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SUMMARIES

THE NATIONAL THEATRE "IVAN VAZOV" AND THE CHALLENGING NEW TIME

Vasil Stefanov

The 100th anniversary of the National Theatre suddenly provoked critics' publications questioning the long ago accepted year of 1904 as the birthday of the oldest Bulgarian professional theatre. These critics are convinced that the beginning of this theatre is even in 1888. Similar to many other dates in the history of the National Theatre, this date is again the object of scientific argumentation and interpretation of facts.

The existing from 1888 and later renewed in 1892 company "Salza I Smiah" assumes the name of National Theatre in 1904 and is stated to be state funded. This is the reason why the year 1904 is considered the birthday of the theatre. Some historians, though, tend to argue that logic. It is very odd that the argument is started exactly in the days of the carefully prepared anniversary celebration, among all other times. The intention is evidently to prove its illegitimacy. But this is beyond the boundaries of the scientific argument and takes on some other features.

In the capacity of a present director of the National theatre I have all grounds to start another, more important argument exactly in the days of celebrating the theatre's anniversary. This is the issue of the statute of the National Theatre, or rather the lack of statute. Steering the theatre for these 100 years of its existence many directors changed, and all of them felt the theatre's unanswered need of legislation to place the National Theatre on clearer grounds with the state. Unregulated obligations of the state towards the theatre and vice versa breed a number of problems pending for solutions even today.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE – GLOBAL-LOCAL PROBLEMS

Violeta Decheva

The article analyses the meanings of the name national, which the National Theatre embodied as a nationally representative institution through the course of its development in the 20th century. The article aims at pointing out the historical characteristics of Bulgarian national theatre in the context of its sibling European institutions:

The definition "popular" outlived many changes and collisions in the fate of the theatre and represents a surviving consensus realization that the "national" is based outside any institutions in a community immanence "travelling through time" and being a symbol of the Bulgarian "spirit". The performance of that "spirit" is always collective, not civil; it is "popular".

The National Theatre also embodied the realization of "cultural institution" (rendered in the beginning of its existence by Pencho Slaveykov). This cultural institution presented the works of the greatest artistic figures of the nation and thus the national culture became a step towards the universal world of artistic culture.

From the very beginning of its existence and later in its being in Bulgarian culture throughout the whole 20th century the National Theatre represented the painful duality of these two approaches to the "national". This strainful and contradictory mixture of the two approaches to the

"nationally Bulgarian" constituted the very name of the theatre as "national". The need of choosing between the two meanings of the national — the collective mythical meaning (traditional) or the individual historic meaning (the modern) — has always been summoned in situations of crisis.

What is the present realization of the national and what are the expectations for the National Theatre to represent? What is the place of the National Theatre in the present national state? Are we ready for the questions globalization as a process poses to the development of culture?

The article outlines the crisis of the national state and the place of the nationally representative institutions as, for example, national theatres like Deutsches Theatre, Bourtheatre, the Royal National Theatre, Comedie Francaise, Theatre Dramaticni in Warsaw among others. The article renders the opinion that national theatres are typical of the universal "high modernism" (Fr. Jameson) which, as a type of expression is representative of the culture of the respective national theatres.

The article also outlines the global crisis of the "national" and its implications in the Bulgarian cultural stratum, along with the adding of other new local problems. It traces the shrinking of Bulgarian theatre after the political changes in 1989 and the lessening of interest on behalf of the national state towards investing into the theatre's future development. As a result from this process, as well as a result from the features of the historical genesis of the meaning of "national" in representation of the National Theatre "Ivan Vazov", the theatre formed after the fall of communism in 1989 rather a unique centre of diverse artistic experiments in Bulgarian theatre than remaining merely a representative of a type of expression of "high modernism" similar to this in its sibling national theatres.

What is the choice of Bulgarian culture — strengthening of the positions of the National Theatre and a special statute for its development in the light of the weakening Bulgarian theatre or marginalization of the National Theatre as a nationally representative institution resulting from the local effects of the process of globalization and the political changes after 1989?

OF THE NAME NATIONAL THEATRE

Nikolay Yordanov

The article aims at throwing some light on the birth of the figure of the National Theatre in Bulgarian cultural stratum. Even in the first governmental reports justifying the decisions of the state for aiding theatre activity in Bulgaria, even in the first critical articles in the first dailies, one can explicitly find the insertion that this is a "popular" theatre. Bulgarian state authorities borrow exactly this image of the theatre to enter it in its state projects and exactly this is the reason why it is legally stipulated, subsidized and institutionalized.

