje Turković in Zagreb, as well as some of the Slovenian Youth organizations and underground artists, such as Jaša Zlobec gave support to the January and February groups.[27] The whole clash ended up in brutally suppressing those rebellious voices – the leadership of the Youth Tribune has been removed, and two members of the KÔD group, Miroslav Mandić and Slavko Bogdanović, have been prosecuted and sentenced to spend up to a year in prison. The art group completely dissolved by the mid-1970s.

Belgrade Art of Performance

One of the crucial institutions for the development of Serbian conceptual art scene was the Belgrade Students' Cultural centre (SKC). The SKC started its operations in 1971 representing a pacifying concession by the establishment promised to the Yugoslav Students' League during the 1968 student protest. Its existence and program policy enabled a turbulent, multiple, versatile and uneven art scene to establish itself.

The SKC was exceptionally important for it housed numerous festivals that gathered international and local artists, making thus a space for the circulation of contemporary, up-to-date art concepts and practices. One of those significant events was the *April Meetings – the Expanded Media Festival*, spanning from the 1972 to 1977.[28] It featured many conceptual, performance and multimedia artists from the country and from abroad: Joseph Beuys, Ilija Šoškić, Marina Abramović, Gina Pane, Nuša and Srečo Dragan, Ilija Šoškić, Goran Trbuljak, Braco Dimitrijević, Slavko Matković, Tom Marioni, Raša Todosijević, Katalin Ladik, Luigi Ontani, Radomir Damnjan, Željko Jerman, Mladen Stilinović, Vlado Martek and many others. Perhaps the pinnacle of the SKC performance art production was the festival entitled the *Performance Meeting*, held in the April 1978, featuring Ulrike Rosenbach, Jürgen Klauke, Charlemagne Palestine (Charles Martin), the theatre of Mistakes, Simone Forti, Giuseppe Chiari, Miša Savić, Sanja Iveković, Dali-

26. Bogdan Tirnanić, *Ko su momci Februara*, Nin no. 1050, Belgrade, 1971.

27. See Zvonko Maković, *Februar i oko njega*, Tlo br. 47, Zagreb, 1971, and Hrvoje Turković, *Farsa oko novosadske Tribine mladih, Studentski list* nos. 4–5, Zagreb, 1971, or Jaša Zlobec, "Novi Sad", Tribuna no. 15, Ljubljana, 1971.

28. *Expanded Media*, Students' Cultural centre, Belgrade, 1975

bor Martinis, Neša Paripović, Radomir Damnjan, Raša Todosijević, Zoran Belić, Zoran Popović and others.

The Alternative Theatre and Performing Arts During the 1990s

The sense and connotation of the term "alternative" in art and culture of the region was changing through the decades – from the protest movements and the alternative life-styles of the 1960s and 1970s, through the alternative artistic and political movements of the 1980s, up to the broad socio-political opposition against Milošević's regime. Nevertheless, given that the most of the 1960s and 1970s alternative art from the region already gained significant international recognition, the opposition mainstream–alternative became evidently less adequate during the 1990s. Therefore, the meaning of the adjective "alternative" used to denote the local non-institutional theatres, points out to an independent and often informal status, as well as to a general opposition against the official culture, ideology and politics.[29]

The alternative theatre of the 1990s in Serbia although completely not being state budgeted at all, had its sources of financing in foreign foundations. The main agenda of such funding – especially and paradigmatically in the case of the Soros or the Open Society Fund – consisted in aiming to build a broad democratic and civic opposition against the authoritarian regime by means of art and culture.[30]

The alternative theatre as a non-institutional theatrical practice was thus more directly present and more actively involved in social and political life of Serbia during the 1990s than the official theatres were. This is easily comprehensible, since the official theatres tend to be more inert in general, and usually oriented towards maintaining the *status quo* in social, cultural and artistic structures because of being financially dependent on the state administration. This fact was emphasized by a number of local theoreticians – such as Milena Dragićević-Šešić, Aleksandra Jovićević and Dubravka Knežević – that were criticizing the institutional theatres of Serbia for their "indifferent" socio-political status and for the escapism offered by their repertoire during the 1990s. In contrast, the alternative theatre and other performing arts practices directly arose from the space opened by shifting social relations. Those practices constituted themselves through questioning the dominant discourses and social mechanisms, aiming to create possibilities for some new and different ones.

29. See: Milena Dragićević-Šešić, *Umetnost protesta*, in: Velimir Ćurgus Kazimir (ed.), *Deset godina protiv; Građani Srbije u borbi za demokratiju i otvoreno društvo 1991–2001*, Medija centar, Belgrade, 2001.

30. Fund for an Open Society, Yugoslavia – *Annual report 1999*, „Arts and culture programs", p. 115: http://snap.archivum.ws/dspace/bitstream/10039/6256/1/REPORT99.doc (21. 05. 2009)

The main mutually connected groups of the alternative theatrical scene during the 1990s were the DAH Theatre, the Omen Theatre, the Blue Theatre, the Ister Theatre, the ERGstatus Dance Theatre, the Chamber Musical Theatre Ogledalo and the SVAN Theatre, as well as the MIMART Theatre. They formed the Association of Independent Theatres (ANET) in 1999. However, those theatre groups represented just a part of a broader array of then significant performing arts practices. Those included artistic performances, actions and happenings by art groups such as the Led Art, the Magnet, the Apsolutno, the ŠKART, the Vaccuumpack or the FIA, as well as individual artists like Saša Stojanović, Nenad Racković, Dobrica Kamperelić, Andrej Tišma, Miroslav Mandić, Bálint Szombathy and others.

The main topics of 1990s' alternative theatre in Serbia reflected the glaring social and political issues – a raging civil war, an oppressive political regime, and dominant nationalist and chauvinist ideology – articulated through an anthropological insight into social positions and inner lives of the dramatis personae. As such an attitude could not be tolerated within the official institutions, the alternative theatres were forced to venture out from the usual theatrical spaces to public ones – streets, squares, market-places, parks, etc., or to places utterly devoid of theatrical atmosphere – shopping malls, public administrative buildings or even public transport vehicles. However, boycotting the official institutions did not mean that there were no spaces for such theatre productions. Throughout the 1990s, the most significant ones in Belgrade were the Cultural centre Rex and the centre for Cultural Decontamination – led by Borka Pavićević. Those independent, non-governmental institutions, being the hubs of a broader cultural and socio-political activity, certainly helped in formulating the motto of the 1990s alternative theatre – Ethics before Aesthetics. It pointed out that the focus should not be on the form, the medium or the discourse of an artwork, but on its subject, content and context.

Accordingly, the autonomy of art became an antiquated myth, since theatre could not have afforded to be self-indulgent and self-serving. The alternative theatre in Serbia during the 1990s could not have been but immediately engaged in its social and political context, while its priorities quite obviously could have not been other than helping people to get into grips with their crushing everyday problems, thus opening the possibilities of their (self-) emancipation. That was the ethical attitude of the 1990s alternative scene in Serbia.

Dance Scene in Serbia

The postmodern theatre – including dance theatre as well as choreodrama – from the end of the 1970s, throughout the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s in Serbia used dancing as a means of artistic expression and as a theatrical medium. This was evident in the activity of the KPGT Theatre with such directors as Nada Kokotović, Ljubiša Ristić and Haris Pašović, in the programs of the Emergency Exit dance theatres festival held in Subotica in the period 1986–1999, as well as in the productions of a number of choreographers and dance performers such as Sonja Vukićević, Katarina Stojkov, Damir Zlatar Fraj, Aleksandar and Marija Izrailovski, Dejan Pajović and the Singidunum dance group.

The art of dance during the 1990s in Serbia developed within the frameworks of the alternative theatre. It practiced hybrid theatrical forms that included dance: non-verbal, physical theatre, the theatre of motion, as well as other experimental theatrical procedures and performance methods. Those dance theatrical forms were used by a number of independent groups such as the Singidunum dance group, the DAH Theatre, the Ister Theatre, the Blue Theatre, the MIMART Theatre, the Omen Theatre, the ERGstatus Dance Theatre, and others, as well as by a number of individuals such as Sonja Vukićević, Boris Čakiran, Ivana Vujić, Tatjana Grujić (now working in the USA), Gordana Dean (now working in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Dejan Pajović (stopped doing theatre after his 1993 production of the *Hair*), and others.

The major influences in coming up with that hybrid theatrical forms came from theatrical anthropology, choreodrama, Brechtian theatre, German *Tanztheatre*, street theatre, Butoh and other far-eastern dance theatres, and not from the contemporary Western dance context.

Choreographers, Dancers and Dance Groups

The newly established dance scene that formed within the alternative theatre has promoted throughout the 1990s a number of independent choreographers-directors such as Ivana Ašković, Nela Antonović, Boris Čakširan, Anđelija Todorović, as well as Olivera Kovačević-Crnjanski i Aleksandar Izrailovski that operated within the national ballets in Belgrade and Novi Sad. Nevertheless, it is the decade of 2000s that brought into the light a significant number of authors specifically expressing through the contemporary dance

practices. Two subsequent "generations" brought contemporary dance to the wider audiences and enabled it to be publicly recognized. One that appeared at the end of the 1990s and that was active in the first part of the 2000s (Dalija Aćin, Dragana Alfirević, Saša Asentić, Ksenija Đorđević, Svetlana Đurović, Olga Glišin, Tijana Malek, Bojana Mladenović, Dušan Murić, Milica Perović, Dragana Stanisavljević, Isidora Stanišić and Čarni Đerić, Ivana Tabori and others), and the other that gained momentum from the mid-2000s (Aleksandra Bjelajac, Dragana Bulut, Bojana Denić, Ana Dubljević, Marko Milić, Nenad Milošević, Miona Petrović, Dubravka Subotić, Ljiljana Tasić and others).
In addition to those developments at the bustling dance scene in Serbia, the Walking Theory theoretical-practical platform for performing arts initiated two small and self-organized, but very necessary critical projects – the Walking Critique and the Forum for Performing Arts Criticism.

Specialized Organizations

There are two operating broad yet specialised initiatives at the contemporary dance scene in Serbia: the Stanica, a service for contemporary dance formally established in Belgrade 2005 and the Forum for the New Dance established within the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad in 2002. However, the Stanica platform is more vibrant and complex since it is actively involved in the functioning of contemporary dance scene in Serbia. It is crucial inner workings consist in exploring and testing of organizational models adequate for an self-organised initiative on the one hand, while it actively advocates progressive political tendencies at the broader cultural scene, on the other. One of the instances that the Station in conjunction with other groups made an improvement is in providing a space for the contemporary dance scene. Thereby, the municipal authorities established the Magacin in Kraljevića Marka cultural centre, but since the sluggishness of the official administration in adapting the space, the whole dance scene has only one small room for rehearsals and workshops, rarely used for performances because of the lack of necessary equipment.

What is (Still) Lacking?

The two main things that were lacking during the development of the local contemporary dance scene are decentralization and production of critical discourses. The process of decentralization – usually accompanying the development and the expansion of a scene – consists in the emergence of new choreographers and other actors. There has been an important advancement in the evolution of the scene during the past couple of years, since there has been a significant increase in contemporary dance productions beyond the circle of initial actors. An important project for this kind of development was the 2007 Fostering Creativity project by the Stanica platform that promoted authors such as Ljiljana Tasić, Ana Dubljević, Nenad Milošević i Miona Petrović. On the other hand, the Belgrade municipal authorities, as well as by the Ministry of culture granted financial aid to productions of Dragana Bulut, Bojana Denić, Marko Milić and the DDT theatre. One of the most successful examples of such productions was the *My Private Biopolitics*, a project of Saša Asentić and the Per.Art organization in Novi Sad that gained significant international recognition, having over 25 performances over the two years span. However, an adequate decentralisation process did not match the process of dissemination of the dance scene. The fact that there are no contemporary dance scene actors in Serbia other than those living and working in Belgrade and Novi Sad is a consequence of an extremely centralised culture and cultural policies of the official Serbia.

The lack of critical discourses on the dance scene is the outcome of the two mutually connected deficiencies. One is almost a complete absence of the contemporary dance education from the university curriculum, despite sporadic and individual attempts to update the language and theory of contemporary dance. The other refers to an obvious deficit in the printed media coverage of contemporary dance, which is precisely what the Walking Critique and the Forum for Performing Arts Criticism projects were aiming to alleviate.

The New Post-Political Drama

The contemporary drama literature gained significant momentum in Serbia at the very end of 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. It started with Biljana Srbljanović's plays in the second part of the 1990s, carried on by Milena Marković from the beginning of the 2000s, to become a significant movement from the mid-2000s incorporating

younger generations of playwrights. The movement is usually labeled with a term already articulated in the broader European theatrical context – the New Drama.[31] It brought collective action of the authors as well as some characteristic shifts in play writing, in structuring of the dramatic narrative and its staging in order to cope with broader social and political context of transition to representative democracy and free market economy. Now the New Drama is not exclusively the only bearer of those innovations, since there are many new – as well as older – playwrights employing similar approaches although not formally being a part of the movement.

The Emergence of the New Drama in Serbia: Notions and Contexts

There is a growing number of playwrights – a whole generation from the 2000s onwards – that managed to make a significant number of theatre plays, publications and public readings, especially increasing from the mid-2000s.[32] This has not led to a coherent New Drama scene, since there is a lack of new theoretical approaches and critical insights that would supply it with an articulated discourse. Nevertheless, there have been some efforts to do just that, especially by the journal *Scena* that dedicated a whole issue to this topic in 2007. Some of the important issues revolve around the connections between the New Drama and postdramatic theatre, the determination of that genre, as well as the structure of language and placement of the roles.

The emergence of a large number of mutually connected play writers represents a genuine exception in the history of Serbian theatre. Over the course of years, its main characteristic was the vacillation between the long periods of merely reproducing the existing theatrical heritage and the shorter ones that witnessed the emergence of new sporadic and isolated "great authors" – as it is evident from Branislav Nušić all the way to Aleksandar Popović, Ljubomir Simović or Dušan Kovačević. Even the initial authors of the New Drama, Biljana Srbljanović and Milena Marković, actually belonged to that tradition. It was only the beginning of the 2000s that marked the end of it by promoting such authors as Milena Bogavac, Milan Marković, Maja Pelević and Filip Vujošević (the hard core of the New Drama movement), as well as Milica Konstantinović, Iva Modli, Ljubinka Stojanović, Staša Bajac, Jordan Cvetanović, Aleksandar Novaković, Slobodan Obradović and others. There are also somewhat older gen-

31. A local director and theatrologist Miloš Lazin defines the New Drama as "a movement that started establishing itself at the turn of the 20th to the 21st Century through the playwrights by Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Rodrigo Garcia or Biljana Srbljanović... Most of the theoretical analyses of it establish January 1995 as its birthday, since that was the time when Sarah Kane's Blasted opened in the London Royal Court Theatre." Miloš Lazin, *Nova drama – nova gluma?*, Scena, no. 1–2, 2007, p. 94.
It is also instructive to see the now very well known study by Aleks Sierz, I*n-Yer-Face Theatre, British Drama Today*, Faber and Faber, London, 2001

32. There is a web library comprising over 80 texts by over 30 authors of the New Drama movement at http://www.nova-drama.org

eration authors that keep close ties to the New Drama: Jelena Kajgo, Ivan Pravdić, Uglješa Šajtinac et al.
However, the local New Drama movement exhibits some important traits that place it within the traditions of independent theatre. Above all, its determination as "post-political" is not to be understood as simply being apolitical. The New Drama is very political in positioning itself beyond the given and existing socio-political divisions. The novelty of the New Drama is therefore not only to be found in its style, topics or methods, but also in its opposition to the enclosed and detached political life in the global neo-liberal age.

Translated by Dusan Grlja

SLOVAKIA

Independent Theatre

Dáša Čiripová

While five years ago we could claim that Slovakia was a country with mostly provincial and local theatre, the situation is slightly different today. Within the past five years, several subtle changes have occurred which, though insignificant at first sight, are essential for the Slovak theatre environment.

In the recent years, contemporary theatre and performing arts in Slovakia have recovered from its mediocrity, invisibility and inability to confront, at least, the European theatre scene. Slovak theatre has now started to deal with the country's history and events with a strong and pronounced attitude and critical detachment. Taking advantage of the generational experience of the creators, it has come to reflect the Slovak mentality and identity in an attempt to capture the thinking and character of the nation, naming such social issues in the country which Slovak theatre has consciously suppressed for some time. One cannot speak about a specific or common tendency – rather there are individual efforts by directors, playwrights, performers or creative collectives that have opened Slovak theatre and shifted its impact abroad, beyond Slovakia's borders.

At last, state and city theatres – after several years of searching – have understood the necessity to turn theatre stages into platforms of confrontation and dialogue, of asking questions and looking for answers.

While state and city theatres are currently trying to come to terms with "national" issues, independent Slovak theatres have shown that they are, as usual, a step ahead. Reflecting social and political issues are no longer unknown territory for independent theatre. They currently focus on how they can become part of the international context – both in terms of content and form.

The independent scene in Slovakia started to form in the 1970s. It was preceded by an innovative, revealing and non-conformist amateur theatre scene. The generation of theatremakers who experienced this type of theatre later created the base for Slovak professional theatre. The creators, who are today in their seventies, still work in the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava.

By the end of the 1980s, young theatremakers started to prefer devised projects, searched for new forms, concepts and themes. The independent scene that was being formed at that time was characteristic for more than just a search for new artistic means. The political situation in communist countries, particularly the fact that some themes and approaches were either limited or outright taboo, made several strong-minded creators try to challenge and transgress the defined boundaries. They tried to introduce an open reflection of the contemporary society and regime into the theatre. One of such creators was Blaho Uhlár who, after graduating from the Academy of Performing Arts, started to work in the amateur ensemble Disk in Trnava. A young director back then, Uhlár would later become the most influential personality of independent theatre in Slovakia, indeed its *enfant terrible.* In the DPDM theatre (1974–1989, today's J. Palárik Theatre in Trnava) and, from 1987, in the amateur Theatre at Kopánka (today's Disk Theatre in Trnava), he drew much attention not only with his productions of the classical repertory, but especially in his devised projects. Already in his early work, Uhlár avoided psychological realism and replaced it with metaphorical and stylized imagery. Gradually, his devised projects would come to include sharp criticism of the society. Uhlár successfully tested the first techniques of decomposition, shortcut and collective improvisation – features that would become the working method of the Stoka Theatre later – in the Ukrainian National Theatre (today's Alexander Dukhnovich Theatre) in the late 1980s. It was there he met visual artist, stage designer and later also director Miloš Karásek who would become Uhlár's equal partner in artistic dialogue. Their creative cooperation resulted in the writing of the 1989 Theatre Manifestos and later in the establishment of the Stoka Theatre. Stoka and its poetics catalyzed the subsequent development of the alternative and avant-garde theatre scene in Slovakia.

Stoka – www.stoka.sk

Stoka gradually became a pioneer of independent devised theatre that experimented with authenticity and collective creation which were not officially tolerable or accepted. Formal stylization and expressivity in the performance by non-actors, together with decomposition and fragmentary texts brought about a literal revolution in Slovak theatre (including the independent scene that started to develop thanks to Stoka). Displaying everyday reality, the banality and absurdity of the time and life, while constantly pointing out social

problems – this provoked and opposed the psychological and realist poetics that dominated the official theatre scene. Stoka's vulgarity, nakedness, bareness, expressiveness and experimentation with form, as well as a pronounced visual stylisation and use of masks, divided the expert public into two groups: those who became enchanted and excited with everything that was new and unknown, and those who rejected everything in any way related to Stoka. The energy, elemental attraction, and something that might today be called a community way of life, left a deep trace in every member of the ensemble. In the early 1990s, the Stoka Theatre found a home in the building of Bratislava Transportation Company.

Blaho Uhlár's rebellion against the social establishment and conventions marked the entire creative modus of the theatre. The community that made up the theatre faced misunderstanding and close-mindedness not only of the wider society, but, rather paradoxically, also of the artistic and cultural community, particularly as far as new approaches and tendencies were concerned. But Blaho Uhlár and his ensemble never gave up – not even at the expense of losing social comfort or personal prosperity. Stoka became a cult theatre and gradually transformed into a scene that may be called a cultural centre. In addition to theatre performances, Stoka hosted musical concerts of alternative Bratislava bands, literary evenings and exhibition openings. The space also included a bar that was often tended by Stoka's actors or Uhlár himself.

In 2007, Stoka's building was demolished. By that time, however, the original ensemble had long disintegrated, leaving only a fragment of the initial set-up. Most members left for a new group, the SkRAT Theatre. The pulling down of Stoka was more than just an ordinary construction demolition. The ruins and rubble became a metaphor for the relationship between Slovaks and their culture, clearly indicating a failure of the artistic and cultural community. After a few attempts made by Uhlár to revive the theatre and its ensemble – attempts which were far from regular or continuous – the director and leader moved out of the spotlight and started working for the Trnava-based amateur theatre Disk. It was there he met young actor Braňo Mosný and this meeting meant not only a resurrection for Uhlár himself, but also hope that Stoka could be revived. This hope opened a new path for Uhlár and started a new Odyssey for the theatre whose flame was still not extinguished. Because this is Stoka and Blaho Uhlár as we know them, everything, just like in the past, originated in improvised, almost squat-like conditions. In fact, Uhlár is a squatter himself, working and living in a disordered space

in the so-called Cvernovka – a former thread-making factory. In this industrial space, Uhlár is renting a studio where he has successfully revived Stoka with new young talented actors.
Already in the late 1990s, several independent devising groups drew on the creative method used by Uhlár and Stoka. It was unimaginable for them to work for official state-funded theatres and so they began setting up their own ensembles. The boom of original and devised projects was brought about by the effort of young and alternative artists to break through the rigid and frigid approach of state theatres.

GUnaGU – www.gunagu.sk

Alongside the rebellious Stoka, another authorial group started to take shape – the GUnaGU Theatre (1985). Creators Viliam Klimáček and Ivan Mizera (originally a doctor and a mathematician) gradually found their artistic programme. In the beginning, GUnaGU was an amateur theatre. In 1991, the ensemble moved to the underground space of the Black Raven café in Bratislava – originally occupied by the Stoka Theatre. GUnaGU benefited from the space located in the city centre where it could start its continuous work and regular performances. The first production entitled *Vestpoketka* foreshadowed the theatre's poetics that have remained more or less the same to this day. *Vestpoketka* was an homage to the Czech comic duo Jiri Voskovec and Jan Werich and their Osvobozené divadlo (Liberated Theatre). Collective creation, improvised images, grotesque and clip-like sketches, or comic-based characters, all introduced to the GUnaGU stage such elements as humour, playfulness, and a melancholy, mysterious atmosphere, supplemented by postmodern quotations and visual shortcuts. Tender cruelty, poetic imagery with a kind of comic brutality, and communication with the audience offered an alternative to the existentially oriented Stoka. In the 1990s, the theatre's style and genre diversity was not a handicap, on the contrary: GUnaGU diversified what had been a fairly dull professional theatre scene. The production *Barbarella* was inspired by the characters of Beavis and Butt-Head from the American animation. The bleak atmosphere of film expressionism and gothic style that permeated *Caligari* helped the play become a cult production. Similarly, in a completely different genre, in the comedy about the Slovak mafia *English is Easy, Csaba is Dead*, the author, director and actors managed to succinctly if hyperbolically mimic the slang of Bratislava gangland.

GUnaGU is still one of the most popular independent theatres in Slovakia, with most performances being sold out. However, its original poetics are now, in the diverse and eclectic 21st century, rather common and rarely inventive. At the same time though, GUnaGU is very successful at finding audiences through communicative themes, humour and straightforward statements – both artistic and philosophical. Viliam Klimáček, who is still the director of GUnaGU, is one of the most frequently produced Slovak playwrights both in Slovakia and abroad.

SkRAT – www.skrat.info

The SkRAT Theatre was established by several former members of the Stoka Theatre. Initially it drew on Stoka's creative methods but in the past few years it has managed to develop its own poetics which, though still based on fragmentation, turned away from decomposition. Under the artistic leadership of Ľubomír Burgr and Dušan Vicen, the Bratislava-based SkRAT continues to use the method of collective improvisation, however, the formal and technical aspects of their productions are different from Stoka's. Their improvised sketches display a clear arc of story development and during the years, their non-actors have appropriated a characteristic style. SkRAT's humour and irony attack social conventions and sometimes also deal with known political cases. Though SkRAT is predominantly a verbal theatre, it is also – perhaps paradoxically – very strong in non-verbal productions using only facial expressions, gestures, movement and music. As opposed to Uhlár's contemporary minimalist theatre, SkRAT's visual art is very fond of the latest technology and trends (*Dead Souls*).
GUnaGU's latest productions *The Trial, of the Trial, by the Trial* or *Interior of the Interior* are strongly related and inspired by political cases of the recent past. *The Trial, of the Trial, by the Trial* deals with the absurdity of state administration, in particular the judiciary. It refers to a case, well known to the Slovak public, in which a dispute with a female director of documentary films revealed corruption and mafia practices in the Slovak judiciary. In the production *Interior of the Interior* – created as part of an interesting project initiated by the international theatre festival Divadelná Nitra titled *20th Century Through the Eyes of the Secret Police* – SkRAT was commissioned to produce a play on a specially selected theme for the first time. To reflect the practices of the secret police and its influence over the people, SkRAT chose the true story of the peculiar

1981 death of double agent and priest Přemysl Coufal, a case that has not yet been solved. In order to be able to present this unclear case to the audience, SkRAT used plenty of documentary materials loaned directly from the Nation's Memory Institute which were processed applying the methods of documentary theatre and combined with symbolic elements.

Debris Company – www.debriscompany.sk

Debris Company, originally known as Hubris, was established in the late 1990s. The poetics of the ensemble, originating in movement, dance, visual stylization and music, was reaffirmed by the intellectual background of its creators. *Debris's projects made allusions to philosophical works of world literature (The Trial*/Kafka, *Gospel in Accordance with Mark*/Borges, *Ulysses*/Joyce, *King Ubu*/Jarry, *Murphy*/Beckett etc.). *For nearly ten years, the Debris Company was an exceptional phenomenon on the Slovak independent theatre scene and has more or less remained the same until today. Director and musician Jozef Vlk, a founding member of the Hubris Company (which would irregularly cease to make any productions), set up a stable creative tandem with choreographer Stanislava Vlčeková. Their collaboration gave Debris its present shape and direction.* The abstract character of dance, which took pains to find a way to the Slovak audiences, allowed Debris to use a more comprehensible theatrical approach. But the perhaps most characteristic feature of the ensemble's work is the constant effort to transgress its own creative boundaries. Debris's most recent productions reach the quality of a *gesamtkunstwerk and are rather performances than theatre productions.*

*E*xpressive, physical, dynamic shows with topical messages and statements react to the current issues of people and the society – the production *Mono* deals with human egoism, while *Dolcissime sirene* is about celebrating life, optimism and values, *Hexen* about the boundaries between reality and metaphysics, and *Soliloquy* is inspired by Joyce's *Ulysses*. In *Epic,* a production about the search for happiness in a consumer, capitalist society, Debris was the first company in Slovakia to use the method of mapping with kinetic and sound effects. Besides, Jozef Vlk and Stanislava Vlčeková always chose very distinct and noticeable collaborators and dancers for their productions. The Debris Company is one of the most progressive theatre groups of the Slovak independent scene, even without a stable ensemble.

P.A.T. – www.slavadaubnerova.com

The devised production *Cells* about sculptor Louise Bourgeois was presented by the phenomenon theatre (an independent and very ambitious experimental ensemble which, unfortunately, does not exist anymore) in 2006. The production's author was the versatile performer Sláva Daubnerová – back then a new face on the Slovak independent scene. Shortly after the premiere, Sláva Daubnerová founded her own authorial theatre P.A.T. Step by step, she would become an exceptional personality of independent theatre in Slovakia. In her projects, she pays continuous attention to art, her attitude to it and to art's importance and position in society. Every P.A.T. production is unique and – just like the Debris Company – transcends Daubnerová's own creative boundaries. The texts she works with are assembled and pasted together from the diary entries, personal notes and letters of personalities like sculptor Louise Bourgeois (*Cells*), director Madga Husáková-Lokvencová (*MHL*), photographer Francesca Woodmann (*Untitled*), or the ex-wife of Heiner Müller (*Some Disordered Geometries*). Even though *MHL* is a documentary theatre production, the productions *Cells* and *Some Disordered Geometries* are an interplay of symbols, bits of recordings, abstract elements reinforced by projections, visual stylization and, in most cases, electronic music.

The Pôtoň Theatre – www.poton.sk

The Pôtoň Theatre's playwright and dramaturge Michal Ditte and director Iveta Ditte Jurčová reside in the community-based culture centre and theatre in the small village of Bátovce. The Pôtoň Theatre focuses on controversial social issues in Slovakia. Nearly all of the theatre's productions are preceded by detailed research that includes the collection of documents, authentic material and interviews with the inhabitants of specific studied regions. The site-specific project *Respect!* focused on the young generation growing up in blocks of apartments and their attitude to the people and places around them. The project was performed on a forsaken playground surrounded by enormous set pieces – an entire housing estate. The actors came from this very environment and performed themselves. The authors started out by collecting material among the young people and, based on their testimonies, created the production's concept.

The production *Terra Granus* was based on field research conducted in the regions of the southern basin of the river Hron and focused on the issues of home and identity. In *Misery* the creators used a research method again and analyzed unemployment issues and the related problems of poverty in Slovakia. The production *The Land of Unscythed Meadows* is a mega-metaphorical report on Slovakia and Slovaks. Peculiar language images referred to the shaping of the Slovak nation, building of its identity, relationship to land, territory, home and traditions. At the same time, the imagery emphasizes our escape from mediocrity, the still present xenophobia and the countless migration waves westward.
Besides the preparation of their productions, the Pôtoň Theatre has established a progressive form of educating both the public and other professional theatremakers. The hard work on educational and research projects resulted in the establishment of the Centre for Art and Creativity in 2008. Bátovce became a place where various residential, educational and creative projects take place.

Ján Šimko

Ján Šimko is a solo artist in the performing arts scene – originally a theatrologist, currently a director – his productions, though not always spotlessly directed, share one important feature: Šimko likes to experiment both in terms of form and content. He focuses on social and societal themes that are shaping today's atmosphere in Slovakia. The first production which foreshadowed Šimko's inclination to documentary theatre was *Petržalka Stories. Petržalka, a housing development that some find utterly awe-inspiring, is with its 110,000 inhabitants the largest housing estate in Central Europe*. Historically, it is built on a place that housed a village of 20,000 people. The production charts the experience of various people whose lives in Petržalka were shaped by the big history of the previous century as well as of those who are trying to shape Petržalka today. The second remarkable production by Ján Šimko was his reflection of the events of November 1989 through the eyes of the participants in the Velvet Revolution. The script for the production of *The Last Historical Task of the Young Generation* used documentary material once again consisting of interviews with the students who experienced the 1989 revolution and with students today. It examines the stories of people whose natural need for youth revolt was transformed into a revolution and their generational protest accidentally aided in the breakdown of the totalitarian regime. The

production reconstructs the stories of those who stood at the edge of the revolution and kept their critical detachment from the emotions and ambitions the revolution brought along. It observes the victories and disappointments of a generation that experienced social change, the impact of revolutionary forces and the hard clash of common ideals.
Šimko's most recent production *Steel My Heart – Wandering the Night, Eaten by the Fire* is situated in eastern Slovakia and captures the lives of the people of this region who for long years worked in the well-known steelworks in Košice (later gradually renamed to U.S. Steel Košice). Using interviews with former and present employees of the steel factory, a production was devised about work and how its perception changes in time, as well as about the changes the steelworks underwent during the turbulent development in the second half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. Everyday stories of common people reflect big historical breaking points as well as social and political changes.

The Prešov National Theatre
– https://sk-sk.facebook.com/presovskenarodne

A unique and original group of young artists is made up of dramaturge and playwright Michaela Zakuťanská and director Júlia Razsuová. Shortly after they both graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts, they decided to return to their home region to draw on and revive what once was a progressive Prešov avant-garde art. Their latest initiative was the establishment of the Prešov National Theatre in 2013. This was no coincidence because their artwork is strongly influenced by the city of Prešov and its significant Ruthenian minority. Michaela Zakuťanská drew much attention with her play *Havaj*, written in the Ruthenian dialect and presenting characters from the Ruthenian region, including such personalities as Andy Warhol. The first production by both Zakuťanská and Razsuová is titled *Single Radicals* and describes fresh college graduates who are deciding about what to do with their lives. They define the space in which they want to live, look for a goal and long for an ideal partner. Egotism and the imbalance between western and eastern Slovakia force the protagonists to reassess their own relationships and values. In the effort to redefine love, they realize that they have become *Single Radicals.* Deprived of ideals, they are unable to build relationships – something that has to be concealed and idealized in the strongly Catholic Prešov.

Young people in Prešov, Petržalka or Košice are a *pars pro toto* of the young generation that is trying to escape the shadows of the past in the areas they were born into as well as of the political system that destroyed their parents or older friends. Searching for one's own identity, redefinition of values, confrontation with the past – these themes connect the young European, mostly post-communist generation. Slovak artists and their work are thus gradually becoming part of the larger European theatre scene.

Another strong, though different, layer of the Slovak performing art and independent scene are dance ensembles or individuals who represent Slovakia on international platforms far more noticably than theatre practitioners. Dancer and choreographer Jaro Viňarský even won this year's the most prestigious American dance prize – the Bessie Award – for his production *Painted Birds* which was created in collaboration with the group Pallissimo, led by Palo Zuštiak, a choreographer who has lived in New York for some time now. His latest performance *Animalinside* was also successfully presented in New York. Another globally recognized Slovak ensemble is a group of Slovaks living in Brussels – Les Slovaks. The dancers in this ensemble have worked with world-famous dance groups (Akram Khan's, Vim Vandekeybus's etc.). Dancer and choreographer Jozef Fruček is another exceptional dancer living and working abroad. Fruček works with his wife and dancer Linda Karpenteau and the art of their ensemble RootlessRoot Company is characteristic for its expressiveness, physical strength, current statements and original stage design.

In the recent years, the independent scene became part of representative international networks and extensive discourse about art. The independent scene offers the space and platform to search for, try, challenge and produce art that escapes the standard theatre thinking.

In 2011, a network called *Anténa* was founded in Slovakia associating cultural centres and organizations that work in independent contemporary art and culture. *Anténa* aims to represent independent cultural centres in their communication with bodies of state administration and self-government, to improve their position in the system of culture policy and to set up professional conditions for art in Slovakia. It also initiates cooperation, exchange of experience and drafting of common projects, and supports the distribution of art productions. This results in the performance of activities aimed at improving the position of independent culture in the society.

At present, *Anténa* associates 15 members:
A4 – Space for Contemporary Culture / Bratislava, Bona fide –Tabačka Kulturfabrik / Košice Kolomaž – Klub Lúč / Trenčín, NA PERÓNE, The Pôtoň Theatre in Bátovce, Záhrada – Centre for Independent Culture / Banská Bystrica, Truc sphérique – Stanica Žilina-Zàriečie, Theatre from the Passage / Banská Bystrica, Štokovec – Banská St a nica / Banská Štiavnica, KC Dunaj / Bratislava, Nástupište 1 – 12 / Topoľčany, Triptych, o.z. – Hidepark / Nitra, Periférne centrá, o.z. / Dúbravica, Publikum, o.z. / Trnava, Projekt bunka / Nitra.

Translated by Ivan Lacko

SLOVENIA

Experimental Theatre

Barbara Orel

In Slovenia, experimental theatre practices have had a rich history and steady continuity since the 1950s, with their roots going back to the first half of the 20th century.[1] Throughout the decades, they have been denoted with a number of different terms: 'experimental theatre' until the end of the 1970s, 'alternative theatre' in the 1980s, 'independent theatre' in the 1990s and 'non-government sector production' as the most apt term after 2000. Like in other Eastern European countries, Slovenian experimental theatre has connected aesthetic challenges with the oppositional political stance. The breaks in the theatre tradition in terms of diverging from the traditional aesthetic principles and mimetic representation have been influenced by an intermedial dialogue with other arts, media and technologies, and have transformed the theatre field into the wider sphere of the performing arts. Theatre innovations have been decisively shaped by the search for new lifestyles which have created new environments of existence, experiences in Slovenian society.

