

**GLEDALIŠČE, PERFORMANS IN PLES
V ČASU COVIDA-19**

***THEATRE, PERFORMANCE AND DANCE
IN THE TIME OF COVID-19***

Uredil Tomaž Krpič
Edited by Tomaž Krpič



Festival Boršnikovo srečanje
Društvo gledaliških kritikov in teatrologov Slovenije
Založba FDV

Maribor in Ljubljana, 2023

Renida Baltrušaitytė, Una Bauer, Giovanni Boccia Artieri, Pia Brezavšček, Stefano Brillì, Laura Gemini, Francesca Giuliani, Ophelia Jiadag Huang, Tomaž Krpič, Holly Maples, Ivan Medenica, Jure Novak, James Rowson in Jasmina Založnik

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Izdajatelj / Publisher

Festival Borštnikovo srečanje v sodelovanju z Društvom gledaliških kritikov in teatrologov Slovenije in Fakulteto za družbene vede
Za Festival Borštnikovo srečanje: Aleš Novak, umetniški director
Za Založbo FDV: dr. Iztok Prezelj
Za Društvo gledaliških kritikov in teatrologov: dr. Zala Dobovšek
Maribor Theatre Festival in cooperation with Association of Theatre Critics and Researchers of Slovenia and FDV Publishing House
For Maribor Theatre Festival: Aleš Novak, Artistic Director
For Faculty of Social Sciences, FDV Publishing House: dr. Iztok Prezelj
For Association of Theatre Critics and Researchers of Slovenia: dr. Zala Dobovšek

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Slovenski jezikovni pregled / Slovenian proofread
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Naslovnica in oblikovanje / Cover design and typesetting
Sabrina Vukalič

Maribor, Ljubljana, 2023

Prva izdaja / First edition

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 157521155

ISBN 978-961-295-054-5 (PDF)

Dostopno prek / Accessible at
<https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/zalozba>

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DOI 10.51936/9789612950545



Univerza v Ljubljani
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UVOD

Gledališče med tišino in novimi izzivi v negotovih epidemičnih časih

V preteklosti je bilo gledališče mnogokrat prisilno zaprto. Razlogi so bili različni, med njimi politični, religiozni, ekonomski in epidemski. Še posebej slednji je bil eden izmed najbolj pogostih. Samo spomniti se moramo zaprtja angleških gledališč v elizabetinskem času zaradi izbruha kolere ali zaprtja v Evropi stoletje nazaj zaradi španske gripe. Situacija, ko so bila nedavno gledališča zaprta zaradi covida-19, torej ni bila popolnoma nova. Kar je bilo tu novega, sta bila obseg in narava zadnjega zaprtja. V času več kot eno leto trajajoče epidemije, v nekaterih deželah še dlje, so bile gledališke stavbe zaprte po vsem svetu. V nekaterih deželah je bilo zaprtje bolj rigorozno kot v drugih, toda zdravstvene omejitve zoper širitev virusa so bile sočasno prisotne po celotnem planetu prvič v človeški zgodovini. Medtem ko so v preteklosti ljudje imeli možnost bežanja na varno, je bilo to sedaj skorajda nemogoče zaradi zaprtja državnih meja, in celo nesmiselno zaradi prisotnosti covida-19 v vseh delih sveta.

Vpliv uveljavitve zaprtja v moderni družbi je brez dvoma skrajno negativen. Kljub pogostim jeremijadam o razdrobljenosti, anonimiziranju in odtujenosti posameznikov, živečih v prekomerno tehnološko razviti moderni družbi, je trenutna epidemska situacija jasno pokazala, da ljudje ne hrepenijo po socialnem distanciranju za vsako ceno. V pogojih narekovanega socialnega distanciranja večina ljudi hrepeni po izgubljenem druženju. In gledališče je, poleg mnogih drugih stvari, tudi način socialnega druženja tistih ljudi, ki pridejo tja, da bi potešili svojo dnevno dozo uprizoritvene odvisnosti. V času ne zgolj omejenih, ampak pogosto tudi prepovedanih stikov med ljudmi je gledališče tako trpelo najbolj.

