

PART II

DRAMA / CHOREOGRAPHY

1. CREATIVE WORKSHOP – CREATIVE ACTIVITY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE PROCESS OF THEATRE CREATION¹⁵¹

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Abstract: *Within the frame of the study field of Aesthetics at Faculty of Arts Prešov University in Prešov, the students have an opportunity to acquire abilities and skills also in creative artistic activities. One of the possibilities is to participate in the creative workshops as the part of Academic Prešov Festival that is very popular with the participants. The actors of a creative workshop can experience, in a short period of time (mostly weekly), an intense creative process in which a young undergraduate student headed by a professional, in the amateur communication with a professional, can experience an unrepeatable experience of creativity, creation of theatrical work as well as the distinctive level of theatrical communication on the axis of participant-lecture-process-making-theatrical work-viewer. In this way, he discovers potential artistic, authentic, and generationally specific dispositions.*

Key words: *theatre workshop, amateur theatre, theatre communication, theatre production, theatre creation*

1. Introduction

During the three decades of the Institute of Aesthetics and Art Culture (IEUK) at the Faculty of Arts in Prešov, there have been created the following: The structure of the department, the content of individual disciplines, the structure of the shaping and optional subjects, the background for the graduate of the study field as well as the programme of its theoretical and practical training. The department currently provides two Bachelor's study programmes – the first degree of undergraduate study (Aesthetics, Aesthetics in combination), two Master's study programmes the second degree of undergraduate study (Aesthetics, Teaching Aesthetics in combination) and one doctoral study programme – the third degree of undergraduate study (2.1.6 Aesthetics) – full-time and part-time study. During the course of theoretical study, the students in of the teaching and non-teaching study forms acquire the necessary knowledge of the history and theory of aesthetics from antiquity to the present-day, from

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contemporary problems of aesthetics of art and aesthetics of non-thematic aesthetics, from history, theory and aesthetics of the selected art (music, theatre, art, film and partially literature). *“In aesthetic education, we always strive for an individual to have the opportunity to experience the artwork and the real aesthetic side of reality, but there is equally important his or her own creativity or the ability to directly create”* (Kopčáková and Kušnířová, 2014, www.kuv.upol.cz). Both the experience as well as the experience of the intense creative process *“should be irreplaceable in the undergraduate training of undergraduate students and not only within the aesthetics departments but also within other study fields”*. (Zahatňanská, 2009, p. 165). In addition to the theoretical knowledge, the students acquire practical skills and habits for scientific work in the form of participation in student scientific activities, skills and habits to control in the creative way electronic media, and finally they also acquire skills of creative artistic activity and its management.

For the above reasons – the ability to experience a work of art, to use one’s own creativity or directly create – it can be experienced by the students in the study disciplines, such as *performance of the selected type of art, museo-educology or creative drama*, while in these disciplines the space is being created with the students creating their own creative projectic or drama works where there is used live contact with the arts where at least theoretical knowledge is being used to some extent. However, there is still the need for certain dispositions and positive motivation from the side of pedagogues. It is precisely in the optional disciplines where there is being opened possibly the only way to explore the meaning and understanding of the importance of works of art and cultural monuments of a material and intangible nature, through their own experience, verbal aesthetic art performance, pedagogical interpretation and project teaching (Kopčáková and Kušnířová, 2014).

Museo-educology is a professional pedagogical discipline that deals with the use of art in the process of education and training, in the process of artistic education, as well as in the process of interdisciplinary relations of art. A museo-educator is focused on the theoretical and pedagogical processing of the content of expositions for working with children, youth and adults, presents the collections by means of methodological sheets, can perform art activities, in the study rooms and libraries they organise educational programmes, lectures. The objective of the study discipline *museo-educology* is to prepare the students, future novices of aesthetics study for educational activities in the context of perception, animation, performance of art and intermedia activities in continuity with the current tendencies to understand museums and galleries not only as presenters of artistic objects, sources, collections but as art- institutions. The results of creative activities during the course of study are the projects in the form of three-dimensional installations with an emphasis on the pedagogical interpretation of art, or curatorship. This discipline is led by our colleague, art

theoretician Janka Migašová, and under her responsibility the following projects were created during the period from 2015 to 2018:

1. The exhibition *Contemporary Visual Arts* (Caraff's Prison),
2. *Oskar Felber and the others* (The Šariš Gallery),
3. *Future in the Short Cut*, (Creative Design Gallery),
4. *The Forms of Being* (Creative Design Gallery),
5. *Art as a New Footprint* (University campus of Prešov University) as well as in the year 2016 there was the participation of undergraduate students of aesthetics at the organisation of the 1st year FEAD – Festival of Architecture and Design in the Creative Design Gallery in Prešov (More at www.unipo.sk/filozoficka-fakulta/ieuk/podujatia/studentske-aktivity).