When Slovenia was part of Yugoslavia (1945–1991), the experimental forms of theatre communities established a space alternative to the politically supervised and ideologically regulated art scene in the society of self-managing socialism. The guardians of the regime were not only vigilant over the institutional repertory theatres, but paid special attention to experimental theatre practices. As stated by Tomaž Toporišič, these practices (irrespective of their level of socio-political engagement) were always considered by the authorities as provocative art or political theatre, for which an upper tolerance limit needed to be set (2008, 140–141). The Yugoslav and Slovenian communist leaders regarded new cultural trends with a certain amount of ambivalence, being aware that "a more free and pluralist cultural atmosphere was an important outlet of intellectual and wider dissatisfaction of the people; on the other hand, they also understood that the opening of the cultural sphere threatened the monopoly of their fundamental beliefs and ideology" (Vodopivec 2007, 356). The authorities indeed attempted to create an impression of Yugoslavia as a country of free creativity,

1. They are represented by the key artists of the Slovenian theatre avant-garde: the director Ferdo Delak (at the Novi oder (New Stage) in 1925 as well as his stagings at the Delavski oder (Workers' Stage) 1932–1933, both venues in Ljubljana); the stagings of plays by Ivan Mrak in the first half of the 20th century at Mrakovo gledališče (Mrak's Theatre); the theatre innovations by the director Fran Žižek at the Neodvisno gledališče (Independent Theatre, founded in Maribor in 1938) and his theatrical innovations at the Mestno gledališče Ptuj (Ptuj City Theatre,1938–1940).

opposing, however, to modernism and avant-garde movements in an authoritative manner because their principles did not match the traditionalist regime views on art.

The first wave of theatre experiments in the 1950s sprang from the need to reform the conventional theatre expression and redefine the traditional communication model in theatre. The first two afterwar experimental groups – the Eksperimentalno gledališče (Experimental Theatre, 1955–1967), led by the director Balbina Battelino Baranovič, and Ad hoc (1957–1965), led by the director Draga Ahačič, were sought to reform stage language, primarily by refreshing the dramatic repertory,[2] with the modernization of direction still focused on the immanent reading of the text, to which the other sign systems of the stage are subordinated. The Esperimentalno gledališče introduced the first theatre-in-the-round in Slovenia. The primacy of the integrity of the dramatic text was also furthered by Oder 57[3] (Stage 57, 1957–1964), founded by the students of the Akademija za igralsko umetnost (Academy of Acting Art) and Filozofska fakulteta (Faculty of Arts) in Ljubljana. Their efforts not only focused on theatre reforms but were engaged in terms of social criticism and declaratively expressed activist tendencies toward reshaping the mode of thought in a broader social sphere: the history of Stage 57 is simultaneously "the history of the struggle of Slovenian culture and spirit against totalitarianism as well as for the autonomy of free practice, for civil society" (Kermauner 1995, 76–77). Among other things, the strong incentive to original dramatic creativity brought about one of the most important Slovenian dramatic works: *Antigona* (Antigone, 1960) by Dominik Smole. In 1964, when the premiere of Marijan Rožanc's play *Topla greda* (Greenhouse) was stopped due to political unrest, the activities of Stage 57 were abolished. Another proof of the deliberate oppression of intellectual life is the discontinuation of *Perspektive* (Perspectives), an influential magazine for culture and social issues, that same year. The continuity of performance research was only systemically established in 1970, with the founding of the Eksperimentalno gledališče Glej (Glej Experimental Theatre, still active today) and the Pekarna (Bakery, 1971–1977).[4]

In the second half of the 1960s, there was a short period of more liberal Communist Party politics, which ran parallel to the spreading of the free-thinking leftist spirit in the scope of the student movement (1968–1971). In this period, the theatre experiments gradually began to transition from the so-called literary type of experiment to the field of total theatre. This is clearly evident from the case of

2. The Experimental Theatre presented the first Slovenian stagings of Beckett (*Endgame*, 1961) and Albee (*The Zoo Story* in 1962). The Ad hoc theatre, however, focused on French and Slovenian drama.

3. Stage 57 paved the way for existentialism, anti-drama, the theatre of the absurd as well as modern philosophical, poetic and politically engaged drama; it importantly furthered original Slovenian dramatic works as well.

4. Nevertheless, the experimental production did not entirely cease between 1964 and 1970. An alternative to the institutional theatre was provided by the group Stranski vhod (Side Entrance, 1965-1970) by Jurij Souček, the Študentsko aktualno gledališče (Topical Student Theatre, 1965–1966) and the Gledališče Pupilije Ferkeverk (Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre, 1969–1971).

the Gledališče Pupilije Ferkeverk (Pupilija Ferkeverk Theatre), developed from the 441/442/443 neo-avant-garde group of poets. Its breakthrough performance *Pupilija, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki* (Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilcheks, 1969) paved the way to performance art. As lucidly stated back then by the Slovenian poet and theatre critic Veno Taufer, *Pupilija*'s "total, theatrically new performance created a new notch" which marks a period of entirely different understanding of theatre in Slovenia, "one in many ways contrary to the previous understanding of the avant-garde and experimenting in theatre". (Taufer 1975, 12–13) The entry into the rhizomatic intertwinement of various artistic fields and media (the visual arts, literature, film and the performing arts) was also strongly marked by the OHO group (one of the first conceptual groups in Yugoslavia), which introduced the first happenings in Slovenia.[5]

In the 1970s, the performance research ranged from 'poor theatre' (with reference to Jerzy Grotowski) to multimedia theatre. Poor theatre gave rise to unique concepts of ritual theatre forms. The following communities provided an original Slovenian contribution to European theatre: the group of Tomaž Kralj (who continued the work of the Gledališče Pupilije Ferkeverk and realized the concept of 'untranslatable theatre'); the Vetrnica (Windmill) group by Vlado Šav (developing an original variant of the 'meeting' between the actors and the spectators); and so-called 'group theatre', practiced by Lado Kralj's Pekarna on the basis of the anthropological research of play and environmental theatre by Richard Schechner.[6] This generation, which sprang from hippy culture, was followed in the late 1970s by the generation establishing itself under the increasing influence of the mass media and pop culture. Through the paradigm of performance theatre, they paved the way to multi-media theatre (in the projects of the student alternative FV 112/15, Dušan Pirih Hup, the Pocestno gledališče Predrazpadom (Streetwalking Predesintegration Theatre)[7] group, the Gledališče Ane Monró (Ana Monró Theatre), Meje kontrole št. 4 (The Borders of Control No. 4), and the first groups in Yugoslavia consisting solely of female authors: Podjetje za proizvodnjo fikcije (Fiction Production Company) and Linije sile (Lines of Force). All of them attempted to abandon the field of aesthetics and were reproached for alleged instrumentalisation of amateurism. The institutional theatre had a reserved stance since it failed to recognize this new sensibility as a characteristic that paved the way to performance art. It only acknowledged the so called literary type of experimental approach at the Eksperimentalno gledališče Glej[8] as well as the research brought to the repertory

5. The OHO group carried out its first happening in 1966 (only seven years after the first happening by Allan Kaprow in New York), and continued them till 1969.

6. For more information on those three groups, cf. Orel 2010, 524–45. According to Aleksandra Schuller, it was already between 1970 and 1973 (and without any direct experiential contact with the work of Grotowski) that Vlado Šav developed the paratheatrical activities which the Polish reformer termed active culture several years later. Šav did this in the scope of his Beli krog (White Circle) group in Koper, and only came into contact with Grotowski's work later on – in 1973, when he pursued further studies at Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław. At the time of his study leave at New York University, Lado Kralj also participated in the performance *Commune* by Schechner's Performance Group.

7. Translator's comment: the name of this group contains a number of wordplays and is usually not translated into English.

8. The directors (Iztok Tory, Dušan Jovanović, Zvone Šedlbauer, Žarko Petan etc.) were inspired especially by the plays of the Slovenian dramatists Milan Jesih and Rudi Šeligo.

theatres by directors like Dušan Jovanović, Zvone Šedlbauer, Ljubiša Ristić etc. Experiments were considered as an integral part of stable theatre structure, with the institutional theatres founding so-called small stages precisely for that purpose – the Slovenian National Theatre Drama Maribor already in 1959.[9]

In the period of strengthened ideological control in the so-called leaden seventies, the expression of critical political views was legally limited, with the cultural politics bringing back the patterns from the first half of the 1950s which were to follow the principle of bringing culture closer to the working class. Although the alternative scene was not controlled by direct censorship, it was regulated on part of the regime by being disabled financially as well as venue-wise. Nevertheless, the alternative persistently defied control and continued to set up a network of alternative venues, with its centre in the basement of block four of the student residences in Ljubljana. This was a platform for new social and artistic practices, e.g. performance art, street art, graffiti writing, punk and new wave music as well as video art. After 1970, it was managed by the Forum student organization as a "base of the cultural avant-garde". After several years of guerilla operation at the club scene, it organized the first Spomladanski festival (Spring Festival) in 1980. This was the first festival of street theatre in Slovenia and an exceptional achievement of experimental theatre practices. Although the alternative of the 1980s was continuously subject to governmental control, it was not only a repressed subject of the authoritarian regime. It purposely persisted in the marginal position, attempting to establish its own organization model, actually a parallel institution in order to provide an autonomous media space and offer a "utopian model of co-being in the dominant culture" (Korda 2008, 331).

With the 1980 death of the state and Communist Party leader, Josip Broz-Tito, the system started visibly cracking at the seams and indeed fell apart at the beginning of the 1990s. The critique of self-managing socialism penetrated every pore of society and subversively spread in the alternative artistic spaces as well as at institutional theatres. The 1980s, which turned out to be the most fertile period in the postwar history of the Slovenian theatre, saw the rise of political theatre. It was the most significantly present at the stage of the Slovensko mladinsko gledališče (Mladinsko Theatre).[10] During the artistic directorship of Dušan Jovanović (1978–1985), the Mladinsko Theatre was transformed into a space of experimentation and has kept this identity till the present day. The new venue of alternative theatre reflected the post-modern trends and gave

9. The Slovensko narodno gledališče Drama Ljubljana (Slovenian National Theatre Drama Ljubljana) opened its Komorni in eksperimentalni oder (Chamber and Experimental Stage) at the Knight's Hall (Viteška dvorana) of the Križanke Complex venue in 1963. The Slovensko ljudsko gledališče Celje (Slovenian People's Theatre Celje) opened its small stage in 1972. The Mestno gledališče ljubljansko (Ljubljana City Theatre) followed with the Stara garderoba (Old Wardrobe) stage in 1979.

10. In the stagings by Ljubiša Ristić, Dušan Jovanović and Janez Pipan. The Mladinsko Theatre was founded in 1955 by Balbina Baranovič as a theatre for children and youth. Cf. the monograph *Ali je prihodnost že prišla?: petdeset let Slovenskega mladinskega gledališča*. The literal translation of the Slovensko mladinsko gledališče is the Slovenian Youth Theatre. However, the theatre itself employs the name the Mladinsko Theatre internationally. (Translator's note)

rise to various prominent aesthetics that marked the shift from logocentrism to scenocentrism. It introduced the theatre of images in the intertwinement of "image-movement-music-text-technology" (Marranca), with the most characteristic representatives of this trend being the directors Vito Taufer and Tomaž Pandur. For the young generation of directors (Matjaž Zupančič, Vinko Möderndorfer, Eduard Miler, Igor Likar etc.), however, the Glej Theatre provided an "oasis for creating the experimental theatre that was not possible in institutions." (Poštrak 2012, 90)

In the mid 1980s, the alternative entered the central Slovenian cultural venue – the newly built Cankarjev dom Culture and Congress Centre in Ljubljana. Goran Schmidt, the then head of its theatre and film department, shaped his programme policy with a daring move: the assimilation of the subculture movements into the dominant culture. This resulted in two contradictory reproaches: "The reproach that the alternative betrayed its own self and its social background by entering an elite state cultural institution, and the reproach of the institution to the alternative that it enters eminent culture with inappropriate content."[11] This contradiction culminated in the multimedia performance *Ogolelo mesto* (Naked City, 1985), which needed to be taken off the programme due to a controversial collage of fiction and documents from politics and popular culture, punk and totalitarian systems (this was a characteristic iconography of the 1980s alternative). Already next year, a scandal broke out at the Cankarjev dom centre due to the retro-avant-garde event *Krst pod Triglavom* (The Baptism under Triglav), directed by Dragan Živadinov and performed by the Gledališče Sester Scipiona Nasice (Scipion Nasice Sisters' Theatre).[12] With the discourse of the theatre of images and an eclectic appropriation of visual narrations from the history of art, especially that of avant-garde movements, the performance provocatively de- and re-constructed the Slovenian national myth.[13] The breakthrough piece had a decisive influence on the new generation of directors which established itself in the 1990s: Matjaž Berger, Emil Hrvatin/Janez Janša, Marko Peljhan, Vlado Repnik, Igor Štromajer, Bojan Jablanovec. Their aim was not to imitate the aesthetics of *The Baptism*, but they were strongly influenced by the totality of the artistic work, which synthesizes and emancipates diverse means of expression in the manner of the Gesamtkunstwerk. In relation to this, they developed their own interdisciplinary practices.

With the founding of the independent Slovenian state in 1991, Slovenian theatre underwent considerable restructuring.[14] At the time of

11. The quote is from the film *Staro in novo* (based on the script by Zemira Alajbegović and directed by Neven Korda), available at: http://www.ljudmila.org/scca/ip/zanka/dok-TV.html.

12. The group was active within the retro-avant-garde collective Neue Slowenische Kunst. After 1987, the Scipion Nasice Sisters' Theatre transformed into the Kozmokinetično gledališče Rdeči pilot (Cosmokinetic Theatre Red Pilot) and the Kozmokinetični kabinet NOORDUNG (Cosmokinetic Cabinet NOORDUNG).

13. Cf. Erjavec 165–66 and Orel 2011, 30–31.

14. The activities of Slovenian theatre at the time of the economic, political and identity crisis before the disintegration of Yugoslavia and after the independence of Slovenia (between 1980 and 2005) are discussed in more detail by Barbara Sušec Michieli.

the massive ideological changes surrounding the disintegration of communism, the downfall of the single-party system and the development of plural society based on Western democracies, Slovenian theatre was extremely cautious. The bonds with the Yugoslav cultural sphere were temporarily severed institution-wise, but not in alternative and popular culture. In comparison to the 1980s, the period of flourishing political theatre (which was understood as a space of freedom and critique directed towards the authorities), a clear decrease of reflection upon the current political situation could be noticed. The alternative theatre of that period, now termed independent theatre[15], directed the politics of representation into establishing connections with the international network of Western theatre, and dealt especially with the research of the theatre medium itself. Due to the exploration of the intersections with other artistic fields, notably fine art (in the directions of Vlado Repnik, Barbara Novakovič Kolenc, Ema Kugler), dance (Damir Zlatar Frey, Matjaž Pograjc, Tomaž Štrucl), theory (Matjaž Berger, Emil Hrvatin/Janez Janša, Bojan Jablanovec) and new media technologies (Marko Peljhan, Marko Košnik, Igor Štromajer), the 1990s can be regarded as an open field of interdisciplinary performance practices. In discovering new languages of the stage, the research of the body was at the forefront. Dance theatre and contemporary dance flourished and established themselves as an autonomous, professional artistic genre with the founding of the Plesni teater Ljubljana (Dance Theatre Ljubljana) upon the initiative of Ksenija Hribar in 1985 (the central representatives of the dance scene are Iztok Kovač, Matjaž Farič, Mateja Bučar, Sinja Ožbolt, Tanja Zgonc, Brane Potočan, Maja Delak etc.).[16] A decisive contribution to the affirmation of the new artistic practices was that of the *Maska* journal, whose editorial board was taken over by the younger generation in 1991.[17] The new artistic practices also managed to establish themselves as worthy of regular coverage by the daily press.[18] The festival boom in the 1990s, in turn, enabled the networking and cultural exchange in the scope of the then newly founded contemporary performance art festivals: Ex-Ponto (1993, with the Yugoslav territory and East European countries), Exodos (1995, primarily with West European countries), Mesto žensk/City of Women (since 1994, it has been presenting the creativity of women regardless of their places of origin, including countries whose artists can rarely be seen in Europe), and Mladi levi/Young Lions (establishing connections between young European artists since 1997).

At the beginning of the 1990s, legislative changes enabled the emergence of new organisational forms in the non-government sector. In

15. It defined independence in relation and opposition to the established system of institutional (i.e. repertory) theatres. An overview of independent theatre is provided in the monograph *Kastracijski stroji: gledališče in umetnost devetdesetih/Castration machines: theatre and art in the nineties.*

16. In Slovenia, dance has had a continuous history since the 1930s, when modern dance started to be developed by Pia and Pino Mlakar (who were influenced by their teacher, Rudolf Laban) as well as Meta Vidmar (taught by Mary Wigman). The 1970s saw the founding of the Studio za svobodni ples (Free Dance Studio, 1973) and the Plesni teater Celje (Dance Theatre Celje, 1975); they are both based on the Middle European modern dance tradition (Ausdruckstanz). The American contemporary dance tradition, however, was brought to Slovenia by Ksenija Hribar (a co-founder of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre). Cf. the articles by Bojana Kunst and Rok Vevar.

17. "The Maska" journal is one of the oldest theatre magazines in Europe. It was founded in 1920. Edited by Rade Pregarc, the journal was issued for one season. It started to be issued regularly in 1985 (with the title "Maske" and Peter Božič and Tone Peršak as editors). In 1991, the original name was taken up by the new editorial board (headed by Maja Breznik and Irena Štaudohar).

18. Before that, experimental theatre practices only had occasional newspaper reviews or were overlooked altogether.

1993, artists began to found private non-profit institutes, which made it possible for them to apply to public tenders with their projects (the most successful at the international level are Maska, Projekt Atol, EN-KNAP, Muzeum, Bunker, Intima, Aksioma, Via Negativa). Notably, these institutes "did not arise from the continuity of 'independent' or 'alternative' institutions of the previous generation (ŠKUC, PTL/Dance Theatre Ljubljana, ŠOU/The Student Organization of the University of Ljubljana, GLEJ, etc.) and in which the new forms of production, reflection and aesthetics could not be or did not want to be recognized." (Peljhan 2007, 67) On the one hand, the new legislation enabled the existence and expansion of non-government sector production, but led to a paradoxical situation on the other: the artists had to become their own producers. For this reason, directors of new aesthetics simultaneously worked at their own institutes and repertory theatres. The generation of directors that became active in the mid 1990s (Sebastijan Horvat, Jernej Lorenci, Tomi Janežič, Diego De Brea, Matjaž Latin, Ivana Djilas, Ivica Buljan) no longer had issues with what types of institutional frameworks they created in.

The new aesthetics were transgressing into the mainstream; at the same time, however, the space within the infrastructural network of repertory theatres that was reserved for experiments was diminishing. In the 1990s, small stages turned into venues for chamber performances. The identity of the alternative at the Mladinsko theatre was becoming less expressive. The Glej Theatre no longer based its identity on the experiment (omitting the word 'experimental' from its name as well); it profiled itself as a mainstream theatre that aimed for international recognition.[19] A new contemporary art venue was that of Galerija Kapelica/Kapelica Gallery (founded in 1995 by the Student Organisation of the University of Ljubljana); in only a few years' time, it established itself internationally as one of the most radical venues for performance art and new media arts. Interdisciplinary practices also won a space for their activities at the central venues of alternative culture in Slovenia: in the scope of the Metelkova City – Autonomous Cultural Centre in Ljubljana (since 1993)[20] and the Kibla Multimedia Centre in Maribor (founded in 1996). Due to the dire need and persistent efforts of the non-government sector to establish a common centre for the performing arts, the Bunker association was ultimately granted management of the Stara elektrarna/Old Power Station venue in Ljubljana[21] in 2004. Slovenia is one of the rarest European countries where non-government organisations are able to make multiannual contracts for managing public institutions. Another successful ex-

19. This vision was successfully realized by its permanent authors: Matjaž Pograjc with the Betontanc group, the director and set designer Tomaž Štrucl, and Iztok Lovrić with the Grapefruit group.

20. Metelkova is located in the former barracks of the Yugoslav Army in Ljubljana. When it was abandoned by the soldiers at the independence of Slovenia, the facilities were to be torn down, but were taken over in 1993 by activists connected into the Metelkova Network (Mreža za Metelkovo).

21. The abandoned hall of the Municipal Power Station of Ljubljana (Mestna elektrarna ljubljanska) started being used as a venue for interdisciplinary artistic practices already in the 1990s. In 1991, it was discovered by Ema Kugler in her search to perform *Mankurt 1.*

ample is the Španski borci Cultural Centre in Ljubljana, managed by EN-KNAP since 2009.[22]

As stated by Eda Čufer (2006, 31), the interdisciplinary practices called for a new kind of thinking in all the segments of the theatre system: in terms of production, distribution and education. Between 1991 and 1999, the Association of the Cultural Organisations of Slovenia (Zveza kulturnih organizacij Slovenije – ZKOS) organized the GILŠ – Gledališka in lutkovna šola (Theatre and Puppet School); the teachers were mostly the protagonists of the alternative scene. Since 2001, Zavod Maska has been hosting both domestic and international experts in the scope of its educational programme, the Seminar of the Contemporary Performing Arts. New aesthetic practices also found support in the reformed study programmes of the University of Ljubljana, where they started to be implemented at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT) in 2009.

After 2000, the hybridization of artistic disciplines and media has been establishing a field of heterogenous performance practices, in which the principle of interdisciplinarity has become the norm and has already transgressed into the domain of transdisciplinarity. After the 1980s and 1990s, which were characterised by a declarative detachment from dramatic theatre, the research of the word was again at the forefront. It formed the core of the activities of the newly founded PreGlej group, which also invented a new genre, termed ready-made drama, and organised the first festival of playwriting in Slovenia, *PreGlej na glas!*[23]. After several years of open but scattered activities (due to the absence of a common artistic vision and directorship), the Glej Theatre re-established itself as an experimental space[24]. Since 2007, it has also been following a clear programme vision. This is reflected the early works of the youngest generation of theatre makers (Mare Bulc, Jaka Andrej Vojevec, Jure Novak, Simona Semenič, Luka Martin Škof, Marko Čeh, Nina Eva Lampič, Jaša Jenull, Vida Cerkvenik Bren, Ajda Valcl, Tijana Zinajić etc.) as well as in its programme, conceived of as work-in-progress artistic research with monthly public presentations (so-called Miniaturke/Miniatures). The contemporary open works in the sphere of 'independent theatre' are based on processuality and participatory practices (with references to the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s). They raise issues such as work methodologies as well as the conditions of creating, presenting and distributing art in neoliberal capitalism. Innovations also take place in the wide spectrum of postdramatic theatre. The adult part of the programme of the new theatrical venue, the Mini Teater (Mini

22. Active at the Španski borci Cultural Centre is also the international dance company EnKnapGroup, the first permanent ensemble for contemporary dance in Slovenia (founded by Iztok Kovač after 14 years of project-based work).

23. The research of the word, understood as a springboard towards new languages of the stage, has also strongly marked the aesthetics of some directors active at other theatres (Sebastijan Horvat, Jernej Lorenci and Diego de Brea).

24. Between 2003 and 2007, the Glej Theatre operated without an artistic director. In 2007, the artistic directorship was taken up by Jure Novak. The manifold activities of the Glej Theatre after 2002 are presented in the monograph *Glej, 40 let* (155–173).

Theatre, founded in Ljubljana in 1999), is based on the aesthetics of the post-dramatic.[25] The play with the real encourages the exploration of authenticity, reality and originality, contributing to the rise of documentary theatre, verbatim theatre and re-enactment. Reconstructions of the experimental performances typically overlooked in the history of Slovenian theatre[26], have become a trend and importantly contributed to the evaluation of the significance of avant-garde movements for the development of Slovenian theatre. Progressive guidelines – not only for Slovenian theatre – have been set in the field between art and science by Dragan Živadinov, who already strongly influenced the generation of the 1990s. In 1999, his team explored the possibilities of theatre in zero gravity (*Biomehanika Noordung/Biomechanics Noordung*) in Star City over Baikonur in Kazakhstan. In the new millennium, Živadinov deals with post-gravitational theatre abstracts and focuses on the culturalisation of space (in the scope of the 50-year telecosmist project *1995/2045 Noordung*, inspired by the work of the Slovenian scientist Hermann Potočnik Noordung (a cosmonautics pioneer and the inventor of the geostationary satellite).[27]

After decades of struggle, experimental theatre practices have indeed managed to obtain and expand their creative space, but non-government sector production has dissipated in terms of organization. In neoliberal capitalism, it remains at the margin of social focus just like cultural production in general. As found by Eda Čufer (2006, 33–34), the issue is not what will or won't be financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, but that cultural politics has not reformed its vertical system – the general ideological parametres and rules of the game that would determine the criteria of evaluation and enable the establishment of new cultural dynamics in the horizontal systems.

25. The second programme scope at the Mini Theatre is intended for children and youth.

26. The trend was started by the 2007 reconstruction of the first performance art piece in Slovenia, *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilcheks*. The reconstruction was directed by Janez Janša.

27. His book *Das Problem der Befahrung* des Weltraums is regarded as a fundamental work by the first generation space explorers. It was published in Berlin in late 1928 (bearing, however, the year of 1929). Cf. Toporišič 2010, 456–57.

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Translated by Urska Zajec

UKRAINE

"In contemporary Ukraine, independent theatre is often identified with experimental theatre, or rather misidentified, as private, independent theatre is far from being strictly experimental. The chief marker of independent theatre is its absence of reliance upon State budgetary support, which in itself is no guarantee of an artistically experimental trajectory. In fact, the situation is often quite another: this non-reliance compels theatre companies toward an even greater financial dependence, one built on audience whim. Theatres are led away from experimental work into the realm of creating a commercially viable performance "product". Reality shows itself for what it is: the presence of an experimental strain in the work of independent theatre companies is typically the exception, not the rule."

19th Season of Kyiv's Dax Theatre, Vladislav Troitskyi, artistic director

"Experimentation goes on simultaneously in state, academic, and private companies."

Les Kurbas Lviv Academic Theatre, Volodymyr Kuchynskyi, artistic director

"By 'experimental' we mean positioning yourself as workshop-theatre, laboratory, using varying exercise methods, training approaches, and occasionally meditative techniques, schools and trends, and a laboratory component in the effort to construct a performance."

Wikipedia

Discussing independent theatre as a category in Ukrainian cultural history is only possible in the broader context of democratic social transformation. Inasmuch as the story of the development of Ukrainian democracy lacks a clear linear structure, but rather reveals itself in a discrete, episodic manner, so the story of independent theatre is similarly a fragmentary one. Regrettably, interruptions in the accumulation of historical experience have not aided in the formation

of a public institution which encompasses the theatrical arts. Ukrainian theatre – both independent and State-subsidised – has not yet become aware of its political and social potential.

Independent Theatre Under Soviet Rule

Focusing on the story of 20th century Ukrainian theatre, the initial appearance of independent theatre may be noted in the first half of the century. In the Russian Empire there were only two Imperial (state-funded) Theatres, the balance were either privately held, commercial concerns, or "playing companies" made up of shareholders where actors/members paid an advance sum, which would later be returned from box-office receipts corresponding to the initial advance. It was also during this period and continuing into the early 1910s that the repertoires of professional touring companies – particularly Ukrainian companies and those of native amateur theatres – were strictly regulated by government censors. World War I, revolutionary movements, and the ascent of the Ukrainian People's Republic affected the state of affairs by creating the atmosphere which spawned the self-defined "playing company" societies formed by Les Kurbas, and the Kyiv Molodiy Theatre acting troupe. The result was the first independent, experimental theatre in Ukraine, where significant attention was given to flexibility and voice training, performances of global contemporary and classical theatre, (prior to 1910, Ukrainian theatres were allowed to stage only Ukrainian drama), as well as instruction in aesthetics and philosophy. (While producing the inaugural performance of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, the Molodyi Company, mindful of the times and sorely in need of revenues, inaugurated their efforts by performing popular works of that time written by Volodymyr Vynnychenko). The Molodiy would last exactly two seasons.

The establishment of Soviet power in Ukraine, and the regime of military communism (times of famine, crop requisition [prodrozvyorstka] and tax-in-kind [prodpodatka]) compelled Les Kurbas, leading KyiDramTe at the time, to look for support and protection from the Soviet Army, where he secured the patronage of the 45th Red Army Division under Iona Yakir.

The early and mid-1920s, the period of Ukrainianization, in spite of the increasing reliance of artists on the State and communist ideology, marked an especially productive era for avant-garde theatre – Les Kurbas, Mykola Kulish, Boris Hlaholin, Valeriy Inkizhynov, Mykhail Semenko, and students of the Berezil directorial laboratory. But this dynamic advance in the dramatic arts of the period would

end tragically with the elimination of an entire generation of artists. The efforts of this dramatic school, only just beginning to distinguish itself, would long be stricken from the pages of Ukrainian history. The cultural rebirth of the early-20th century would enter the historical nomenclature as the "Executed Renaissance". This was the spiritual, cultural, and literary generation of 1920s and early-30s Ukraine, producing works of literature, philosophy, painting, music, and theatre of rare distinction, which was, in the end, exterminated by Stalin's totalitarian regime.

The public denouncement of Les Kurbas by his colleagues at the society he had founded – the Berezil – and his arrest in 1934 and execution in 1937, would mark the beginning of a prolonged period of usurpation of Ukrainian theatre by soviet ideology. Other than amateur theatre or theatre groups operating deep underground, the idea of an independent theatre in Ukraine was a question well beyond consideration. The dramatic arts and all other spheres involved in forming cultural expression, endured strict ideological oversight in the soviet system: a system which well understood the meaningful influence that theatrical performance could exert on social consciousness.

The historical rehabilitation of the cultural accomplishments of the "Executed Renaissance" Generation came only with the Fall of the USSR. Prior to that watershed moment, with a multi-tiered system of censorship in operation, communist society precluded the mere possibility of the existence of a non-governmental association. Control was maintained over dramaturgy, over the theatres, excluding even the faintest possibility of artistic independence. Special permission was required for the publication or staging of any dramatic creation. Repertoires were rigidly controlled, with quotas assigned for the numbers of performances of contemporary domestic works, concerts, and world dramaturgy. "Arts Councils" worked in conjunction with theatres, monitoring productions before they premiered, organizing performances for Party functionaries without whose approval a play would never see the light of day. All theatre workers found themselves subjected to this oversight; those few who demonstrated signs of non-conformism were intimidated into silence with threats of exclusion from the Party and loss of employment. Decisions affecting the formation of new theatre companies were made by the Politburo of the USSR.

Still, liberalizing processes at work in soviet society began to manifest themselves in the dramatic arts. Illustrative of the situation is an episode from 1981 – the attempt to employ the Grotowski Method in a production of Pedro Calderon's "The Constant Prince" at Kyiv's

Molodyi theatre, with Mark Nestantiner directing, Maria Levytska designing, and Gregory Hladiy playing a role. News of the use of Grotowski Method was slowly making its way to foreign – in particular, Polish – critical literature, but the text and directorial approaches were constantly subjected to interference from municipal Communist Party functionaries who were busy cutting passages, and altering anything which referenced Christian tradition to reflect greater "neutrality", for example, replacing the word "God" with "the People".

During the late 1980s early 90s – the perestroika period under the last General Secretary of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev – the alternative theatre movement experienced a significant revival due to a number of factors: a general liberalisation of soviet society, a slackening of ideological rigidity, the elimination of censorship, and the introduction of economic reforms, i.e., private financing and the general concept of self-supporting, commercial theatre.

The impetus behind creation of independent theatres was provided by a decision handed down by the USSR Ministry of Culture on August 6, 1986 regarding "A Comprehensive Approach for the Improvement of Theatre Management and Effectiveness". A further resolution from the Ministry dated November 22, 1988 dealt with the "Transfer of National theatres to New Modes of Fiscal Management". Implementation of this resolution in theatres came on January 1, 1989. Considering the overall economic and societal freefall the country was experiencing, the "half-measure" character of these provisions rendered them ineffective.[1]

In this barren, yet hopeful period there was little mention of commercial profit; independent theatre of the era was the embodiment of freedom. Yet the manner in which theatres of the time understood "freedom" as a discrete category was reduced to an exercise in aesthetic experimentation and a means of social escapism. The manifestation of this phenomenon was seen in particular in the activities of Oleh Liptsyn's Theatre Club, and the theatre of Larysa Paris and Yurko Yatsenok, and others:

> "The model of theatre they put forward was characteristic of that era of collapse in every way, from the routine to the conceptual, it was the collapse of one-sided notions of the surrounding reality, social reality in particular. It was the era of overthrow of authority and the shattering of stereotypes, and the era that swept the foundations of stability from under us: the past was unknown, the future problematic, the present worthless."[2]

1. H. Lypkivska, *Ukraine's Molodyi theatre in the late-80s and early-90s: a postmodern ideologeme of consciousness and its impact on stage effects, in: Notes of the Shevchenko Scholarly Society*, Vol. CCXXXVII: Works of the theatre History Commission, Lviv, 1999. pp. 345–363.

2. H. Lypkivska, *Ukrainian Drama theatre of the New Era (late 20th - early 21st centuries): Supplementary Analysis of the monographs, Essays on the History of 20th century Ukrainian Dramatic Arts, and 20thcentury Ukrainian Dramatic Arts: a Performance Anthology*, Kyiv: Alpha-PiK Publishers, 2011, p.47.

The distinction between experimental and independent theatre came about only after the introduction of the market economy in post-soviet Ukraine. In its early days – the mid 1980s – when concrete creative alternatives to the soviet institutional theatre system first began to appear, independent and experimental theatre functioned as a unified whole.

The History of Independent Theatre in the New Era

Several periods are distinguishable in the modern era of Ukrainian independent theatre. The first wave of independent theatres to appear on the territory of Ukraine came in 1987–1988. In 1987, the first five non-state "contracted company" theatres opened including Kyiv's *theatre on Podil*, *Hortex theatre*, and the pantomime theatre. By 1990, independent theatres numbered nearly 60 in the cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Sevastopol, Mykolaiv, Uzhhorod, Simferopol, and Khmelnytskyi. In Kyiv alone in that period, several dozen independent theatres were operational, including the *Aktor*, the *Suzirya*, the *Koleso*, the *Benefis*, the *Dzerkalo*, the *Theatre on Podil*, the *Theatre Club*, et al.

Following the 1991 founding of the independent Ukrainian state, 1992–1994 saw another wave of independent theatres throughout the country: the *Verim!* in Dnipropetrovsk, the *VIE* in Zaporizhia, the *Dakh centre for Contemporary Arts* in Kyiv, the *Arabesky* in Kharkiv, and Donetsk's *Zhuky*. During the 90s and into the early-2000s, a number of independent theatres were afforded State status (administrated on the municipal level), establishing a sector of the country's newly formed workshop-theatres. These include Kyiv's *Theatre on Podil*, *Suziya, Puppet theatre*, and *Koleso*; Lviv's *Les Kurbas theatre* and *Voskresinnya*; Vladimir Petrenko's *Verim! theatre,* and Mykhailo Melnyk's one-man *Krik theatre* in Dnipropetrovsk; V. Popov's *VIE theatre-Laboratory* in Zaporizhia; O. Belskyi's *Akademia Rukhu* in Kryvyi Rih; and V. Smotrytel's one-man *Kut theatre* in Khmelnytskyi and more.

Many theatres not listed here were compelled to close their doors, a fate which befell, among others, Liptsyn's *theatre Club*, Bilchenko's *Experimental Studio theatre* (later, *NAUKMA Experimental Studio*), S. Proskurni's *Budmo! Studio theatre*, and the *Balaban Ukrainian Musical-Drama theatre Classical Workshop*.

Exceptions to this are seen in two theatres that were able to survive by securing backing apart from the State. Rightly considered Ukraine's preeminent independent theatre associations, they are Kyiv's *Dakh*

centre for the Contemporary Arts and Kharkiv's *Arabesky*. In the first instance, Vladislav Troitskyi, served as both the *Dakh*'s founder and patron. In the second case, the *Arabesky*'s skilled application of international grant programs have ensured its continued support.
As the 1990s transitioned into the 2000s, a number of theatrical associations began to form: *TantsLaboratorium* (Larysa Venedyktova), *Vilna Tsena* (Dmytro Bohomazov), *Novyi Dramatychnyi Teatr na Pechersku* (Oleksandr Kryzhanovskyi), *Drabyna Art Workshop* (Lviv), *Kyiv Modern Ballet theatre* (Radu Poklitaru), *Kotelok theatre* (Volodymyr Horyslavets), *the Meyerhold centre* (Andriy May and Mykola Homaniuk), *the Karman Art centre* (Simferopol), *Teatr na Chayniy* (Odessa), *Larysa Paris theatre* (Kyiv), *Vidkrytyi Pohliad* (Ksenia Romashenko and Stas Zhyrkov), and others.
Notable festivals run by Ukrainian independent theatres and theatrical organizations are the *Kurbalesia* in Kharkiv, *GOGOLFEST* in Kyiv, *Moloko* in Odessa, the *Tyzhden Aktualnoyi Pyesy* in Kyiv, *Drama.UA* in Lviv, and *Art-Alternatyva* in Donetsk. Attracting the largest audiences for drama, these events stand out in the Ukrainian festival and independent theatre movement. Not a single state-sponsored festival currently meets international performance standards.