Posledično so bili najbolj tragični in obsojanja vredni v teh za gledališče in performans neprijaznih in negotovih trenutkih politični poskusi, da bi poravnali račune s trenutno ranljivo gledališko skupnostjo. V času epidemske krize smo lahko bili priče temu, kako so v nekaterih deželah še posebej desno usmerjene politične stranke nagnjene k poskusom izkoriščanja situacije z namenom utišanja politično in družbeno neprijetnih opozicijskih glasov umetnikov in ljudi, zaposlenih v gledališki industriji. Že od samega začetka človeške zgodovine je bilo gledališče ponosen prostor izmenjave različnih mnenj o javnih zadevah. Toda gledališče je bilo vedno javni prostor, napolnjen s politično modrostjo, ne pa prostor cenenege vsakdanjega političnega žongliranja v zaodrju.

Gledališče, tudi samo del tega pojava, kritično odraža stanje demokratičnih vrednot v družbi. Umetniki, ki so na pravi strani zgodovine, nam tako kažejo vizijo prihodnosti z željo, da bi jo udejanjili v dani situaciji. Politiki, ki sledijo svojemu lastnemu ozkemu političnemu dnevnemu redu, zavidajo gledališču njegovo svobodo in drznost. Toda včasih se celo čutijo ogrožene in namesto podpore in napora, da bi ustvarili okolje, v katerem bi gledališka ustvarjalnost cvetela, ga zatirajo ali celo poskušajo uničiti. Odprtost gledališč in dobri pogoji za umetniško delo so tako lahko prepoznani kot močan in relevanten preizkus demokratičnih standardov v vsaki moderni družbi.

Čeprav je verjetno še prezgodaj, da bi lahko rekli, kakšen vpliv je imela epidemija na bodoči razvoj gledališča in performansa, pa so kratkoročni vplivi že prisotni. Večina jih je negativnih. Mnogi umetniki so izgubili svoje službe in se posledično soočili z brutalno socialno negotovostjo. Nekateri od njih so si morali drugje iskati začasni priložnosti za delo ali pa se morda celo niso vrnili v gledališče, ko se je situacija zopet normalizirala.

Nekaterim gledališčem je covid-19 predstavljal tako grozen udarec, da so morala za stalno zapreti svoja vrata. Na splošno pa je bil razvoj gledališča zaustavljen ali vsaj za nekaj časa upočasnen. Toda po drugi strani, ker se gledališki ustvarjalci niso vdali v usodo, saj so si odločno prizadevali poiskati nove načine izražanja svoje ustvarjalnosti in ustvarjati nove poti do odsotnega občinstva, ta čas ni bil popolnoma izgubljen. Še posebej internet je predstavljal pomembno sredstvo, s katerim sta se gledališče in performansa uspešno približala gledalcem, čeprav seveda ni mogel v celoti zapolniti praznine neprisotnosti. Internetna produkcija se razteza od predvajanja že posnetih iger in performansov do različnih eksperimentov s platformami kot na primer Zoom, Teams in podobno. To bo vsekakor pustilo pečat na prihodnji gledališki produkciji. Ali se bodo gledališča pomembno odmaknila od tradicionalne drže »socialnega druženja«, pa je vprašanje, na katerega lahko odgovori samo prihodnost. Ta knjiga bi morala slediti simpoziju *Gledališče, ples in performansa po covidu-19*, ki bi se bil moral odvijati na Festivalu Borštnikovo srečanje oktobra 2020. Naslov simpozija je vsekakor bil naiven in pretirano ambiciozen glede napovedi bodočega poteka epidemije, upajoč, da se bo zdravstvena kriza končala jeseni istega leta. Zaradi zdravstvenih omejitev je bil festival po komaj dveh dneh prekinjen in preostali program, vključno s simpozijem, odložen na naslednje leto, v maju 2021, potem ko je bilo slovenskim gledališčem zopet dovoljeno odpreti svoja vrata. Danes, ko to pišem, epidemija še zdaleč ni končana, čeprav so izgledi, zaradi uporabe cepiva zoper covid-19, da bodo gledališča v prihodnosti ostala odprta, sedaj mnogo boljši. Besedila, objavljena v tej knjigi, so bila dokončana pred več kot enim letom, ko je bil izid epidemije precej bolj negotov. Njihova glavna vrednost je tako v prikazu prvih znanstvenih spoznanj in v izražanju skrbi za stanje na področju gledališke umetnosti na vrhuncu epidemije. Čeprav knjiga ne obravnava nadaljevanja epidemije, vseeno upamo, da bo bralca kot značilen dokument časa prepričal naš napor napraviti ta pojav bolj razumljiv.

