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SUMMARIES

THE BIG LEAP: THE BERLINER THEATERTREFFEN IS INTERESTING TO CHINA, A STUDY

Thomas Irmer

The paper traces the development of the recent ‘phenomenon of a disproportionate theatrical exchange’ between Germany and China. Productions of big Berlin and Hamburg companies are performed dozens of times in large cities unheard of in Germany until now. Berliner Schaubühne alone would make 3 or 4 visits to China on a yearly basis, as the revenues yielded on that giant market afford an opportunity to stage new costly theatrical productions at home.

The author is well aware of the fact that the country’s curiosity about German theatre is piqued, to a great extent, owing to the Asian state’s

interest in such giants as Mercedes or BMW, and that the local audiences, coming to watch the visiting performances, are making of them something very different from what the European spectators do. The author draws a historical parallel with Arthur Miller’s *Salesman in Beijing* where the playwright describes his experience during the staging of his play *Death of a Salesman* in the 1980s, at Beijing People’s Art Theatre.

Conversing with Chinese theatre professionals and curators, the author seeks to figure out the developments in China’s theatre life since the 1980s. In his conclusions, he recapitulates the major hindrances to creating a real theatrical dialogue between the two cultures, touching upon such issues as censorship and the differences between their views on theatre.

THE DIRECTORIAL TURN. THE BEGINNINGS

Kamelia Nikolova

The study deals with the directorial turn in European theatre, which began with the advent of stage director in the late nineteenth century and achieved its culmination and *eventuation* with the establishing of the figure of stage director as the sole creator of a performance from the mid-1950s until the late 1960s, followed by undermining of and transformations in the stage director’s status over the decades that came. After clarifying the basic theoretical problem under consideration, the article traces the initial period of the directorial turn: the period of the advent, shaping and the establishing of the figure of stage director in European theatre from the 1870s until the end of the nineteenth century.

Recently, in theoreticising over theatre such terms as *performative turn* and *digital turn* established themselves. The former was introduced to describe the ever-widening orientation that begun in the 1950s and 1960s of theatre practice towards pure eventivity of the performance, towards the spontaneity and authenticity of various performative forms, defined at their emergence as *happenings*, *actions* and *events*, to be later incorporated in the term *performances*. The latter underscores the changes in the language of theatre and in the overall theatrical situation, called for by the advent of new technologies and the created by these technologies new socio-cultural conditions of the contemporary digital era. From such a perspective, the advent of stage director in the late nineteenth century ought to be defined as the first basic turn in theatre's new history, which should be referred to as a *directorial turn*.

Studying the 150 years of stage director's development since director's advent up until now, two major long stages may be distinguished: director's theatre or director's 'golden age' (from the 1870s up until the 1960s), which we have referred to as the stage of director's turn, and the next stage, characterised by deconstructions and new transformations in the figure of director in the post-modern period and contemporary digital era (since the late 1960s until now). These two major stages should be divided into several periods, running at times as radical (internal) turns as compared to the previous one, and sometimes, seamlessly segueing into the next.

The paper deals with the shaping of the figure of stage director during the first of the said periods (the last quarter of the nineteenth century), which has taken place in the theatrical experiments and activities of several persons: Herzog Georg II von Sachsen-Meiningen (1826–1914), André Antoine (1858–1943), Otto Brahm, (1856–1912), Paul Fort (1872–1960), Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë (1869–1940), Constantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938) and Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966). These figures were also the earliest directors of European theatre, who shaped the first stage director's generation in it.

BETWEEN DECONSTRUCTIONS AND RECONSTRUCTIONS: THE CANON OF BULGARIAN PLAYWRITING AFTER 1989

Nikolay Yordanov

The paper deals with the binary opposition *official-alternative literary canon*, particularly in Bulgarian playwriting. Following 1989, a number of studies were published and conferences and discussions were held about the matter, but a final consensus on many of the broached issues has not been reached as yet. Apparently though, in the course of the changes in social paradigms in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s striving for a quest for alternative canons was witnessed along with a motion that originally, many canons, rather than a single privileged Canon, exist. These constructions retained the logics of the canon-establishing mechanisms and the acknowledgements of the environment (both in the past and the present), but this was done from alternative viewpoints; a pluralistic option was allowed in some cases, which reconciled different visions of the canon.