The above-mentioned projects were also created in co-operation with professional artistic and cultural institutions. J. Migašová (2014, p. 333) in her study points to the problem of education in the history of visual arts – she believes that it is essential to innovate the teaching of visual culture disciplines not only with regard to digital technologies, but also with regard to digital technologies and she also pointed to the necessity of interactivity and the transformation of the narrative of the history of art: *“The concept of the history of art as a linear narrative with the limited number of characters and events has serious cracks. It overschematises the understanding of the discipline, or by computing a large number of works and authors it complicates learning, informally overloads, and obscures the storyline. Therefore, we propose to consider the history of art as a “network” of centers and their localities that follow the geography of the Earth, the world, the landscape. Therefore the labels will therefore be historical periods, styles, artists and their works topologically arranged.”* Museo-educology has great prospects for the future as it uses one of the most important categories, without which the perception of art lacks artistic experience as a form of resonance, the responses of the perceiving man to the work of art. Educational programmes at museums are the rich source of aesthetic experience and own audio, visual or even haptic experience of what constitutes the tradition, but also with what occurs at present.

2. Creativity of Undergraduate Students, Creative Workshop at the Festival Academic Prešov

But the intention of our study is to point out to the possible undergraduate students of aesthetics and other undergraduate students of Prešov University to participate in creative workshops within the Academic Prešov Festival (AP), in which actors in a short time interval (usually a weekly) experience intense creative process, under the guidance of visiting scholars or the scholars of their universities, often in amateur communication with a professional, while at the same time they can experience an unforgettable experience of creativity, and the creation of a theatrical work. The AP Festival, now referred to as the

Competition of Creativity of Slovak Undergraduate Students, has already celebrated the 52nd year (2018) in its tradition since 1968.

Later, this festival was crystallised as a competition tour of *student theatres, artistic poetry and prose, and literary art written by undergraduate students*, and it is currently complemented by *short film and artistic translations*. After 1989, foreign ensembles (from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Great Britain, Ukraine, Spain, and others) of an essentially alternative type have become an integral part of the structure of the AP Festival, mostly the arts bodies presented and presented in their way, “revealing” performances for the context of Slovak Alternative Theatre. The festival has been associated with the name of Professor Karol Horák. Horák worked from 1994 to 2014 as a university pedagogue at IEUK, one of his scientific profiles is also the issue of alternative theatre in Slovakia with a connection to the Central European context reflected in the *Proceedings of Alternative Theatre I, II, III, IV, V*, as well as the *Proceedings of Alternative Theater Contexts in Contemporary Thinking*.

He is a long-time organiser of this event and currently the director of the festival, as well as the names of current and former IEUK college educators in certain years participating in this festival: Miron Pukan, Eva Kušnírová, Lukáš Makky, Adrián Kvokačka, Alžbeta Verešpejová. Between 1994 and 2014, the Institute participated with the students in the organisation of AP Festival and during the course of study, some students actively participated in the artistic-theatrical production at the Student Theatre of the Faculty of Arts, Prešov University (under the supervision of Professor K. Horák, the origin of which dates back to 1960 and it belongs among the oldest amateur alternative theatres in Slovakia.

In the other years after 1989 creative workshops became the constant part of the AP Festival. K. Horák is one of the creators and lecturers of creative workshops and, as he claims, these workshops “*represent an excellent opportunity to meet professionals, foreign lecturers, simply devote two days to great adventure. (...) We organise these workshops to engage students in creating to identify themselves. It does not need to be just the theatre of experiencing according to Stanislavsky. It is important to enjoy oneself in the type of performance to verify our hidden creative dispositions. (...) My ambition is to get them into the contact with inspirational people.*” (Horák and Ivanová, in Kušnírová 2013, p. 171). Creative workshops include the co-operation of undergraduate students – amateurs with leading Slovak professional filmmakers, starting with directors, choreographers, stage designers, actors, as well as theater pedagogues, theatrical theoreticians and practitioners. For example, creative workshops led by Miroslav Kasprzyk, Dagmar Inštitorisová, Juraj Letenay, Michal Babiak, Ondrej Šoth, Patrik Lancarič, Ján Šimko, Valentín Kozmenko-Delinde, Rastislav Ballek, Dušan Bajin, Karol Horák, Miron Pukan, Eva Kušnírová, Nad'a Lindovská, Julia Rázusová, and others.