Na koncu bi rad izrazil svojo globoko hvaležnost Festivalu Borštnikovo srečanje, še posebej umetniškemu vodji Alešu Novaku, ki je prijazno nudil finančno in organizacijsko gostoljubnost mednarodni skupini navdušenih gledaliških raziskovalcev in strokovnjakov v času simpozija. S tem je omogočil živahno izmenjavo misli in mnenj o situaciji v gledališču v času epidemije v živo. Rad bi se zahvalil tudi Ani Gabrovec, organizatorici kulturnega programa pri Festivalu Borštnikovo srečanje, za pomoč pri pripravi simpozija. Ta knjiga je enako rezultat radodarnosti festivala, kar je prav tako sprejeto z globokim odobravanjem. V tem oziru bi rad izrekel zahvalo Mojci Kolar, asistentki umetniškega direktorja, ki je opravila veliko delo pri prevajanju besedil za monografijo. Omeniti moram še dva druga prav tako omembe vredna partnerja pri tem projektu: Društvo gledaliških kritikov in teatrologov Slovenije in nekdanjo predsednico društva Aljo Lobnik, s katero sva skupaj organizirala simpozij, ter Založbo FDV, ki je monografijo prijazno vzela pod svoje okrilje. In nenazadnje sem se dolžan zahvaliti vsakemu gledališkemu raziskovalcu in raziskovalki, ki je prispeval svoje besedilo k monografiji. Renida Baltrušaitytė, Una Bauer, Giovanni Boccia Artieri, Pia Brezavšček, Stefano Brillì, Laura Gemini, Francesca Giuliani, Ophelia Jiadag Huang, Holly Maples, Ivan Medenica, Jure Novak, James Rowson and Jasmina Založnik, brez vašega osebnega napora bi ta projekt prav gotovo ne bil možen.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre between Silence and New Challenges in Uncertain Times

In the past, theatre has had many forced closures. Among the diverse reasons were political, religious, economic and pandemic. Especially the last was one of the most frequent. We just need to remember the closure of English theatres during Elizabethan times due to the plague or when, a hundred years ago, theatres in Europe were closed due to the Spanish flu. So, theatre closures during the COVID-19 pandemic were not entirely new. What was new was the scale and nature of the last closure. For more than one year during the pandemic – and in some countries even longer – theatre buildings worldwide were closed. In some countries, the closure was more rigorous than in others. However, sanitary restrictions against the spread of the virus were synchronically present all over the globe for the first time in human history. In the past, people at least had a chance to flee to safety in other countries. This time, such fleeing was almost impossible due to national border closures and even nonsensical due to COVID-19's presence throughout the world.

In modern society, the impact of the implementation of lockdown is, beyond any doubt, profoundly negative. Despite frequent lamentations over atomised, anonymised and alienated individuals living in excessively technologically developed modern societies, the current pandemic proves that people do not crave social distancing at any price. Most people longed for the lost social gatherings in the conditions of dictated social distancing. And for those who come to the theatre to appease their daily dose of performance addiction, theatre is, besides many other things, a way of gathering socially. In times of not merely limited but many times also prohibited close contact among people, theatre thus suffered the most.