The study traces the discussions conducted within the professional theatrical circles, the major research events and publications on the canon of Bulgarian playwriting and its readings after 1989. Methodologically, its cardinal issue was whether or not to stick to the model of *official-non-official* theatrical culture of the period under communism. The author believes that we need a more precise evaluation of the theatre-makers and the art practices of that period, without abandoning for good the dividing line between tolerated writers and works and the victims of repression or at the same time heroising persons and works with hindsight.

КАК СЕ СТАВА ЛЮБИТЕЛ – РАЗКАЗИ ЗА ЧЕШКИЯ АЛТЕРНАТИВЕН ТЕАТЪР ПРЕДИ И СЛЕД 1989 Г.

Петер Христов

Съдбовните социални и политически промени след "нежната революция" през ноември 1989 г. не само промениха и повлияха на ролята и положението на театъра в

чешкото (и словашкото) общество, но биха могли да се разглеждат и като жалон и повратна точка в историята на едно голямо изкуство и движение за независим, алтернативен и любителски театър в страната/страните.

Изследването се опитва да обедини две перспективи – ролята на любителския (непрофесионалния) театър в рамките на чешкия (чехословашкия) театър преди и след 1989 г. и разказа за един любител, който след 1989 г. израства като професионалист и се превръща в един от най-влиятелните театрални дейци на чешката театрална сцена от последните три десетилетия.

Творчеството на Петер Лебъл (1965–1999) и като режисьор, и като сценограф е не само *pars pro toto* от традиционната и дълготрайна взаимовръзка между света на професионалистите и непрофесионалистите, но и уникален пример за един изключителен майстор на театъра, който си остава 'любител за цял живот'.

Изследването е насочено и към перспективите на развитието на традицията в чешкия (чехословашкия) любителски театър, като се опитва да анализира принципите и особената роля на "движението за чешки любителски театър" в историята на чешкия театър.

UPENDING THE MEANINGS OF 'US/THEM' IN BULGARIAN PERIOD DRAMA BETWEEN 1944 AND 1989

Romeo Popiliev

The paper deals with Bulgarian period drama between 1944 and 1980 through the prism of the 'us/them' problem. Both parts of this binary underwent a radical upending of their meanings, at times absolutely inconsistent with those of the past and sometimes fleetingly and shyly returning to them. This foretold, complicated and unavoidable confusion was a result of the political conjuncture and generally, of the unrestrained communist Soviet ideological dictates. Still, the very privileged position of the future and the fruition of the general plan of achieving it should have continually unsettle and challenge them. Under communism, 'us' had to be subject to the com-

mon, while 'them' was not allowed at all. Thus 'us', compromising with 'them', could in no way get united in the 'own', while 'them', which had to be missing and was driven out, became estranged in the natural course of events. The 'us/them' were initially pointed by the occupier, remaining completely out of synch with the natural dynamism and the change in the us/them relationship.

The article broaches some major and well-known dramatic texts of that period, divided in three mythological cycles (the underground fight waged by communists; the period of the National Revival and the medieval period) by such playwrights as Orlin Vasilev, Kamen Zidarov, Ivan Peichev, Georgi Markov, Stefan Tsanev, Nicola Rusev, Konstantin Iliev, Margarit Minkov, etc. Highlighted are both the things in common and the substantial differences from the period drama and the 'us/them' problem until 1944.