For the period 1903 — 1907 professor Ivan Shishmanov in his capacity of a Minister of People's Enlightenment directly initializes, ideologically justifies and fulfils his project for a national theatre as a state (national) institution of culture. A bit later, in the face of Pencho Slaveykov in his capacity of a Director of the National Theatre (1908 — 1909) this positivist project launched by Shishmanov of the state-builder and benefactor—guardian of the theatre is implicitly put under critical reconsideration through

valuable juxtaposition of the concepts "popular" and "national". Slaveykov's project for a state autonomous "national theatre", combining the individualism of Nische with the spirit of Enlightenment is the only alternative to the established theatre pattern in the country for the period after the Liberation up to the I World War of this hybrid figure, namely a state national theatre that is realized as popular. His project remains equally misunderstood both by the romantic-sentimentalist cleavage of actors aiming to achieve a state-protected status and the paternalist state (government) striving to implement the idea of modernized "construction" in Bulgaria.

In conclusion, the article tries to follow the development of the so established model in Bulgaria through different historic periods.

ACTORS' GENERATIONS IN THE NATIONAL THEATRE

Joanna Spassova-Dikova

The main problems discussed in the paper pertain to the following questions:

How many actors' generations there are in the Bulgarian National theatre during its whole history of about 100 years? Which are the factors that influence the change of one actors' generation with another? What are the specific features of each generation that makes it different from the other?

There is an accent put on the fact that both the number and the specific features of the different generations in the National theatre are connected with the factors, which have influenced the change of one generation with another. It is interesting that usually this change is made by the administration where part of the old actors are retired or fired and on their place new actors are appointed. The paper argues that although these acts often are associated with the name of a certain administrative or artistic director they are not based on complete subjectivity but are a result of objective circumstances. Moreover as a rule the leading motive of the directors pertains to their desire the theatre system, which with the years has become outworn and outdated, to be reformed and renewed. An attempt is made to find out the specific features of each generation. Here the main criteria were the following:

1. Age (date of birth).
2. Education, acting school.
3. Working period in the National theatre.
4. Repertoire and circle of roles.
5. Directing.

Acting approaches and methods.

A hypothesis is made that it is possible to outline several professional actors' generations in the National theatre. Rather conventionally six generations are pointed out. There is one zero generation of amateur actors, who gave performances before the foundation of the National theatre as institution. That makes the generations of Bulgarian theatre seven, where six of them are especially connected with the name of the National theatre. The logic of such division follows the whole historical development of our theatre, its professionalization, institutionalization and modernization from the beginning until the end of 20th century.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE – NORM AND DEVIATION

Romeo Popilievs

The article examines the National Theatre "Ivan Vazov" as an existence of the norm that develops through its deviations. The

approach of the article is to start by analyzing the city plans position of the theatre and the symbolism of the adjacent buildings. From the very beginning of its existence, the National Theatre was supposed to introduce both the European traditional norms in drama and to leave a door to its stage ajar for modern aesthetics and even some elements of the avant-garde. Norm and deviation remain equally respected and active forces during the 20s and 30s and thus the very opposition between them is gradually reconciled. After 1944, the theatre falls into a deep aesthetic anomie and, though not articulated, loses its statute of an aesthetic legislator. Nevertheless, during the recent decade it again rejected the space that carries the major part of aesthetic innovation in Bulgarian theatre. Apparently this is the future of the theatre — to present the possibly best performance for the possibly largest audiences in their possibly greatest variety. All that in a time when norm no longer exists and thus deviations cannot be evaluated.

THE COMPANY OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE — CULTURE OF BEHAVIOUR Svetla Beneva

The proposed text is an attempt to examine the company of the National Theatre as behaviour in the initial years of its formation. Its behaviour reflected or even developed certain attitudes and experience of values in the context of social development and in seeking a Bulgarian cultural identity. Such behaviour refers to the comprehension of culture as a collective phenomenon, as a system of shared meanings, symbols, ethical and moral principles, and is in a state of a continual dialectical development, interpreted and realized through everyday human experience.

Socially, Bulgaria belongs to family, lineal culture and thus in forming the National Theatre company, lineal attitudes are strongly represented in it. In order to be able to exist at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, the company follows behaviour that is characteristic of the Bulgarian traditional society. In it, the family is a structural element; marriage is taken for a personal fulfillment and a change of the individual social status. The seclusion of the company as a family is a process that can be clearly defined in the activity of the theatre “Osnova”. A similar process is visible in the theatre “Salza I Smiah” as well, only developing the relationships and the structure of management, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of the family activity and the ways of communication with the state, which is thought of as the father-guardian figure. But the basic, initial value that upholds and binds the family in its behaviour is survival. Theatre as art is the profound goal of the forefathers of Bulgarian theatre, but the theatre that results from their activities is not yet the true art. The perseverance for achieving the idea of the theatre, the sustainable efforts of the company to fulfil it in practice in the years of its formation, grant the company the part of a primitive unit in the chain of history of the National Theatre. Moving into a new building, the company as a family achieves the idea of home. Later, in the face of N. O. Massalitinov, the company realizes its spiritual father — a concept sought for such a long time. During Massalitinov’s time, and with him, the family experiences a peak of achieving theatre as art. This period of the company’s life rein-

serts and turns some behavioral features into tradition that marks the company as a conservative closed society tightly bound to its lineal nature.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE AND THE LEADING IDEOLOGIES IN THE COURSE OF ITS DEVELOPMENT Kamelia Nikolova