DAKH Centre for the Contemporary Arts

Kyiv's *DAKH Centre for the Contemporary Arts* was opened November 12, 1994 by Vladislav Troitskyi. Troitskyi represents the rare combination of successful businessman and theatre producer/director. Though the main objective of the Centre's work was theatre, the founder has referred to his creation as "an arts hotel". For 19 years *DAKH* has shaped its own theatrical aesthetic and creative ethic. A dominant creative component of *DAKH* is the inspiration it draws from the deep roots of the native Ukrainian musical tradition. In recent years, the theatre has actively toured throughout eastern and western Europe, serving as the representative of this type of Ukrainian theatre in the wider theatrical world.
In its creative approach *DAKH* has laid particular stress on training actors as individuals, capable of informed choices in character development, unfettered and endowed with an open mind. Experimental-didactic performance has always been its pursuit. Vladislav Troitsky's neo-baroque aesthetic was formed from experience and familiarity with the realist theatre of Boris Yukhananov, the intellectual buffoonery of Valeriy Bilchenko, and the nul-set ritualism of Klim. Offshoots of the *DAKH* centre's work include the creation of the musical project,

ethno-chaos group *DakhaBrakha* and the freak cabaret ensemble *Dakh Daughters*, and the aforementioned *GOGOLFEST*.
In August 2013 Vladislav Troitskyi announced that *DAKH* would no longer function as a repertory theatre, and would instead reorient its focus on the production of stand-alone projects. Continuing in its established areas of activity had become no longer financially tenable.

Theatre-Workshop Arabesky

The theatre-workshop *Arabesky* was founded in 1993 by students of the theatre department of the Kharkiv Arts Institute. In the absence of any financial support, the Kharkiv Literature Museum found space for the young collective. These rooms have been and remain a place of creative coexistence of many Kharkiv-based Ukrainian artists – artists, musicians, poets, and actors. In its early years the group concentrated on methodological (laboratory) exercises, exhibiting the results of its experiments before a larger audience only occasionally. In 1997 the concept of the theatre changed. In addition to regular vocal, dance, acting and speech training, and scene rehersals, the group engaged itself in an effort to create a repertory theatre which would tour actively. To the greater community, the theatre is known primarily for its projects conjoining theatre and contemporary music, theatre and sociology, and theatre and contemporary art.

Among the more well-known *Arabesky* projects:
- The Social-Arts Project "PARAlelne Misto" (social work with people with limited mobility, photography exhibit, installation of access ramps in the Kharkiv Municipal Gallery) 2008, Kharkiv
- The organization of a series of MARA (Netherlands) actors workshop training sessions (co-sponsored with the *Les Kurbas centre for the Theatrical Arts*), 2007
- "Theatrical Therapy as a Means of Social Rehabilitation" (Stage Productions by professional directors with prisoners from three incarceration facilities, in Kharkiv & Lviv). The shooting of a short format documentary, 2005.
- Organization of an touring exhibition "Orange Alternative" (photography exhibit, lectures, film screenings, performance art) in five Ukrainian cities – Kharkiv, Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Lviv, 2005.
- "Critical Days" (joint Ukraine-Poland project: staging a performance in Kharkiv, visual art projects in Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Yerevan,

release of an additional soundtrack CD for the project, a discussion series, art management seminars and lectures) 2003–2004.
— "Z\Z: Zony Zrady. The Arts: Public Projects" (Performance of the "A Little Play about Betrayal" in five Kharkiv prisons, sociological research, roundtable and discussion series, and exhibition in Kharkiv, Kyiv, & Lviv, a documentary film, and the publication of an essay collection, 2003.
— Innovative project – the making of a video textbook supplement "Human-trafficking Prevention" (in cooperation with the *International Human Rights centre La Strada-Ukraina*, 2002

KROT: Kyiv Revolutionary Oral*** theatre

KROT independent theatre appeared as an outgrowth of the kitschy satirical writing of author and artist Les Podervyanskyi whose creations have achieved cult classic status over his last two decades of work. Yet, until 2011 when Andriy Kritenko (Stuttgart, Germany) first directed them, his work had never been performed. Prior to this his texts existed only in audio recordings, though many memorable lines have worked their way into the local vernacular. It is the author's frequent use of "non-standard" language, i.e., profanity, bluntly offensive scenes, and socially provocative themes which have led established theatres to ignore his texts. Podervyanky's work is thus readily associated with low-brow, obscene native humor, and not the academic theatre. And yet allusions to Soviet history, Shakespearean motifs, and ancient mythology in his work land the author squarely in postmodern territory, and thus *KROT* tends to attract an educated "artsy" audience to its performances. The theatre operates on a commercial basis and conducts theatrical floor-shows in Ukrainian cities across the country.

Kherson – The Meyerhold Centre

The Centre was established on August 15, 2008 by a group of like-minded individuals as an experimental stage for the production of works spanning the disciplines of theatre and sociology. Leading the efforts to establish the Centre were director Andriy May and sociologist Mykola Homaniuk.
The primary thrust of the centre's activities were documentary and verbatim theatre. The centre concentrates on researching contemporary society, uncovering new expressive forms, the development of site-specific theatre, and the creation of audience feedback channels.

The founders of the centre stress that their prime objective is to close the gap between the life of the theatre and everyday life.
The centre holds the "Liuty/Fevral" (*Eng.,* February) theatre Festival at its facility every winter. The festival was originally conceived as a directorial debut festival, but has now been broadened to include actor and writer debuts.

Odessa – Teatr na Chainiy

In 2010, graduates of the Odessa Theatrical Lyceum established the theatrical laboratory *Teatr na Chainiy* on the grounds of a closed tea factory, creating a sanctuary for independent directors and theatrical initiatives in Odessa. The theatre's primary work involves workshops, rehearsal training, and committed professional development.

Political and Social Consciousness

Only recently has independent theatre begun to acknowledge and apply its potential as an instrument of moral influence on the political and social process. Independent theatre is currently undergoing a transformation from that of an escapist exercise to one of engaged socially conscious expression. The encounter with new drama, documental drama, and the verbatim method has played no small role in the reconsideration of the role of theatre in the cultural process. An example of this is "Diploma" – a documentary performance project on the educational system and corruption – on which Lviv dramatist Sashko Brama has been working for over a year. Over 400 people have been enlisted in the project to date, and its first "Act" is making its way through internet social networks, were it has sparked lively discussion of the video material being readied for the premier.
Overall, however, independent theatre has seen better days: aesthetically distinctive companies which matured in the post-soviet environment have already begun to exhaust their artistic programs, and due to the absence of State financial support, State policies regarding the encouragement of philanthropy and sponsorship activities, and an insufficient number of non-State foundations which support dramaturgy, most of these theatres have been shuttered. The situation was magnified this summer with the closing of two of the country's most engaging independent theatres: the *DAKH centre for the Contemporary Arts* which had represented Ukraine in the international cultural arena, and Kyiv's precocious *Vidkrytyi Pohlad theatre.*

As independent theatre eschews the marketplace which insists on adherence to the whims of public taste, it will be driven to the margins, kept alive by solitary "true believers" reconciled to enduring difficult material conditions, including poverty, for the sake of preserving the dignity of their profession.
The State provides no support for independent theatre, and Ukrainian philanthropy has not yet – again, with rare exceptions – sufficiently developed.

Kyiv – GOGOLFEST Festival of the Contemporary Arts

A contemporary, authentic symbol of independent theatre and art in Ukraine is the *GOGOLFEST* Festival, founded in 2007 on the private initiative of the leader and stage director of the *DAKH centre for the Contemporary Arts*, Vladislav Troitskyi. His co-founder, and chair of *GOGOLFEST*'s development council, Evheniy Utkin, developed the "Kvazar Mikro" IT Company.
During its existence the festival has developed into an international brand. Yet despite its remarkable popularity among Ukraine's artistic younger generations and its public and media resonance, the festival receives no State support. It is worth noting that *GOGOLFEST* is currently the sole festival conducted in Ukraine which fully reflects the international theatrical context.
For five years running the festival has been financed with support of a small group of socially-conscious businessmen. But an uncertain small and middle-sized business climate in the country and economic policies have put a damper on the philanthropic efforts of willing patrons. What this meant for *GOGOLFEST* was that for the first time in 2013 the festival charged for admission.
GOGOLFEST provides a relevant example of crowd-sourcing put into practice: nearly all artists/participants who appear in the program do so without a fee. The concept of *GOGLFEST* as a cultural forum has gradually been shifting into that of the implementation of an alternative cultural reality, one that is self-propagating, unencumbered of state-imposed preconditions. Step-by-step the festival reshapes itself from an artistic event into the manifestation of an increasingly aware Ukrainian social consciousness.
The growth of the independent arts at *GOGOLFEST-2013* has given legs to thoughts of organizing a substantial art cluster on the premises of an electro-mechanical plant in Vydubychi – a dilapidated, former industrial zone in Kyiv. It is worth noting that there are no other premises of this type in Ukraine. The factory owner, Anatoliy

Yurkevych, has granted the free use of the territory and has begun to invest substantially into infrastructure development of this depressed area.

Lviv – Drama.UA Contemporary Dramaturgy Festival

An offshoot of the *Drabyna* independent arts workshop, the *Drama.UA Contemporary Dramaturgy Festival* first appeared in Lviv in 2010. The festival's aims: to create the environment for the development and propagation of contemporary Ukrainian drama; to familiarize audiences with the work of emerging Ukrainian and European authors; to connect playwrights with theatres and foster new collaborative projects.
During the festival a competition in Ukrainian language playwriting is conducted – *Drama.UA* – which is involved in identifying emerging authors and promoting of-the-moment Ukrainian drama for performance and publication. The works of festival participants and competition winners are published in drama periodicals, performed during readings, and some have made it to the stage. A collection of plays by festival winners was released in September 2013.

Kharkiv – Kurbalesia. Festival of Independent theatre

The festival's emergence and existence – as is true of practically all Kharkiv independent theatre groups – is tied to the L. Serdiuk Actors' House. Kharkiv has long been one Ukraine's prominent theatre cities. Currently the city has nearly 30 non-governmental professional theatre groups, most of which are working out of the Serdiuk Actors' House. The most prominent of these are *Teatr 19, Kotelok, Laboratoria Teatrra*, the *PS theatre*, and the theatrical organization *Prekrasni Kvity*. The *Kurbalesia Festival* aims to positively influence Ukrainian theatre through exchanges between theatre companies, and the systematization and stimulation of the creative development of emerging talent. The festival offers the chance to familiarize oneself with the best examples of world and domestic dramaturgy and stagecraft, and to bring these to the attention of a broad range of audiences as well as the theatrical community.
The festival is structured to run as a laboratory with three parallel programs: demonstration, competition, and laboratory. These programs complement one another organically, providing an effective format for the festival to meet its objectives.

Translated by Joel Rakoš

Archives

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Irina Solomatina — Belarus

330 Archives of No Policy
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340 Theatre/Performance Archives
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BELARUS

This article is an attempt to outline what has been written in Belarus about theatre and presented as "significant work on organising archival documents that served as a basis for publishing research papers". In other words, this is a reflection on the situation of the established and institutionalised system of theatre-related studies, inscribed into the system of national standards, since Art Studies (Theatre Studies) was included in the list of degree courses approved by the Belarusian State Academy of Arts (BSAA). This attempt to critically re-evaluate what has been written about Belarusian theatre will hopefully help find new approaches and join discussions held in the wider Humanities community.

Thus, let us take a close view of who the recognised experts in theatre studies (art studies) in Belarus are, or – alternatively – the 'norm-givers' of theatre culture; how rules of acknowledgement and assessment of the author/text/production are set up, how reputations are established and maintained, which interpretation techniques are applied and whose biographies are published and studied.

Who's who?

It is commonly believed that the systematic study of history, theory and conditions of theatrical art in Belarus started as early as 1957, following the establishment of the Theatre and Film Section (since 1995, the Dramatic Art Department) at the K. Krapiva Institute of Study of Arts, Ethnography and Folklore of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (hereinafter the NAS of Belarus). The basic activity of the Department is deep research into Belarusian theatre art and history of the national theatrical culture.

Virtually all the Department staff have held more than one office at different government institutions. Prof. Ryčard Smolski (b. 1946), Doctor of Art Criticism, Head of the Dramatic Art Department, was at the same time Rector of BSAA (from 1997 to 2010). Since 2010 he is the Chief Research Associate at BSAA's Research Department. Under his supervision, the *Programme of Priority Areas in Developing Theatre in the Republic of Belarus for 2001–2010* was developed, which

was approved of by the Board of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus. Ryčard Smolski is Chair of Dissertation Committee at BSAA and member of Dissertation Committee at the Centre for the Belarusian Culture, Language and Literature Researches of the National Academy of Sciences.

Prof. Anatol Sabaleŭski (1932–2012), Doctor of Art Criticism and a Research Associate at the Department, was Rector of the Belarusian State Theatre and Art Institute in the years 1984–1989. It was on his initiative that the *Teatralnaja Belarus* (since the 6th issue, *Teatralnaja Tvorčasć*) journal was launched in Minsk. He was its editor-in-chief from 1992 to 1998. The bi-monthly journal was published in Belarusian until 1998.

S. O. Pietrovič (1931–1981), Candidate of Art Criticism, who worked as a research scholar at the Section in the periods of 1960–73 and 1977–81, was Vice-Minister of Culture of Belarus in 1973–75.

All the mentioned scholars, as a rule, held chairs at BSAA and the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts (hereinafter BSUCA).

At present, the list of staff members of the Department includes Prof. Ryčard Smolski, Tamara Harobčanka (b. 1942), Ałła Savickaja (b. 1951), Vieronika Jarmalinskaja (b. 1958), Ludmiła Klimovič (b. 1971), all Candidates of Art Criticism, as well as E. Ustinova and V. Hrybajło, Junior Research Assistants.

In the years 1983–1987, *Historyja belaruskaha teatra* [*The History of Belarusian Theatre*] (in three volumes, four books) was published. Written by the staff of the Theatre Department, its chief editor was Prof. Uładzimir Niafiod (1916–1999), Doctor of Art Criticism, Associate of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. For all the significance of this academic edition, which was quite innovative for its time, it now appears too ideologically biased, so, as Prof. Smolski claims, it is necessary to develop new textbooks and study guides for art students, based on up-to-date research approaches and new methodologies. In such a way, a call for another history of theatre is voiced (even if somewhat understatedly). One might assume that what is meant here is that in regard to the history of Belarusian theatre, it is necessary to use a different approach based on different cultural and cognitive values. The ideological views typical of the Soviet period with its rigid system of artistic norms are half gone, but *The History of Belarusian Theatre* is still used as a basic college textbook.

It is worth mentioning that the priority areas of Belarusian theatre studies have always been linked to the "ideas and tasks of the state cultural policy in the context of our native history." President Aleksandr Lukashenka formulated the state cultural policy as follows:

"There is no country without the development of a moral culture. Culture forms the spirit of the nation! That is the reason why moral upbringing, preservation and creation of the cultural ideological bases of the country are the main targets." (2010)

On December 10, 2012, Barys Sviatłou, Rector of BSUCA, was appointed Minister of Culture of Belarus. Now he implements the cultural policy as confirmed and approved of by the head of state. The team working on the task of providing citizens with 'moral culture' includes: Prof. Sciapan Łaušuk (b. 1944), Doctor of Philology, Associate of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Deputy Director for Science and Head of Contemporary Belarusian Literature Department in the years 1998–2007, and since 2007, Chief Research Associate at the Yanka Kupala Institute of Literature of the NAS of Belarus; Prof. Vadzim Salejeŭ (b. 1939), Doctor of Philosophy, Chief Research Associate at the Education Problems Laboratory of the National Education Institute affiliated with the Ministry of Education and Chief Research Associate at BSAA's Research Department, known for his frequent and elaborate comments on the 'aura of spirituality'; Prof. Taciana Katovič, Doctor of Art Criticism (who teaches at the P. M. Masherov Vitebsk State University); as well as Halina Alisiejčyk (b. 1955) and Natalla Valancevič (b. 1978), both Candidates of Art Criticism and Associate Professors at BSAA.

Rascisłaŭ Buzuk, Candidate of Art Criticism, Associate Professor and Head of Department of Theatre Art at BSUCA, maintains close cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. In the years 2008–10, he managed the collective research project "Theatre art of Belarus: historical, theoretical and pedagogical aspect". At present, he is academic supervisor of the Action K–03 under the 2011–2015 Culture of Belarus state programme, providing for the development of "foundations for the image positioning of the culture of Belarus by means of multimedia technologies." Rascisłaŭ Buzuk is member of the Art Criticism Research Board at BSUCA and member of the Music, Theatre and Choreographic Art Section of the Scientific and Methodological Board on General Education, Preschool and Special Education Institutions under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus.

...and what they write about

The 1960s – a watershed period in the development of Soviet society's ideology – witnessed the publication of a number of monographs on Belarusian theatre: *Biełaruski narodny teatr batlejka* [*Be-*

larusian folk theatre Batlejka] by G. Baryšau and A. Sannikau (1962), *Narodnyja teatry Biełarusi* [*Folk theatres of Belarus*] by S. Pietrovič (1966), *Biełaruski teatr imia Jakuba Kołasa* [*Belarusian Yakub Kolas theatre*] by U. Niafiod (1976), *Russkij dramatičeskij teatr v Belorussii XIX v.* [*Russian drama theatre in the nineteenth-century Belarus*] by J. Paškin (1980), *Dziciačy teatr BSSR (1931–1941)* [*Children's theatre of the BSSR (1931–1941)*] by S. Pietrovič (1983), *Narodny teatr* [*Folk theatre*] (1983, ed. M. Kaładzinski), and *Žyvaja krynica: Teatralnaja samadziejnasć na sučasnym etapie* [*A living source: Amateur theatre at the present stage*] by J. Sochar (1983). Also, *Teatr i žyzń: Nekotoryje problemy teatralnogo processa v Belorussii 70–80-kh godov* [*Theatre and life: Selected problems of the theatre process in Belarus in the 1970–80s*] authored by U. Niafiod, R. Smolski, T. Harobčanka, K. Kuzniacova, V. Kozel (Jarmalinskaja), V. Navumienka and others was published in 1989.

In 1970–80s, a set of monographs dedicated to Belarusian playwrights and Belarusian drama were published including *Jakub Kołas i biełaruski teatr* [*Yakub Kolas and Belarusian theatre*] by S. Pietrovič (1975), *Kupałauskija vobrazy na biełaruskaj scenie* [*Kupala's characters on the Belarusian stage*] by T. Harobčanka (1976), *Na pulsie życcia: Andrej Makajonak i biełaruski teatr* [*On the pulse of life: Andrej Makajonak and Belarusian theatre*] by J. Sochar (1979), *Kandrat Krapiva i biełaruskaja dramaturhija* [*Kandrat Krapiva and Belarusian dramaturgy*] by S. Łaušuk (1986, 2nd ed. 2002), and *Kandrat Krapiva: narys życcia i tvorčasci* [*Kandrat Krapiva: An outline of life and work*] by A. Sabaleŭski (1989). Besides, *Chrestamatyja pa historyi biełaruskaha teatra i dramaturhii* [*A Reader in the History of Belarusian theatre and dramaturgy*] in two volumes (1975) ed. by A. Sabaleŭski, as well as *Sučasnaja biełaruskaja dramaturhija* [*Contemporary Belarusian dramaturgy*] (1977), *Stanaulennie biełaruskaj savieckaj dramaturhii* [*The formation of the Belarusian Soviet dramaturgy*] (1984), and *Na dranatyčnych skryžavanniach* [*On the crossroads of drama*] (1989) by S. Łaušuk were published.

The books which appeared in the 1990s included, among others, *Teatralny eksperymient: Prablemy, pošuki, rašenni* [*Theatrical experiment: Problems, searching, and solutions*] by V. Navumienka (1990), *Teatr i hliadač* [*The theatre and the viewer*] by R. Smolski, V. Navumienka and others (1993), *U teatr idu jak u chram: staronki teatralnaj Biełarusi* [*I go to the theatre as to the temple: the pages of the theatrical Belarus*] by I. E. Lisneŭski (1997), and *Na miažy stahoddziau: Sučasny biełaruski dramatyčny teatr* [*At the turn of the century: Contemporary Belarusian drama theatre*] by T. Harobčanka (2002). All these studies

record the changes and problems faced by Belarusian theatres during the transition period, taking into consideration only stationary repertory theatres (patterned after the state-run theatres of the Soviet time).

It is curious that the changes in life of the society are defined by the mentioned authors through binary oppositions where high culture is opposed to mass culture, spiritual culture to material culture, and classic culture to folk culture. In her book *Na miaży stahoddziau: Sučasny biełaruski dramatyčny teatr*, Tamara Harobčanka expresses deep concern with the transformations taking place in society and appeals to preserve the creative role of theatre as a counter to the mass anti-culture implanted in the life Belarusian society today through video, film and TV products. In the author's opinion, Belarusian theatre workers should preserve their intrinsic 'spirituality' and 'national originality.' Harobčanka fails, however, to clarify what she means by the special Belarusian spirituality.

So far, no monograph has appeared focusing on the activities of theatre companies practicing other forms of theatre. Only one extensive monograph, *Studijnyje tieatry Biełarusi. 1980–1990* [*Studio theatres of Belarus. 1980–1990*] by Halina Hałkoŭskaja, Candidate of Art Criticism and Associate Professor at the Department of Directing of BSAA, was published in 2005. At the same time, since the 1990s there have been enough examples of other types of theatre in Belarus. These include, to name but a few, the legendary Alternative Theatre (under the artistic direction of Vytautas Grigaliunas) that existed in the 1990s, the theatrical studio of Ryd Talipaŭ (who passed away in 2011); the theatrical studio Abzac (headed by Uładzimer Savicki); the theatrical studio of historical drama and comedy of Uładzimer Matrosaŭ; the theatrical studio Dzie-Ja? of Mikałaj Truchan (following its leader's death, it is no more a directors' theatre and was reorganized into the repertory New Drama Theatre); the experimental workshop Act of Vital Barkoŭski (some years ago, the director moved from Belarus and currently lives and works in Russia); the InZhest Physical Theatre which was founded in 1980 and still operates today (director Vyacheslav Inozemtsev); and the Korniag Theatre headed by Evgenij Korniag (set up in the 2000s). There is also the world famous Belarus Free Theatre, headed by *Nicolai* Khalezin and *Natalia Kaliada* (the project has been a success since 2005). In her 2010 book *Struggle over identity. The Official and the Alternative "Belarusianness"* published by the Central European University Press in Budapest, Nelly Bekus focused exclusively on the Belarus Free Theatre in the summarizing chapter "The 'Free Theater' or the Alternative Belarusian-

ness on Stage." All this points to Belarusian scholars' indifference to alternative models of theatre, as there have been neither synthetic studies nor any points of view expressed concerning these models and the problems of implementing projects of this type.
In the 1990s, post-conference proceedings started to go out of print, including *Biełaruski teatr u prastory susvietnaj kultury* [*Belarusian theatre in the space of the world culture*] (1996), *Biełaruskaje akciorskaje mastactva* [*Belarusian art of acting*] (1997), *Sučasnaja biełaruskaja režysura* [*Contemporary Belarusian directing*] (1998), *Biełaruskaje sučasnaje mastactvaznaustva i krytyka* [*Contemporary Belarusian art studies and criticism*] (1998), *Na šlachu da stałasci: Stan i pierspiektyvy razviccia biełaruskaj mastackaj krytyki* [*On the way to maturity: the condition of Belarusian art criticism and prospects for its development*] (2001).
In 2002–2003, the two-book encyclopaedic dictionary *Tieatralnaja Biełaruś* [*Theatrical Belarus*] was published under the general editorship of Prof. A. V. Sabaleŭski. The edition is announced as "the first study and reference book in the field of drama, music, and puppet theatre in the history of national culture." The encyclopaedia features more than two thousand entries, overviews concerning major theatres contain lists of performances staged.
In 2012, the book *Teatralnaje mastactva* [*Theatre art*] was published as volume 13 of the multi-volume series titled *Biełarusy* [*Belarusians*]. The volume's entries are authored by R. Smolski, A. Savickaja, A. Sabaleŭski, S. Łaušuk, B. Jarmalinskaja, T. Harobčanka, V. Ivanoŭski, U. Niafiod, N. Juvčanka. The aim of the book, as revealed by its Academic Secretary Valeryj Žuk, is to give the most comprehensive idea of "the system of Belarusians' societal traditions," of their life activities and of the culture of the Belarusian nation.

Inexcusable anachronism

Today, Belarusian theatre studies are under pressure, with state bureaucracy in charge of education, culture and propaganda. As it was in the Soviet era, ideological activities are exerted to promote the officially sanctioned version of history, and not only history of theatre. But – unlike the Soviet times, when the category of "the national" functioned in a quasi- way – in the post-Soviet period, national feelings have become more significant for expressing the ideal constituents of national spirit and serve as an evidence of social unity or, in other words, of the integrity of the Belarusian nation's collectivity. It is curious that different variants of the history of theatre co-exist in Belarus: while one of them is focused on expressing the national

culture, the spirit of the nation and its history of heroic achievements, the other is a Soviet-type view of history putting emphasis on the correlation of "the typical and the ideal" and the portrayal of the decay of former social class ideals.

Suffice it to recall *The History of Belarusian Theatre* in three volumes and four books or pay attention to what is onstage in Belarusian theatres today. For example, in 2009, the Belarusian State Academy Musical Theatre presented the play *Babii bunt* [*Women's Riot*] (based on Mikhail Sholokhov's *Tales from the Don*) which was first produced there in 1976 and held the stage until the late 1980s. The Minsk-based theatres still feature performances premièred as far back as the Soviet era: Yanka Kupala's comedy *Paulinka* has not left the stage since 1943, the ballet *Carmen-Suite* since 1974 (Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre), or the ballet *Spartacus* since 1980 (National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre).

Another similarity to the Soviet period is that managerial positions, as it was earlier, are held by the older generation. In 2009, the then Minister of Culture Pavał Łatuška emphasized "the pressing problem of lack of young theatre directors in the country." The same year, senior managers were replaced at three Belarus' major theatres: the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre (Minsk), the Maxim Gorky National Academic Drama Theatre (Minsk) and the Yakub Kolas National Academic Drama Theatre (Vicebsk).

Quite peculiar in this respect is the fact of appointing Mikałaj Pinihin as Senior Artistic Director of the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre. Valery Rayevski, People's Artist of Belarus, was dismissed after holding the position for about three dozen years as a result of the conflict between the theatre's managers and its staff. An actress of the Kupala theatre addressed an open letter to President Lukashenka concerning the artistic crisis in the theatre. It was then, as the Belarusian Telegraph Agency notes, "logical to appoint a new senior artistic director." The former Senior Artistic Director Valeryj Rayeŭski continued to work at the Kupala theatre as director until his death in 2011.

Taking all this into consideration, one can conclude that the total state control over education, culture and research does not allow for systematic development and up-to-date research projects in the field of theatre criticism (or art criticism in general). The activities of the staff of research institutions demonstrate their willingness to follow all the guidelines and to satisfy demands for a particular positioning of Belarus' culture. Moreover, is the stunning fact that scholars and academic teachers consider it quite normal to publish

monographs and papers that are compilations of what their older colleagues, or even themselves, have already compiled. There are virtually no attempts to develop a new type of professional competence based, for example, on an interdisciplinary approach to study of visual culture. The conceptualisation of the dynamics of the post-Soviet nation-building project appears to be completely absent from the academic discourse.

This tactic of keeping aloof from what is topical or contemporary is common. The lack of any debate inspired by the sharing of ideas is a compelling evidence of the absence of demand for the development of different theoretical frameworks or, otherwise, alternative concepts of 'particular' histories. Their absence, however, makes it impossible to develop an internally consistent vision of history in all its multidimensionality. The history of Belarusian theatre is national heritage: there can be only one single and commonly shared history. Hence the negative attitude of scholars and managerial staff of state-run theatres to the present, their lack of comprehension of reality and distancing from it in practice.

The history and theory of theatre and art as taught in the higher education institutions in Belarus, appears to be 'inexcusably anachronistic' (as was aptly noted by Prof. Almira Ousmanova, Head of Department of Media at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, Lithuania). Representatives of the academy in Belarus, who completely lack a critical approach to conventional art criticism, are not able and willing to resist its idiom and its ideological constraints. They go on speculating about the sublime and the beautiful in art. Notwithstanding the removal of rigid ideological bans of the Soviet period, there has not been any 'perestroika' in the Belarusian art education, which remains conventional. The curriculum of the Academy of Arts has retained its old 'general' logic, structure and content. It offers no courses in contemporary philosophy and present-day theories in the Humanities – as a result, the outdated criteria of understanding and defining art are still applied.

New formations, such as the Centre for Belarusian Drama (CBD) set up in 2007 on the premises of the National Theatre of Belarusian Drama in Minsk (RTBD Theatre) to develop and promote contemporary Belarusian playwriting, fail to influence the overall cultural policy of the country. The centre collects drama texts and organizes seminars, discussions and workshops. A repository of plays by contemporary Belarusian authors was launched, of which a part is available for open access (at http://cbdrr.org/). This is not to say, however, that the possibilities provided by the Centre – including public stage

readings and experimental productions – offer young playwrights more chances to have their plays produced at Belarusian state-run theatres. It is common knowledge that the condition of Belarusian national and local theatres, which are dependent on state demands and repertory plans, hardly encourages creative experiments, which involve risk (including a commercial one).

Such a tragic underdevelopment of the local context resisting all the attempts at articulating a new agenda leads to the fact that theatre projects and productions, which have a potential for the future not only turn out to be in a critical vacuum, but are also completely ignored by the academic community. Apart from that, it results in various limitations and social prejudices spread in today's Belarusian society.

Appendix

The National Statistical Committee released the following theatrical statistics concerning Belarus in 2012:

— The most popular is the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre: in 2012, its performances were watched by 254 thousand viewers;
— Theatregoers prefer drama and musical theatres—those who attend these types of theatre constitute 65.5 per cent of the overall number of viewers. Of these theatres, the most popular in 2012 was the Belarusian State Musical Theatre: it sold 152.1 thousand tickets while the Yakub Kolas National Academic Drama Theatre (Vicebsk) sold 112.3 thousand tickets and the Maxim Gorki National Academic Drama Theatre (the Russian Theatre, Minsk) was visited by 110 thousand viewers.
— In 2012, twenty-eight professional theatres were operating in Belarus, including nineteen drama and musical theatres, eight theatres for children and youth, and one opera and ballet theatre.

Translation by Andrij Saweneć

BULGARIA

Some years ago, during the socialist era in Bulgaria, in one of the offices of the Ministry of Culture, a conversation like this one took place: 'I need some statistics on the audiences from the last four years in regional theatres. Can you tell me, please, which folders to look into?' The person asking was a young woman responsible for the newly formed and short-lived Theatre and Information Department. 'Which theatres exactly are you interested in?' asked an elderly man and took out of his inside pocket a battered notebook ready to open it depending on the answer of the young lady.

Although concerning a specific period of Bulgarian history this anecdote eloquently describes the overall status of theatre archives in Bulgaria. The fact that there is a shared understanding of the need and the importance for preservation of memory in this fleeting artform notwithstanding, there have not been enough targeted actions to ensure that Bulgaria has a proper institution dealing with the selection, acquisition, registration, processing, accounting, conservation, provision-for-use and publication of documents connected to Bulgarian performing arts in the past or the present.

A book published some years ago by a renowned Bulgarian actor Petar Petrov – who dedicated his life to speech and pronunciation, but also to the memory of those who started his profession in Bulgaria – quotes the members of a circle that existed in the 1920s called "Priests of the living word" stating that an archive should be established where theatrical productions could be documented. While they communicated this idea some forty years after theatre became professional in Bulgaria, a century later theatre archivists can still be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The main concern of this entry is to serve as a way into Bulgarian theatre archives to those performing arts historians, theoreticians, practitioners and interested in theatre readers who are just becoming acquainted with it.

Eras

As we approach theatre archives in Bulgaria we need to highlight the fact that theatre history in Bulgaria is relatively short in terms of the artform's global narrative. The turning point in the development of Bulgarian professional theatre is December 4th, 1888. It was then, for a first time, that a professional theatre company presented a performance in a space, designed and built especially for the purpose in Sofia. The company's name was "Osnova" (Basis) and was the first state-subsidised Bulgarian National Theatre.

Since then Bulgarian performing arts have constantly moved forward, going through periods of high achievement, dischord, censorship, happy discoveries, despite blind inertia and bitter sobriety. For this article I will take the three major periods in Bulgarian history that coincide with the life of theatre in Bulgaria so far. These are the Third Bulgarian Kingdom (1878 - 1946), The People's Republic of Bulgaria (1946 - 1990) and the Post-Communist Transition Era (1989 – present). It is worth noting that all three periods were controversial, in terms of succession to their predecessor's institutions, no matter how important they might subsequently have proved to be for the development of a certain field. All three have lasted long enough to have significant impact upon the advancement of Bulgarian theatre.

While theatre artists in Bulgaria have been active in all three periods, the comprehensiveness and accessibility of archive collections has no direct relationship to how intense their activity was.

This phenomenon can be linked to specific characteristics of how information was dealt with in each of the periods.

The early days of the first period – Bulgaria right after the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) – were marked by the excitement of the young liberated state. Most of the historically important events still had living witnesses telling stories, writing about them and keeping records in their private desks. A majority of the most telling information was contained between the lines of personal correspondence between renowned contemporaries. The Minister of Enlightenment at that time, professor Ivan Shishmanov, started a new representative state institution called the National Theatre in 1903. He demanded that the managers establish a museum department for keeping track of the development of Bulgaria's main theatre company. It was not until 1929, after the theatre building was renovated after a devastating fire, that this idea was really put into action, however. In 1935 the newly established National Radio started a sound archive and managed to document the voices of the first big Bulgarian actors and directors.

Records of how the theatres were managed at that time, photos from performances and theatre meetings, as well as printed evidence of the public perception can be found in the Central State Archives.

The years of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (1946 - 1990) were characterised by the control of information. The ways of extracting, hiding and manipulating data were manifold. The main goal was not to let natural processes in society and professional circles take place. The method was to restrict access to information making it secret, available to only a chosen few or simply never acknowledging the existence of such information at all. Therefore, although all state and regional theatres were obliged to send statistics on their finances, details of their audiences, printed materials from premières and other events, as well as copies of the plays they were staging, neither an appropriate institution nor specialised repository to contain and organise all this material was founded.

Specialists working during this period made it their personal mission to organise all incoming data in a way useful not only to clerks in the Ministry, but also to researchers. These efforts were only supported by a few and, as a result, every time someone was retired, moved into another department or sent away, their work was destroyed and the next proactive archivist had to start from scratch again. Another aspect of this discontinuity should be taken into consideration here: the irreparable damage inflicted upon the personal archives accumulated in the first period by the irresponsible expropriation of the belongings of people deemed to be the republic's enemies, either by the state or by their heirs fleeing the country.

Unique evidence from this period appears in the specialized magazine Theatre. From its establishment in 1946 until the 1990s the magazine was under the direct management of the Ministry of Culture. Now a private enterprise under the same title, it keeps a significant, non-standardised collection of photos from performances and cultural events that took place in the People's Republic. Other reliable repositories include: the Central State Archives, Union of Bulgarian Actors Archives, Academic Library and Archive at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts "Krastyo Sarafov", and The National Library Network. It was also in this period that Bulgarian National television was founded. Its archival footage is another indispensable part of the puzzle.

During The Post-Communist Transition Era (1989 – present) the mindset regarding information, on a global level, is the most constructive. All spheres of society produce tons of data, constantly invent programmes to make use of it, and it is all digitalized;

accessibility to information stands as the utmost human right and people go into exile in the name of transparency. But what is the situation in Bulgaria?

In January 1990 a lot of secret service files were destroyed and classified archives were not made public, despite the model of other post-Communist countries. Those documents that survived have been being opened since 2007 on an apparently random basis, most often resulting in people or institutions being discredited and adding to the impression that the memory of the past cannot bring anything positive to the present. In the 1990s, a lot of public institutions changed status, changed their management, or were relocated. The result is that most of the archives connected to theatre and culture, which up until that point were primarily state-owned, were either submitted to the Central State Archives or kept in disorderly collections.

For the first 20 years of the post-communist period, the State Theatres system stayed broadly intact. However, several new waves originated. The first started right after the changes. It was a large movement of small private companies, mostly actor-led and touring contemporary best-seller plays from the Western world that had previously been forbidden or neglected. Although commercially oriented they didn't have financial stability and most of them did not last long. Documents and printed materials as records of their work can most often be found in their own private collections.

