

DRAMATURGY OF THEATRE EDUCATION

Dramaturgical questions in four performances of Káva Theatre Educational Group

THESES

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Supervisor: Karsai György, Professor

It is productive to examine from a dramaturgical point of view to what extent a ‘Theatre in Education’ performance can be interpreted on the base of theatre aesthetics. To what degree the dramaturgy of educational performances is different from the traditional theatre dramaturgy? Which aspects, challenges and intentions leading towards theatre define the aesthetics of TIE?

The years I spent with Káva company and the four performances I have participated in as dramaturg, writer or actress/drama teacher draw a clear image on the company’s activities and artistic endeavours. My thesis aims to analyse the genre characteristics of TIE in regard to the aforementioned four performances: *Fatherlabyrinth* (2010), *Tangle* (2011), *The Missing Classmate* (2012), *Dramas of Memory* and its part *Statue* (2013). The thesis reflectively examines their rehearsal processes, describes their dramaturgical implementation and analyses the aesthetics of the ready stage performances; furthermore, it tries to define to what extent TIE can be interpreted by the tools of theatre paradigm. My point of view is multiple and it allows me to overview the whole process both from outside and inside: that of an artist, who participates in the creative process by writing texts, that of an outsider who arrives from the theatre and that of a constructive critic, a role created by my position as a dramaturge.

The identity and aesthetical classification of TIE is uncertain; the theatre does not consider it its integral part, because several factors refrain the TIE from corresponding to the traditional rules of theatre, and also because its pedagogical objectives regularly overwrite the theatre components. However, TIE companies, especially Káva tend to define themselves more and more as theatres. Káva, according to its self-definition, is ARS, “*A Résztvevő Színháza*” (‘Theatre of the Participant’). This name clearly shows that the spectator’s position and the observation of position changes is an important aspect while examining TIE.

This “hybrid” status between theatre and education results in a continuous searching for position and identity, generating inspiration and frustration at the same time. Káva’s performances can be evaluated as cross-border experiences, aiming to extend the limits of the genre and re-defining its aesthetics. The four performances analysed in this thesis are no exceptions.

Fatherlabyrinth is an adventure into the realm of improvisational theatre. This is a particularly inspiring and fruitful form of theatre education, as this spectacle uses improvisational features generated by the participating children’s opinions and reactions. Switching between the two forms of stage presence – acting in traditional, fix roles or acting as an improvisational drama teacher of dramatic parts – is a continuous challenge and difficulty for the actor/drama teachers.

Tangle is an experiment to shift towards a more professional theatre attitude, also because it was staged by Árpád Schilling, an internationally acclaimed and innovative director.

The project called *The Missing Classmate*, based on the results of a social survey, intends to unveil the characteristics of school segregation for the Hungarian countryside's élite high school students. The survey focused on four Hungarian towns (Hódmezővásárhely, Szolnok, Salgótarján, Sárospatak). The élite high school students living in the countryside, the performance's target group is personally affected by this issue, however, due to their children status they are only subjects of the situation, being unable to challenge it. Notwithstanding, the performance gives them an opportunity to examine the topic from a new point of view, as well as to obtain more knowledge and insight on it. This opening towards an intercultural, interdisciplinary way raises several questions about the goals of TIE from a genre, a pedagogical, a theatre aesthetical and especially from a dramaturgical approach.

The project *Dramas of the Memory* comprises four TIE performances, each of them focusing on an important historical event of the past 100 years, deals with manifest human problems or social traumas. My thesis focuses on the play *Statue*. The performance asks questions about memory and racism in connection with the serial killing of Hungarian Romas in 2008-9. In this context it is particularly noteworthy to ask the question how the theatre of social responsibility (which creates an interest in the spectators on current social and political issues) can meet the traditional philosophy of theatre education (which allows the participating children to express their views and question others' opinion on general human issues). As the play deals with the problem of racism in connection with a recent atrocious set of events, the spectators' defensive lines get weaker, thus allowing more questions of active approach and responsibility to appear.

In Hungary the position of theatre education is peripheral; it is considered a branch of the already marginal independent theatre, an area often depreciated by the classical professional theatre: to the children theatre. Perhaps this typical, peripheral Hungarian way of existence has made it sensible for social peripheries, such as Roma and poor issues or classes refused by the system. This sensitivity often leads to a social activity that oversteps the fictional space of theatres and the traditional role of theatre education.

All four performances show a clear intention to exceed the genre's limitations and overstep its boundaries. This brings an important consequence for the dramaturge's role, who becomes more than a creator of language and texture of the spectacle. Different approaches must often be coordinated before the beginning of the rehearsal process. The scientific,

pedagogical and theatrical aspects, such as the approach of a pedagogical theatre and socially responsible theatre are often in confrontation with each other. However, the effort of the performances to coordinate these aspects in a constructive way, creates a unique form of art.