Consequently, in these moments that were unpleasant and uncertain for the theatre and performance, the most tragic and condemnable aspect was any political attempt to settle accounts with the currently vulnerable theatre community. During the pandemic, in some countries – and Slovenia was no exception – we witnessed how the right-oriented political parties often took advantage of the situation to shut down politically and socially unpleasant critical oppositional voices raised by artists and people working in the theatre industry. Since the dawn of the history of humankind, the theatre has proudly been a place to exchange opinions over public matters. But theatre was always a public place of political wisdom, not of cheap mundane backstage political juggling. Theatre, being a part of the phenomenon itself, critically reflexes the state of democratic values in society. Artists, who are on the right side of history, thus show us a vision of the future with the wish for it to be pertinent to the current situation. Following their narrow political agenda, politicians envy theatre for its freedom and boldness. But sometimes, they even feel endangered, and instead of supporting and struggling to create an environment in which theatre creativity can flourish, they oppress or even try to destroy it. The openness of theatres and good conditions for artistic

work can be thus seen as a robust and relevant test of democratic standards in any modern society.

Although it is perhaps still too early to tell how the pandemic will impact the future development of theatre and performance, short-term effects are already here. Most of them are negative. Many theatre artists lost their jobs and consequently faced severe social insecurity. Some of them had to search for new temporary opportunities elsewhere; others did not even return to the theatre once the situation returned to normalcy. For some theatres, COVID-19 represented such a horrible blow that they, unfortunately, had to close permanently. In general, the development of theatre art was halted or at least slowed for a while. On the other hand, theatre creators did not give up. They struggled to find new ways to express their creativity and tried to forge new tracks to reach the absent audience. Thus, the time was not entirely lost. The internet was a vehicle that successfully moved theatre and performance closer to the spectators, although it was not completely able to fill in the gap of non-presence. Online productions stretched from transmitting pre-recorded performances to various experiments with online platforms like Zoom and Teams. No doubt, these developments will leave an impact on future theatre productions. Whether theatres will significantly shift away from the traditional concept of “social gathering” is another question that only the future can answer.

This book should have followed the symposium Theatre, Dance and Performance after COVID-19 at the 55th Maribor Theatre Festival in Slovenia in October 2020. The symposium’s title was undoubtedly naïve and too ambitious in the predictions of further pandemic course, hoping the health crisis would be over by autumn of the same year. Due to health restrictions, the Festival was interrupted only after two days. The rest of the programme – including the symposium – was postponed to May 2021 when Slovenian theatres were again allowed to re-open their stages. Now, as I write these lines, the epidemic is far from being over, although, with the introduction of the vaccine against COVID-19, the prospects that theatre will stay open are now much better. The chapters published in this book were finished more than a year ago, in the spring of 2021, shortly before the symposium, when the outcome of the pandemic was far more uncertain. Their principal value is thus to bring us one of the first scholarly insights and expressions of the significant worries about the state of theatre art at the pandemic’s peak. The book does not treat the continuation and final “normalisation” of the pandemic and, as such, does not provide a complete insight into the dynamic relationship between theatre, performance, dance and COVID-19. Nevertheless, I still hope the reader will embrace our efforts to make this phenomenon more comprehensive and accept it as a distinct and precious document of its time.

Finally, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Maribor Theatre Festival, especially its artistic director, Aleš Novak, who kindly offered financial and organisational hospitality to our international group of enthusiastic theatre researchers and scholars during the symposium. He thus made a vibrant live exchange of thoughts and opinions about the situation in theatres during the pandemic times possible. I would also like to thank Ana Gabrovec, cultural programme organiser at the Maribor Theatre Festival, for her help in organising the symposium. This book is a result of the Festival’s generosity, which is also deeply appreciated. In this respect, I would like to thank Mojca Kolar, the assistant to the Festival’s artistic director, who has done a tremendous job translating the texts for the monograph. I also need to mention two other notable project partners in my acknowledgements: the Association of Theatre Critics and Researchers of

Slovenia and its ex-president, Alja Lobnik, with whom I organised the symposium, and the Faculty of Social Sciences Publishing House, which kindly took the monograph under its wing. Last but not least, I owe a great debt of thanks to every single theatre researcher and scholar who contributed to the monograph. Renida Baltrušaitytė, Una Bauer, Giovanni Boccia Artieri, Pia Brezavšček, Stefano Brilli, Laura Gemini, Francesca Giuliani, Ophelia Jiadai Huang, Holly Maples, Ivan Medenica, Jure Novak, James Rowson and Jasmina Založnik, without your personal efforts, this project would not have been possible in the first place. Thank you all!