The second wave came from artists who, after visiting workshops and master-classes outside of Bulgaria, brought the notion of contemporary dance back with them and worked both in Bulgaria and abroad. In 1990s and 2000s they collaborated with the bigger theatres in Sofia, in whose archives traces of their work can be found. Most of them now live and work in Western Europe.

Independent theatre groups came out of the activities of this second wave; forming a third, with its own characteristics and aims. Mostly supported by the Open Society Institute in Sofia, Pro Helvetia Bulgaria and the National Culture Fund in the 2000s, now their main financial support comes from the Ministry of Culture, Sofia Municipality and smaller cultural institutions.

These supporting institutions, along with the financial report for the productions they backed, also received printed materials and press clippings. In the start of 2009 ACT Association for Independent Theatre initiated an informal survey that accumulated an informal database for performances produced by independent groups throughout the last 20 years. At the opening of the first ACT Festival for Independent Theatre 2011, Angelina Georgieva, the perform-

ing arts theoretician, and Mladen Alexiev, the theatre director and co-founder of the ACT Association, curated an exhibition called "Independent theatre dictionary" comprising the public statements, manifestos, documents and printed material independent activists and artists had released.

Places for preservation of primary and secondary sources

After close research into the state of theatre archives in Bulgaria, the drama specialist Rumiana Nikolova reported: 'As far as places for the preservation of theatre memories are concerned, we can draw the following conclusion: documents describing overall processes in culture and the ways performing arts have been administrated are contained in the Central State Archive and its subdivisions, as well in the archives of cultural institutions that stayed steady in times of change such as the Union of Bulgarian Actors (UBA) and the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA). Specific evidence for the existence of productions for example texts, photos, leaflets, catalogues and posters, are kept in the archive files of each theatre. The so-called secondary sources – newspapers, themed collections, books etc. are preserved in libraries.'

National Libraries Network

There are at least 3,500 libraries in Bulgaria. The catalogues of about 400 are already digitalised. Theatre researchers rely heavily on Saints Cyril and Methodius National Library, which is the oldest and largest. The 27 regional libraries where collections about local theatres and cultural operators can be found are also helpful to researchers. Often in these libraries specialists in local cultural process make their own studies and publish them as part of the catalogue of the institution. It is also useful to know that outside specialised theatre magazines, valuable texts about performances and their creators can be found in the issues of Literary Newspaper (Literaturen Vestnik) and Kultura newspaper.

Archive files at theatres

In general all theatres – state and regional – make their own archive collections that encompass everything that has happened since the start of each theatre. Those who take Theatre Studies say that these collections are far more incomplete for the years after 1989.

This reflects the atmosphere of overall uncertainty and a lack of confidence that every theatre event has significance in the overall perspective following the end of communism.
Some of the theatres do take special care and release series of themed selections listing the performances made there, along with related texts, interviews, photographs and other documents – most often these are published to coincide with an anniversary. Prominent archive experts like Nikola Vandov, Maria Vandova and Tania Tamahkiarova have worked on collections issued by the National Theatre "Ivan Vazov", Theater Laboratory "Sfumato", Central Puppet Theatre, Drama Theatre of Sliven, Drama Theatre of Smolian, Drama Theatre of Pazardjik and more.

Academic Library and Archive at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts "Krastyo Sarafov"

NATFA's library was established in 1948. It was only in 2010 when it officially included Archive in its title. The Academic Library and Archive (ALA) already had an impressive collection of 100,000 items with analytic descriptions of articles about performances staged in Sofia and the province as well as interviews with prominent theatre artists. The renowned bibliographic expert Vassil Mavrodinov, who was in charge of the library for many years, preserved and catalogued a card-index which was unique in Bulgaria. Along with theatre programmes, newspaper and magazine clips; posters, photos, brochures, etc. dating from 1863 to the present can be found. There is also an electronic department that has 25,000 digitalised bibliographic entries. In 2007 they started a procedure for accumulating a database with current information from printed media in three categories: Theatre, Personnel, and Analytical Descriptions. There are still a lot of discrepancies between the catalogues – digital and analogue – and the actual repository availability.

Union of Bulgarian Actors Archives

The UBAA are under the direction of the administrative coordinator of The Union of Bulgarian Actors. The organisation has been registered under different titles since 1921, but has always kept its profile as an artistic trade union organisation, representing the interests of its members before employers and state authorities. According to the classification Rumiana Nikolova offers, the documents that are preserved in UBA premises can be roughly divided in three

main groups: the first contains all the printed materials that each state and regional theatre was obliged to send after each première of a show. These leaflets, theatre and festival programmes, posters, photos, lists and newspaper clippings are stored in paper folders. The second collection is a database collected through the years, which is now digitalised. It can be searched by keywords like: "city"; "author of the text"; "title of the show"; "adaptation for stage"; "translation by"; "performers"; "nomination/prize"; "festivals participation"; "touring"; "reviews" and so on. The third collection is not yet catalogued and consists of documents issued by the UBA: reports on various professional topics, transcripts of meetings and thematic conferences, as well printed editions published by the Union.

Central State Archives

The Central State Archives is a directorate at the Archives State Agency. Since its creation in 1952, it has been reorganized several times so that the inside structures be optimized. In 1993 on the basis of the contract signed with the Supreme Council of Bulgarian Socialist Party, the Archive accepted the documents of the former Central Party Archive, which makes it the of utmost interest for those researching the Socialist Era. In 1999 it acquired the documents of the former Institute of Bulgarian Photography – the public photo archive.

The Archive deals with all documents issued by the central structures of the state bodies and other state institutions and public organizations, as well as the documents' legacy of important figures with national significance and documents concerning the Bulgarian history, which are kept in foreign archives and institutions. The Archival Policy Chief Directorate has six regional directorates: Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Montana. According to its principal functions the Central State Archive is structured into these divisions: "New Archives", "Processing of Archival Funds" with a sector "BCP's Funds", "Private Funds", "Foreign Funds", "Accounting and Preservation of Archival Funds", and "Use of Archival Funds" with a sector "Services to the Readers".

National Culture Institutions Archives

The National Culture Institutions receive funding reports for all the productions that they support. This makes the archive files of the Theatre Department at the Ministry of Culture, of the National

Culture fund and those of the Culture Programme at Sofia Municipality central to the historiography of independent performing arts productions. Although it is not a state-governed institution, the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate should also be mentioned here as it has been supporting independent productions, festivals and events and keeps detailed track of all of them.

National TV and Radio Archives

Both national TV and radio maintain the Golden Fund Archives comprising of records of interviews and programmes of high artistic and historical value. The collection of the National radio contains over 14 000 sound files and that of the National TV holds more than 66 750 entries. Access to these is restricted, however.

ACT Association for Independent Theatre Archives

ACT Association was founded in 2008 with the purpose of making visible and possible the independent performing arts scene in Bulgaria. The archive collection of the Association consists of voluntary contributions of information by activists and members of the organization. This has proved to be a reliable way to complete the picture of a whole sphere, which has been overlooked for the last 20 years, the data is far from exhaustive since the organization is not structurally supported and there is still no possibility of appointing an archives administrator. The Dramaturgy New Platform's series Independent Theatre in Focus does provide a detailed survey on the current independent scene, however.

Personal Archives

The situation with conservation and preservation of personal archives of significant figures in Bulgarian performing arts is not settled in any formal way. Currently, acquisition of such collections depends on the private decisions of their owners, or the managers of the few institutions that can keep them. Some of the personal repositories prominent artists are owned by the theatre archive departments of CSA, UBA, NATFA and NBU (New Bulgarian University). Monographs studies often contain a lot of personal archive documents and thus make them available to a wider audience. Major authors here are Anna Topaldjikova, Tania Tamahkiarova, Maya Pramatarova, Nikola Vandov, Rumiana Emanuilidu.

Conclusion

This article would not be complete if I didn't explicitly stress the lack of a state policy for preserving the memory of performing arts. The primary evidence for that is the absence of an institution dedicated entirely to gathering, preserving and analysing theatre facts. Beyond this, the deficiency of targeted funding in that sphere makes timely research impossible and the still-living memory of invaluable phenomena is barely being recorded. Last but not least is the demand for well-motivated specialists in all needed links in this profession.

Returning to the fact with which this article started – the very young age of theatre in Bulgaria – here are the words of Tzvetan Todorov on the part memory plays in an individual's development: 'The development of the mind and of memory allows the child to internalize the temporal dimension, and because of this development he begins to identify the individuals around him... He also remembers the past enough for it to influence his behaviour... Finally recognizing the other as a partner in the dialogue, the child constitutes himself as subject and discovers intentionally. He now takes an action because he wants to, not in reaction to external appeals.'

Bulgarian theatre deserves to acquire this motivational principle and, by taking good care of its past, emancipate it in the name of a lively present.

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CROATIA

In *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (2010) Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait introduced five concepts fundamental to theatre/performance history and historiography, one of them being the archive.[1] Different approaches to archives have given the archive different shapes, functions and identities, but in the last few decades the focus has turned towards the archive itself, making its structure and historical background the main object of study. Academic attention has been redirected from the records themselves to the ways the records are collected and selected, and to the multiple influences which the archiving process can have on the meaning, (re)contextualisation and interpretation of records, cf. Derrida: "the archivisation produces as much as it records the event"[2]. The assumption of archives' reliability, neutrality and objectivity, and the assumption of meticulous archival research as sufficient validation of research credibility in the humanities has been deeply shaken and undermined by claims that archives are neither authentic nor objective, and that archives are the result of number of economic, political, ideological and/or social constraints, constructs, stereotypes and/or biases influencing its profile and objectives.
These claims hold true for theatre/performance archives. The archival records of theatre are as important as the history and structure of the institutions that collect and maintain them, as well as the wider cultural, financial, legislative, social and political context of theatre collections. However, theatre/performance archives also have numerous specific points – such as the elusive, ephemeral nature of the objective of archiving – often strongly pronounced by the theatre practitioners themselves, and by the diverse and miscellaneous nature of theatre records, which often escape the categories of classic text-based archives.

Locations of theatre records

Records on Croatian theatre/performance history are kept in a number of cultural and scholarly institutions throughout Croatia: the in-house archives of theatres; the Croatian State Archives and regional

1. Charlotte M. Canning, Thomas Postlewait, *Representing the Past: An Introduction on Five Themes, in: Representing the Past. Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 2010, pp. 1–34.

2. Jacques Derrida, T*he Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression, "Diacritics"*, volume 25, number 2, 1995. pp. 9–63.

state archives; state, regional and city public museum archives; the National and University Libraries in Zagreb, and the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. They are also kept in numerous private collections. Croatian theatre/performance archives are predominantly building-based, with only few and exceptional virtual theatre/performance archives (such as the online archive of Gavella Drama Theatre or the digital archive of the International Festival of New Theatre Eurokaz).

The collections are usually not interconnected. A small fraction of records kept in different institutions overlap, but a straightforward criteria for where theatre records are kept or should be kept remains conspicuous by its absence. The displacement of theatre records across a range of institutions with various degrees of accessibility – or even available information about the records – is one of the major problems when discussing theatre/performance archives in Croatia. The fact that they are often inadequately maintained is another problem. Apart from private collections, the founders of theatre/performance archives are mostly the state or particular regions or cities. They are predominantly state-funded, with little or no income from other sources except donations and sponsors. This is reflected in the national or local identities of individual archives. However, direct state influence on the contents or policies of theatre/performance archives is unlikely.

The majority of Croatian theatres house and maintain their own archives or collections, but they differ significantly in archive formation, holdings, material gathered, selection principles, organisation and indexing standards, archival staff and their education. They also differ in terms of the importance ascribed to the archive and its content by the theatres' managements. What is kept in theatre/performance archives – and how, why, and for whom – varies considerably according to the immediate needs of the particular theatre, its structure, budget and available staff. As repeatedly noted by expert archival officials, the circumstances of record storage do not often meet necessary archival standards. The archives of major national or city theatres normally have efficient mechanisms for theatre archiving and a person appointed for the job who may have skills of a trained archivist. This is rarer in smaller or privately owned theatres. Experience reveals that the approach to theatre records is often the result of individual archivist's inclinations and abilities, and that the creators of theatre records are often focused on present or future projects rather than on archiving the old ones. In smaller theatres the records are usually kept in one place, while

in larger theatre houses they are often subdivided into drama, opera, ballet or into types of records, such as text-based records and photographs in one place, with visual and aural performance recordings in the other. The casual relationship of some theatre managements towards the theatre archives has in some cases, during management changes or building renovations, resulted in serious losses of theatre records, with valuable collections ending up either destroyed or in private hands. However, such losses are not purely the result of irresponsible or short-sighted managements. The fire in Split National Theatre in 1970 destroyed a significant part of the archive, and during the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s, number of theatres – Dubrovnik, Osijek and Vinkovci, for example – were popular targets; and theatre archives a part of the collateral damage.

Part of Croatia's theatre records are kept in the state archives responsible for a particular region or city and their theatres. These records are usually catalogued, indexed and sorted; properly stored, preserved and accessible. The information about them (including the information on theatre records kept outside the system of national archives) is available in two-volume publication *The Overview of Archival Funds and Collections in the Republic of Croatia* (Zagreb 2006 and 2007), and national archival information system ARHiNET, which has open public access online. However, it must be noted that the records kept in national state archives are only the tip of the iceberg, and that they usually refer to theatres and theatre companies that are no longer active. Some theatre records, especially "artistic" ones – recording set and costume designs, scale models, theatre costumes, props and puppets and so on – are more likely to be held in public museums or the private collections of theatre artists or their heirs. Frequently a single collection is divided in two parts with the state-owned part kept in the museum, and the privately-owned part kept by the artist or her heirs.

Centralisation

The central institution or, more precisely, the institution that would like to be central and authorised to keep the records about the Croatian theatre in all its scope and variety, is the Division for the History of the Croatian Theatre in Zagreb: a unit of the Institute for the Croatian Literature, Theatre and Music in the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. As already pointed out by number of archive scholars, the majority of archives have a much

more complex history then one would imagine. The Division is no exception. It was founded in the mid 1960s as the Theatre Studies Department within the Literature and Theatre Studies Department, when the Croatian Academy's Literature Department obtained the contents of the Archive and Museum of the Croatian National Theatre (CNT) in Zagreb, whose origins go back to the 1840s, the time of Croatian National Revival, formation of the CNT and the beginnings of Croatian theatre professionalisation. The records of the CNT in Zagreb – miscellaneous administrative and financial documentation, personal documents and contracts, correspondence, play scripts, theatre programmes, director's notes, playbills, photographs, theatre reviews, and set and costume designs – are still an important component of the Division's theatre/performance archive. In its early years, the Division's programme was based on gathering records on the CNT and expanding the CNT collection, reaffirming its Zagreb-oriented or CNT-centric position. In the seventies, however, with the arrival of new scholarly personnel and management in the form of Branko Hećimović, the Division began to expand its range of interests and started collecting records about all Croatian theatres, theatre festivals and performances, and gathering the private collections of Croatian theatre artists and people connected to Croatian theatre such as theatre critics and theatre photographers.

The Division's mission since has been collecting records on all national theatres, performances and theatre artists with due regard to different definitions of *national* and *theatre/performance*. Even though it is still closely related to the legacy of the CNT Archive and Museum, the Division aims to distance itself, at least declaratively, from its prior focus on the CNT in Zagreb, on Zagreb theatre, on institutional and professional theatre, and to widen the scope of the collection as much as possible with regard to various types of theatrical expression and genres; and various types of theatrical records. In a way, the Division's aim is closely related to its longstanding project of publishing the *Croatian Theatre Repertoire* which currently covers the period from the 11th century to 1990s. Even though sometimes the availability of records about a certain theatre may have influenced the decision to include it in the *Repertoire*, equally so the decision to include a certain theatre in the *Repertoire* may have prompted collecting records about that theatre.

The Division has changed title or status several times, but the change that influenced its perception mostly has its origin in politics/ideology. When the Republic of Croatia gained independence in

the nineties, the name of the Theatre Studies Department changed from one neutral with regard to time and place of theatre event to the one emphasising the national and the historical component of record collecting. The new name coincided with the majority of Division's prior interests, and despite the *history* term in its title, and the prominence given to researching the past, the Division continued to collect records on contemporary theatre.

The fact that the Department was founded by the CNT in Zagreb and the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the fact that it is financed by the Croatian Academy, has had major influence on the Division's profile and functioning, and so have the individuals who managed it. The Division's everyday activities of collecting records about the Croatian theatres are complemented by research work, publishing and exhibiting. The Division's budget is minimal, it is rather poorly maintained and understaffed, and the programme funding depends exclusively on open competition programmes, sponsorship, donations and the like. The collection relies chiefly on private and institutional donations, with only a few examples of targeted purchases, additionally deepening the partial, fragmentary and selective nature of the collection. However, the inflow of records to the Division still outweighs its capacities to catalogue, sort, label and make it fully accessible, thus making the problems of space, storage, technological support, finances, and trained human resources more and more urgent.

Shaped by the historic connection to the CNT Archive and Museum, the focus on national theatre, the hierarchical structure of the Croatian Academy, the numerous financial, staff and space limitations, the Division is also restricted by Croatian archival legislation which give it no official or legal frame for theatre records collecting. It is therefore clear that the Division's participation in archiving the national theatre past and present depends upon numerous political, historical and cultural limitations and that it must be viewed with respect to the processes that Helen Freshwater names "random inclusion and considered exclusion"[3] of both various types of performance art and theatres, and theatre/performance records.

What theatre? What records?

Each theatre/performance archive is the result of numerous factors and motivations, decisions and choices regarding what is and is not going to be included in the collection, so the question of types of records housed by theatre/performance archives is never

3. Helen Freshwater, *The Allure of the Archive*, "Poetics Today", volume 24, number 4, pp. 729–758.

an easy one. In theory, the archive collects everything connected with theatre and performance arts regardless of the time and place, or the process of creation, performance or reception. The range of theatre records varies significantly, including textual records (play scripts, playbills, theatre reviews, personal and official documentation…), visual records (set and costume designs, scale models, photographs…), visual and aural materials (sound and video recordings…), or personal artefacts and the objects and artefacts from actual performances (elements of set design, theatre costumes, properties…). However, the theory and practice in Croatia differ considerably.

In spite of the archives' alleged openness to all types of theatre records – both conventional and unconventional – and the assumption that all theatre records will comprise a unique whole that need not be divided into the so-called artistic and administrative parts, the majority of Croatian theatre/performance archives are primarily text-based. They may hold visual records (theatre artist photos and performance photos), set and costume designs, and minimal collection of scale models, but these are less and less present in official and state-owned archives. Even though the Division for the History of Croatian Theatre stores a large collection of set and costume designs, as do several museums and theatres, in the last several decades the set and costume designs, and lighting plans, are mostly kept by artists themselves – although artists' contracts oblige them to hand in the designs to the theatres. Performance photographs are often missing from the theatre archives because there was a period when they were almost regularly given away (mostly to the media) and can often be found only in private collections, usually owned by the photographers. The negatives are also often lost or inadequately preserved, and in recent years the photos are frequently stored in digital form only.

Leaving aside the numerous questions regarding the nature and scope of performance recordings, performance recordings are still quite rare, sporadic and far from complying to any unified criteria of recording. So, even though certain theatres have introduced the practice of regular performance recording, recordings are often of a poor quality, and minimal informational value. Lots are actually TV-adaptations, and most are accessible in private archives only. The number of scale models diminishes rapidly as they are replaced by advanced computer technology, and only a relatively small number of scale models have been preserved, due as much to chance as to their historic and cultural significance. Theatre

costumes are taken as integral part of theatre holdings, and after the closing of the production for which they were originally created, they are reused and adapted for new productions until they are finally destroyed or discarded. There is no mechanism of excluding outstanding or historically important examples of theatre costume design from this process and there are no institutions that house such theatre artefacts. The exception is a limited number of theatre costumes preserved in public museums, or in the private collections of some costume designers.

On the assumption that the principles of selection and organisation in theatre/performance archives sometimes reflect the power relations and hierarchies present in both theatre and society, it is worth noting that majority of Croatian theatre/performance archives are not only text-oriented, but also display a preference towards certain types of theatre and theatre records. Dance, therefore, seems particularly under-represented in institutional theatre/performance archives, not only because of the nature of dance productions, which are difficult to preserve, but also because of textual biases of some archives. The same can be said about the puppet theatre as well, with the exception of in-house theatre archives. For example, in the Osijek and Rijeka theatres. However, attitudes seem to be changing.

After the War of Independence, the Republic of Croatia has passed several legal acts and regulations on the subject of theatre records and theatre archives. Theatres, state- and privately-funded, are understood as creators of archival records of lasting cultural, scholarly and historic significance, and are therefore obliged to abide by the legislation and regulations about the archives and archival records. The same is restated in the Theatres Act. However, the legislative procedures are subject to various interpretations, especially when it comes to the artistic records, so the gap between the regulations and their implementation and between the creators of archival record and archival institutions is still quite visible, and so are its consequences.

The processes of theatre/performance archives digitalisation have begun, but are still quite small in scope, sporadic and fragmentary. For example, the digitalisation of several thousand 19th century playbills in the Division for the History of the Croatian Theatre is only a tiny percent of its holdings, but what is promising is the determination to make the digitalised records publicly accessible and freely available on the internet.

CZECH REPUBLIC

When conducting historical research on theatre culture in the Czech Republic, one can come across archives that fall into two categories: actual theatrical archives and archives where theatre is included due to its association with a more general (administrative or political) unit.

One of the largest theatrical institutions of the first type is the *Divadelní ústav* (The Theatre Institute) in Prague, which since 2007 is functioning under an expanded name as *Institut umění – Divadelní ústav* (The Institute for Arts and Theatre). Ideas to set up such an institute first appeared in Czech circles at the turn of the 20th century, when the theatre had emancipated itself as a distinct type of art. It is at this time that the first archives in individual theatres are founded, due to an increasing need to record the theatrical life in archival and theoretical form[1]. Shortly before WWI, in 1913, a committee was set up to oversee the foundation of the Museum of Theatre (*Divadelní muzeum*), which was supposed to serve as an umbrella institution for the archival, museum and academic aspects of the Czech theatre (i.e. theatre in Czech language). Although the committee recommenced its activities after 1918, the planned foundation of this institution did not come to pass. The idea of setting up a Museum of Theatre in the Czech territory was revived in 1925, when the magazine *Komedia* published an article about the Wiktor Brumer Institute of Theatre in Poland. It was not until 1930 that the Theatre Department within the National Museum was set up, which was gradually supposed to become a museum of Czech theatre. However, this intention was never realised; the National Museum's Theatre Department (DONM in Czech) still continues to follow the concept designed by its first director, Jan Bartoš. It concentrates on theatre artefacts pertaining to the Czech theatre from its beginnings to 1945. (The year 1945 is just a notional temporal boundary, as DONM also houses the legacy of theatre professionals who were active after World War II, for example the Alfréd Radok collection; Radok was one of the most important Czech directors of the 1950's and 60's, the founder of *Laterna magika*, who emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1968). The DONM collections are not digitalised, and

1. Based on a German model, the theatre studies begins to emerge as a discipline. This first occurred in the late 1920's at the literature studies seminars by Václav Tille and Otakar Fischer, who are considered the founders of the theatre studies in the Czech Republic. In the 1930's, a theatre studies seminar in Brno was tutored by Frank Wollman. Theatre studies as a distinct study programme under the leadership of Jan Mukařovský was not founded until 1948 at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Charles University in Prague.

for the most part can only be searched by means of a card catalogue, while recent archival material is recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Due to lack of storage space, the DONM collections were moved to a depository in Terezín (70 km from Prague) in 2010. Access to individual collection items is given by the curator of a particular collection on the basis of a previously granted permission obtained by a letter of application. Since 2011, the National Museum premises have been undergoing extensive reconstruction; as a consequence, DONM's specialised research room has been closed and researchers of period Czech theatre must use other research rooms at the National Museum.

Other institutions where one can look for artefacts related to (not only) period Czech theatre include the Department of the History of Theatre at the Moravian Museum in Brno (*Divadelní oddělení Moravského zemského muzea v Brně*, founded in 1957) and the Silesian Museum in Opava (*Slezské zemské muzeum v Opavě*); these archives focus on theatrical activity in the Moravian and Silesian territory. Some archival collections are also housed in regional museums; these are randomly acquired collections, usually poorly labelled, if at all, which are normally part of literary or music departments.

After World War II, the Czech theatre community persisted in its efforts to found a centralised theatre institute, which would – in addition to its archiving function – undertake theoretical, exhibitory, publishing and marketing activities. The year 1952 saw the foundation of DILIA's theatre documentation department, which – in addition to its documenting and bibliographical activities – has also published a number of brochures with seminal source material regarding Czech theatre[2]. An independent Theatre Institute (*Divadelní ústav*, or DÚ) was founded in 1959 in Prague and was subordinate to the Ministry of Culture[3]. DÚ focuses on Czech theatre after 1945 and mainly included activities related to research, museum and collections, documentation, library, bibliography, exhibitions, publishing, marketing, and international cooperation. In 1963, DÚ started publishing several book series containing seminal sources on Czech and foreign theatre. In 1963–1972, it published 9 volumes within the book series *Inscenace*, which contained photographic material, commentaries by artists and critics, and a bibliography of the most notable productions in Czech theatre. The book series was discontinued (banned) in 1972.

In 1962–1972, DÚ was publishing a book series *Drama, divadlo, dokumentace*, which concentrated on the staging of plays written by major authors; the series was complemented by an appendix with

2. This consisted of material pertaining to the Czech theatre of the 19th and the second half of the 18th century.

3. Together with the Prague headquarters, a Slovak branch was set up in Bratislava and became independent in 1961.

sources and bibliography. This series was likewise discontinued in 1972, when the so-called Normalisation (i.e. the period after the defeat of the Prague Spring and the occupation by Warsaw Pact forces) took root in the Czech theatre. In the 1961–1962 season, DÚ started publishing a yearly *Česká divadla*, which brought information about the staffing of Czech professional theatres, their premieres and repertories. In the 1990's, its issues were supplemented with information regarding education in drama and theatre studies and drama festivals. From 2005, these yearly issues appear only in electronic form. The series *Scénografie* has been published at irregular intervals since 1963 and has brought a selection of translated foreign articles and studies in the field of stage design. DÚ's final series was *Zprávy Divadelního ústavu*, which published new information about the DÚ and general articles about the organisation and management of Czech theatre.

DÚ's Documentation Department was collecting archival material about the activities of individual professional theatres in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia. In the late 1980's, DÚ started working on an electronic information database. Its website www.divadlo.cz was launched at the turn of the millennia during Ondřej Černý's stint as a director. It serves as a basic information source about the theatre life in the Czech Republic. The website also includes a Virtual Study, which is divided into these sections: Library (DÚ library catalogue), Audio and Video Library (a catalogue of audio and video recordings), Bibliography, Theatre Productions, Theatre Photography, Scenography and Theatre Events (i.e. information about festivals, guest performances, exhibitions, etc.). It can be said that the basic unit of DÚ's Virtual Study is a production in professional Czech theatre from 1945 to the present. The database includes basic information about the theatre, the première date, date of the last performance, author/authors (i.e. e.g. the translator, author of the adaptation), the production team and cast. This basic information is complemented with production photographs and stage design proposals (provided the DÚ owns the rights) and bibliographical entries on reviews and studies in the press. (Due to intellectual property rights, the texts of reviews and critiques are accessible to the readers only within the *Virtual Study* interface in the DÚ building.) The electronic database is the result of a cooperation between DÚ's Bibliography and Documentation Departments, which ever since their inception have been using the envelope method to collect basic source documents related to every professional theatre production (production programmes, cut-outs from daily and specialised press; the folder description of

the relevant envelope is searchable in the DÚ database). To date, almost all theatre seasons since 1945 have been digitalised.

A book entitled *Divadelní ústav 1959–2009* was published to mark the 50th anniversary of DÚ's founding. It brings a list of all DÚ publications and exhibitions.

The problem with the DÚ archive (and consequently with its electronic database) lies in the fact that it focuses exclusively on official sources. However, at least since the early 1970's, DÚ was writing internal reviews of individual productions in Czech professional theatre; the main goal was to oversee the artistic level of the Czech theatres. These reviews would be sent over to the Ministry of Culture and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. It was therefore not only a form of reflection, but also of multi-level control of Czech scenes. It is a paradox that these reviews were often written by important theatre professionals, who had been removed from their original posts after 1972 (e.g. Karel Kraus, Ota Roubínek, etc.). It is thanks to them that the 1960s theatre thought and writing survives (the language of official reviews from the 1970s and 1980s is diametrically different and often unintelligible to someone not familiar with the political climate of the time); in addition, it is much easier to find out from these texts how a production might have been problematic, especially from an ideological viewpoint. The collection of these internal reviews is currently only partially accessible and has not been catalogued.

DÚ still does not have its own archival collection (or it has not been discovered yet); in the case of an organisation that in the period of 1959–1989 had the decisive word in shaping Czech theatre, it is a considerable drawback. The same holds true for other organisations that made a significant contribution to the running of Czech theatres – e.g. the archival collection of the Union of Czechoslovak Drama Artists (*Svaz československých dramatických umělců,* SČDU), currently only available as random documents located in various places.

In order to obtain information about the removal of a title from the dramaturgical plan; a problematic production; banning of a production; or withholding information about the participation of a banned person, one would need to piece together a mosaic from archives that are no longer available – DÚ, DILIA, SČDU, as well as from archives of individual theatres, territorial units overseeing the theatres, and individual chapters of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, all of which either do not exist or have not been organised as archives.

Besides large umbrella archives, there are also archives of individual theatres. The largest and the oldest one is the National Theatre Archive in Prague (*Archiv Národního divadla v Praze*, ArND). ArND houses memorabilia related to the running of the National theatre, its artistic activities and specific theatre professionals who have been part of this theatre. It also dubs as an internal library of academic and theatre texts. An overall digitalisation of the ArND has been underway since 2002, divided into three phases. The first phase was finished in 2003; its goal was to give access to the repertoire lists of the National Theatre (*Národní divadlo*) since its founding (1883) to this day, by creating an internet database searchable by season, genre, name and title. The second and third phases of the ArND digitalisation have been underway since 2003. The goal of the second phase is to give access to the daily repertoire of the National Theatre in Prague, whereas in the third phase, visual documentation (photographs, stage design proposals and costume design proposals) and written material is being digitalised. In the context of other Czech national theatres, the digitalisation of the ArND is quite unique. The archival collections of the National Theatre in Brno (*Národní divadlo v Brně*) and of the Moravian-Silesian National Theatre in Ostrava (*Národní divadlo moravsko-slezské v Ostravě*) have not been digitalised as yet.

In 2008, under the auspices of the Theatre Research Society (*Teatrologická společnost*), a team of theatre studies professionals (Margita Havlíčková, Tatjana Lazorčáková, Libor Vodička and Jan Jiřík) conducted a survey of the state of archives in statutory theatres in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The survey, which included a total of one hundred theatres – both those that are part of the long-established theatre network, as well as some of those which have sprung up after 1989 – has allowed us to draw a number of conclusions about the current state of archives in Czech theatres. 1. While most theatres do have some kind of an archive, it is quite problematic to determine what these theatres mean by an archive. For the most part, it consists in amassing advertising material related to the current repertoire, and such an archive ceases to be of interest to the theatres once the last performance takes place. 2. The archive is run by a number of different employees of the theatre, without a concise methodology, and with a few exceptions every theatre treats the archival material according to its own judgement. 3. This also has a bearing on the methods of recording, which differ markedly in the overwhelming majority of the surveyed theatres. 4. A great majority of the theatres (exceptions include large urban theatres e.g. in Plzeň, České Budějovice, Zlín, etc.) view archival continuity exclusively in

the context of the current management of the theatre. Archival collections from the previous period (i.e. before 1989) were at best relegated to the care of archival institutions in whose administrative area the individual theatre is located (e.g. the Prague City Archives (*Archiv hlavního města Prahy*) in the case of Prague theatres).

The archives continuously maintained as part of statutory theatres in Bohemia (especially in Prague) have been seriously damaged by flooding in 2002. An important fact relating to the archives of statutory theatres set up before 1989 is that – bar a few exceptions – they usually focus purely on the artistic production of the given theatre. Archival material documenting organisational or censorial aspects must be looked for in overseeing institutions (municipal councils, higher territorial units, local chapters of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), which have not been adequately organised to archive standards or are not accessible at all.

Archival collections of individual academic institutions have not been catalogued so far. Currently, cataloguing is underway in the archive of the Department of Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Charles University in Prague. This archive has been in operation since the 1950's; just like other archival institutions in Czechoslovakia at the time, it sought to amass an independent source and collection material used in lectures or in academic work by the department's lecturers.

Besides professional theatre, amateur theatre has played an important role in the Czech theatre culture (see e.g. amateur theatre enthusiasts Petr Lébl and Jan Antonín Pitínský became leading directors in professional theatres; cooperation of progressive theatre professionals of the 1980's with amateurs). Archives of individual amateur companies were gathered together by the authors of a two-volume publication *Místopis českého amatérského divadla* and by the employees of ARTAMA, an organisation bringing together amateur theatre enthusiasts. The result of this effort is a database of Czech amateur theatre, accessible at www.amaterskedivadlo.cz. This database looks like a large and richly structured encyclopaedia, which gradually works through more than 200 years of history and present of Czech amateur theatre in the form of entries dealing with troupes, personalities, places where theatre was performed, festivals and their editions. Entries are interconnected by a series of hyperlinks, and complemented by visual and textual documentation, bibliography and references to archives where further material is stored. The database is searchable by the basic criteria of place, company, person, festival and organisation.

Archives of the other kind, i.e. archives which store the archival collections of a theatre on the basis of its affiliation to some type of a higher administrative unit, can be found on the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Czech Republic website (http://www.mvcr.cz). The ministry lists all the archives in the Czech Republic, as well as a database that allows their search. The database consists of data regarding the name of the collection; name of the archive, where the particular archival collection is stored; the size of the collection; place of its inception; name of the founder in the original language and spelling; time period of the collection; and archival aids available in the archive where the collection is stored. The database contains information on 162,066 archival fonds and collections (802,594.74 metres of archival material) and 166,821 archival aids. It deals with archival collections stored in the National Archive, 7 regional state archives (in 2002, collections from 72 county state archives have been moved there after their dissolution), 5 municipal archives, a few dozens of specialised and private archives, in the so-called cultural academic institutions (museums, libraries, galleries, institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, universities) and in the hands of private corporate or physical entities (archival material stored outside the archives). The database contains information on whether the individual archival collection is accessible, partially accessible or inaccessible to researchers (i.e. mostly not catalogued; the delay in cataloguing archival collections is unfortunately significant). The database is searchable in Czech, English, German and French. Archival activities are regulated by law no. 499/2004 Col., on archives and filing services, standardised according to EU norms. The umbrella organisation in the field of archiving in the Czech Republic is the Czech Archival Society (*Česká archivní společnost*, http://www.cesarch.cz).

The largest specialised archival and collection institution is the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů,* ÚSTR), which was founded in a vein similar to its foreign counterparts (most notably the Slovak Nation's Memory Institute (*Ústav pamäti národa*) and the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut pamięci narodowej*)) in 2007 as an academic and archival institute. Its main role is the academic research of Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes, as well as making available archives with a connection to both dictatorships (i.e. most notably the archives of the security services of both political systems). The institute is headed by the Institute Board, whose individual representatives are elected by the Senate of the Czech Republic;

this is one of the reasons why ÚSTR is the centre of attention of politicians and the media and why its academic activities are sometimes politicised.

ÚSTR's main archive is the Security Services Archive (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*). Archival fonds and collections are divided into fourteen basic groups (e.g. archives of the ministries of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, archives of the State Security Service (*Státní bezpečnost*) and State National Security Service (*Státní národní bezpečnost*), education, prisons, etc.). Each collection includes a brief description, including the type of documents it contains, and with many of them temporary inventories can be displayed immediately. Inventories include a name index, a subject index and a place index, which make orientation easier. The overview also indicates which ÚSTR department houses the given collection[7]. Parts of archival collections can be ordered by sending an e-mail to the USTR research department (besides its headquarters in Prague, the institute also operates a branch in Brno). In addition, special requests regarding the ordered documents and collections can be discussed with an employee of the institute or the curator of the particular collection. The waiting period in ÚSTR ranges from two to four months. ÚSTR employees also provide information on whether a certain archival collection is publicly accessible or not.

The Security Services Archive is currently in the process of digitising its collections (i.e. scanning individual documents), which can be accessed in the Electronic Research Room at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes.

The ÚSTR Archive publishes a professional journal *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních služeb*, which concentrates on original academic work of historians from the Communist period, as well as on the field of archival science, but also on academic work that deals with the historical development of the security apparatus, government administration, persecution of citizens and other topics related to the functioning of totalitarian regimes at home and abroad. ÚSTR regularly updates the information about the state of its archival funds and collections on its website.