Another group of leading workshops is made up of former AP participants or the members of student festivals who once played on this forum and at a different level return to the festival. We could consider them “traders” of their experiences with the theatre that they gained during the creative process in their youth during their studies, and later these new experiences gained in professional practice. This is the case of Ľubomír Šárik, Ivan Barla, Lucia Tarbajovská, Marianna Ošková, Lenka Papugová, Stanislav Bilý, Diana Laciaková, Lukáš Šútor, Alexandra Mireková and many others. I would like to mention one more group of workshops made by former participants working at other Slovak universities as doctoral students or university teachers who devote themselves to artistic activities in student theaters or are also the creators of workshops they present at their faculty forums or they get the space for their presentation within the AP. We have in mind Miroslav Ballay (a university teacher at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, who led Student Theatre VYDI for many years), Juliana Sersenová (at that time artificially active in England, founded the theatre ensemble Slovak Theatre in London) and Adela Mitrová from the Faculty of Education, University of Prešov, and P.A.D.A.K. Art Theatre Leader).

From foreign artists who have led creative workshops at AP Festival we mention the names of the following pedagogues and teatrologists:

1. **Jana Pilátová**, the Czech theater anthropologist, teatrologist and theatrical pedagogue who has completed a half-year internship at Jerzy Grotowski and this experience has determined the direction in her life-long focus. Since 1990 she has worked at the Department of Educational Dramatics DAMU in Prague (*The Integration Process of Creativity – The Heritage of Grotow's Existence* – in 2000 and 2004).
2. Another prominent personality was the Polish director, actor, professor **Lech Raczak**, the legend of Polish alternative culture and co-founder of TEATR ÓSMEGO DNIA (Theatre of the eighth day) in Poznań (1964), who led the workshop in 2006 entitled *From biomechanics to modern performing expression – the actor of the Second Theater Reform and after it*.
3. In 2007, we had the opportunity to watch Wilgoć (SP Kul Lublin), the personality of the Polish alternative scene and the founder of SCENE PLASTYCZNEI (Plasticity Stage) Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego (KUL Catholic University of Lubelsk, 1969), a scenographer, director, painter, and Professor **Leszek Madzik** who returned his experience to a college student in a creative workshop *Actor in Modern Art*.
4. We cannot forget a significant Polish director **Henryk Rozen**, who has conducted four creative workshops in the AP Festival since 2000 (*Monodrama as a Problem II – Employee of the Funeral Service*, 2005, *Among the Social Theme and Tragic comedy, Buridan's Donkey*, 2008 and the other two: *One Man Show* and *Alternative space metamorphoses* 2011). The first two mentioned projects resulted in the complete production of performances by the

professional theatre ensembles (*Money, party and Eternal Light*, 2007, Jorik Stage at Puppet Theatre in Košice, *Buridan's Donkey*, Theatre of Alexander Duchnovič Prešov, 2009).

The phenomenon of the creative workshop deserves our more intense attention. As stated by K. Horák (2009, p. 201) *“in a short period of time the participants in the workshop, leadership by well-known art educators or active artists can experience authentic, not hectic but concentrated creative work. This part of the competition of undergraduate students is based on the effort to attract as many students as possible to the process of artistic value (still new and new generations of young adepts in the almost fifty-year history of the event), but also in this type of AP programme to continue in its own authoritarian (including dramaturgical) artistic concept, to update the suggestions of the current ‘postmodern’ theatre in a social group of artistically oriented undergraduate students. There was an ambition to maintain the ‘alternative’ of their own productions.”*

During a short, time-bound concentrated creative work, undergraduate students create the conditions and environment for a dual aesthetic experience that can be understood as *“a dynamic process that enriches and improves the nature of the interaction between the aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object (the variability of the assessment position during the course of the aesthetic situation, gradual discovery of details, connections, and others)”* (Kvokačka, 2008, p. 218). The aesthetic interaction, that is a condition of aesthetic experience, thus establishes an aesthetic relationship between the viewer or recipient and the actor or object, while the possibility of experiencing the aesthetic situation is not unilateral. To the same extent, where a recipient is invited to experience that aesthetic condition, the actors may also benefit from such aesthetic condition, especially when it comes to a creative workshop where do students (and thus, inexperienced artists) participate: Due to their participation in the art form or awareness of the recipient's response, which gives them further impulses. The aesthetic situation is a unique and unrepeatable process, *“that includes the individual components as an aesthetic object (what is aesthetically perceived and has, among other functions, also a distinct aesthetic function), the perception (percipient, recipient) of the aesthetic experience.”* (Kopčáková, 2016, p. 76). The aesthetic function in this relation is an imperative of aesthetic experience, because it has the skill to win, specialise and isolate the reciprocated phenomenon, clearly informing the recipient that it is not a normal situation and, above all, has the ability to 'force' the audience to adopt an aesthetic attitude (Makky, 2017, p. 191-192).