DINAMIČNA DŽUNGLA

Gledališče, umetnik in kitajski trg v spreminjajočih se časih

UVOD

Kako delujejo gledališča in kako živijo ter delajo gledališki in plesni umetniki na Kitajskem? Ali lahko pandemija spremeni krajino zlasti v dinamiki med umetniki in gledališči? Večina bralcev morda ni seznanjena s strukturo uprizoritvenih umetnosti na Kitajskem, ki se precej razlikuje od evropske, zato bom začela s kratkim povzetkom zgodovine in politik, ki so oblikovale ta »sistem«, kar je ključnega pomena za razumevanje pojavov, opisanih v nadaljevanju. Nadalje bom na kratko predstavila uvedene ukrepe proti covidu-19 na območju osrednje Kitajske in njihov vpliv na uprizoritvene umetnosti od januarja 2020 naprej. Poudarek je na spremembah prizorišč uprizoritvenih umetnosti, čemur sledijo primeri, kako se nekateri umetniki odzivajo na dano situacijo in kakšno vlogo je odigrala tehnologija pri spreminjanju dinamik. Kitajska je velika država z neenakomerno razvitostjo kulture in umetnosti, zlasti uprizoritvenih umetnosti. Primeri, ki sem jih izbrala, so večinoma iz gospodarsko razvitih urbanih območij, kot sta Peking in Šanghaj. Ta članek deloma temelji na mojem opazovanju sektorja s stališča umetnice in producentke pri produkcijski hiši, zato so lahko nekateri deli neizogibno subjektivni in omejeni z lastnimi izkušnjami.

KULTURNO OZADJE PRED LETOM 1990

Mnogi raziskovalci, ki preučujejo Kitajsko, bi se strinjali, da je treba najprej razumeti njeno preteklost, da bi razumeli njeno sedanost. Kitajska družba je v zadnjih petih desetletjih doživela drastične spremembe, kar se odraža tudi v kulturnem sektorju. Potem ko si je država opomogla po uničujočih desetih letih kulturne revolucije med letoma 1966 in 1976 so bile gledališke in plesne skupine, ki so delovale na nacionalni, regionalni ali lokalni ravni s sistemom polnega financiranja edine enote, ki so lahko vadile in ustvarjale na področju uprizoritvenih umetnosti. Umetniki so morali biti zaposleni na eni od teh ravni, sicer jim ni bilo dovoljeno delati, zaposlitev pa je bila vedno za nedoločen čas. Kulturni sektor je od leta 1978 do 1992 deloval po socialističnem modelu »načrtovanega gospodarstva«, kar je pomenilo omejeno število produkcij, narejenih v enakem slogu. Trg za uprizoritvene umetnosti niti ni obstajal. Vstopnice za predstave so bile brezplačne ali po izjemno nizki ceni; navadno so jih javnosti razdelili preko delovnih enot kot neke vrste materialno blaginjo ali pa za namene izobraževanja. Umetnikom ni bilo treba razmišljati o svoji publiki, razen na splošno o »ljudeh«. Toda z gospodarsko reformo in odpiranjem Kitajske se je moral uprizoritveni sektor kmalu spoprijeti s spremembami.

V takšnih razmerah je bilo ustanovljeno gledališče, kjer sem trenutno zaposlena: Šanghajsko ljudsko gledališče in Šanghajska mladinska gledališka skupina

sta bila ustanovljena v petdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja in sta uživala polno finančno podporo; obe organizaciji sta imeli pomembno vlogo v zgodovini razvoja kitajske drame. Leta 1995 so ju združili in ustanovili Šanghajski center dramskih umetnosti (ŠCDU). Cilj tega centra je bil raziskovanje novih načinov produkcije in upravljanja, vključno z oblikovanjem lastnega gledališča. Kitajski mediji in akademski svet so sceno uprizoritvenih umetnosti, ki je zaposlovala na tisoče zasedb in dolgoletno zaposlenih uslužbencev, označili za »zadnjo trdnjavo načrtovane ekonomije«.