What is the contemporary meaning of an effort to reconstruct the history of the Bulgarian National Theatre? — This is the question that serves as a starting point of the text. The answer proposed is that in the context of contemporary situation of culture, the meaning is contained in the attempt to once *archive* the National Theatre as an exponent for the museums of national (regional) and world (global) cultures where it can be contemplated and examined, and, on the other hand, to be rendered as a *material for recycling*, that is, as something to be perpetually re-worked, and experienced again and again. The strategy chosen for reconstructing the image of the National Theatre set in the process of its century-long existence is that the theatre is realized through the light of its connection with key ideologies in the course of its development up to the end of the 80s of the 20th century. Three major ideologies have been traced as such, being consecutively dominant in the period from the beginning of the 20th century up to the end of the I World War, the period of the 20s and 30s of the 20th century and the period of the socialist epoch. The ideology of the first period is that of *establishing the state* (that recently gained its independence); for the second period it is the ideology of *the loss of national ideals* after the failure in the wars and the need for overall renewal of the state after them; for the third period — this is the ideology of *constructing the socialist state*. A considerable part of the text is dedicated to the analysis of the particular determinative influences of each of the above-mentioned ideologies on the institutional and aesthetic status of the National Theatre, then summarizing and defining its reconstructed historical image. The National Theatre bears two major characteristics — 1. Under the given historical circumstances, the National Theatre is established and subsequently continues to be re-established as/in the place of the whole Bulgarian theatre and; - 2. It is the focal point under whose model is formed the rest of the theatre periphery in Bulgaria, or under whose model the periphery is negatively rejecting it.

In conclusion the author claims that after defining the basic status of the National Theatre, it is now comparatively easier to read and spell out the complex developments in it during the 90s of the 20th century (after the political changes in Eastern Europe) and to look for an answer to the inevitably posed question in any such historical — political recapitulations, namely: What would be one of the most adequate and useful forms of its existence in the present day? Sensing clearly that both of the problems need a separate, detailed and thorough examination, the text gives only two short comments on them. According to the first comment, the National Theatre reflection and the permanently established attitudes towards it to be considered the center in which to a certain extent is initialized or made the organization or re-organization of the theatre in Bulgaria as a whole, explains the mixing of traditional, avant-garde, popu-

lar and other types of performances on its stage during the 90s, this being an attempt to introduce to the country the variety of theatre ideas, practices and receptive strategies typical of the theatre network of the developed democratic countries. The second comment refers to the question what the National Theatre should be today, on the basis of its heritage and in the context of the contemporary cultural situation. And the answer is: As far as the Bulgarian National theatre is part of the network of European (and world) *national theatres*, it should be recognized by “the humanity observing all theatre productions of its own play” (Liothar) as exactly national. This would mean that the National Theatre should preserve and display the *archive* of its own and the global theatrical heritage (plays, staging and acting styles, basic value predispositions) and continually to *archive the theatric existence*, that is the achievements and the interesting findings of the up-to-date stage practice in the country.

THE POPULAR REPERTOIRE OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE Aglia Stefanova

The text poses questions of the “mass” character of the National Theatre repertoire from the first decades of its existence.

In an attempt to catch up with missed artistic experience, it happens that “high” and “low”, “popular” and “elite” often lose their identification features, their diversities during Bulgarian Renaissance (1762 — 1878). At that period any work of art is taken for valuable information, due to the belated institutionalization of the acting craft in Bulgaria. Any theatre production would pass on the stage of the National Theatre without prejudice or conservative bans; everything is examined in order both Bulgarian theatre artists and theatre goers to gain enough artistic and theoretical information on the different genre forms, plot options and artistic cross points of interest characteristic of drama. It all urges the audiences, and along with it the theatre critics, to take an active critical view, to build on dynamic criteria for comprehending the different works of art.

The National Theatre creates a new cultural geopolitics whose set of rules is established according to the cultural specificity of the region. In it, romantic drama and melodrama are often taken for tragedy; comedy is regarded as a purely educational genre and a corrective measure. Classical plays are alternated by melodramas and saloon comedies; modern drama smoothly coexists together with its lower, “mass” version.

National Theatre repertoire in the first theatre seasons is typically a pastiche compiled from the world aristocratic and boulevard stages, thus inserting itself as a product of “third culture” (Edgar Morin), meaning accessible for everyone, offered as a kind of “popular reading”, though on behalf of a formal, more and more “stately” institution. Hundreds of years of wars between directions and styles in drama are reconciled here. Mass entertainment feature is needed for attracting the audiences that are still not accustomed theatergoers, for establishing interest in the theatre and forming theatre habits that would later lead to the estimation of the “high” dramaturgy of concepts.