Creative workshops also signal the distinct level of theatrical communication, which takes place on the axis of the participant – the lecturer – the process of theatrical production – the theatrical works – the audience. The experience of this creative work is for students or creators not only interesting aesthetic experience but, above all, an artistic experience. At the beginning of

the creative workshop, it is assumed to determine the starting point of theme, to analyse it with the director or the workshop leader, to determine the character of the work, to prepare a point scenario, or a text fragment as the starting point for the creative process.

From the implications it results that the poetologically creative workshop does not favour the process of emergence of theatrical work in a classical way (in the beginning it is a finished literary text which seeks to interpret the acting team through the effort to identify and identify with the given literary text), but by the “modern” way – thus the order of authorial theatre, where there is theme in the beginning, the creation of text by all the members of the short-term workshop who by taking part in the creation of the text are involved in the realisation of personality acting, which is typical of the Second Theatrical Reform.

An important moment is also the composition of the participants of the workshop, whether they are undergraduate students, or the members of the Student Theatre of the Faculty of Arts (in the past referred to as the Faculty of Philosophy). Some workshops also included the confrontation of a creative college of undergraduate students with professional actors, especially actors of the Theatre of Alexander Duchnovič in Prešov). Creative workshops have been working on the theme a few days (a week, sometimes a ten-day workshop), and the result of their creative activity is presented to viewers during or at the end of the festival, in most cases with a great audience resonance.

There is a need to add one more fact about the appearance and form of the text that “*the text component was mostly produced during the work of the team that participated in the workshop – the text was only*” codified “*after the workshop was terminated or was not graphically recorded. As an example, the following workshops with ‘unstable’ text, with several variants, are reflected in several different titles: Pregnant music, Chronos’ tooth, La Musica (1999-2001), Jam from homemade raspberries, Faidra/Vertical Cut (2005 – 2006) and the most recent theme ‘Social theme and tragicomedy’ (Buridan’s Donkey) (2008 – 2009).*” (Horák, 2009, p. 202).

In this context, in terms of textual form, we could divide the artistic projects that emerged into the creative process during the AP Festival into several groups, REMAKY projects, which have returned to the cult texts of alternative theatre of the past decades (such as *Living Furniture* 1975). Another group could be workshops that included a modern, unconventional interpretation of classical texts of world drama (for example *Antigona* 2003, *Hamlet* 2007). But also a group of workshops in which programs from various poetry texts (such as *Meeting with a postmodern? I, II, III, IV – continuously reported in 2000-2003*). In the last group, it is the realisation of performances (*Redundance or the sea humming of Prešovská street* 2008, *Motherhood* 2011) (see the catalogue of creative workshops from the publication from 1989 *Theatre of Reflection* 2011). The trend of AP workshop authors is also searching and

experimenting in non-public spaces, whether in the city or within the university: the sacred space of the Prešov Church, the space of the street, the space of an antiatomic shelter in the Prešov University of Prešov – Student House, the university campus of Prešov University (the interior space of university institutions or the outdoor area of the university campus) and others.

One of the disadvantages of workshops is their short duration, but also their momentariness. The process of creation that we have mentioned takes several days. The workshop may be the first stage of creating a work of art, and later it can lead to the development of sketched lines in the form of a full-fledged theater work. In some workshops, there is a one-off demonstration where the entire production process is closed, but the final product of the workshop can be a re-run play, as we have already mentioned, which later forms part of the repertoire of professional theatre or it takes the place in the repertoire of Students House at the Faculty of Arts, Prešov University of Prešov in Prešov such as *La Musica* 2001, *Arbitration* 2002, *Home of Plasticine/Faidra Vertical Cut* 2006, *Buridan's Donkey* 2009 and others.