4. Temporary inventories are still not exhaustive, and therefore, when searching for specific persons, it is useful to compare the Registration Records and Finding Aids – databases used for search purposes in USTR – with the so-called *Cibulkovy seznamy* (The Cibulka Lists), i.e. lists of StB collaborators (www.cibulkovyseznamy.cz). These lists were published in an unofficial way in 1992 by journalist Petr Cibulka. Although they do not guarantee a 100% accuracy of the data, and furthermore often fail to make a proper distinction between a person cooperating with the Czechoslovak secret police and a person who was being followed by this police, they nevertheless remain a valuable tool for the researchers of this historical period. In fact, they supply at least basic information about whether the person who is the subject of academic research was cooperating or being followed by the StB; this information may still not be accessible in ÚSTR's temporary inventory.

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Databases

National Theatre Archives in Prague (Archiv Národního divadla v Praze) http://archiv.narodni-divadlo.cz/

Archive of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Archiv Ústavu pro studium totalitních režimů) http://www.abscr.cz/cs/archivni-pomucky

The Cibulka Lists (Cibulkovy seznamy) www.cibulkovyseznamy.cz

Czech Archival Society (Česká archivní společnost) http://www.cesarch.cz

Czech Amateur Theatre Database (Databáze českého amatérského divadla) http://amaterskedivadlo.cz/

Art Institute – Institute of Theatre in Prague (Institut umění – Divadelní ústav v Praze) www.divadlo.cz

Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Czech Republic (Archives and Collections in the Czech Republic) (Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky (Archivní fondy a sbírky v České republice)) http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/archivni-fondy-a-sbirky-v-ceske-republice-386553.aspx

National Archive of the Czech Republic (Národní archiv České republiky) http://www.nacr.cz/

Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů) www.ustrcr.cz

Translated by Blanka Zahorjanova

HUNGARY

At a first glance the question of archives in the context of theatre and arts history of the 20th century has at least two distinct faces. Firstly, how can archives be used as resources of history writing in the attempt to reconstruct an artistic event and its context – aesthetic, social and political? But also: how the archives themselves, and the process of archiving, repay the same amount of analytical and artistic interest as direct (textual) outputs of totalitarian systems.

In numerous post-1989 artistic renderings, the presentation of archives and of the processes of their coming to life function as powerful metonymies of the functioning of the regimes. Consequently, the imperative of (post)modern historiography to constantly reflect on the resourcefulness of a given resource rather than just using its content is in this case less a theoretical than a concrete task.

Coming to terms with the archives of this era is a process which has led to reopening wounds on personal, familial and macro-social levels. This process has two equally important, and painful, phases: one; acknowledging that such archives exist, and people close to us have been instrumental in their creation. And, two; getting to know the content of the records and trying to evaluate the consequences of the reports.

Certainly there are many different types of archives concerned, with varying degrees of inherent objectivity, yet in all cases the researcher has to proceed with heightened caution, as an element of falseness, unreliability or forced nature of the testimonies could always be present. A veil of lies, faking and partial truth was a constant requisite of both the creation and the content of these archives, to the point where the archiving process misses its primary task of recording the truth (or at least a version of it), becoming, with the means of irony, an anti-document, created with the purpose of hiding the truth or diverting attention from the important aspects, often as a way to protect the subject(s) or the creators of the record. Semiotically void, the archiving process often becomes nothing more than a self-generating 'process', producing useless signifiers, a cancerous accumulation, or simply 'shit', to use Péter Esterházy's visceral metaphor.

Archives on theatre

In the theatre historiography of a period with only sporadic audio-visual records researchers must heavily rely on reviews and still images of theatrical events. Luckily, in the Visegrad region archives of written accounts and images have been systematically collected and annotated from the 1950s, creating an institutional network of theatre archives which many other countries envy. Neatly fitting the institutionalised and centralised system of the communist information infrastructure, theatre archives seem offer the modern researcher the profit of the all-prevailing zeal for documentation without the moral and emotional burden of secret police archives.

However, traces of a documentation fetish gives away that here too the main purpose of documentation is not preservation but a tool of exerting power and control through information. The systematic folders filed in the alphabetic order of playwrights and theatre artists not only contain all the newspaper cuttings about a given person or performance but also many typed transcripts of television and radio reports and interviews, translations of the foreign language articles and very often machine-written copies of certain articles. These copies are not just great metaphors for a need to centralize information (in the convenience of a file) and to keep an oversized archiving team busy (unemployment did not exist in theory), but also of a certain distrust of the spoken language, as a written document can easily be used to testify also 'against' a certain person or event.

In the case of such an evasive art as theatre, written reports are both indispensable and dangerous.

And this leads into the core methodological question of the researcher: despite their relative abundance and verbosity, all the written reports of this period on theatre represent an overly challenging hermeneutical conundrum. 'How can we decide whose account we can accept, and whose is to be questioned? How can we investigate what cowardly, pre-meditated, cockeyed intentions lurk behind these texts?'[1] asks critic István Nánay, who belongs to the generation that experienced most of the communist period. He exemplifies the reluctance of critics to record what was shared knowledge between all of them and all the contemporary spectators who later swarmed the small-town Kaposvár theatre in buses and trains: that in the 1981 performance of Marat/Sade references to the 1956 Revolution abounded. This remembrance was forbidden at the time. 'Some journalists wrote only generalities about the performance. Others started beating around the bush. (...) The unspoken agreement seemed to

1. István Nánay, *The metaphoric language of theatre critics*, in Joanna Krakowska, Attila Szabó (eds.), *Theatre After the Change and What Was There Before the After*, vol.1, Creative Media, Budapest, 2011, p. 107.

work perfectly: what we do not talk about does not exist'[2]. This pact of silence among critics echoes another, much larger scale pact, which, as a one-sided new deal between party secretary János Kádár and the Hungarian people, served as the foundation of a milder form of communist regime from the 1960's onwards after the key culprits of the 1965 'counter-revolution' had been executed in silence: 'The people who are not against us, are with us.'

Despite Kádár's loosening of ties the secret pact between critics of deliberately 'mis-documenting' interpretations was still in function in 1987. András Sütő's play the *Dream Commando* (*Álomkommandó*) presents an allegory of a dictatorship 'set anywhere and everywhere it can happen', which the playwright masterfully blends with a (meta-) theatrical evocation of the Holocaust. One totalitarian regime follows another, and both are equally oppressive of humanity, art, moral and social values. Despite the many obvious theatrical references to the communist dictatorship of the 1950's none of its reviewers dared to put down what must have been clearly known by all the writers, critics, spectators and agents of the censorship which did not officially exist in Hungary. Yet when carefully analysing the radio and video recordings available, the laughter of the audience at certain moments, especially following the well-masked but still obvious theatrical references to the present situation in the late 80's, assures one that the pact of unspoken allusions was in place also between the audience and the mise-en-scène.

In matters of 'pure aesthetics', reviews must be taken with the same caution. Socialist realism being the one and only permitted artistic language, all 'unusual', 'formalist' or 'l'art pour l'art' or 'avant-garde' attempts had to be decried and marginalized in the recorded discourse. Often by deeming certain non-naturalist manifestations 'powerless', 'failed', 'empty' or partially disagreeing with certain aspects of a performance, critics managed to deliberately underrate the subversive potential of a given theatrical gesture.

Being less text-based genres, it is easy to see that dance theatre, puppet theatre, and different kinds of amateur theatre experiments, were considered therefore dangerous, both politically and aesthetically. As soon as the dictatorship solidified, all amateur, family-owned puppet theatres were banned, breaking an important performing arts tradition of the twenties and thirties, which was then also in line with the Modernist movements of the continent. Centrally controlled county puppet theatres were founded, exclusively following Sergey Obrazcov's[3] aesthetics. Later amateur and student theatre groups were refuges of theatrical innovation, until some were forced to leave

2. Ibidem, p. 106.

3. Sergey Obraztsov was the leading Soviet puppeteer and theorist, who founded the State Central Puppet Theatre in 1931 in Moskow. His theatre toured throughout the world, he also visited Hungary. The Hungarian State Puppet Theatre, which was for a long time the only professional puppet theatre in the country, was founded based on Obraztsov's model. His influence was immense on the programme and aesthetics of the Hungarian puppeteering during the communist times.

the country or fit in the establishement (like Péter Halász, who later founded SQUAT Theatre in New York, or András Jeles, József Ruszt, István Paál and others).

Since 1989 new theatre history writing has made a great effort to canonise these theatrical attempts as direct influences on the renewed theatre language after the regime change. However, in their case, the scarcity of documents and records makes this work fairly difficult. Either choosing to be in the shadow, or forced to be there by the powers above, the systematic archiving of amateur groups has not been carried out, except retrospectively and partially after 1989. Even today, as there has not yet been a significant rethinking of the collection mechanisms since the communist times, an 'archiving inertia' still mostly follows the channels of established, text and repertory-based organizations.

To conclude, one can say that both in the case of amateur and established theatre reviews, as first hand reports of theatrical events, neither were often not so much interpretations and judgements of taste addressed to the readers of the present nor the future, but rather apologies addressed to those who were themselves not spectators but observers of spectators, who were interested in preserving the status quo of a totalitarian regime.

Jan Jiřik describes very similar tendencies also in the case of the subversive Czech amateur theatre, distinguishing between resistant and protective functions of theatre reviews. He warns that: 'We can be sure that official reviews reversed its function and it has to be interpreted in its own context, as an original structure. And this is the crucial problem of contemporary Czech theatre history – the non-existence of context in Czech(oslovak) theatre during the era of totalitarianism. Another question: are we able to reconstruct the contexts of the performances of this time?'[4]

It seems that the restitution of such an interpretative context can be the only way of solving the complex cobweb of speech acts and deliberate misinterpretations lurking behind contemporary reviews. Although some set phrases, idiosyncrasies and euphemisms could be decoded as a reward for the tedious work by a contemporary historian of meticulously reading these texts, resulting probably in a very scanty 'dictionary' of communist criticism, one could never really be sure that a remark about the interpretation or contextualising attempt of an older performance would really hold water. The only more plausible solution would be to initiate another layer of interpretation and confront the participants of these events with the documents of their activity.

4. Jan Jiřik, *The Protective and Resistive Function of Theatre Review pre-1989, in Theatre After the Change 1.*, op. cit., p. 101.

This, of course, assuming they are still living and willing to engage in such a discourse. The Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute is presently in the process of recording a series of oral history interviews with prominent artists and reviewers who had personally witnessed these times. Naturally, these would only give small windows to the theatre history of half a decade, they are by definition very personal and biased, and, due to the rigorous process of oral history, it is not known when they will be transcribed and made accessible to the public. Ironically, when the ideological barrier has lifted, and first-hand witnesses are (more-or-less) free to say what they really think, the "memory institutions" lack the financial and/or human resources to operate the recording and documenting mechanisms which had been used so sumptuously during the previous regime.

Agents rising from down under

Getting to the core of the discussion of archives of the period one comes to the more delicate matter of the secret service files. For the countries to the East, from behind the former Iron Curtain, the matter of the these archives and the question of collaboration with an oppressive regime has been, and still is, the most painful point in the process of coming to terms with the communist era. Archives in this discourse are no longer signifiers of historic resources but they stand as undeletable evidence of lies, treason, dissimulation. The surfacing of a public person's dark past always represented a sharp break in the given figure`s personal life, identity and political career. According to one sequencing of the process of coming to terms with the past this social process requires two distinct phases: 1. Realising that the past has passed and is no longer directly affecting our present, 2. Coming to an understanding of how the past defined our present identity. This process is thus governed by the antagonistic forces of distancing and approaching which are also the main discursive strategies used both in artistic elaboration and the public debate.[5] The contents of secret service archives have mostly been used as tools of political blackmail, with a public person's secret service past turned against them to question the legitimacy of their present political mandate, even if democratically elected. We can obseve that the Hungarian public discourse is not yet done with the first phase of this process.

With these compulsions in mind, the individual choices are still various. Political philosopher Janos Kiss argues that the reason behind

5. Zsolt Bagi, *Testközösség és múltfeldolgozás*. (Body Community and the Elaboration of the Past). Kalligram, XI. 2002. "The most important insight of the process of coming to terms with the past is to understand that the past is not standing in front of us as an independent entity, that we are all parts of it in one way or another, that it defines us, we cannot circumvent its weight and power and are only able to work out our bits of independence from it in its cracks and fissures." http://www.kalligram.eu/Kalligram/Archivum/2002/XI.-evf.-2002.-oktober-Nadas-Peter-60-eves/Testkoezoesseges-multfeldolgozas.

the extremely polarized political discourse of the present is the missed chance of both right and left wing groupings after 1989 to come to terms with their burdensome past during the 20th century.[6] The left wing failed to refuse continuity with the Kadarian communist regime, while the right wing parties still nurture a nostalgia for the nationalist and racist regime of Miklos Horthy. In this context secret service files fuel a hundred-year-long fight between the two sides. Most polythologists agree that neither the left- nor the right-wing intelligentsia is willing to publicly admit some of achievements of the adversary regimes. Some examples could include the modernization results of Kadar's times, the economic achievements and relative freedom of movement in the 70s and 80s. On the other side in the evaluation of the Horthy regime it has to be appreciated that, despite the traumatized position of post WWI Hungary, it managed to preserve a core of parliamentarism until the very late in the 30s, despite the totalitarian temptations from both left and right. Today, the left wing parties are responsible for not realizing the differences between the shades of right-wing parties, not equalling the racist far-right with more moderate conservatives.

Right-wing affiliated press revealed in 2002 that the socialist prime minister Péter Medgyessy had been a counter-espionage officer in the III./II. section of the Ministry for Internal Affairs. Medgyessy admitted the charges but claimed that he had that his duties lay in the defence of Hungary from the KGB and securing Hungary's International Monetary Fund's membership. Janos Kiss claims that this, like many others, was a missed opportunity for the new socialist party to come to terms with this issue, but instead 'the left-wing propaganda machine forged a powerful hero myth around the prime minister's role as a secret agent'.[7] In the same year it surfaced that Zoltán Pokorny, the then leader of the right-wing Fidesz party, also had a dark stain in his family history: his father was an agent of the III/III section of the same ministry. Pokorny decided to immediately abdicate from his function of party president and leader of the Fidesz fraction in the Parliament, and abstain from politics until 2003.

Waiting for a masterpiece

The artistic elaboration of secret archives definitely offers more shades but it is not present in equal weight in all genres. Films have generally proven to be the very effective means of engaging a large part of society in the discourse on coming to terms with the com-

6. Kiss János, *Az összetorlódott idő* 2., "Beszélő", 05.05.2013, http://beszelo.c3.hu/onlinecikk/az-osszetorlodott-ido-–-masodik-nekirugaszkodas

7. Ibidem.

munist past in general, and more specifically the question of secret agents and archives. In this case the obstacles are not so much in current party politics, the bigger challenge is of finding the most suitable aesthetic means which would be the soil for a debate on the issue which is neither oversimplified nor exclusive. Despite very different attempts within different genres and dramaturgical patterns there still seems to be an expectation of a central masterpiece like *The Lives of Others* by Florian Henckel von Donnerschmarck.

Among a handful of others[8] two more recent works exemplify the possibilities and challenges of the medium. *Drága besúgott barátaim* (*Dear Betrayed Friends*, 2012), the first feature of the young writer-director Sára Cserhalmi, investigates the most representative dramatic moment of the archive issue: when the opened archives prove that the best friend was an informer writing reports about one's family. Critics seem to agree that what is memorable from the film is the great cast (György Csehalmi, János Derzsi, Pál Mácsai, Anna Györgyi, Imre Csuja, Zoltán Schneider) and well-shot images which give space to the non-verbal art of the actor. János Derzsi's motionless glass eye (a physical feature of the actor) becomes a haunting symbol of the traitor being unwilling and unable to face-up with the past. Instead of confessing and asking for forgiveness he tries to victimise himself, yet, finally, proves to be unable to live together with this moral burden. Reviewers, however, heavily criticise the inability of the writing to create an intriguing plotline which leads to supporting characters and subplot scenes floating inorganically around the main conflict, even if some of these are very well written and significant. Emil Keres, for instance, has a short comic sequence in which he impersonates a 1956 Revolution veteran (Gyula bácsi), offended and aggressive, demanding an immediate access to his materials in the archive about him and by him. Overly stubborn and proud yet he fails to remember exactly if he had written any reports himself: 'I just want to know which side I'm on.'

The film seems to be most heavily criticized for its inability to break free from the traditional habits of Hungarian art film cinematography: the slow tempo, the long shots, the non-dramatic plot structure and the undecided ending, which are disengaging to the majority of viewers otherwise interested or personally involved in the topic. 'The film keeps a decent distance from its topic, observing events like a disengaged bystander'[9]. Quite unexpectedly, a more successful elaboration of the issue follows a very different aesthetic tradition: the dramaturgy of thrillers and espionage movies. Usually Hungarian directors experimenting with Hollywood dramaturgy (both 'com-

8. Most notably Apacsok (*Apaches*, 2010, wrtitten by Géza Bereményi and Krisztina Kovács, directed by Ferenc Török), *Az ügynökök a paradicsomba mennek* (*The Agents Go To Paradise*, 2010, written and directed by Zoltán Dézsy)

9. Gyárfás Dora, *Ügynöklecke kezdőknek*, Origo, 04.02.2012.

edy' and 'action') leads to terrible results, but *A Vizsga* (*The Exam*), directed by Péter Bergendy is a refreshing exception. The film was awarded in festivals in New York and Chicago, at the latter receiving the Gold Hugo in the New Directors category. '[*The Exam* is] a film which combines the intricate plotting of a Cold War secret agent thriller with the serious undercurrent concerning deeper issues of personal loyalty versus the police state…It exudes a quiet confidence, remarkable in a new filmmaker.'[10]

Although not dealing explicitly with the archives, the film presents through a most engaging cat-and-mouse chase of how a regime obsessed with surveillance and documentation leads to an all-embracing paranoia after the 1956 Revolution. The mechanisms of observance and thought control, which certify the survival of an illegitimate political system, inject distrust and treason in the very depths of private existence, poisoning all human relationships, destroying all bonds of friendship, parenthood and love. The many unexpected plot twists, obligatory requisites of the genre, do not seem forced or artificial in this case since they strengthen the grasp on the atmosphere of the times governed by unpredictability and fear, giving the spectator deeper and deeper insight into the very theatrical nature of surveillance.[11] In this frame, however, we do get some glimpses of true selflessness and sacrifice, flickers of real emotions, which make the overall image more complex and discourage the one-sided victim-perpetrator debates.

This is how György Ritter concludes his review on *Our Dear Betrayed Friends*: 'The film could reach its true aim if there was a serious discourse born around it which would trigger the public debate of newer and newer questions in the topic. I suspect that the majority of the Hungarian intelligentsia will yet again skip this task even if in the countries to the West from us such a film would be accompanied by a long series of historical-sociological conferences. One of the reasons for this is that a smashing, deep film was yet again not born. But Our Dear Betrayed Friends is another step ahead for such a work to be born sometime. We hope this would come sooner than later.'[12]

Betrayed Sons and Daughters

The still-awaited film masterpiece seems to be compensated for by significant work on the era in literature. Gábor Kránicz sees the heightened preoccupation of contemporary Hungarian prose with the father figure as a symptom of the decay of the great sagas.[13] Noth-

10. Praise from the jury of the Chicago International Film Festival: http://ppmhungary.wordpress.com/2012/10/28/peter-bergendy-passes-the-exam-in-chicago/

11. For a detailed analysis on the theatricality of surveillance, observing withouth being seen, see the essay by Georges Banu, *La scène surveillée*, Le temps du theatre/Actes sud, 2006.

12. Ritter György, *Kémmorál*, Filmtett, 13.09.2012, http://www.filmtett.ro/cikk/3158/cserhalmi-sara-draga-besugott-barataim

13. Gábor Kránicz, *Az apa mint hiány* (The father as a deficiency), Új Nautilus, 13.10.2007.

ing supports this hypothesis more obviously than Péter Esterházy's *Javított kiadás* (*Corrected Edition*, 2002)[14], which was published as an 'appendix' to *Harmonia Caelestis* (2000), the novelist's monumental saga on the several hundred years of history of his family, a family that belonged to the high nobility in Hungary. *Corrected Edition* reads as a painful diary written by the acclaimed writer of the instant classic *Harmonia Caelestis*, who is trying to come to terms with the dark and until then hidden side of his father's past, namely finding out that he had been a secret informer. The reports written by his father accompanied by the comments of his various (often semi-literate) supervisors surface as an unwanted mass of texts – linguistic garbage, or simply 'shit' as Esterházy puts it – which are painful to read but cannot be left unread.

This diary-novel offers the reader a rare glimpse into both the text of the reports (which Esterhazy, the 'great copyist'[15] notes down and renders in a verbatim manner), and the writers own comments, his struggle to understand its contents and its implications, to fit it in the context of his previous image of his father. It is disturbing to read how the postmodern playfulness and a certain distance of the *Harmonia*'s language is cancelled by an invasion of a non-fictional textual past, demanding an involved and personal analysis of the father-son relationship, along the 'traditional' axes of morality, responsibility, truth, guilt or innocence. Thus the post-modern technique of textual collage receives here a new layer, alien to itself: a description of bodily and emotional reactions of the burdened reader/writer, which become so numerous that in a while the writer chooses to even abbreviate them, not very differently from the instructions in theatre plays: t – for tears, s – for self pity.

A feminine version of a similar elaboration of the hidden family past was written by Anna Koós in a book titled *A nem kívánt hagyaték* (*The Unwanted Heritage*), in which she is trying to uncover and come to terms with her parents' activities as officers of the State Protection Authority (AVH). In 1968 her mother committed suicide, but despite some vague rumours in the family her activity as an AVH captain was kept completely secret. Co-founder of the famous Kassák Studio and later SQUAT theatre in New York, together with Péter Halász, she was an important member of the underground theatre life of Budapest, until they were forced to leave the country in 1975. She recalls: 'My mother had committed suicide before we managed to found an independent theatre group in the Kassák House, before the authorities noticed us, or rather put us under surveillance without any authority to do so. Our harassment went on for six years, from

14. Péter Esterházy, *Corrected Edition, Javított kiadás: Melléklet a Harmonia Caelestishez*, Magvető 2002.

15. A symbolic event of post-modern Hungarian prose was Esterhazy's gesture to copy by hand the full text of the novel Iskola a határon by Géza Ottlik on a single A4 page overwriting text over text in 1981. On a more general level, Esterhazy has been repeatedly charged for a too heavy use of intertextualism, sometimes bordering on plagiarism. http://www.pim.hu/object.160510e6-ad4d-4314-a506-ba7306cf9f2d.ivy

1969 to 1975. The authorities deprived us of the right to perform publicly, they observed our everyday life and convinced many artist colleagues and young people of our age to submit oral or written reports on us. They listened to our telephone conversations, opened up our personal letters, stopped us from getting any jobs.'[16]
Her mother was arrested in 1953 and spent a year in prison, though the children always believed that she was in Moscow for a study trip. Given the silence and secrecy between family members for Koós, similarly to Esterházy, reports are the only way to gain access to the truth is through the documents in the archive, through the process of copying: I was not happy to gain access to the to me unknown part of my parents' life, if not entirely but partly, through the same kind of work my mother used to contribute to the working of this diabolic machinery. I am thinking of the part of her work when she had to copy the highlighted parts of the reports.'[17] And as sources for reconstructing the truth, she admits that these documents are very far from being reliable: 'The analyst must be trained in hell to be able to interpret the fragmentary transcripts of police questionings or notes taken in jails, since it often happened that neither the questioner nor the person questioned knew what the issue in question was.'[18]
Koós sees herself as a member of the 'scattered generation' who, together with many members of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde culture, were forced into emigration or silenced forever. Coming to terms with the role of her parents in the state machinery must also mean to come to terms with their direct or indirect responsibility in her and her generation's future life: 'I received a heritage which is shameful, one that makes fun of the child's love.' She admits that such process is of great difficulty, since there are a number of self-comforting traps that could offer an easy way out: 'You just couldn't know. This was the spirit of the age. You cannot write history from an armchair, etc., instead I was trying to dig out a valid and acceptable explanation from under the ashes of fanaticism, irrationality and stupidity.'[19]

Fragments of theatrical elaboration

Such a lengthy analysis of film and novel is necessary primarily because drama and theatre in Hungary is still missing a pivotal work addressing the question of archives, secret agents and communism in general. The vehemence with which the contemporary Romanian playwrights/theatre makers have turned towards the dramatic

16. Anna Koós, *A nem kívánt hagyaték*, Holmi, 11.2005, 1353, http://www.holmi.org/2005/11/koos-anna-a-nem-kivant-hagyatek

17. Ibidem.

18. Anna Koós, *A nem kívánt hagyaték*, fragment published in Szombat, Zsidó politikai és kulturális folyóirat, 02/2006. http://szombat.portalinternet.hu/2006/0602anemkivant.htm

19. Ibidem.

elaboration of the present Romanian identity and its strong ties to Ceausescu's dictatorship is now a generational trend[20], similar to that of the Polish young playwrights' plunge into the theme of the Holocaust. These are trends which cannot be observed in Hungary. There are lone works, but due to the differences in dramaturgical traditions between the writers, their age and degree of personal involvement into the times depicted, and a general disengagement of the theatre-going public with theatre as a discourse on the past, they are rarely theatre events which ignite a larger public debate. A certain traditionalism in theatre production and reception makes such attempts as Ales Brezina's documentary opera on the Horakova showcase trial, *Tomorrow There Will Be*, almost inconceivable in the present Hungarian opera scene.

On a more general level of elaborating the heritage of the communist dictatorship, György Spiró's (b. 1946) *Kvartett* (Quartet, 2003) and *Prah* (2009) present how deep the experience of the dictatorship is still nested in some people's mind, making them unable to break free from the thinking mechanisms they are accustomed to. In *Prah* Spiró tells the story of a middle-aged couple, born and raised under the communist regime, who had won the lottery, a situation they do not know how to handle and finally find the money more of a burden than a gain. Janos Háy (b. 1960) in A *Senák (The Senák)* (2004), written for a drama competition of the National Theatre, evokes the times of forced nationalisation in the 1950's with a bitter comedy about a young farmer who does not want to give his land and animals to the collective. The play gives a humorous and disturbing picture of the process of indoctrination and corruption, the mechanisms of the regime of destroying the human relationships and hierarchy in a village by turning people against each other, and a strong image of a family man unable to take a decision which would preserve both his manhood and the well-being of his family.

Primarily known as a novelist, Pál Závada (1954) has emerged also as a playwright in the past decade, with a sharp sense of history and time. His plays reinterpret the epic tradition of playwriting using Shakespearean and Brechtian structures and frequent songs as a distancing device. *Janka estéi* (*Janka's Evenings*) gives a cross-section of the Hungarian history from 1940 to the late 1980's, with a parallel presentation of a masculine and a feminine narrative and fate. László Dohányos is a researcher of folklore and a womaniser who becomes an important politician after the communist takeover and manages to preserve his status of a distinguished personality even despite his involvement in the 1956 revolution. For this, however,

20. Mainly plays and performances by Gianina Cărbunariu, Saviana Stănescu, Ștefan Peca, Alina Nelega, David Schwartz, Bogdan Georgescu.

he has to sacrifice and betray his Jewish friend, the submissive Adler in several different instances during the frequent historical regime shifts (Nazi times, communist takeover, 1956 Revolution, communist retribution). Contrary to Háy's broken father figure, who cannot make a good decision, Dohányos appears as a bearer of masculinity who just cannot make a move bad enough to lose his public recognition and appeal among women. The Choir, which is somewhere between a Greek tragic choir and an operatic choir, gives voice to this at the end of a sequence:

> This is too much for us,
> Yet we are not surprised. That this eternal
> Minister, who helped swipe his own party
> Away, then gave his name
> To the deeds of the people's oppressors,
> And did not have to leave his seat so far.
> (…)
> It could be someone else – but why would that be nice,
> If we have here our comrade Dohányos till the end of times?
> It could be someone else – but why would that be nice,
> If we have here our comrade Dohányos till the end of times?[21]

The protagonist in the title, *Janka*, is the feminine counterpoint, although a character of a strength and drive comparable to Dohányos. She was a photographer, research companion, lover and later wife of the politician and mother of his son, Michel, who left to France and has a male lover. Most of the scenes take part in her flat in the evenings, where she offers food and drinks to her male visitors, confronts them, and offers them advice, shelter or love. There are several flashback scenes in the play, yet the present time is set in the 1980's when Janka tries to convince communist party officials to take measures for the preservation of her late husband's memory, to name schools and culture houses after Dohányos, and help her bring his son back to the country from France.

The son, Mihály, who likes to call himself Michel, represents a clear break from the system of values, set of compromises and dubious morality of his parents. Janka uses all her connections to attract him back to the milder communism of the 80's and rehabilitate him into a strongly homophobic society through the work on his father's heritage, by doing editing work on a collected publication of his Dohányos's essays. He initially refuses this 'archivist's' task, giving word to a visceral refusal of his father's ideology, ethos and homophobic masculinity, which definitely reads also as a symbolic

21. Pál Závada, *Janka estéi*, Színház drámamelléklet, 10.2010, http://www.szinhaz.net/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=14

failure of Dohányos's so-far unbreakable communist career, dream of emancipating the village and preserving a macho status quo in spite of deeming the fates of friends and colleagues.

JANKA Your father's heritage should be made into a volume. His letters, his diary…
MICHEL I will not touch them…!
JANKA Don't tell me you are not interested.
MICHEL I might be interested… But I would just throw up every half an hour.[22]

The play, with its ironic tonality throughout, and the potential of quasi-operatic sequences that could be made from the rhyming choral songs at the end of the scenes (which also sum up the 'moral' of each scene in a tone of heightened irony), could be the basis of a greatly engaging performance reflecting on many aspects of the heritage of dictatorship. For this, however, a theatrical language should be found to highlight the creative and critical potential of the text. However, so far the play only lived a staged reading during the National Festival of Theatre (POSZT), and did not yet trigger the attention of progressive Hungarian directors.

It is striking to see that the most inventive theatre makers usually choose to write their own texts for the stage rather than working with a previously written dramatic structures. This leads to the birth of engaging and innovative theatre works, but sadly also means that some important and novel literary achievements remain unexploited on the stage: not staged at all, or staged by less able directors. This is why János Térey's taboo-breaking poetic text on the 1956 Revolution, *Kazamaták* (*Dungeons*) remained barely unnoticed at the Katona József theatre or Kornél Hamvay's *Castel Felice* at the Radnóti Színáz, about the surfacing and responsibility of secret agents, failed to leave its historical setting and speak about a very much contemporary challenge of our public life today.[23]

From the several performances made for the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution in 2006 it was only director János Mohácsi's show *56/06 Crazy Spirits Broken Armies* in Kaposvár, the text of which was written in collaboration with his brother, István Mohácsi, which became a true event in the public discourse, both as a trigger of a cheap political scandal[24] and as a theatrical event acclaimed by critics and other theatre professionals. For both, we can argue, it is the 'strong' theatricality of the performance to be held accountable, rather than the text in itself. In a monumental political tableau of the forty years of communism (in which the 1956 revolution occupies

22. Ibidem, p. 23.

23. For a more detailed analyisi of these performances in the framework of the process of coming to terms with the past see Attila Szabó, *Recalling the Revolution, in Theatre After the Change 1.*, op. cit., p. 128.

24. One of the scenes of the performance led to a short court case, as a historian, withouth seing the play, sued the theatre for falsifying history, in presenting a character similar to Ilona Tóth, a young medical student who killed a communist officer and was later executed. Her guilt in the murder is still heavily debated and the performance, though certainly using the aesthetic tools of grotesque and irony, was not taking sides in this debate but offering a possible explanation for her deeds in that tense situation.

a central role), co-writer János Mohácsi admits that the hardest part was grasping the essence of the everyday life: 'History is not for the stage: it flows and there are no dramatic clashes.'[25] Imre Nagy, János Kádár, Ilona Tóth and other important figures of the 1956 uprising appear in the performance, yet usually in very theatrical, hyperbolised and symbolic settings, often bordering on the sacrilegious. István Mohácsi admits that they were not interested in history itself but rather in finding theatrical equivalent of how a certain person would react in a difficult situation.

In their more recent work at the National Theatre in Budapest, *We live once or the sea disappears into nothingness thereafter* (2011), there is also an important theatrical attempt to capture the overall atmosphere of the suffocating years of dictatorship. In the last act living and dead characters have returned from the Gulag in Siberia. Yet no one, dead or alive, is allowed to call things by their names or talk about the experiences in the labour camp. A very tense silence envelops the stage for a long half hour in great melancholy, a silence of the unspeakable things, a silence of the banned memories, which served as a justification of the communist dictatorship.

25. István Mohácsi in a conference lecture in Budapest, 11.2008, Theatre and Coming to Terms With the Past, organized in the frame of the Contemporary Drama Festival Budapest.

MACEDONIA

An Attempt to Preserve the Passing Moment

Ivona Opetcheska-Tatarchevska

This paper is about the research sources, the manners of archiving performed pieces and the existent available data. With this respect, I will start this paper with a quotation from the book that was an outcome of a bilateral project between Macedonia and Croatia entitled "The Theatre as a Storing Place - Macedonian and Croatian Experiences" which was conducted by people some of which are involved in this project, too. In the papers considering storing history and ways to preserve "the passing moment", the multifold aspect of this issue was clarified by means of reading authentic papers of each of the authors, related to stage management, dances, scripts, performance etc. In on of her papers, the author says: "It is obvious that the theatre is a multidimensional game with the memory; it is considered as a storing place - lieux de mèmoire (Pierre Nora). Ever since Aristotle, the chronological character of the theatre has been closely related to "here and now", which sounds like it being in collision with the past as a function of the memory - something that implicitly is contained in the notion "memory". (Kapushevska-Drakulevska, 2013:73). Unlike the majority of art genres, which constantly offer their pieces to an ever-changing audiences, such as Michelangelo's *Pieta,* Dante's *Divine Comedy,* the church "St Sophia" in Ohrid etc, arts related to performance - plays, dance, music and the new hybrid genres such as choreodrama, physical theatre, body art etc. contain a kind of a time boundary, something that determines the performance. In which way can we fight the ephemerality and short- lastingness?

The theatrologist Jelena Luzina , in an attempt to define the ways of theatre memorization, says: "Is the theatre trying to extricate itself from history and history recording, or, still better, to completely leave its dangerous "shadow", striving to develop, promote and cherish its own, completely new memorization techniques based on visual, emotional and cognitive approach?" (Luzina, 2013:147). What kinds of memorization are there and in which manner are they organized? What are theatre archives like and are they the only reliable sources in this area of research? Following the data on one performance, we commence searching the data bases, the archives - institutional or personal ones - looking for witnesses…

Fact file about the theatre

On the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, theatrology as a science, with its procedures, tools and issues in the very "scientific" sense of the word, began developing relatively late[1]. What was theatre production like before and in which way was it recorded? Omitting the serious theatrology analyses related to the beginnings of the 20th century, the theatre production and performing arts can be monitored by means of several types of sources. Let me make it clear that performances dating from Hellenic and Byzantine period, the well known Scomrachy, the Bogomils and their dialect forms, as well as carnivals, are not included into this analysis, since this would take much more time and space.

Reviews. The first information on performances made during the period of the Kingdom of SCS (Serbs, Croats and Slovenians), excluding the preserved programs and posters (which, apart from information regarding time, staff and location, do not give any other additional data), can be found in the newspapers and magazines published in that period, where all the data regarding performances (relatively little, compared to today's production) was thoroughly recorded. As an example we will take one ballet dancer, Jelena Poljankova, who is exceptionally important for the development of ballet theatre on the whole on the territory of Yugoslavia. Had there not been an article published in the newspaper "Economic Herald" published at that time, which made a critical review of her performance in Skopje in 1923, this datum would have been lost forever. In search for this kind of information, if we leaf through these newspaper articles, we can always come across some interesting and useful information. In the periods to come, which seem easiest to classify by the structure of the society - the period of Socialist Republic of Macedonia (1945–1991) and Republic of Macedonia (1991-) - information on a certain theatre performance, critical review of the performance, an interview with the performers or the director/choreographer, all this information is available on the pages of the daily, weekly or monthly newspapers and magazines, which is the reason why they are all of crucial importance for us.