APPROACHES TO KAESTNER, BRECHT'S POETRY

Boris Minkov

The article studies the fundamentals of poetry writings by Bertolt Brecht and Erich Kaestner in the context of the cultural situation in the Weimar Republic of the late 1920s and the early 1930s. The principle line of reasoning of this study is that regardless of their different worldviews and aesthetic principles, the two writers have taken a similar attitude towards poetic language and the overall socio-cultural climate of the age. Of paramount importance to placing this poetry is the fact that turn in the expectations for the capacity and the effect of the poetic took place in an environment of being awake to the crises of representation (a concept by Erika Fischer-Lichte). In this regard the study highlights the main characteristics of a principally different discourse, where the poetic subject abandons the key position in acquiring and stylising lyrical experience, introducing and connecting instead various poetic voices and roles, producing disengaging transformations of the

modulation in his own voice. From this perspective, the understanding of the figure of the poetic subject as a mediator (Walter Benjamin) offers opportunities for this figure's ambivalent comprehension as a resignative social practice and a compensatory activity, hypertrophied in the theatrical gesture. The paper relates the cognitive theatricalisation as an expression of the crisis to the interaction between the lyric poetry and the tradition of cabaret culture of the early twentieth century; it relates the basis of fair culture and the practice of the cabaret gesture of interlude to Kaestner—an author, intentionally staged himself as a verse-maker—to the maintaining a high poetic pretence Expressionism (this paper owes it to Kamelia Nikolovay, who related Frank Wedekind to cabaret elements).

THE HAPPINESS PROJECT AND BULGARIAN PLAYWRITING

Anna Topaldjikova

Over various historical periods, happiness has been understood either as a subjectively significant goal or as a goal benefiting many people. The article focuses on several pieces emblematic of Bulgarian playwriting that have highlighted certain trends in the ever-changing idea of happiness in the period of modernism, the era of Socialist Realism and nowadays. The play *Strahil The Terrible Rebel* by Petko. U. Todorov of the early twentieth century deals with the unimplemented happiness project with respect to the anguish of modern mind. The 1939 *Albena* by Yordan Yovkov traces the rise and fall of the idea of happiness of the individual and the community, understood as sexual attraction and a dream of an unattainable ecstatic experience. In Yordan Radichkov's *January* of 1975 the happiness project, unbound neither by love, nor by the duty to the society, is implemented in the area of spiritual quest. After 1989, playwrights redirected their attention from the common to the personal, the idea of community increasingly

becoming an abstract notion. The end of the article establishes the blanks that open up new horizons of quest for contemporary Bulgarian playwriting.

THE 'THAW' PERIOD AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE. AVANT-GARDE SCENOGRAPHIC PRACTICES' COMEBACK

Albena Tagareva

The paper seeks to offer a look into the processes of challenging the stringent dogmatic constraints imposed by Socialist Realism, that have taken place in the scenography at the National Theatre. In view of the theatrical situation in this country between 1956 and 1968, the National Theatre was no longer the authority that had set the aesthetic directions in the theatre practice. Still, several productions, though few and not that radical as elsewhere across the country, could be highlighted even there, such as Schiller's *Don Carlos*, dir. Krustio Mirsky, set design by Ivan Penkov, architect Georgi Trendafilov (1955); Ivan Vazov's *Toward the Abyss*, dir. in Stefan Surchadjiev, set design by Asen Popov (1958); Leo Tolstoy's *The Living Corpse*, dir. Nikolay Lutskanov, set design by Asen Stoichev (1963), etc., that have broken the mould of the illusionary-likening scenographic solutions. These premieres have established a clear trend in the way the 'Thaw' was taking its course, viz. through modernising classic plays and primarily, through their visual *expressiveness* onstage.

Scenography of theatrical productions was the promptest of all the elements of a performance in shaking off the burden of the dogmatic Socialist Realism imposed in Bulgaria in the Stalinist era. It was the artists who have earlier established the scenographic practice and then worked in the period under consideration for the National Theatre with all their authority and mastery to demonstrate their ingenious art that in the late 1950s and the early 1960s became the motor giving an impetus to the change in the conservative design of the theatre's productions.

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