3. Creative Workshop Redundance or the Sea Humming of Prešovská Street

One of the creative workshops at the AP Festival was *Redundance or the sea humming of Prešovská Street* that was performed in 2008. Eight undergraduate students (students of the Aesthetics Department and the members of the Faculty of Arts of the Faculty of Arts, except for the last named Stanislav Bílý, Lenka Papugová, Lucia Račková, Peter Gallo, Petronela Kliková, Peter Šimčík, Denisa Baranová, P. Pivovarník) under the guidance of lecturers Karol Horák, Miron Pukan, Diana Laciaková tried to create the artefact in the busy space of the university campus, more precisely in front of the *Ballad Café* at November 17 street, no. 102, near the university campus and the Student's House, and the university dining room (this space is important because it is the “home for undergraduate students”, while it is also the space where they pass to the nearby residents of the adjoining settlement, the presentation of this production is based on the idea of locating to the ‘notoriously’ known terrain production, which initially looks like a regular ‘event’ that takes place in the everyday space, which fulfills a pragmatic function in the life of its inhabitants).

The production *Redundance or the sea humming of Prešovská street* tended to be an “event”, an “action” to the form of a happening, and in some aspects also the character of performance – banal expressions of the life of civilians (arrival and stay at the café terrace, refreshments, attempts to communicate between guests, traffic from a nearby outpost from the city) were “ritualised” into the form of a hysterical onslaught of tense attacks on the consciousness of the participants, ending with a paradoxical, “gag”, mental collapse of the waiter who pours on his head the ordered beverages.

The theme of this workshop was to create the tense situation of a contemporary man who does not perceive – he cannot perceive – ordinary life beauties, details, being permanently interfered with by the nervousness of everyday civilisation interventions. The question arises: *How can these feelings be expressed? How to break, pull away from the stereotypes of people to read for a moment and get back to their pure relationships and genuine responses?*

At the beginning of the workshop, themes were highlighted and transformed into specific fabulous motivations in the process of realisation. Out of ordinary participants who were sitting on the cafeteria terrace there was profiled the active character of a Soldier, who followed the contact with the woman at the side table, we called her the Pooh-Pooh. Then there were incorporated two female characters into the array of characters from the café, a Hysterical woman and a Phlegmatic woman. Another male figure was a Phlegmatic man, similar to his feminine counterpart a Phlegmatic woman, who expressed classical apathy to the environment. Conventional communication of the other character Waiter and the guests was interrupted by the noise of his motorcycle Rider with a helmet that went into the mask, so we did not see his face. The noise of the motorcycle was alternately dominated, so that when the fault broke down, it gradually re-graded the nervousness of the terrace.

The audience, mostly undergraduate students of Prešov universities, surrounded the terrace, while the inhabitants of the housing estate – both from the balconies and on the way to food – broke off their activities for a while and watched this unusual production at the street. This interruption of the stereotypical life situation and the reactions of audience from the street to the “event” energised some features of the interactive staged theatrical forms (*“they are being created ... as current events; ... the author of the form is more focused on the creation of ideas regardless of the way and the quality the interactive modulated situation ... is basically so much a project, the sketch of the concept as a precisely modelled intent, the participants of the process are thus aware of the dominance of randomness, uncertainty, and a multitude of approaches in its shaping”*) (Inštorisová 2009, p. 26).

The creative workshop presented the type of street theatre that tries to work outside closed buildings, approaches to meet the audience and tries to interact with people, as well as the impact of an unrepeatable accidental situation. It is also related to the use of specific urban environment conditions. Therefore, the size and shape of the space for this “theatre” (circle, ellipse, triangle, and square) and the distance of actors from the audience are important. Different tactics are used to attract, distribute, spread, and distract the audience, to determine the appropriate length of the performance and the form of its conclusion.

4. Conclusions

In our study, we have indicated one of the paths of stimulation and creativity of students in the process of discovering latent artistic dispositions and

their presentation. In a constantly changing world, the importance of creativity is growing, and for this reason “*creativity is of crucial values in the life of a man as well as society*” (Zahatňanská, 2018, p. 41).

In spite of not the most creative condition of creativity and its support at Slovak universities, we can still notice that at the beginning of the new millennium, “*creative activities in the Slovak university centres that were in the past the citadel of the student theatre are re-emerging. (...) Therefore, if contemporary undergraduate students come up with their own need to professionally express themselves in the form of authentic generational testimony, then there seems to work somewhat universal, essential in the ontogenesis of a young person, a young undergraduate student. It is obviously his or her need to actively influence his or her reality and to create certain values within it (at a specific average through the theatrical creation of aesthetic value). Thus, in this artistic activity, the classical postulate of contemporary aesthetic education is fulfilled, according to which the artistic creation enables a person – literally said – to experience himself or herself as a being able to overcome unilateral pressure of practical purposes by their own creativity. Therefore, this process can not be indifferent to us. From the point of view of creativity, pedagogy and research.*” (Horák, 2009, p. 45).

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