The disastrous earthquake in Skopje which happened in the early morning hours on July 26th 1963, left in ruins the buildings *Macedonian National Theatre* and *Drama Theatre,* which meant that all the archive materials in these theatres were simply gone. Therefore, most reliable sources of information (apart from the artists' personal

1. Master's Degree studies in theatrology at the Faculty of Drama Arts within the Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje were established in the academic year 1998/99, whereas the first holder of PhD in theatrology came in 2003. The very Institute of Theatrology, which operates within the Faculty of Drama Arts, started operating in 1999.

archives) are the critical reviews contained in the culture column of the oldest daily *Nova Makedonija (The New Macedonia)* which was first published in 1945. They were later published in the daily *Vecher (The Evening)* and the weekly *Ekran (The Screen)*, as well as in other culture-related newspapers: *Razgledi (The Considerations), Sovremenost (The Contemporariness), Teatarski Glasnik (The Theatre Herald), Kulturen zivot (The Culture Life,) Stremez (The Aspiration)* etc. In independent Macedonia the number of magazines drastically rose and accordingly, beside in the already existing ones, critical reviews were also published in *Utrinski Vesnik (The Morning Newspaper), Dnevnik (The Diary), Vest (The News)*, for some period in *Den (The Day)* and *Fokus (The Focus)*, as well as in some weeklies which were discontinuously published, such as: *Puls (The Pulse) Globus (The Globe), Gragjanski (The Citizens')* etc.

In his paper entitled "Various types of theatre critical reviews", Martin Esslin has defined the following types of review: 1. review providing basic information on the performance, 2. memorization review, 3. ideological or political review, 4. a review that follows a certain aesthetic line, and 5. impressionistic review. Macedonian reviews have practiced all the types of reviews, with the first and the last type prevailing, as per Eslin. A host of critical reviewers were permanently giving their opinions in the published media, evaluating and interpreting, from their own point of view, the performances[2]. Recently a current trend has been the authors' compilations of this kind of material: J. Kostovski - *Pieces and Performances*, I. Mazov - *The Stage and Life*, B. Ivanovski *From the Audiences Point of View*, Emilija Dzipunova *Macedonian Ballet Stage* etc. All these publications have helped theatrologists to track and identify easily the wanted reviews related to a certain area or a critic.

Memoirs and theatrographic studies. The second source available are the authoris' theatrographic publications where the author (most commonly directly involved in the theatre) offers his/her view of the piece or the area he/she is personally involved in. These are a sort of individual archives of the author or some others who had considered a certain issue. The way of preserving the performances was considered by the theatrologist Zdravkova Dzeparovska: "The theatre act, whether we talk about one performance or the whole repertoire in a definite period of time, after being performed, continues to exist in a form of fixed, frozen feelings recorded as critical reviews, considerations, shots or brain memory folders." (Zdravkova-Djeparoska, 2013:14). The last ones, the "brain memory folders",

2. The critic I. Mazov in his article entitled *What on Earth is Going on? Is There a Whirl on the Stage of MNT?* published January, 7th 1968, criticizes Kole Chashule's script for the performance *Vitel (Whirl)* which is considered to be one of the first modern scripts on Macedonian stage. The critic had obviously failed to understand the value criteria, finding it easier to simply reject the script and declare it inadequate and of low quality.

are basis for this type of sources. Unlike the approach present with the critics, this sort of publications contains a certain degree of subjectivity. They belong to the group of Eslin's impressionistic (auto) review. There are plenty of publications of this kind in Macedonia, but in order to consider all the types of performance arts, I will give an example from the field of music. The composer Ljubomir Brangjolica was present for decades on Macedonian stage with his operas, ballet performances, music for plays and TV programmes etc. At the fiftieth anniversary of his work, he published the book *Music - 50 Years with You*. In it he went through all his written and staged pieces, making comments on his creative process, his way of stage interpretation, his cooperation with other critics and the audience's responses, but all that through the prism of his own author's aspect. In this group we could mention the publications which compile, collect, and maybe, in some segments, even appraise the processes going on in Macedonian theatre. Particularly active and hardworking in gathering, classifying and publishing these materials was Risto Stefanovski, a long standing director of Drama Theatre in Skopje (1957–1983) and General Director of MNT (1983–1988). His presence in these two most important theatres in Macedonia put him in position to have a close insight of the theatre production. His bibliography on this topic is impressive: *The Theatre in Macedonia* (1976), *The Theatre in Macedonia from Hellenic Period till 1944* (1990), *From Heraclea to a National Theatre in Bitola* (1994), *Chronological Annals of Macedonian Drama and Theatre - volume one and two* (1968 and 2006) and many others.

Theatrology publications. With foundation of the Institute of Theatrology, serious activities related to Macedonian theatrology started. With this respect, we would highlight the publications and projects being part of a fairly ambitious operation programme. The passed years witnessed a great number of activities (designing the Macedonian theatrology data base, issue of the CD-ROM The Theatre on Macedonian Ground), conferences (topic-related ones - The Balkan Theatre Sphere, Intercultural Theatre, The Theatre and Identity, The Theatre and Memory), publications published in cooperation with FDA (Faculty of Drama Arts) (Ballet Dramaturgy - Sonja Zdravkova Dzeparovska, Dramaturgy Articles - Nada Petkovska, Balkan Theatre Sphere, The Macedonian Theatre: the Balkan Context etc. - Jelena Luzina, Architecture on Stage - Ljupcho Jovanov, Macedonian Postmodern Drama - Ana Stojanovska, etc.). The Institute cooperated with the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MASA), preparing the sequence of papers The Theatre on the Territory of Macedonia

published in the 13th and 15th volume of the edition Culture History of Macedonia. The Institute also published a majority of monographies (Monographies on Ilija Milchin 2003, Petre Prlichko 2004, Risto Shishkov 2007). Of particular importance is the multimedia CD-ROM entitled The Theatre on Macedonian Ground which classifies, considers, analyses and makes comments on the processes and productions in theatre sphere from its beginnings till 2001, which was published in 2002. In 2003 this CD-ROM was awarded with the highest state award for scientific research work "Goce Delchev". From its foundation till now, the Institute has been headed by Jelena Luzina, whereas the team which constantly or periodically contributes to the Institute's work includes: Nada Petkovska, Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska, Ana Stojanovska, Sonja Zdravkova-Dzeparovska, Ermis Lafazanovski, Mishel Pavlovski, Nikos Chausidis etc.

Archives - types and contents

Systematic study of Macedonian culture within established archives has been lasting for a few decades, thus creating multi-genre material dispersed in various institutions. Here I have classified and considered diverse archives specialized in particular areas, being at the same time in close relation with the topic studied, i.e. performance arts.

Material related to performance arts - theatre, opera, dance. The above mentioned Institute of Theatrology collected and classified all the theatre performances (drama, opera, ballet). The data base contains 4500 performances thoroughly analyzed, dating from 1945 on, and incomplete data on 1000 performances for the period 1913–1944. There are personal data bases for more than 700 authors, bibliographic references for above 40.000 theatre critical reviews, out of which about 4000 ones had already been digitalized, and 7500 identified photographs. The Institute has a collection of more than 200 digitalized recordings of performances staged and played in Macedonian theatres or some foreign stages where some Macedonian directors had had visiting directing, as well as detailed information on all the festivals held in Macedonia. It is worth mentioning that most of the data related to theatre is available in this relatively new institution (compared to other institutions).

Materials related to ethnology and traditional performances. Ethnology-related materials and collections are contained in a specialized archive, where for more than 5 decades materials related to

non-material cultural heritage of Macedonia have been gathered and stored. That is the Archive of the Folklore Institute Marko Cepenkov in Skopje. This Archive contains 9 different types of inventories (photo library, sound archive, video archive, archive collection of drawings, a catalogue of recorded songs, decoded spoken materials etc.). The original survey of the Archive of the Folklore Institute "Marko Cepenkov" in Skopje proved existence of a collection of more than 6000 sound units, 200 video units, over 7000 photographs, 4000 slides, 25.000 melograms (music notations), 100 kinetograms etc. (the data could vary to a certain extent, due to lack of time for making an in-depth analysis).

Materials related to Macedonian language and literature. The Areal Linguistics Centre within MASA (Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts) initialized the project *Digital Archives of the Macedonian Language* which is specialized in collecting, cataloguing and digitalizing of books and manuscripts, as well as in promoting Macedonian language through the power of the word. This project was accomplished in conjunction with the Institute for Archiving and Researching Music, part of the Faculty of Music Arts with the Ss Cyril and Methodius Univeristy in Skopje. This Institute ceased existing as an Institute in 2012. Namely, the Ministry of Culture made a Decision according to which an institution in charge of collecting, storing and protecting materials associated with Macedonian language, in compliance with the Law on Protection of National Heritage, shall be *The Institute of Macedonian Language Krste Petkov Misirkov - Skopje*, which since 2010 has been involved in a massive project for digitalization of the 9 types of data bases in their archives, protected ex lege (by Law).

Materials related to music and music pieces. Most accurate storing of the audio, i.e. music materials was performed by the *Institute for Archiving and Researching Music* established in September 2000 within the Faculty of Music Art, which mysteriously ceased operating in 2012. This is the only institution founded with the purpose of digitalizing audio-visual cultural heritage. The activities of this institution were in direction of transferring the analogue audio-video materials, photographs and other graphic materials (kinetograms, melograms etc.) in digital format according to IASA/04 standards. The archive also owns some completely digitalized collections (*Firfov's collection* 1362 traditional songs and dances and 383 transcriptions of Macedonian folk songs;) *Badev's Collection* 159 songs, *Vido-*

evski's Collection 3600 minutes of spoken material with Macedonian dialects, sayings, customs; *Brzanov's Collection* of songs, speeches, customs and 68 transcriptions, *Penushliski's Collection* 3.300 minutes of spoken material, songs, a description of traditional music instruments, customs etc.).

Materials related to culture. In the whole system of archiving the cultural heritage, MASA (Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts) participated with their Archive founded in 1967. Their archive has archives material from 15 bigger research projects from the field of history, literature, ethnology, folklore, linguistics, visual arts, architecture, music, law, economics, medicine, heraldry, biology etc. The Archive's library in MASA contains more than 75.000 books, 321 rare books, 183 microfilms, 81 recording tapes, 250 musical manuscript, 122 individual collections of archive documents, 12.000 photographs, as well as a collection of paintings and sculptures. The oldest item owned by the Archive is an old Slavic document which dates from the 14th century, whereas most of the other materials date from the 19th and the 20th century. The documents and the manuscripts are in a few different languages: Macedonian, Old-Slavic, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, French, English etc.

Apart from the above listed archives, in the group of Archives which can be a basis for research of the performed arts is also the Archive of Macedonia, as a most significant State institution for storing and gathering data. Other important archives are the smaller Archive of the city of Skopje, the National and University Library St. Climent Ohridski which contains items divided into several classes. The collections owned by the theatres and the only Museum of MNT are of unique significance. They were opened literally a few months ago. Here we could also mention the Archives of some greater publishing houses such as *Nova Makedonija (the New Macedonia)*, the majority of private archives etc. We will round up the list here, although it does not mean an end of the list of institutions and individuals who could offer precious materials in the field of study of performing arts.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that with every rise of the curtain an artistic act begins, and by dropping the curtain the text is lost forever, we tried to highlight the possible sources for reconstruction of a theatre performance, of a different approach to it. Of course, there was neither

space nor an opportunity to write here about the reconstruction methods. The multitude of sources which help us to return to the play are different, but that discursive variation of materials helps us to return to the performance and to try to interpret and study it. In this respect, by means of selection, the most significant sources and institutions were shortlisted - Archives which treat this material. This list is much longer though, but that would be material for another broader and additional research.

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Translated by Marija Avshar

POLAND

Archive as a Public Institution

Marta Bryś

Archives have always existed and collected materials considered to be period pieces, or those which could constitute an important element of the identity of future generations (e.g. collections of works of art), but they also consisted of what might have been needed in the near future (e.g. documents). Therefore one can talk about two types of archives - the first, temporary, whose collections are important here and now, and the second type which includes collections of timeless value. Over time, however, materials collected in the archives ceased to attract attention, lying in storehouses as evidence of the past, a bygone era, etc. The performative turn rediscovered the significance of archives, their critical and research potential. Archives have become an invaluable source of knowledge not only about the image of the past, which can be deduced from the material at the level of classification – what was considered important and what has been lost, and therefore completely forgotten. The collected artefacts are currently the only stable point from which the past can be recreated. Classified archives carry a particular critical potential. This fact also determines their political importance and their impact when they are declassified.

The definition covers a few examples of archives in Poland - political, historical and artistic ones (though these categories are linked together). This brief combination clearly Wojny Staregi indicates that that the archive does not represent a value in itself for the institution, hence the reference to the institutes and not the archives themselves. Institutes conduct extended operations, which aim to not only share the contents of the archives, but to promote and demonstrate their research and critical potential. What is characteristic of the twentieth century Polish archives primarily the fact that they allow for the restoration to the national memory of forgotten events, as well as unravelling and correcting an image of the past and complementing historical knowledge in social disputes.

Institute of National Rememebrance

The Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) – The Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation – was founded in 1999 as a centre of an educational archive with investigative powers. The main issues addressed by the institute are the collection and management of documents from the security organisations of the Communist period, and the prosecution of Nazi and Communist crimes. According to statute, the subject of research of the Institute are, among others: crimes committed by the civil and military apparatus of the Third Reich in occupied Polish territories, deportation to concentration camps, deportations of Home Army soldiers and other independence organizations; the people of the Polish Eastern Borderlands of the Second Republic into the Soviet Union; the pacification of the Polish lands between the Vistula and the Bug River in the years 1944–1947 by NKVD units. In these areas the work conducted is related to the collection of documents and their historical handling. The Institute has its subdivisions in several Polish cities, which focus on local statutory issues. IPN publishes its own newsletter, books related to materials collected in the archives, organizes conferences and supports research projects related to its activities.

Under the act of Disclosure of Information, the IPN was given some of the documents produced during the communist period – archival resources and a catalogue of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, the former ministry of interior of the communist era, resources of the Military State Security Authorities lent by institutions and military archives, and the relevant records from the State Archives, courts, prosecutor's offices and prisons. These documents were not complete as a large amount of material had been destroyed; mostly burned by the services of the communist era. The resources are divided into open and secret. The open documents include those of a political and historical value (contracts, decrees, Party declarations, speeches of state leaders, etc.). The secret documents include data and reports submitted by individuals who cooperated with the Security Service as secret collaborators; it is one of the most controversial topics connected with the IPN. The social debate oscillated around two demands: on the one hand there was a call for transparency from IPN, in the fashion of the Czech Republic, which have agreed to decommunization and disclosure of communist archives, on the other hand it was suggested that disclosure of resources would seriously disturb the stability of the country because many communist agents took high state and

clerical positions after 1989. After 2000, several spectacular vetting trials took place, some were even broadcast on Polish Public Television (the trial of Zyta Gilowska, for example). During the vetting trials, documents from the archives of IPN were examined, and hearings of both the vetted person and living former officials of the State Security Service were held; this issue caused the most ethical doubt. In 2005, there was a leak from the Institute of National Remembrance, a well-known, right-wing journalist Bronisław Wildstein copied the data files of secret collaborators and published it on the Internet as the so-called "Wildstein list". There were 240,000 names on the list. Not only collaborators, but also persons under surveillance (many of whom later received the status of a "victim" by vetting trials). The case shocked the public, causing extreme reactions. No substantive analysis of data meant that each name on the list was suspected of collaborating with the communist apparatus.

The IPN authorities, whenever there is an election, are a subject to a different party in power. Depending on the political orientation of a chosen party, IPN is the subject of dispute with regard to the disclosure of the collaborators. The most serious problem in the evaluation of these documents is the fact that the IPN is not able to definitively determine if, and to what extent, the document was crafted by the Security Service; whether the data pertain to fictitious persons, and to what extent they indicate an intensive cooperation with the authorities. And ltimately, disclosure of the names only places high-ranking communist officials and active collaborators on the same shelf as ordinary citizens, blackmailed and forced to submit harmless reports.

CRICOTEKA
Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor

"Living Archive" was founded in 1980 in Kraków by Tadeusz Kantor whose aim was to collect all the information about the artist himself and his art (both theatre and painting). The venue, in addition to functioning as an archive, also fulfilled the role of the gallery space and a place for play rehearsals. For Kantor, Cricoteka was not only an autonomous institution, but also a place obtained from the City of Krakow to use after many years of effort, which became the seat of the Cricot 2 Theatre.

The archive collection includes Kantor's manuscripts, reviews of performances, photographs of rehearsals and performances, interviews

with Kantor, comments for exhibitions, audio and video conferences and press releases, also documenting meetings with Kantor, scientific texts of Kantor's artwork, posters, playbills, exhibitions catalogs, performance programs. Furthermore, the collection of Cricoteka includes original works of Kantor - objects and props from performances, costumes and boxes in which they were transported during the tour. The structure of the archive and its operation has been precisely defined by Kantor in the text "About Cricoteka". Kantor wanted to create a space that would serve the education of future generations through sharing of collected data, but would also become an artistic inspiration after his death. Currently the archive serves a scientific and educational purpose, and as a gallery – in the basement of Cricoteka regular exhibitions of works of Kantor are organized, available to the public. The archive is open to all, admission to the exhibition is free of charge.

The materials in the archive are handled separately, any filing applies, for example, to specific performances (i.e. all the reviews of "The Dead Class"). This type of leaving raw materials does not impose any interpretation, Cricoteka does not develop critical texts, but only catalogues them. The collection, handled in such a manner, enables not only the reconstruction of certain scenes from performances, but most of all reconstruction of Kantor's reception in Poland and abroad. The current collections are estimated at: Kantor's texts, reviews and articles: about 40,000; about 20,000 photographs and approximately 2,500 audio and video recordings. The ongoing process of digitization of the collections and transferring them to digital media is aimed at enhancing access to Kantor's legacy. In 2001 Cricoteka – in collaboration with Ossolineum Publishing – has released three volumes of Kantor's collected writings, including the scores for plays, as well as texts and manifestos that Kantor wrote while working on new productions. In addition, Cricoteka issues its own publications, mostly related to the documentation of a given period of Kantor's creative activity. It also sells original posters and playbills for plays and video recordings of performances Kantor, and documentaries about Cricot 2 Theatre.

For several years Cricoteka has changed its profile, as a result of the construction of Tadeusz Kantor museum in Cracow. The museum will have exhibition space capable of presenting most collections. The nature of the archive will remain unchanged, as well as its educational and research objectives, however, the activity of the institution will be extended to workshops conducted by actors of

Cricot 2 Theatre, exhibitions of artists associated with Kantor, theatrical presentations, educational projects, etc.

The Grotowski Institute

In contrast to Kantor, Jerzy Grotowski did not leave instructions for documenting his legacy, nor did he treat his archive as "a work of art". He cared only for appropriate handling and releasing documentation relating to its activity. There is a document in the Institute by which the Centre obliged to take care of Grotowski archive was appointed:

> In October [of 1984] The Programme of The Wrocław Second Studio was ready, which inter alia postulated a proper preservation of the legacy of the Laboratory: Taking over the site of the Laboratory Theatre, the WSS undertakes to care for the remaining documentation and the items that have acquired historical value, such as: costumes, props, films, programmes, photographs. The WSS, with the professional help of specialists, will secure these remnants and appoint a historical-research department, whose work will aim to catalogue the existing documentation of the history of the Laboratory Theatre, and to make it available to all interested parties. The WSS will also appoint a Public Research Council, which will co-operate in the sorting of the remaining materials of the Laboratory Theatre and will seek the most appropriate way to transform this department of the WSS into an independent institution... The Research Council will be obliged to look after the collected documentation, ensuring that none of its parts is destroyed, lost, or deformed. This will apply to any document, item, note, or recording made before 31st August 1984.

The collections in the archives of the Grotowski Institute come from the Department of Archive and Documentation Centre for Study of Jerzy Grotowski and the Cultural and Theatrical Research in Wrocław, which in turn were inherited at the time of its establishment in 1990 from the Documentation Centre of the Laboratory Theatre. The Institute in Wrocław does not function as an archive in the traditional sense. The collections include audio and video recordings, Grotowski's texts, records, notes, photographs of performances, reviews, critical essays and scholarly publications. The Institute cares for regular resumptions and critical editions of Grotowski's texts, the latest is "Grotowski - collected works".

A separate field of the Institute's activity is regular theatre workshops for acting and music. Workshops are run both by artists associated with Grotowski (including Rena Mirecka) and those who are inspired by his art. Workshops are one of the most recognisable activities of the Institute and have attracted attention from both Polish and foreign participants around the world.
The Institute is committed to the goal of promoting and maintaining knowledge of Grotowski, but nonetheless it expands into scientific and cultural activities in a broader sense. The Institute holds conferences devoted to, or with the participation of other artists (Tadeusz Kantor, Anatoly Vasiliew), and regularly publishes books about artists associated with Grotowski, as well as holding scientific conferences.
The Institute is a publisher of a theatre magazine, "Didaskalia", which analyses theatre in Poland and Europe from the perspective of different research theories. It also publishes its own internet journal, "Performer", devoted primarily to Grotowski's work. This publishes archive materials as well as news on the latest developments in critical work on Grotowski.
ZAR Theatre also operates within the Institute, led by stage director and the general manager of the Institute, Jarosław Fret. A successful company, inspired by the thought of Grotowski, their performances have been staged around the world including the prestigious Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute

Established in 2003 on the initiative of Maciej Nowak and Dorota Buchwald, it was meant to be a place where Polish Actors Association archives could be gathered. Gradually, the Institute came to serve as the place where documents related to the life of theatre in Poland were collected. Currently, the resources of the Documentation Department of the Institute include over 8,000,000 clippings, 2,000,000 photos, 4,000 posters, 800,000 memorabilia, documents and theatre programs, as well as much material from the private archives of artists provided by the family and heirs. The Theatre Institute is the only institution in Poland which essentially studies all materials related to the Polish theatre from the subject matter perspective. Apart from its archive, the Institute led by current director Dorota Buchwald expands its field of activity through, for example, the organisation of conferences on a variety of issues in the field of theatre – such as "Another scene: woman in the history and

contemporary Polish theatre" – and publishing books about theatre. Recently, the Institute has also started an artistic programme, organising staged-readings (a series on dramas of Juliusz Słowacki, including directors such as Weronika Szczawińska, Krzysztof Garbaczewski, Michał Zadara, Paweł Passini), experimental theatre ("Women's Choir" by Marta Górnicka), as well as plays and educational activities for children ("Playground of Jan Dorman"). The Institute also supports the education of young critics in the "New Critical Force" project, where young Polish critics review performances in their cities. In addition, meetings with artists of the theatre which are open to the public regularly take place. The Institute also performs research projects by scientists who can step beyond the academics and appeal to a wider, more diverse audience. A wide range of activities of the Institute has often been controversial, e.g. the recent discussion on its profile and alleged politicisation (in the case of "Another scene" there were claims that it promoted gender and queer theory, while a number of topics from the history of Polish theatre were still unprocessed).
The Institute also runs the only theatre website in Poland; www.e-teatr.pl, where all reviews from across the whole country are published, along with current information about theatre life in the country, announcements of opening nights, festivals, and other theatrical events. The website also publishes digitalised materials, such as theatre programs, posters, playbills and detailed documentation of reviews, coupled with the performances. By 2011 the Theatre Institute was also the organiser of the largest presentation of performances from around the country in Poland: Warsaw Theatre Meetings. The festival program was prepared by the staff of the Institute on the basis of watched opening nights in the country. In 2012 the prestigious project was given the leadership of the current director of the Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw.

Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

This Institute was founded in 1947 following the restructuring of the Central Jewish Historical Commission, acting at the behest of the Central Committee of Jews in the Polish Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. Originally the main purpose of the study was the Holocaust and its issues. It was not until the early 90s when the topics of its research became more diverse. The Institute conducts extensive activities including publication, exhibiting, documenting and educating. The archives of the Insti-

tute are one of the richest sources for researching the history of Jews in Poland. Its collection includes documentation of organizations such as the Central Committee of Polish Jews, Joint, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and Society for the Propagation of Work among the Jews. The library, which currently has more than 70,000 volumes, is the largest collection of historical and contemporary publications on the history, culture and religion of the Jews. It continues the tradition of the Main Judaic Library, a source of its many publications. A collection of reports has 6967 archival units and 346 memoirs. The archive is still collecting – but now on a much smaller scale – documents and reports on the history of Jews in Poland. Almost half of the collection consists of books and magazines in Hebrew and Yiddish. On its website the Institute provides information collected in the archive in a form of a directory divided into Polish towns and villages where there were villages and Jewish communities. It is the only institution in Poland documenting the Jewish presence in the Polish territories. At the same time the institute conducts educational activities – publishes newsletters, quarterly journals, supports research, organizes exhibitions in which, among other things, the works of Jewish artists are shown (permanent exhibitions, temporary and intended to be lent). Simultaneously it maintains a highly scientific nature, not engaging directly into political or ideological issues. The Institute supports all initiatives of the Jewish community in Poland, and events associated with this culture, which continuously attract a lot of attention in Poland. Through its collections and activities, the Institute preserves the memory of the Jewish communities living in Poland, making the resources available for research purposes. The Institute is also involved in the organisational and merit-oriented activities of the newly established Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which by 2014 will have a permanent exhibition, and currently presents temporary exhibitions. The Institute is funded by the public.

Conclusion

These selected examples are an attempt to show the specificity of Polish archives and their distinguished role in the public space. It is also important to remember hundreds of smaller archives operated by institutions such as theatres, where the theatre's work is documented – opening nights, interviews, reviews, photos, etc. Their resources are an invaluable source of information for historians of the theatre. However, apart from the Institute of National Remem-

brance there are also the so-called state archives, which also contain materials of the communist regime (the Party, the government, the censorship). Along with information on the performances of the period of communist Polish People's Republic, they are an invaluable source of information about the political context of performances and the political situation of artists in this period in Poland.

Translated by Magdalena Bazylewicz

ROMANIA

In the absence of a Theatre Institute or any similar institution in Romania, theatre archiving doesn't exist as a regular, coherent practice of preserving the artistic legacy (in terms of working processes and products). Unfortunately Romania has a long and constant tradition of ignoring its cultural legacy, and theatre is no exception. The dismantling of the archives belonging to public theatres (those that still exist are, with few exceptions, chaotic and disorganised), the restricted access to the archives of the former secret police (Securitate)[1] and other political institutions under Communism, and the subjective motivations for the altering of personal memoirs and accounts for artists and managers active before 1989 – all make the question of archiving theatre a sensitive issue of politics of memory.

Archives, by their very definition, have an aura of objectivity, authenticity and truth in preserving the past, even when dealing with such subjective fields as arts – but what is usually overlooked when discussing them is that researchers and individuals working with archives are in fact the ones creating meaning; and meaning is often the subject of not-so-objective agendas.[2]

The Bucharest National Theatre has a museum of its own: actually, a display of costumes and props, photographs and disparate documents related to famous artists associated with the institution. A similar one exists as a department of the Iasi Museum of Literature. None of them have full time researchers, except the manager of the Bucharest Museum[3]. The National Institute for Heritage (http://www.cimec.ro) has digitalised the entire collection of the most important theatre magazine of the communist period, *Teatrul* (*Theatre*), in a not very user-friendly version; and has also created an online alphabetical inventory of artists, playwrights, institutions and performances active/ produced between 1944 and 1989 (www.cimec.ro/Teatre/Star_Home.htm). This data base has its origins in a project financed by the Ministry of Culture in the 80s, but after 1990 only a few of the subsidised companies have continued to provide it with accurate information. The small team of theatre researchers from the Institute of Arts History (under the umbrella of the Romanian Academy) publishes academic research articles in the internal

1. These archives include surveillance and collaboration files of many artists (relevant, for instance, for the rehearsing process in specific theatres of that time, and for the dynamics of social life in the theatre), as well as reports and informative notes on censored performances between 1948 and 1989, performances that – *because* they were censored – are difficult to document otherwise. In fact, the secret police was the best and most truthful arts critic, since its materials were not intended for publication. The restricted access – to these archives but also to those belonging to the National Archives, etc. – refers not to availability to the general public but to the arbitrary way in which researchers themselves are given access to documents.

2. More about the way archiving provides meaning and artistic practices in working with archives, in Matthew Reason, *Archive or Memory? The Detritus of Live Performances*, www.nyu.edu/pages/classes/bkg/methods/reason.pdf.

3. Ionuț Niculescu, from the Museum of the National Theatre Bucharest is also a historian, and published documents and historical commentaries in several series of the collection „The Library of I. L. Caragiale National Theatre".

journal *Studies and Research on Arts History. Theatre, Music, Cinema* from time to time.

The foundation that publishes the quarterly *Teatrul azi* (*Theatre Today*), one of the few theatre magazines in the country, has also published a number of books (in the collection entitled *Galeria Teatrului Românesc/The Gallery of the Romanian Theatre*) by or about established actors and directors – mainly of the communist times, sometimes in the form of lengthy interviews[4].

A number of researchers in Cluj, led by Liviu Malița, published documents related to and studies on censorship practices in theatre before 1990, also documenting specific cases of censored performances. Numerous PhD theses deal with theatre before 1990, but not all of them use original research and documentation, and only some of these have been published. The Theatre and Film University of Bucharest has published several collections of articles dedicated to famous theatre directors from the 60s. From time to time the National Television rediscovers its own archive of recorded performances which has not been yet entirely indexed. In contrast, the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company has a complete audio archive on theatre and circulates it both as CD collections and on the internet[5].

This is what the landscape of archiving Romania looks like: an empty space with random signs of actual life. With the exception of the online archive/data base of the National Institute for Heritage, access to the past is not direct and neutral. Instead it is mediated through the selection of information and subjective use of documents which are not always (almost never) directly available to the reader. This situation is not specific to theatre – or even the arts in general – but to everything related to the public (and sometimes private-) life of the communist decades, leading to a general practice of politicising memory[6]. It also reflects (in the opposite 'ideological' direction) the treatment, between 1944/1948 and 1990, of the archives (and by extension cultural and social history) dealing with the previous period. A period when the political affiliation of the artist had become a criterion of professional/artistic value, and the political 'engagement' of the artistic work was considered a form of aesthetic validation. This "politics of memory" leaves researchers with an emphasis on union and workers' theatre (extremely marginal before 1944, due to the low level of industrialisation), on minor directors and playwrights (in extreme cases 'invented' on the spot), and no actual data on the private theatre companies which dominated pre-1944. For the communist regime, the 'real' theatre was born in Romania after World War II.[7]

4. In societies where factual memory was subject of selective preservation (something that leaves no official, documentary trails doesn't exist…), personal memories can be placed on the same level as traditional archives.

5. The dynamics of publication is strictly depending on the approval of Copyro, the main collecting society for copyrights, which makes the whole process rather lengthy and expensive. The same kind of copyrighting issues are, in many cases, preventing the National Television from making public (at least through broadcasting) part of its video archive.

6. The most obvious example is related to the wide practice of disclosing names and files of Securitate informants in sensitive moments as part of specific political battles.

7. From a certain point of view, it was invented after World War II – the first decades of communism saw the founding of public theatres throughout the country (before, theatre companies or institutions only existed in a handful of big cities) and the emergence of the idea of 'repertory public theatre' itself, the extension of university-level training for theatre artists, etc. But all this was possible, in a rather short period, because there was already a certain tradition in professional theatre. Its whole history was re-written in the following decades, including the 'imported' Western (not local and popular) origins of Romanian theatre.

In the cultural field now, the interpretation/ politicising of the past is directly linked to the dominating intellectual narrative of 'anti-communism' – a general symbolic framework of reading the communist era as a time of 'external occupation' and total internal resistance.[8] Even if in communist Romania there was actually no intellectual opposition and very few dissidents, post-1990 intellectuals have strongly supported the idea of a 'resistance through culture': practising an apolitical form of high culture, as unconnected to reality as possible, positioned as an active form of protesting against the political system. By virtue of this definition all established artists and intellectuals are considered as 'anti-communists' after 1990 – and their work is usually read exclusively through this frame. As a direct consequence, the archiving of artistic practices such as theatre tends to emphasise and be focused on the 'opposition' factor, especially through the careful selection of materials made available.[9] The history of the Romanian theatre during Communism is generally presented as a constant one-to-one struggle between the 'good' artists and the 'bad' propaganda machine. In this interpretation, the high artistic quality makes everybody an 'anti-communist', no matter the actual actions of the person in question, his/her personal history and the general context of a continuum between political position and aesthetic validation[10].

This post-factum ideological interpretation of the past strongly affects that part of established artists' work with genuine leftist/ Marxist inclinations. It happens with the first period of activity of directors such as Gheorghe (György) Harag who was originally interested in contemporary plays with assumed social impact, before becoming known as the director of classical stagings, such as *The Cherry Orchard.* Or Radu Penciulescu and his performances made in the 50s[11], which culminated with a staging of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* in 1972[12]. The lack of organisation and even availability of archived materials which are difficult to place in their proper context, alongside the predisposition towards an 'anti-communist' reading, also affects the methodology possible for researchers. Facts that are informal common knowledge among theatre scholars and the theatre community are generally missed by researchers in cultural or political history. Artists praised by their former students, now famous, as good acting professors are automatically presented as 'great' actors themselves even when they were not. Actual reviews, testimonies or recordings being difficult to access, and the temptation to make conjectures too big. Known artists of Jewish origin protesting in party meetings against the new state policy are reconfigured as

8. The Romanian 'anti-communism' is a specific post-1990 ideology, forged by intellectuals, focused on self-legitimation (there was very little open intellectual opposition to communism before 1989) and nostalgia for the interwar Romania (more precisely, for the middle-class living style and cultural life of that time; in this understanding of it, interwar Romania is synonym with the internationally famous Mircea Eliade, Eugène Ionesco and Emil Cioran).

9. This programmatic ideological selection includes eluding elements like: previous involvement of artists in the far-right movement during World War II and their public political options in general; the artistic 'compromises' with the propaganda system; potential cases of collaboration with the secret police (some of them well-known but kept under lock by the theatre community); aesthetic 'compromises' (stagings of plays inconsistent with the apolitical aesthetic frame of the 'resistance through culture'); audience practices; the amateur and workers' theatre in general and the 'exchanges' between them and professional theatre; the collaborative mechanismsin the so-called special viewing of performances by censorships committee etc.

10. The well-known (at least locally) intellectual Monica Lovinescu (daughter of the esteemed literary critic Eugen Lovinescu, she was an important figure of the Romanian 'culture-in-exile' – she was living in France since 1947 – and one of the most listen to voices of Radio Free Europe in Romanian) even forged the untranslatable concept of *estetică* ('Aesthetics' reformulated as 'Eastern-ethics') for a sort of a parallel canon of 'righteous' artists and their work.

dissidents persecuted for their 'democratic' views, even when the actual context in the mid-1950s is that of long-term leftists losing their political positions in the process of the 'Romanization' of the party apparatus.

A total silence covers all theatre works falling outside the narrative of "high culture" – not only amateur or workers' theatre, but also the corpus of plays written before the 80s[13] and their stagings. When in 2010, director Theodor-Cristian Popescu started his endeavour to critically re-stage a famous communist comedy of the 60s, Aurel Baranga's *Public Opinion*[14], in what was to be an original performance with documentary and re-enactment elements, he faced numerous and sometimes insurmountable difficulties in finding archive materials on the first staging of the play and video footage of the author, even though Baranga was an acclaimed and well-promoted playwright of his period.

Nonetheless, even if the lack of interest in archiving, documenting and interpreting historical data seemed to be the general rule for a long time – for both authorities and public institutions. But one can detect a change in perspective and practices from several subsidised or independent theatre companies. On one hand, some public institutions have begun the process of digitalising their own portfolio of old photos and posters, and have even made their own data bases of performances public (see references below); an initiative with no financial or professional support from the central or local authorities.

On the other hand, archiving as an artistic practice has appeared in Romania as a reaction to the specific condition of artistic memory and its huge potential for manipulation. It is mostly a practice of artists and collectives working with marginal, atypical forms of theatre such as community and devised theatre. The most representative example is that of the Rahova-Uranus Project, an artistic intervention in a disenfranchised neighborhood of Bucharest which lasted for around six years (2005/2006 – 2011/2012). The team of artists (among them, Maria Drăghici, Irina Gâdiuță, Bogdan Georgescu) visually documented all their activity (theatre and music performances, workshops with children, open-air happenings…) and made this archive available online and through publication. The same happens with artists working in documentary theatre, some of them dealing themselves with materials from historical archives that they confront with their own documentation: for example, *Heated Minds* – David Schwartz and Mihaela Michailov's performance on the miners' violent intervention in Bucharest in 1991.

11. Penciulescu is widely acclaimed as the author of a revolutionary *King Lear* (in 1970) and an excellent professor, as well as for leaving Romania in protest for Ceaușescu's nationalist politics. He has never denied his (disillusioned) Marxist views.

12. *The Deputy or a Christian Tragedy* is a controversial play insinuating that Pope Pius XII knew and was indifferent to the Jews' Holocaust in World War II; it served as an inspiration for Costa Gavras' film *Amen* (2007).

13. The 80s saw in the Romanian playwriting a revival of the absurd and highly metaphorical language.

14. At the 'Radu Stanca' National Theatre in Sibiu.

For the moment, it's nearly impossible to imagine a profound and systematic change in 'official' cultural policies regarding the preservation of cultural/theatre heritage. It seems more plausible to expect these changes coming from some kind of a bottom-up strategy of the theatre community itself.

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SERBIA

What Archives?

Aneta Stojnić

Why do Archives Matter (a brief theoretical intro)

Before entering a discussion of archives, one needs to ask the question: what do we consider to be an archive? With this we already introduce the issue of selection. Selection is a key moment as the decision on what can, is, and shall be archived determines what is, can, and shall be studied. It determines what will be included in a certain history and consequently gain the status of "knowledge" as something that can be researched and studied.

The power over an archive, as the power over a history, lies in the core of all political power. This means that the process of archiving does not only record an event, but produces it just as much.[1] The mechanisms of archiving are the tools for production and construction of a collective memory over specific historical periods and disciplines of knowledge. Moreover, dealing with concrete material objects archives themselves are, in fact, the very locus of the collective memory, in a physical as much as a symbolical sense.

According to Derrida:

> "There is no political power without control of the archive, or without memory."[2]

Therefore, the archive is not a passive container, a kind of objective and neutral storage of history. On the contrary, it manages and controls the way history will be read and thus shapes the current political reality.

In his fundamental work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault defines the archives as a system of discursivity emphasising the relation between knowledge and power. This means that the archives as the system of discursivity, establishes what can, or cannot be said.[3] For instance, Foucault conceives academic disciplines, as discursive formations of systematic conceptual frameworks that define their own truth criteria.[4]

In other words, both Foucault and Derrida see the archive as a central metaphorical construct around which views on human knowledge,

1. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. Religion and Postmodernism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 4.

2. Ibidem, p. 17.

3. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 128–30.

4. Marlene Manoff, T*heories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines, in Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2004, p. 9–25.

memory and power, as well as the demand for justice, are formed. The archives function as mechanisms for articulating and controlling the past. In the archivist's history-telling some narratives are privileged and others marginalised. As Schwartz and Cook say in their analysis of "archival science":

> "In the design of record-keeping systems, in the appraisal and selection of a tiny fragment of all possible records to enter the archive, in approaches to subsequent and ever-changing description and preservation of the archive, and in its patterns of communication and use, archivists continually reshape, reinterpret, and reinvent the archive."[5]

It is important to emphasise that archives should not be understood as fixed, unchangeable structures, but rather open systems that can be altered. For this reason the work on creation of new archives, and re-articulation of the exciting ones should be regarded as an important field of contemporary political struggles.

The power over memory is the power over identity; the power over the fundamental ways in which society seeks evidence of what its core values are is in what they used to be. Memory becomes a space in which social power is negotiated, where it is challenged, denied or confirmed. By establishing memories, narratives, which are necessarily ideological in the context of the present time, are also established. This is why the space of memory must always be critically re-examined, deconstructed, and reconstructed anew. However, the form and the technical methods and procedures for construction of the archive are the ones that produce a specific context, even the semantic framework for the interpretation of its contents. In that sense we can say that, by the introduction of the forms commonly referred to as "live archives", digital technologies – the development of online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and the like – have radically changed the status and meaning of the term, even the relations of power, primarily in terms of breaking of the concept of hegemonisation of memory. In place of stable entities come flexible forms, within which the creation of documentation can be viewed as an intervention, where archiving becomes a kind of collective project. "Live archives" become a product of collectively formulated collective memory. Although, in a sense, we could say that all this is about opening up space for democratisation of memory, or at least of the process of documenting/archiving, I do not see the universalist claim for "objectivity" in it. Rather, the pos-

5. Joan M. Schwartz, Terry Cook, *Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory*, Archival Science 2: 1–19, 2002, http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/methods/schwartz.pdf 24.06.2012

sibility of obtaining knowledge relevant to current social reality. As Donna Haraway points out:

> "Rational knowledge does not pretend to disengagement: to be from everywhere and so nowhere, to be free from interpretation, from being represented, to be fully self-contained or fully formalisable. Rational knowledge is a process of on-going critical interpretation among 'fields' of interpreters and decoders. Rational knowledge is power-sensitive conversation."[6]

In the light of the above, we can expect that the field of theatre archives will also be a struggle for power over theatre histories, both on the local level (what shall become the national history of theatre) and internationally (where will this history "fit" in international context).

But Who Cares About Theater? (stumbling in the field search)

The problem of the archive becomes especially complex when we try to think it in the context of performing arts and theatre. Ephemeral in their nature, they are subject to the laws of the instantaneity and temporality of the specific moment in time shared between a specific and concrete group of people (performers and the audience). Therefore the "object to be archived", the "artefact" to enter the history, is already transformed into a document, audio-visual recording, transcript, catalogue, written review, critique, testimonies of the participants/witnesses, etc. In this regard the archiving processes of theatre and/or performance is closer to archiving of historical events than artistic works, as the artefact does not exist in its "original" material form.

For the purpose of this text I have put special focus on the availability of video documentation, as the most approachable format for documenting performances, and most probable starting point for deeper research in further materials. The other point that I wanted to focus on is the life of the archive: how it is it displayed, who are the users and how "user friendly" is the archives.

Determined to explore the policies, procedures, tactics, and above all the criteria and mechanisms extant in the archival processes in the sphere of contemporary theatre and performance in Serbia, I've armed myself with above mentioned set of theoretical (pre) conceptions, ideas and hypothesis to be examined. And then, I've headed for the field.

6. Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, in: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, p. 196. Here, Haraway makes reference to Katie King, *Canons Without Innocence* (PhD thesis, University of California at Santa Cruz, 1987).

In order to get the overall picture I've visited a number of both mainstream institutions as well as organisations and initiatives operating in the independent scene.
Majority of theatres have their own archives where the historical record of this or that particular institution and its past productions can be found. These can range from ambitious institutional representations like the recently opened (2010) Museum of National Theatre in Belgrade to the small but functional work archives of independent theatre organizations like "Dah Theatre". Although a thorough research of those specialised archival resources would be necessary in a larger study of contemporary theatre histories in Serbia, they will not be the subject of this text. Instead I shall focus on the quest for the sources that offer wider and more general context for the research of theatre in Serbia. Here I will give an overview of several representative and/or resourceful examples.

Museum of Theatre Art in Serbia

Firstly I went to Belgrade's Museum of Theatre Art (founded in 1950). It keeps the historical record of local theatre from its beginnings up to the present day. The museum's material is thematically and chronologically organised in several collections: photography; programmes and posters; scenography and costume; press clippings; artistic and memorial objects; audio and video archives; library and archives. Although I would consider the whole museum as a sort of an archive, surprisingly it has a separate collection named "archives" which consists of handwritten theatre plays, private letters, biographies and memoirs, but also administrative documents including documentation about the work of the museum itself.

The Museum collection is currently in process of being digitalised and a search of its partly digitalised database is available online (in Serbian). Regarding the display of the archives, the Museum of Theatre Art organises exhibitions mostly of monographic character, with occasional thematic events. The program of regular showings of video recordings of performances for the audience (so called "Teatroteka") was scrapped in the early 2000s allegedly due to the lack of interest of public. Due to the lack of space for a reading room in the museum, the library is not open to public, but functions as a resource available to researchers on demand.
Since the focus of my research of archival resources is contemporary theatre I've taken most interest in video documentation of theatre performances. Naively, I expected that the museum would receive

a copy of every recorded performance, in a similar way to National Library receiving a copy of every catalogued publication. Here I met my first disappointment. The collection counts has around 400 videos of performances, dating form 1959 to present day (2013), mostly from the '80s. Inquiring abut the selection criteria for the video database I was surprised to learn that currently there is no systematic collaboration between museum and theatres. The most comprehensive part of video collection covers the period from 1980. to 1990. when the museum had its own TV crew that systematically documented theatre premières. This practice was abolished due to lack of resources. Currently the videos are acquired by random gifts to the museum, the exception is Yugoslav Drama Theatre (JDP)[7], which still regularly sends a copy of each video-recording of their productions (apparently they alone take their place in Serbian theatre history seriously).
This seaming randomness in criteria of selection seams troubling at the first sight. "The weary archivist" is not too concerned about the choice of contemporary theatre pieces in Serbia that will stay recorded in the collective cultural memory. On the other hand, this can be seen as an opportunity, the responsibility for "booking a place in history" seems to be left to the theatre producers themselves. If archives are "battle fields" for power over history, the Theatre Museum left me with the depressing feeling that little of that power seems to be attributed to history of theatre.

BITEF

The next methodological stop was the office of BITEF. Founded in 1967. as a festival of new theatrical tendencies, BITEF has been hosting some of the most distinguished theatre-makers worldwide, and has become one of the most influential theatrical institutions in the country. During the times of Yugoslavia, BITEF also had a strategic value due to geopolitical position of Belgrade. Since Yugoslavia was a communist country, but was not behind the "Iron Curtain", it was the furthest point in the East where artists from West could go, and vice versa. In other words it was a meeting point. Since 1989 it has lost some of its international importance, but has preserved its local value as a place where current performances from abroad can be seen as well as put in context and/or contact with local theatre productions.
Nevertheless, the archives of the BITEF cover 45 years of theatre history and present a valuable research source, especially in terms of

7. One of the major theatre houses in Belgrade.

the relationship between local and international scenes. As a festival of new theatrical tendencies that cultivated vanguard approach to theatre practices it preserves the historical record of some of the performances and authors that have been considered "milestones" in international contemporary theatre history. And, if studied comparatively with the history of theatre in Serbia and ex-Yugoslavia, it offers the possibility for extensive research on the mutual influences between local and international scenes and could provide resources for historical research (and perhaps re-articulation) of the notion of a "local contemporary theatre" in an international context.

The BITEF archives themselves consist of complete festival catalogues, written and photo documentation of performances and other festival events and programs (discussions, exhibitions, side programs etc.) as well as the audio and visual documentation. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the BITEF festival, a collaboration with the Historical Archives of Belgrade was initiated by Jovan Ćirilov, the artistic director and the selector of festival since its founding. The collection – Belgrade International Theatre Festival: BITEF – became part of the Historical Archives of Belgrade. This collection consists of complete archives of BITEF festival from 1964–2004. Materials in the collection are available in all ex-Yugoslav languages as well as in English, French, Italian, German, Czech, Polish and Romanian. The database is searchable by ISAD(g) standard[8]. The Historical Archives of Belgrade is available to researchers on demand, and occasionally the resources from this archives are used for thematic exhibitions, usually during festival.[9] the foundation of the collection was followed by the monograph "BITEF: 40 years of new theatrical tendencies" published by the Historical Archives of Belgrade.

Annoyingly, the archival documentation of BITEF from 2004 until today (2013) is currently not systematised as an archive. It is not catalogued, organised as a functional database, nor publicly available. This post-2004 part of the archive is situated in the BITEF offices, and functions as a sort of a "working archive" for the festival staff. This means that if a researcher is looking for something specific from this period, the information can be obtained with assistance of a person who knows "which shelf it is on" (I also talked with Jelena Knežević, the executive director of the festival, who was very helpful), but at the moment there is not systematic search system nor database. BITEF does not currently have an archivist in its team, i.e. there is no one whose job it is to specifically take care of the archives. From this, we may or may not conclude that in an institution which already established its place in history, archives

8. ISAD(G) (General International Standard Archival Description) is an international standard which provides guidelines for creating the content of an archival description.

9. For example "Bitef Grand Prix" exhibition in 2007 or "France at Bitef" in 2012, exhibition made in collaboration with French Cultural Center in Belgrade.

are considered only so important that their turn to be dealt with comes once in every 40 years.

Stanica - service for contemporary dance

Having looked at these mainstream (archivist) institutions, I then examined the independent scene and "small scale" archiving of those contemporary performance practices that could be creating "alternative archives" and "parallel histories".
Stanica - service for contemporary dance, has a small but resourceful archives that comprise fully digitalised video archives (about 100 DVDs), as well as various print documentation on contemporary dance in Serbia and abroad. The video archives include historically important contemporary dance pieces from the 70s to the present day. The selection criteria is based largely on the self-selecting needs and processes of the archives' users, and Stanica. The archives of local and regional dance are built mostly through the "Nomad dance academy". The archive is free, open to the public, and available to all. It is mostly used for educational purposes by students, researchers, and young dancers who wish to be informed about specific productions from the past. The classification and cataloguing of the archives is currently in progress. This means that there is no searchable database (digital or analogue) available yet, and one needs to get assistance from Stanica staff members (I talked with Ljiljana Tasić who is currently in charge of Stanica archives), or simply to venture through the titles on the shelves alone. The plan for the future development of the archives is to structure it as a functional searchable database, as well as to sharpen the focus on local and regional contemporary choreographers. The main obstacle to completing this is financial, as funding is rarely allocated for the development of the archives. In the situation where the actors of the independent scene are constantly struggling for the basic funds for projects and productions, it is regrettably understandable that the archives are considered a secondary concern. On the other hand, without the proper development of the archives, there is a risk of losing a vast swathe of this valuable history.

Tiger's Leap in History

The project that deals with the problems or processes of history and archiving of contemporary dance in Eastern Europe (thus also in Serbia) in most developed way methodologically is "Tiger's Leap To

History" by Ana Vujanović and Saša Asentić. This project is conceived as "a method of reloading the history of local scenes"[10] i.e. a way to research local dance scenes of the 20th century, in a quest for the missing local history of contemporary dance. Referring to a Walter Benjamin's claim:

> "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'. [...] It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger"[11]

The authors of the project strive to historically (re)articulate the structures of the contemporary dance scene in Serbia and its position in the international dance world. I find it particularly significant when considering the subject of archives, because it deals with the questions concerning the hegemony of an "official memory", by creating a rupture in the smooth historical narrative of Western history of contemporary dance. A rupture that allows for excluded and neglected projects, works and authors from "the East" to reappear, constructing a (new) history of dance. The project consists of two parts that function like a two mutually supplemental archives: Tiger's Leap to History and Recycle bin. According to Ana Vujanović:

> "Tiger's Leap has been produced as a series of video interviews with actors, participants, and witnesses of local dance and performance scenes in different periods of the 20th century. The work is an open, long-term research without a predetermined list of interviewees. [...] the work has been constantly self-broadening and self-(re)defining, with more and more figures, who formed a web of cross-references of the interviewees."[12]

In this rhizomatically-structured, history-in-the-making a polyphony of narratives has been presented as a video installation, with an interactive element consisting of large sheet on which the audience was invited to draw map of their own versions of history of dance in Serbia.[13] The interviews are also available online (http://www.perart.org/savremeni-ples/tigrov-skok-u-istoriju/#)

The second archive of the project – Recycle Bin – presents a collection of unrealised projects and as such stands out as a unique resource of its kind. These archives construct history through stories about unrealised performances, unachieved manifestations and festivals, or festivals that had only a first edition, failed megalomaniacal projects, projects unrealised due to insufficient budget or infrastructure, collaborations failed because of impossibility of travelling, censored

10. For detailed information about the project see: Ana Vujanović, T*iger's Leap: A Method of Reloading the History of Local Scenes, in Leksikon Nesvrstanih Poetika* / Paralel Slalom, ed. Bojana Cvejić & Goran Sergej Pristaš, Beograd-Zagreb 2013.

11. Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken, 1969, pp. 253–264.

12. Vujanović, op. cit.

13. The installation was firstly presented in February 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina in Novi Sad.

projects and systematically forgotten projects, pieces and projects that haven't been contextualised during its time etc.
Concepts and ideas that have been excluded not only from historisation, but also from realisation and/or actualisation are also introduced into the archives. In this way authors of the project make clear claim that: "The space of art is not determined only by that which it includes, but also, or even more so, by that which it excludes." This stance is politically important as it can be applied beyond the space of art towards re-reading the present as consequence of deliberately "forgotten" events and actors in the past. Recycle Bin has also been exhibited as a video installation and is available online (http://www.perart.org/savremeni-ples/recycle-bin/).
I would emphasise this two-fold archive as an especially resourceful point of reference for a researcher determined to really examine the problems of historical relations, conditions, and formation of contemporary dance in Serbia. It is methodologically precise, politically thought out, and most of all it suggests a model for thinking about archives in terms of genealogy (in Foucault's meaning of term) and outside of the hegemonic narratives.
However, it is the responsibility of the authors as initiators of archives to find a way to keep them alive and well by continuous and permanent updating (which in this case means inclusion) – either directly or by reference to other ongoing projects of a similar character and intentions. If neglected these archives could, in the worst case, become the opposite: another fixed structure in which certain projects (even if institutionally excluded) are inaugurated to be memorised; or, at best, a model for inclusive, polyphonic, critical and engaged archives that works with the past for the present. I am not advocating the need for some kind of meta-centralised structure, but rather emphasising the importance of continuity, which is a major component of all archival work, since it is a work with memory. And memory never stops, even if it sometimes loops.

CZKD

Lastly, I would like to mention the upcoming "Context Studies Project" of CZKD: Centre for Cultural Decontamination. This project is not connected specifically with the performing arts – although CZKD also has a theatre production, and hosts performance programs – and is still in preparation so it may still end up in "Recycle Bin". However, I find it interesting to mention for its treatment of the archives. "Context Studies Project" intends to offer the use

of CZKD's archival resources as a method in a self-educational process. The resources are understood not only as the archival materials and infrastructures in a traditional sense, but also as a network: links and contacts with people who have collaborated or have been connected with the work of the centre since its foundation in 1995. In this way the archives of the centre will become a symbolic space for re-investigating the role and function of the CZKD today, by opening the new polemic space with younger generations who have a different experience and relationship towards its role in the recent history of the local scene.

Where are the Archives?

My initial intention in this article was to investigate the existing sources for archival research of contemporary theatre and performing arts in Serbia, and to outline what could be starting points for a researcher interested in these histories. Due to limited possibilities for a more comprehensive field investigation, at this stage I have focused on the sources that can be found in Serbia (and mainly in Belgrade). I would like to emphasise that research on archives and theatre history in Serbia can barely be separated from the history of theatre in ex-Yugoslavia. Therefore, more extensive analyses would have to include the field research of the archival resources in the whole region. Finally, I would like to emphasise that work with the archives goes way beyond research of documentation and artefacts. Nevertheless, archives are also people, discourses, embodied practices, and all of the scattered and unexpected encounters in the diverse and winding paths between present and past.

Links and resources

http://www.perart.org/savremeni-ples/tigrov-skok-u-istoriju/# Tiger's Leap in History
http://www.perart.org/savremeni-ples/recycle-bin/ Recycle Bin
http://www.bitef.rs/festival/?pg=simple&jez=en&smpl=festival BITEF Festival
http://www.arhiv-beograda.org/english/fond_bitef_eng.html Historical Archives of Belgrade
http://www.dancestation.org/index.html?detectflash=false Stanica - service for contemporary dance
http://www.mpus.org.rs/mpus/pretraga.php Museum of Theatre Art in Serbia

http://www.tkh-generator.net/ TkH Walking Theory
http://www.czkd.org/arhiva.php?lang=sr CZKD Centar for Cultural Decontamination
http://www.dahteatarcentar.com/ Dah Teatar
www.cedeum.org.rs CEDEUM Center for Drama in Education and Art
www.pmv.org.rs Theatre Museum of Vojvodina, Novi Sad
www.pozorje.org.rs Archives of "Sterijino pozorje" festival, Novi Sad
http://www.narodnopozoriste.rs/index.php?id=4082 Museum of National Theatre

SLOVAKIA

Conserving Fleetingness

Vladislava Fekete

When organizing an exhibition commemorating 50 years since its establishment in 2011, the Theatre Institute in Bratislava used the above phrase to point out the fact that "the task of the Theatre Institute is to conserve fleetingness", quoting what theatrologist Nelly Štúrová, one of the most prominent employees of what was then a developing Theatre Institute, said in 1971.

The Theatre Institute in Bratislava, as a budgetary institution of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, fulfills several specialized roles which make it an organization with a unique field of activities. Its basic expertise is focused on documentation, archivation, library and museum activities, education, information and publishing work, exhibitions, presentations, etc. At present, it is the only organization in Slovakia performing these activities in the area of theatre.

However, there were times, when theatre documentation was facing its extinction – when precious collections were moved to housing units, or similarly inadequate spaces, and were often unsorted and pressed into bags and boxes. Many of the exhibits would have seen their end had it not been for a personal engagement of individual people. Another threat was posed during the period known as "normalization" because of incompetent "experts" who were employed by institutions not because of their expertise, but because of their ideological merit and political engagement. The Theatre Institute took advantage of the social changes after 1989 and pushed for modernization and improvement of its repositories and collections. Today, these are the basis for research of the chronology and development of Slovak theatre since the foundation of the first professional scene in 1920. This period was only a logical consequence of the preceding decades of "pioneer-like enthusiasm" and mostly individual efforts by exceptional experts in the field who considered documentation and archivation of Slovak theatre to be important and who, struggling to deal with elementary problems, became visionaries building the first funds and collections. It is necessary to particularly underscore the last period of Ján Jaborník's (1942–2010) work in the Theatre Institute. In 2001, Jaborník took

the position of the head of the Department of Theatre Documentation, Information and Digitization. His arrival gave the Theatre Institute a special mark of expertise and, in 2002, also the concept of a new arrangement of funds and collections.

In the same year, based on the decision made by the Department of Public Administration of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Theatre Institute was defined as an Archive of Special Importance. In 2005 the Archives of the Theatre Institute were incorporated into the Specialized Public Archives of the Slovak Republic with an accredited section for research and development. In 2010 the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic gave the Theatre Institute a Competence Certificate to conduct research and development. The above mentioned triad of special statutes ensured that the Theatre Institute became a fundamental institution of performing theatre research, archivation and documentation in Slovakia.

Currently, any theatre historian can take advantage of an extensive database of information and documentation materials that have been described, electronically processed and stored in electronic databases (the publicly accessible comprehensive online catalogue etheatre.sk which uses the data and documents of the information database THEATRE.SK, the archive database BACH, the central register of museum collections CEMUZ and the library information system CLAVIUS). This materials are being gradually digitalised thanks to an extensive national digitization project coordinated by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (more on the project below). The archive and museum sources are constantly improved and developed making use of strategies aimed at an enhancement of archivation and registration of museums and galleries in individual programming periods. Such strategies include the planning of research and scholarly activities, special protection of archive materials and collection items with a focus on improving the protection and safety of buildings and premises holding the stored documents or exhibits, and the monitoring of acquisition and presentation activities. They also aid in improving human resources and setting up conditions to foster education and professional training of employees.[1]

At present, the documentation collections of the Theatre Institute, its Specialized Public Archive and the Museum of the Theatre Institute include documents on professional theatre making in Slovakia since its establishment in 1920 (the year of the foundation of the Slovak National Theatre) that have been collected, systematically

1. The managing authority in the field of archiving in Slovakia is the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic which also manages the administration of registries. State archives were formed in Slovakia in the early 1950s. At present, there is a network of State Central Archives, State Archives with regional operability, City Archives and Specialized Public Archives. Any mentions of theatre events, buildings, personalities, etc. are stored on all levels of archives. However, the Theatre Institute Archive, owing to its uniqueness and breadth of the cultural heritage it has available, is listed among the Specialized Public Archives.

processed and made accessible. The documentation has been extended to chart amateur and international theatre with a focus on the work of Slovak professional theatremakers. The files include written, printed and photographic documentation. The collections are divided as follows:

- Collection of theatre productions – the basic unit of the collection is a production envelope containing the programme bulletin, printed promotion materials, reviews, an internal review and other published articles, as well as production photographs from each specific production.
- Collection of biographies – the basic unit is a personal envelope containing photographs, bulletins, reviews and other published articles about an artistic personality related to theatre art. It also includes lists of characters, questionnaires, funeral notices, correspondence, etc.
- Collection of programme bulletins – contains the Repository of archived bulletins, the Repository of bound bulletins, and the Repository of multiple bulletins.
- Collection of text posters – contains the collection of the oldest posters as well as all text posters.
- Collections of theme entries – these records contain documents on festivals, tours, guest visits, theatres, art schools, awards and art projects.
- Collection of production texts – contains directors' books, stage managers' notes, texts of the performing actors and actresses for various productions by Slovak professional theatres.
- Collection of negatives and transparency slides – it has been conserved and any additions to it can usually be made only through acquisitions.
- Collection of audio-visual records – contains recordings of productions, as well as other documentation records about theatre and its personalities, including television productions.
- Collection of digital documents – this is the most recent collection and relies on present-day modern technologies.

The Digitization of Cultural Heritage in Slovakia Project

This is a unique digitization project that also tackles the issue of protecting and making accessible of the Slovak cultural heritage objects. It is an exceptional project also on European level. The processes conducted under the project have never been performed

elsewhere in the same extent and under such conditions. The project OPIS – Operational programme Information society – Priority axis 2, Development of repository institutions and renewal of their national infrastructure (measure 2.1. Digitization of the content of repository institutions, archiving and provision of access to digital data and improvement of the system of acquisition, processing and protection of content) is guaranteed by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

Owing to this project, 3,433,500 cultural objects will be digitalised by 2016 – in the first stage of digitization, these objects make up a selection of the most valuable items of the Slovak cultural heritage. However, the project tackles not only digitization, but also repair and renewal – mostly of textual as well as other historic items. Digitization offers the possibility to save many historic items and have them available for research and other purposes. 217,158,357.00 euros was allocated for institutions in the establishing competence of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (first calls were published in June 2011).

The feasibility study of the OPIS 2 project was approved on 22 January 2010 and defined the following projects and expected results: Digitization of 2D objects • Digitization of movable 3D objects • Digitization of immovable 3D objects • Digitization of film, audio and video material • Digitization of text documents and their conservation • Setting up a network of 5 digitization workplaces • Copyright protection • Content securing of national registers • Providing access to digital content • Setting up a workplace covering Roma culture in Slovakia.

The overall OPIS 2 project included activities aimed at ensuring protection of individual objects (restoration and conservation work), copyright protection of the presented digitalised content, setting up of a central application infrastructure to ensure long-term archivation, protection, administration, processing and providing access to digital content – the so-called Slovakiana (compatible with Europeana). Thanks to the project, new expert bodies were established alongside the creation of numerous jobs that will make it possible for the digitization of the cultural heritage to continue in the future.

In the period between 16 September 2013 and 1 November 2014 (including dates set for specific objects), the Theatre Institute was involved in the national project titled *The Digital Museum* applied for by the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica. The main objective of this project was to unite reposi-

tory institutions in one platform that would be used for storage, long-term archivation and providing access to the information potential of collections of material and immaterial cultural heritage. By means of digitizing museum collections, a "Digital Museum" is currently being created as a depository of digital representatives of the most significant part of museum collections interconnected with the digital knowledge system of Slovak museums. Museum collections digitalised in this manner could be used for further scientific utilization of cultural objects, for education, cultural relaxation or representation, and for the promotion of the country both in Slovakia and abroad. The digital objects will be stored in a central data warehouse while the presentation of a part of the digitalised objects will be made through the Ministry of Culture's portal – aiming to provide international access to Slovakia's cultural heritage in the future.

In the case of the Museum of the Theatre Institute (which is part of the Institute's Department of Theatre Documentation, Information and Digitization), 20,000 objects were included in the digitization campaign. The preparation of collection items, particularly their expert treatment and comprehensive electronic recording, took over two years. The final number of digitalised 2D objects was 19,740 pieces and of 3D objects 260 pieces (the latter category including mostly models, costumes and puppets). Prior to the scanning, stage and costume 2D designs were deacidified and dusted. The scanning itself, depending on the type of the object, was conducted either in contact with the object, or using three-dimensional techniques. After the digitization, the objects were packed in Ph-neutral paper and marked with RFID labels that use barcode technology. In the future, this type of marking will prove useful during inventory inspections as well as when recording the movement of artwork from/to repositories. 3D scanning was performed using two methods. With small objects (up to 70 cm), 3D stereo scanning was used creating an extended object panorama consisting of a series of 3D stereo images. Objects with at least one measurement exceeding 70cm were scanned using an object panorama method. This method was sufficiently flexible to meet diverse arranging requirements resulting from the objects' character and type.[2]

At present, the metadata from the scanned objects, together with other documentation and archive metadata, is stored and accessible online at www.etheatre.sk (output for the public from the THEATRE.SK information system as well as from the Theatre Institute's collection items records).

2. More on the digitization project in the Museum of the Theatre Institute can be found in the publication titled *Malé múzeum s veľkou zbierkou. Sprievodca múzeom Divadelného ústavu / A Small Museum With a Large Collection. A Guide to the Museum of the Theatre Institute.* Bratislava: Divadelný ústav, 2015.

All collections and repositories of the Theatre Institute are processed in the following databases:
THEATRE.SK information system – a basic electronic archive of productions by professional theatres in Slovakia (the basic numbers represent data about theatres, productions, personalities and events) that works also within the extension application of records (photo documentation, stage design, production texts and multimedia).
BACH inventory – an electronic catalogue of the Specialized Public Archive,
CEMUZ – central register of museum collections,
CLAVIUS – library programme and bibliography.

The **etheatre.sk** application for expert and general public, whose creation and development took several years, was made accessible at the beginning of 2015. It comprises four basic sections:

— Personalities – a list of over 22,000 creators, performers and reviewers who took part in Slovak theatremaking. The list includes also the names of prompters, lightning staff or stage managers. The names are sorted alphabetically by last name – when the user clicks on a name the artwork of the person in question will be displayed. This offers an overview of artistic activities that can be sorted according to several criteria: chronologically, by activity, theatre, production title, or premiere dates.
— Productions – the list of over 12,500 productions since the 1920 establishment of the Slovak professional theatre contains: first and last night show dates, name of theatre and ensemble, language of the production, original language of the play, names of the creators (authors, directors, translators, librettists, conductors, etc.) and performers. The productions are listed chronologically and the section contains also an alphabetical menu listing productions by their title. The productions can be browsed by all used data.
— Theatres and institutions – this section comprises two parts: Theatres: an overview of over 180 professional theatres on the territory of Slovakia, including their history, predecessors and organizational form. The section includes existing theatres, as well as theatres that no longer exist, state-funded, regional and independent theatres, theatres established by civic organizations and art schools. The presented information can simply present the impact of social changes on the names and fates of theatres.

Institutions are represented only very concisely as co-organizers of theatre events and festivals.
— Events – is made up of two parts: Visits – data about more than 2,300 visits of Slovak theatres on stages abroad and of international theatres visiting Slovakia. Events – over 260 festivals sorted alphabetically.

In addition to the basic section, the catalogue of collections and repositories has also the following sub-sections:
— Characters – a list of all dramatic characters in the produced plays. The names of characters are sorted alphabetically.
— Collections – one of the ambitions of this presentation portal is to apply an attractive model of presenting the electronic additions in the book of Photographs (paper, glass, digital pictures and scans), Production texts, Multimedia carriers and Stage designs.
— Photographs – sample photographs from Slovak professional theatre productions, portraits of personalities of Slovak theatre; the sub-section includes pictures of theatre buildings, tours, festivals, awards, as well as snapshots of historic moments. The data can be browsed by name and description. The photographs available on the portal can be enlarged (including zooming in), but cannot be downloaded and are protected against PrintScreen with a watermark.
— Production texts – a list of play texts with adjustments, deletions, notes and changes made by directors, stage managers, lightning staff, prompters and so on. Some texts are also available in a sample file in pdf format. In the future, most of the texts should be scanned and converted into electronic format.
— Multimedia – an overview of film reels, turntable records, magnetic tapes, CDs, DVDs as well as other carriers containing recorded productions, discussions or events.
— Stage design – a list of over 22,000 stage design items – models, costumes, stage and puppet designs.
— Annual – the aim of this special application is to facilitate the preparation of the publication Theatres in the Season (known as the Annual) which presents the essential publication and specialized output of the Department of Theatre Documentation, Information and Digitization of the Theatre Institute. The Annual contains all relevant data of the individual theatre seasons.

The Specialized Public Archive of the Theatre Institute

The Specialized Public Archive of the Theatre Institute was established in 2002 following the approval by the Department of archives and registries of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic of the application sent by the management of the Theatre Institute. The application requested the establishment of a specialized archiving body that would – in accordance with Act No. 395/2002 Coll. of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on archives and registries, in line with Executive Decree No. 628/2002 of the Ministry of Interior – take over the administration of the Theatre Institute's historical archive repositories and collections.

The establishment of the Specialized Public Archive was the result of a long process that started when a branch of the Prague Theatre Institute was set up in Bratislava in 1961. An in-depth revision of the reports on the Theatre Institute's documentation was performed in 2002, together with the institutionalization of the specialized archive. In the same year, the most precious archive repositories were set aside. In the following years, the institution focused on the elaboration of research regulations, filing rules and planning, completion of records and location overview. Also, priorities were set for the takeover and processing of archive documents and the protection of the depot premises was secured.

The basic mission of archives is defined by Section 7 of Act No. 395/2002 Coll. of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on archives and registries. In line with this act, the Specialized Public Archive of the Theatre Institute fulfils the following tasks:

- performs pre-archiving care and takes archive documents over from their originator or owner,
- files archive documents, keeps records thereof and notifies about any changes,
- protects archive documents,
- provides access to archive documents, including the processing of archiving aids,
- allows the performance of state specialist supervision,
- provides access to archive documents, archiving aids as well as the records of archive documents it has taken over,
- draws up a programme of producing conservation copies and informs the Slovak National Archives about it,
- produces and sends one piece of the conservation copy of the most important archive documents to the Slovak National Archives.

At present, the archive administers over 130 archive repositories and collections that spread over 100 standard metres. The collections and repositories are divided into: personal funds, archive funds of theatres and museums, other central bodies, archive funds of publishing and editorial houses, other cultural organizations, funds of interest organizations, collections of photographs, photographic negatives and transparency slides, collections of posters and flyers, other collections and documentation collections.[3]

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be observed that researchers interested in theatre history in the territory of Slovakia have at their disposal substantial archive and documentation material, made accessible by means of Act No. 395/2002 on archives and registries and Decree No. 628/2002. The limited access to archive documents is only applicable to documents that originated before 1526 and no study copies have been made of them, as well as to damaged archive documents and to archive materials that have not yet been processed. Similarly, access is limited to archive repositories containing items related to People's Courts (1945–1947), Regional Court in Bratislava (1872–1945, 1949–1970), State Court in Bratislava (1948–1952), State Prosecutor's Office in Bratislava (1948–1952), Regional Prosecutor's Office in Bratislava (1947–1984) and the State Office in Bratislava (1919–1949).

The establishment of the Nation's Memory Institute on 1 May 2003 became an important social landmark because the institute's specialized archive fosters collection, access, publication, administration and use of documents of the security forces of the German Third Reich, the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics, as well as the security bodies in Slovakia that were produced and collected between 18 April 1939 and 31 December 1989. The Nation's Memory Institute is governed by a special piece of legislation on nation's memory whose task it is to provide impartial evaluation of the totalitarian period, to analyze the causes and ways in which people lost their freedom, and to study the expressions of fascist and communist regimes and their ideologies. The Institute significantly aids in the study of how these expressions found their manifestations in culture and art that were often the focal point of interest of state authorities because of their broad impact on the society.

There is virtually no area that would be inaccessible for a potential researcher in Slovak archives. Therefore, we should hope that the

3. A thorough description of individual repositories and collections was published as a book by Rudolf Hudec, *Krátky sprievodca Archívom Divadelného ústavu. (A Brief Guide to the Archives of the Theatre Institute)*, Bratislava : Divadelný ústav, 2011. It is also available online at http://www.theatre.sk/uploads/files/archiv/archiv_final.pdf

government will invest in setting up optimal conditions in archives in order to allow further study of Slovak history, its analysis and storage. This will help identify great amounts of yet unstudied material that might complete the picture about watershed moments that shaped the development of the country and its citizens.

Translated by Ivan Lacko

SLOVENIA

The public archival institutions in Slovenia keep fonds of nine theatres, four of which are no longer active. Two of them (Zabavno gledališče Ljubljana, 1950–1954, the amount of materials 0,1 linear meters; Gledališče za otroke in mlade Ljubljana, 1981- 2005, 1,9 lm) are kept by Historical Archives in Ljubljana, the other two (Ljudsko gledališče Koper, 1949- 1961, 0,6 lm; Gledališče Slovenskega Primorja Postojna, 1949–1954, 0,1 lm) by Regional Archives in Koper. Out of 13 public theatres, which are bound to transfer their archives to competent archival institutions, four have done it so far (Slovensko narodno gledališče Maribor, 1961, 3,0 lm; Slovensko narodno gledališče Nova Gorica, 1954–2009, 1,7 lm; Mestno gledališče Ptuj, 1896–2001, 3,7 lm; Slovensko ljudsko gledališče Celje, from 1911–2013, 24,4 lm).

All the fonds listed are kept in competent archival institutions in Maribor, Nova Gorica, Ptuj and Celje. The latter one, kept in Historical Archives of Celje, is divided into 18 series. Most of them fall under the so-called „artistic" part (texts, costume and scenee sketches, performance folders, performance forecasts, programmes, posters, photographs, recordings of performances on VHS and CDs, criticisms, certificates and awards), the other part of series deals with the rest - the activities of technical staff and theatre administration (regulations and minutes, personal folders, correspondence and files on fire protection). In the case of materials of Celje theatre there are visible problems posed by its preservation. Photos, posters, programmes and occasional records of individual performances were in the first period glued into large albums of one or more consecutive years, thus forming an indivisible whole and they are also kept as such in the archives. In the following decades, these categories of material were stored and delivered in a separate series, and are now kept in separate series. The ways of grouping and keeping of listed play materials were then changed once again, they are now put in so-called "performance folders," which store the photos, posters and programmes of individual performances together again. The above criteria did not apply to performance trailers, scripts, costume

and stage sketches, reviews and criticisms which have comprised separate series all the time.

There are, therefore, only about 42 lm of theatre archives in total in public archival institutions in Slovenia, because all the other theatres keep their archives by themselves.

Apart from the fonds listed, many other documents can be found at institutions for the protection of cultural heritage in Slovenia. These records were not created by the theatres but comprise a lot of data concerning the history of theatrical activities in the area of today's Republic of Slovenia.

The Regional Archives of Maribor keeps personal fonds of theatre director Emil, fonds of Regulation and Construction Administration (construction of Maribor theatre), archives of Abolition Commissioner for societies, organizations and associations in Lower Štajersko (from 1941 to 1943).

The Historical Archive of Ptuj keeps posters and theatre programmes in the collection of the Museum Society (1816–1943), it also keeps the oldest theatre programme from the year 1789 and a lot of postcards showing Slovene theatres' buildings in the time perod after 1894.

Regional Archives of Koper keeps the documents concerning the theatre building and theatre activities in family fonds Pellegrini (1684–1835) and in family fonds Cadamuro (1806–1824).

Historical Archives of Celje keeps personal fonds of Fedor Gradišnik, which contains many texts concerning Celje theatre and some other Slovenian theatres since the mid-19th to mid-20th century, correspondence with many theatre artists, photos, files and photos on renovation of Celje theatre, programmes and texts by Slovene and other authors.

Regional Archives of Nova Gorica keeps personal fonds of Riko Debenjak and Cestnik Jože, which contain information about theatres.

Historical Archives of Ljubljana keeps fonds of Loški oder theatre in Škofja Loka (1945–2006, 7,0 lm), postcards of Stanovsko theatre, National Theater - today's Slovene National Theater Opera and Ballet Ljubljana and so-called „German Theater" - today's Slovene National Theater Drama Ljubljana, plans from 1909 for „German Theater", etc.), Novo Mesto unit of the archives mentioned keeps fonds of Kazinsko Society from the thirties of the 19th century.

A lot of archives relating to the history of theatre is kept within the archives created by the administrative authorities. It has no connection with the artistic work of theatres, but with their administrative work (management, construction, technical inspections, fire protection, war damage, etc.). It can be found at all levels, from the highest

to the lowest administrative bodies. Archives on theatres are also kept in fonds of Associations of Cultural Organizations (existed from 1977 until the end of the 90s), Cultural Communities (existed from 1970 to 1989), Workers' Educational Societies, it can also be found in fonds of the socio-political organizations, and in addition to the above, it can be found in the personal fonds as well.

In the fond of Higher Theater Directorate in Ljubljana (1752–1880; 1,5 lm) The Archives of the Republic of Slovenia keeps documents on renting the theatre, inspection of Stanovsko Theater, instructions by Higher Theater Directorate regarding the management of the theatre, the inventory of movable property in the theatre, financial management and wages. It also keeps documents of the theatre, concert and artistic programmes, invitations to exhibitions of wax figures,theatre reports and schedules, enquiries and offers for the position in the theatre in Ljubljana, documents concerning housing of theatre groups and owners of boxes. The archives mentioned above keeps even older documents on the theatrical activities on the grounds oft oday's Republic of Slovenia. One of those is *Letopis ljubljanskega jezuitskega kolegija – Historia annua Collegii Societatis Jesu Labacensis*, in which in 1598 the first Jesuit theatre performance *Isaac's Sacrifice – Isaac Immolatio* was mentioned. Archives also keeps documents on the activities of the Dramatic Society, architectural plans and documents on the activities of Stanovsko theatre. It also keeps some of theatre artists' personal fonds (e.g. Žarko Petan in Bojan Štih).

After being transferred to public archival institutions theatre documents are edited, their technical equipment is improved, finding aids are improved and made accesable on the Internet via the shared database of Slovene regional archives SIRAnet (http://www.siranet.si/archivplansuche .aspx.) or database of the Archives of the Republič of Slovenia (http://arsq.gov.si/Query/suchinfo.aspx).

In addition to public archives the materials regarding the history of theatre in Slovenia, can be found at other public institutions for the protection of cultural heritage.

Slovene Theater Institute (SLOGI) was established on 28 February 2014 and is the legal successor of the Slovenian Theater Museum, established on 29 November 1952. Its first goal was to collect the documents kept in the archives of Slovenian theatres and in private collections. The Institute has undertaken a systematic editing of the collected material and began publishing a collection *Documents*, periodic publication of papers and articles on the history of Slovene theatre. On the centenary of the establishment of the Dramatic

Society (1967) museum issued a *Repertoire of Slovene Theaters* for the first time. It has been published annually as *Slovene theatre yearbook* since 1994.

In 1978, the independent (originally dislocated) film division joined the Slovenian Theater Museum. This film division had previously operated within the Slovenian Film Workers Association in Ljubljana, but in 1996, this section of the museum joined the Slovenian cinematheque.

The Institute now consists of library containing expert reference material in the field of Slovene and world history of theatre as well as other departments which are responsible for different areas of theatre history: the collection of manuscripts and articles, cinematheque, video and sound archives. Regular flow of records increases the collections of video and audio documentation, photographs, programmes, books, flyers, letters, posters, manuscripts, newspapers, periodicals, scene and costume sketches and other material. They keep recordings of theatre performances ofSslovene institutional and non-institutional theatrical groups (since 1964), as well as documentary and portrait broadcasts on theatre activities. Theaters had been submitting certain types or materials sistematically for a while (eg. costume sketches). They also store the materials donated by individuals whose work was related to theatres (Julij Betetto, Ignacij Borštnik, Danilo family, Dušan Moravec, Jože Tiran, Alja Tkačeva, Oton Župančič, etc.).

National and University Library in Ljubljana in the collection of manuscripts stores collections of individuals associated with the theatre activities (writers, theatre workers, e.g. Bratko Kreft, Josip Vidmar), which include programmes, posters, flyers, reviews, seasonal programmes, texts, photographs, correspondence with theatres and articles on theatres. Within the image collection it also keeps a collection of theatrical posters (the oldest is from 1850). Among the materials of greater significance we list: first issue of Linhart collection of poems *Blumen aus Krain* from 1781 in which his silhouette was published; the first Slovenian play *Županova Micka* from 1790 and *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi*; the first criticism of Slovene theatre performance, published in 1789 in the newspaper Laibacher Zeitung, the announcement of the first staging of Matiček in 1848 in Novo Mesto, as well as the first issue of Linhart games *Miss Jenny Love*, etc.)

University Library of Maribor also stores archives related to the work of theatres. Photos and postcards of the theatre building (oldest from 1890) and its interior, posters of performances from each year in the

period from 1974 to 1998 testify about the history of the Slovene National Theater in Maribor. The library also keeps the programmes for individual performances and marketing material, and the Maribor Puppet Theater annual theatre repertoires.
The poster of the first play preformed in theatre in Celje, with a date September 16, 1849 is kept at Celje Central Library.
The oldest postcard of an Slovenian theatre building is kept at Mirana Jarca library in Novo Mesto. It shows Theater in Ptuj (1886).
The oldest Slovenian theatre archives from 1647 (synopses and announcements of visiting theatre groups in Ljubljana) is kept at the Semeniška Library in Ljubljana, while the library of the Capuchin monastery Škofja Loka keeps the original Škofja Loka Passion Play (Škofjeloški pasijon) from 1721.
Part of the Slovene theatre history resources is preserved in the National Museum of Slovenia, e.g. the list of the owners of boxes in the Stanovsko Theater, the report on a fire in the Stanovsko Theater, various graphic images of Stanovsko theatre, etc.
Photographic material, partisan puppets, costumes used in the Slovene National Theater on liberated territory and Frontline theatre (from the period of the World War II) are kept at the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.
The material in the field of theatre (some originals, mostly coppies) are also kept at the Center for theatrology and filmography of the Academy of Theater, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT) at University of Ljubljana in its archive and mediatheque. They collect, process, keep and protect archival and documentary material for the purposes of the teaching process of AGRFT as well as for the needs of external users. They contain archives concerning artistic, research and pedagogical work of AGRFT since 1945: (iconotheque, photograph collection, manuscripts, awards, etc. as well as cinematheque and video collections of AGRFT film and TV productions), reference material concerning Slovene, European and world theatre (phonotheque; cinematheque and video collections; world and Slovene iconotheques (pictorial material on the history of European and Slovene theatre); documentation about performances in Slovene theatres (flyers, newspaper clippings, programmes, etc.), legacies and manuscripts on the history of Slovene theatre and film (a legacy of partisan theatre from the period during and after World War II , and legacies of people whose work has been associated with the theatre). According to the census of 2012, the collections of the Centre consisted of 627,709 units of different materials. Online theatre and film catalog e-Kumba, which allows

users to view the catalogue of all materials, has been active at the Center since 2004.

The cultural center Cankarjev dom in Ljubljana stores around 25 lm of materials related to theatre activities from the beginning of its existence in 1980 until today. Archive comprises programmes, posters, clippings, VHS tapes, to a lesser extent also DVDs. Posters on paper are kept for the time period until 2004, those from the period after that are in electronic form. The same is true for clippings, which are stored in electronic form since 2005, as well as on microfilm.

Archive of Radio and Television of Slovenia keeps recordings of radio plays and of theatre productions. The collections include recordings from the period from 1957 to 2014. 1472 recordings of broadcasts on the topic of "theatre" and up to 1990 images on the topic of "drama" are kept. The section with code n 32/2 (drama theatres, tv dramas, tv feuilletons, pantomime, monodrama) for the period from 1989 to 2014 contains the collection of 2973 recordings of daily news broadcasts, 1846 magnetoscope recordings, 582 recordings on cassettes, 27 film strips and 662 pieces of copied material from old magnetoscope tapes. The section with code n 32/4 (puppet theatre) and n 32/8 (youth and children's theatre) for the same period are related to 513 recordings of daily news broadcasts, 925 magnetoscope recordings, 87 recordings on cassettes, 35 film strips and 449 pieces of coppied material from old magnetoscope tapes. A collection of photos of all three sections comprises 1080 pieces. Card index from the period from 1957 to 1989 comprises 4049 data cards on photographs, films and tapes.

Non-governmental organisations

Web portal sigledal.org is available at http://www.veza.sigledal.org/. It shows photographs, recordings of theatre preformances, electronic collections on individual theatre workers, domestic and foreign authors, on materials created at theatre activities etc. This portal contains so called REP (Repertoires of Slovene theatres: http://www.repertoar.sigledal.org/isci-po-predstavah), created in cooperation with Slovene Theater Institute; it is an interactive version of Repertoire of Slovene Theater.

SCCA- Ljubljana Center for Contemporary Arts- DIVA contains digital archive of video and new media art (created since 1995) – examples of theatre preformances. It is available at http://www.e-arhiv.org/diva/.

Association of Contemporary Dance Arts - Network for contemporary dance stores recordings of domestic and foreign dance performances.
Video Archive Ljudmila (VAL) is a project of digitization and audiovisual archiving of art projects in the field of performing arts with aim to preserve and present contemporary Slovene cultural and artistic activities. It is available on VHS tapes in the archives of Ljudmila and at http://val.ljudmila.org/si
ECLAP, European Collected Library of Artistic Performance - The collecting library of the performing arts (http://www.eclap.eu.) contains 200 edited video recordings of contemporary performing arts in Slovenia, directly from the authors, since 1991.
SloVid (Slovenian video archive), available at http://www.slovid.com, video portal, where one can store his favorite video websites.
Costume and scene sketches are very often kept by the authors, as well as other materials, e.g. Vojko Vidmar.
An important, systematically created archive of audio-video recordings and photographs of performances is kept by their author, Tone Stojko, who along with his son founded Prodok Ltd. (http://www.youtube.com/user/prodoktv). Tone Stojko began to photograph Slovenian theatre performances in 1972. He made a number of photographic portraits of Slovenian theatre artists as well. He abandoned taking photos of the productions, but still makes recordings in some Slovenian theatres. He is also active in the Association for the preservation of theatre heritage.

Conclusion

According to the data provided by the Statistical Office of Slovenia 44 theatres operated in 2011. However, Register of Public Archive Records Creators - RegUst, run by public archival institutions of Slovenia, lists 13 theatres (Gledališče Koper, Slovensko ljudsko gledališče Celje, Mestno gledališče Ljubljansko, Slovensko mladinsko gledališče Ljubljana, Slovensko narodno gledališče Opera in balet ter Drama Ljubljana, Slovensko narodno gledališče Maribor, Slovensko narodno gledališče Nova Gorica, Prešernovo gledališče Kranj, Mestno gledališče Ptuj, Lutkovno gledališče Maribor, Lutkovno gledališče Ljubljana, Gledališče Toneta Čufarja Jesenice) which are the public archive records creators. This is the reason why they are obliged to take into account the terms of Protection of Document and Archives and Archival Documents Act as well as Regulation on Documents and Archives Protection in its activities.

Regional archival institutions are in charge of most of the theatres mentioned, The National Archive of Slovenia takes care of the records from Drama, Opera and ballet at the Slovenian national theatre of drama in Ljubljana as well as the records from Theater Institute in Ljubljana.

According to the Act and Regulation theatres must ensure conservation, preservation, integrity and arrangement of documents received or created in the course of their work until archives are selected from those materials. They must allow the competent archival institution to examine the state of documents, and provide data required for keeping a register of archives. The duties of theatres in the transfer of public archives to the archival institution include: cooperation with the competent archival institution in elaborating instructions for the selection of public archives from documents; selection of public archives from documents according to the instructions of the competent archival institution and the drawing up of a list of selected material and transfer of public archives to the archival institution. Theaters must transfer public archives to an archival institution no later than 30 years after their creation

In order to perform the listed obligations, theatres must ensure appropriate material, personnel and financial conditions, and appoint a person to be responsible for carrying out those obligations.

Theaters may themselves provide protection of their own archives subject to an authorisation by the Minister responsible for archival institutions. The authorisation is issued when the Minister responsible for archival institutions has established that the relevant entity under public law has the necessary and appropriate premises and equipment as well as trained employees at its disposal, and provides proof of sufficient means for the protection of its own archive.

Most public theatres still take care of their archives themselves. Situation in the Slovenian theatres is very diverse given the state of tidiness, material protection, the respective leadership's will for collaboration, financial conditions and personnel. Some take exemplary care of them, others store them in unsuitable premises with inappropriate equipment. For many, guidance on the selection was adopted, but is not being preformed. Methods of disposal are not unanimous. Some started updating the management of documentary material (classification scheme). What is noticable is separation of materials coming from the overall business on one hand and artistic materials on the other hand (performance texts, theatrical and costume sketches, photographs, sound / image and the recently digital recordings of performances, posters, theatre sheets, reviews).

Not so much interest is shown in the first group whereas with the second one the situation is varied.
Large discrepancies exist among the attitudes of theatres towards transferring their archives to competent archival institutions. Some do not show any opposition to transferring them to archival institutions, especially where they have problems with lack of space. Others do not want to transfer them because they have a distinctly negative attitude towards the archival institutions. Their employees are presumably not familiar with their archives, and hence would not be able to classify them. In particular, this applies to materials of artistic value or types of materials that they need in the work itself or they often give them to the outside parties of interest. Therefore, they list numerous reasons for refusal to transfer their archives to the competent public archival institutions, but these are not in accordance with the conditions which must be met by entities under public law who want to ensure the protection of their own archives.
Due to the development of technology and its application in staging theatrical events, we are facing great problems in their preservation. The question which arises is how to permanently maintain records of these events, so that they could be used by future generations even in spite of constant technological change, for example new media or formats of records, unstable URLs or new software environments.

UKRAINE

The word "archive" comes to us from the Greek ἀρχή (*arkhé*), meaning "beginning", "revolution/rotation", also "dominion" and "institution". In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida employs this binary definition as a singular demonstration of what lies at the core of the archive. Ontologically, the archive is a place of commencement, a return to history and beginnings, and nomologically, it is a return to the commandment and to order.[1]

Yet the archive must not be strictly identified or interpreted as "a beginning"; archives are a particular means of establishing the traces of history, attempts at their re-creation, and a method of bridging past and future. These processes result from the structuring and selection of materials, with each document assigned its particular "mark" or meta-data establishing its documentary status and its place in the broader historical context. As Derrida argues, an original becomes an original only after it has been stored in an archive – the archive itself attaching significance to the object.[2]

The document categorisation procedure, document appraisal, and submission, is unreservedly dependent upon the expectations and conventions rooted in a given culture.[3] Beyond this, a defining feature of the archive lies in its functional reciprocity with the empowered institutions. Initially, documents preserved in archives pertained primarily to the structure of the ruling authority. The original objective of the archive was to store documents and records in order to legitimise designated processes both economic and/or political. Such records were intended to substantiate authority and validate certain agreements and/or treaties; thus, institutions in power regularly assumed for themselves the task of archival administration. To assist in the safekeeping of records, systems of document acquisition, filing, and storage were developed. As a result, even once documents had outlived their initial purpose of the legitimisation of the authorities and the enumeration of rights, they remained in storage. In this way the archive was transformed from an instrument of memory of governmental and societal discourse to one of testimony of the past.[4]

1. Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, in Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer, 1995), pp. 9–63.

2. Fertig, Yulia. Nakleivaya Etiketki na Veschi, (Russian) http://iph7.ras.ru/uplfile/aesthet/audio_video/22_11_12_yulia_fertig/002.mp3

3. Francis Blouin and William Rosenberg, S*tatus Dokumenta: Okonchatel'naya Bumazhka ili Otchuzhdennoye Svidetel'stvo?*, http://postnauka.ru/longreads/9394.

4. Aleida Assman, *Prostory Spohadu. Formy ta Transformatsiyi Kul'turnoyi Pam'yati*. Alyaida Assman, Ukrainian translation from German K. Dmytrenko, L. Doronicheva, O. Yudin, Kyiv: Nika-Tsentr, 2012. p. 360.

Governmental control over archives was not limited to the mechanical modes of control over the material evidence of the past. It was also constituted of a symbolic regulation of memory and the formulation of the collective memory of discrete groups. The archive at once has served both to construct conceptual systems of the past by creating weighted hierarchies which reflect authenticity and singularity, and yet may also function as an instrument of exclusion from memory.
Thus the archive is a source which continuously generates new meanings and, as Derrida asserts, functions as an open system of future reference inasmuch as it is available to constant reinterpretation and reconfiguration.[5] Ukrainian archival holdings should be considered in light of this recursive binarity: as a localisation of traces of the past, and a place of the discourses of power.

The Archive as Power Discourse

Ukrainian archives are the product of the relentless modification of state institutions. They constitute a complex system representing different – and often mutually exclusive – notions of the ruling authorities on document values and priorities, and ultimately their selection and interpretation.
The foundations of the Ukrainian state archive system were laid during the period of the Ukrainian People's Republic in December 1917 with the founding of the Library Archive Section of the Department of Arts of the General Secretariat of Education. To a significant degree, the current Ukrainian archival system is based on the structure set up during the Soviet period. This centralized and hierarchical structure of State archives (UkrDerzhArkhiv – http://www.archives.gov.ua/Eng/) is attached to the central government system, and unites 699 archival agencies housing 58 million objects. A portion of these document archives – significantly, those related to theatre history – are concentrated in agencies which are not included in the UkrDerzhArkhiv network. Some materials are carefully systematized and catalogued, while others are scattered throughout numerous "non-theatrical" collections.
The fall of the Soviet Union and the formation of an independent Ukraine resulted in a fundamental reconsideration of this archival legacy. Archives represented one of the first places where sought after and newly socially relevant themes were "brought into the open", fundamentally altering the question of the value of historical documents. Those archives which had occupied an especially

5. Robert Vosloo, *Archiving Otherwise: Some Remarks on Memory and Historical Responsibility* http://umkn-dspo1.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4357/Vosloo.pdf?sequence=1.

rarefied space in the Soviet hierarchy, i.e., the Communist Party archives, were relegated to the margins. In their place an entire string of declassified materials formed the basis of an original historical narrative in the newly established state, the construction of which demanded both a "trustworthy" foundation as well as "unique" materials which could be employed as a viable counterpoint to previously fostered historical argumentation.

Examining the Ukrainian archives through the prism of the discursive theories of Michel Foucault, one may rightly characterise the post-Soviet period of the Ukrainian archives as a contest between Soviet and Ukrainian discourses. Changes to the interpretive canvas as well as the emergence of new modes of expression required legitimisation and corroboration of the "veracity" of the new paradigm, which the new archives would provide. Significant efforts were undertaken in the archives resulting in the reappearance, reworking, and dissemination of documents pertaining to varying periods of Ukrainian national history.

The first twenty years of the post-Soviet period may be described as a period of the archival institutionalisation of the Ukrainian national narrative. In the context of the theatre it is possible to distinguish, for example, three major, vital themes in theatrical history – themes which serve as the basis for the bulk of the scientific research produced. They represent the most scrupulously documented and perhaps comprehensive collections of resource material. These are: the "school" drama of the "Cossack" Baroque period; the formation and activity of the earliest Ukrainian professional theatres of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the *Coryphaei Theatre*, the *Rus'ka (Ukrains'ka) Besida* theatre company; and the *Berezil Theatre* phenomenon and the work of its creative director, Les Kurbas.

The first decade of the 21st century saw a departure from the narrow confines of the national historiography, resulting in the stipulation that archives rethink theircollections. Archival materials which had long lain "dormant and invisible" became objects of interest. Attention was renewed for resources documenting the history of various national theatres – Polish, Russian, Jewish, German, et al. – which had existed on the territory which comprises contemporary Ukraine. The increasing availability of materials from the period of the Soviet Union resulted in a reinterpretation of Soviet theatre as well.

Yet, simultaneously, a full accounting of archival materials from the history of contemporary theatre has remained outside the immedi-

ate interests of archivists. Materials relating to state, independent experimental, theatre/workshops, and amateur theatres from 1991 onward are largely absent from archival collections.

Archives as the Localisation of Memory

The Ukrainian archival landscape is dotted with institutions with significant theatrical holdings: designated archives, museum archives, personal (houses) as well as literary museums, theatres, and universities. Among these are a number of "personality museums" dedicated to a single institution (theatre) or individual. Many of these have assembled chronologically and geographically diverse collections, which are of help in establishing not merely specific factual details and past events, but also bear witness to how, with time, theatrical conventions change, and serve as witness of collaborations between theatres, the state structure, and other institutions.

Theatre-related Documents in Archives

A significant portion of the materials which pertains to theatres, and in particular the collaboration between theatres and the state, are located in historical archival collections. The Central State Agency Archive in Kyiv and the Central State Archive of Public Organisations of Ukraine possess materials from the history of Soviet theatre, and of particular interest, records from the Central Committee and Politburo sessions addressing matters of the theatre and culture.

State Oblast (Regional) archives preserve records which relate to theatre construction, permits for tours and productions, police reports and information on censorship, theatrical society activities and acting troupes, and scores of placards and photographic material from various theatres.

Information on the theatre of the Soviet period (in particular, information on repressed artists) is available in the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) archives; electronic archives of declassified records are also available here.

Theatre-related Collections in Museums

A peculiar feature of theatrical "records" lies in the fact that they are comprised of more than text documents. Also to be found here are exhibits related to performance production and the activities of

individual artists. Due to their sizeable collections of documents as well as exhibit materials, these museums serve a combined museum and archival function.

With holdings of nearly 300,000 items, one of the largest theatrical collections in the country is located at the Central State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art of Ukraine (TsDAMLM) in Kyiv. This Archive-Museum assemblage represents the sole Ukrainian arts collection accessible through an automated information retrieval system.

Concentrated here are individual collections, as well as collections from state institutions, artistic associations, public organisations, art publishers, newspaper and magazine archives, with the majority of items dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. In particular, these archives feature records of the creative work of Ukrainian stage luminaries, information on the ongoing activities of national theatres, film studios, and music venues, strings of private and professional photographs of arts workers, correspondence, composition manuscripts, and critical reviews. One particularly well-organised archive is that of Vasyl Vasylko – actor, director, theatre critic, and disciple of Ukrainian theatre reformer Les Kurbas. The TsDAMLM archive is a catalogued collection drawn from the private libraries of prominent artists.

Another significant theatre archival source in Ukraine is housed at Museum of Theatre, Music, and Cinema of Ukraine (Kyiv). It was opened in 1923 by the *Berezil* artistic association and other commissions, stations, and laboratories which were experimenting in professional theatre work. Vasyl Vasylko headed the Museum Commission. At first the museum's holdings contained largely personal objects from the *Berezil* team, but was soon re-imagined by Les Kurbas as a national establishment – a goal that was realised only later after its 1926 amalgamation into the Academy of Sciences (currently the museum is within the Capital Cultural Administration) and headed by the noted theatre historian Petro Rulin. Besides the abundance of materials related to the activities of Berezil in its holdings, the Museum of Theatre, Music, and Cinema – with nearly 250,000 items – houses one of the largest theatrical collections in Ukraine.

The facility serves as both archive and museum, with collections of exhibits, documents, photo archives, announcements, and sets which provide a comprehensive depiction of the advancement of the national theatrical arts. Items of particular interest at the museum include the collection of Ukrainian Nativity plays (Ukr., *vertep*[6]) wooden box stage from late 18th – early19th century; hand-pained

6. *Vertep* is an ancient Ukrainian Christmas drama, which was played by puppets in a large wooden box stage, typically divided into two levels, on the lower of which a secular play was enacted.

posters of 19th century Ukrainian touring companies; documents of historic significance from the first Ukrainian (1907) stationary theatre – the *Mykola Sadovskyi Theatre*; the most extensive collection of *Berezil* photography, and samples of the set design work of Ukrainian avant-garde designers Oleksandra Ekster, Vadym Meller, and Anatoli Petrytskyi.

The House Museum of Ivan Karpenko-Kary – the Hope Farmstead, (Ukr., Nadia Khutir) – near Kirovohrad is notable for the fact that eleven plays which are now among the classics of Ukrainian drama were created here. Another historical landmark is the Les Kurbas Farm in Staryi Skalat in the Ternopil region, which houses a wealth of materials relating the histories of a number of theatres including the theatrical society *Ruska Besida*, the *Ternopil Theatre Meetings*, *Molodyi Theatre*, the *KyiDramTe*, the *Artistic Union "Berezil"* (Ukr. abbreviation, *MOB*), and the *Berezil* Theatre. In Lviv, the Solomiya Krushelnytska Memorial Museum, in addition to materials related to the creative work of the noted operatic soprano, also maintains the archives of violinist and collector Yaroslav Hrytsai, the operatic tenor Modest Mentsynskyi, and composer Stanislav Lyudkevych, as well as an extensive collection of historic gramophone records.

The Museum also has a significant collection representing eminent Ukrainian cultural figures. Artifacts from Mykola Lysenko, Mykhailo Starytskyi, Panas Saksahanskyi, Lesya Ukrainka, and Ivan Franko are also housed here. Yalta's Anton Chekhov house museum possesses drawings and correspondence of the writer, books from his personal library, handwritten texts, and also papers relating to the complicated history of the construction of the Russian playwright's "White Dacha".

The Kharkiv Literature Museum holds manuscripts, creative works, books and photo archives, and handwritten texts of 20th century artists including scenographer Boris Kosarev, playwright Mykola Kulish, actor/director Les Kurbas, and theatrical figure Hnat Khotkevych.

Theatre Archives

The majority of state theatres have their own archives, though not all are systematised or even available for research purposes. In the second half of the 20th century a number of large Ukrainian theatres began organizing dedicated public theatrical museums. One of the oldest and most impressive collections is run by the *Afanasyev Kharkiv State Academic Puppet Theatre*. The Museum holdings include 11,000 objects – puppets, announcements, mock-ups, mementos, sketches,

programs, and photographs, drawn from both the theatre's repertoire collection, and includes donations from prominent stars of the world of animation Sergey Obraztsovy, Michael Meschke, and Margarita Nikuleska.

The *Taras Shevchenko Kharkiv Academic Ukrainian Drama Theatre* established its museum in the 1970s, its collection organised by Kurbas actress Yulia Fomina. Here one will encounter manuscripts, correspondence, announcements, programs, press clippings, photograph albums, theatrical library volumes, and legal documents, all of which recreate the entire history of the theatre, with a clear emphasis on the *Berezil* era.[7]

The archives of Kyiv's *Lesya Ukrainka National Academic Theatre of Russian Drama*, organized by actor Serhiy Filimonov, are exceptionally maintained and presented. The collection includes the personal effects of actors, manuscripts, character scripts, and props, costumes, and performance sketches.

A sizeable database is maintained by theatres' literary department heads, who are frequently tasked with the unofficial duties of theatre archivist. For example, Lviv's *First Academic Ukrainian Children and Youth Theatre* possesses a large collection of nearly 10,000 pieces, including conference proceedings, World War II-era correspondence, comment books, booklets, and transcriptions, as well as photographs, announcements, plays, musical scores, and staging sketches from as early as 1923, covering the vibrant Kharkiv and Lviv eras of theatrical production. This dramaturgic archive rivals that of Kyiv's *Lesya Ukrainka Theatre*.

Library Theatrical Collections

The chief research libraries in Ukraine – the Verdanskyi National Library of Ukraine, the Gorki Odessa National Scientific Library, the Karazin Kharkiv National University Central Scientific Library, and the Stephanyk Lviv National Scientific Library – house significant theatrical materials in both their manuscript and specialized departments. For example, the manuscript institute and Ancient Manuscript Department of the Verdanskyi National Library of Ukraine and the Kyiv Theological Academy and Seminary preserve materials significant to Ukrainian theatre history – activity records of the XVII-XVIII century theatre school of the Ukrainian Cossack Baroque epoch. These manuscripts and early printings include the works of playwrights and drama theorists Georgiy Konyskyi, Meletiy Smotrytskyi, Dmytro Tuptalo, Feofan Prokopovych, and others.

7. Following the arrest of Les Kurbas, his Berezil Theatre (1926–1933) was eventually redesignated as the Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko Kharkiv State Ukrainian Dramatic Theatre.

In the Arts Department of Vasyl Stefanyk Lviv National Library is housed a sizeable collection of theatrical photography from Ukrainian, Polish, and Jewish theatres dating from the late-19th century through 1939. The manuscript section of the library also holds scores of material on the activities of the *City Theatre* (currently, *Solomiya Krushelnytska Lviv National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre*), on the *Ruska Besida* Theatrical Society, and photographs of theatre troupes from the time of World War I.
The Stanislavsky Specialised Municipal Music-Theatre Library in Kharkiv houses valuable, personal archives of local composers, playwrights, and actors. Kyiv's Lesya Ukrainka Public Library possesses the personal library of Serge Lifar.

University Theatre Collections

Several collections have been assembled in the Theatre Arts Department and Actors' Workshop of Ivan Franko National University in Lviv's Culture and Arts Department. In particular, the collection includes archival materials of Ukrainian actress of the 1930s–1970s, Vira Levytska, of Lviv stage director Ada Kunytsa, and theatrical designer Yuri Stefanchuk, as well as papers (scripts, photos, playbills, etc.) from the *Lesya Ukrainka Lviv Dramatic Theatre*.

Digital Archives

In Ukraine in recent years, work has begun on the creation of a new theatrical collection. In particular, the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe is currently assembling a digital archive of the oral history of Lviv theatre, documenting the period of the late 1940s through the mid-1980s. In addition to the gathering and digitizing of audio interviews, a large collection of the personal items – photographs, playbills, autographs, articles, and other publications – of Lviv actors, directors, theatre professionals is being assembled.

Translated by Joel Rakoš

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East European Performing Arts Platform/EEPAP supports the development of performing arts in Central and Eastern Europe. It initiates and fosters the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience between theatre and dance artists and specialists working in the region. It links artists, curators, and theoreticians from Western and Eastern Europe. It effectuates educational, research and residency programmes, supplying an alternative to traditional programmes hosted by academic centres and cultural institutions. Its activities focus around the mutual relations of performing arts and social and political life.
EEPAP primarily targets independent performing artists, curators, critics, theoreticians, and persons organising theatre or dance hubs and festivals from 18 countries, including the Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries.
The project was initiated in 2011 by Culture.pl as part of the Polish Presidency of the Council of European Union. As of 2012, the project has been realised in cooperation with the City of Lublin.

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute is a national cultural institution, whose mission is to build and promote the cultural dimension of the POLSKA brand, through active participation in international cultural exchange. The Institute has organized cultural events in 70 countries, including: the United Kingdom, Russia, Israel, the Benelux countries, Spain, Austria, Sweden, France, Germany, Turkey, USA, Ukraine, Lithuania, as well as Algeria, Morocco, India, Japan and China. So far, the Institute has presented over 5 500 cultural events, for over 52 million people on five continents. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute's activities are now consistently presented to consumers abroad under its flagship brand **Culture.pl**.

The **Culture.pl** website, run by the Institute, provides fresh information on the most exciting Polish cultural events around the globe, it is also the biggest and most comprehensive source of knowledge about Polish culture. The website, which in 2015 had over 4, 5 million users worldwide, is now available 3 languages – Polish, English

and Russian. In 2015, Culture.pl received the Gwarancje Kultury/ Guarantee of Culture Award in the "Culture On-line" category.

Centre for Culture in Lublin combines the tradition of a municipal cultural centre with a contemporary artistic institution which is open for innovation. Each year, it is a place where hundreds of events take place, ranging from local scale events to international ones.
It is a place where many artists from theatre, dance, performative and visual art fields work. They realize a large scale program of promotion of culture and art by means of both production and presentation of shows created by resident professional ensembles, as well as by organizing festivals, workshops, movie screenings, artistic residencies and academic conferences. All of that takes place in a modernized 18th century building which is fully equipped in state of the art technology. Across its long and rich history, the building has acted as a safe place for: sisters of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, a hospital, military casino or Medical Academy.
Currently, Centre for Culture in Lublin houses performance spaces, rehearsal and workshop rooms, a visual arts gallery, a cinema room, as well as a bookstore and a café. All those elements coexist with each other to create an original vibe of a contemporary art institution with a friendly attitude towards participants of cultural events of all ages.

The Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IS PAN) is an inter-disciplinary research institution, whose responsibilities include research into and documentation of Polish art and artistic culture in the field of the fine arts and architecture, music, theatre, film and audiovisual art, taking into consideration the European and global context. In addition to the efforts of individuals, the Institute's academic and research activities include numerous collective efforts surpassing the capabilities of an individual researcher and requiring a set of institutional tools. Such works, along with the collections and Library, constitute invaluable research resources for the entire academic community in respect of the history of Polish art and artistic culture, namely the fine arts and architecture, music, theatre, film and audiovisual art. The results of the documentation work conducted at the Institute form the basis for studies in all the fields represented at the Institute. The results of research work are published in academic periodicals published by the Institute, and are among the leading Polish academic periodicals in their respective fields, in synthetic studies and in catalogues, dictionaries, bibliographies.

Lublin, the administrative centre of the voivodship and the capital of the Lublin Region, and home to approx. 350 thousands inhabitants, is the biggest city in Eastern Poland. Lublin is an academic centre recognized in Poland and abroad, with a rich educational offer. The city's main assets are five public universities: the Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, the Catholic University of Lublin, the Lublin University of Technology, the Medical University, the University of Life Sciences; and a number of other higher education institutions. Lublin is the winner of the Golden Star of Partnership, the European Diploma and the Flag of Honour of the European Council for international cooperation. The city is the hub of bustling cultural life, with different events held annually, and attracting a wide audience. The Night of Culture, the Festival of Traditional and Avant-garde Music "Codes", "Theatre Confrontations" International Festival, the International Dance Theatre Festival, Jagiellonian Fair, Magicians' Carnival, or The Different Sounds Art'n'Music Festival are Lublin's flagship festive events whose prestige has been constantly growing. Economically, Lublin offers a rapidly developing services sector, with favourable conditions for making profitable business. Buoyant international cooperation brings many benefits to the city's multidimensional development.

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