ŠCDU je bil na Kitajskem pionirski eksperiment tako imenovane »strukturne spremembe umetniških skupin v lasti institucij«, ki ga je vodila potreba po zmanjšanju močnega finančnega pritiska na vlado, pa tudi iskanje novega modela za motiviranje in vzdrževanje produkcije uprizoritvenih umetnosti. V naslednjem desetletju je na stotine umetniških skupin sledilo zgledu ŠCDU in se iz polno financiranih ustanov spremenilo v javna podjetja. Leta 1998 je kitajska osrednja vlada napovedala popoln prehod na tržno usmerjenost vseh državnih podjetij, vključno s kulturnimi, kot je ŠCDU. Enote za uprizoritvene umetnosti so morale svojo vodstveno strukturo preoblikovati v način podjetniškega poslovanja. Do leta 2012 je 95 % od 2.102 uprizoritvenih umetniških skupin po državi, ki so bile podvržene strukturnim spremembam, izpolnilo cilj, med njimi se jih je 61 % preoblikovalo v podjetja, ki so bila le delno sofinancirana iz javnega denarja. Slednja so imela več svobode pri odločanju o lastni proizvodnji in poslovnem modelu glede na zahteve trga. Umetniki in strokovnjaki za uprizoritvene umetnosti so začeli resno razmišljati o svojem občinstvu kot viru dohodka in preživetja.



Slika št. 1. Šanghajski center dramskih umetnosti na Anfu Road, Šanghaj. Last Šanghajskega centra dramskih umetnosti.

S poglobitvijo reform in vzpostavitvijo tržnega gospodarstva so zasebna podjetja in samostojni umetniki od leta 2000 začeli dobivati svoje mesto tudi v kulturnem ekosistemu. K tej spremembi je zaradi raznolikosti zahtev pripomoglo naraščajoče število umetniških prizorišč, kot so gledališča, muzeji in zasebni prostori, številno mlado urbano prebivalstvo z željo po umetnosti in z razpoložljivimi finančnimi sredstvi ter velike komercialne korporacije s tržnim proračunom. Umetniki so končno imeli več svobode v svoji umetniški karieri in načinu življenja za razliko od prej, ko jih je bilo mogoče le najeti ali pa so bili povezani z gledališči ali podjetji, ki so bila javno financirana. Sedaj so lahko poskrbeli za lastno preživetje in si celo financirali lastno umetniško ustvarjanje s poučevanjem v zasebnih izobraževalnih institucijah, s ponujanjem umetniških storitev podjetjem ali pa so ustanovili lastna podjetja za umetniške projekte. Dandanes številni umetniki sredi svoje umetniške kariere ali pa uveljavljeni umetniki kitajske uprizoritvene scene, kot so gledališka režiserja Meng Jinhui in Li Jianjun ter koreograf Tao Ye, delujejo in ustvarjajo v lastnih podjetjih ter sodelujejo z različnimi umetniškimi prizorišči, da zaslužijo s prihodkom od prodaje vstopnic. Nekateri so v svojih umetniških podjetjih razvili tudi uspešen poslovni model kot na primer koreografinja in plesalka Xie Xin, ki ima svojo blagovno znamko plesnih/vsakdanjih oblačil. Naziv ali projekt, dodeljen s strani umetniške ustanove v državni lasti, ni več edini način preživetja ali ohranjanja umetniške prakse. Z neposrednim povezovanjem s trgom in z občinstvom lahko umetniki delujejo popolnoma neodvisno od sistema javnega financiranja. Nekateri dobijo določen delež javnih sredstev od gledališč, ki gostijo njihove predstave, vendar to ni več bistveno za njihovo preživetje ali prakso.

SPREMEMBE V KULTURNEM SEKTORJU PO LETU 2000

Spremembe so v kitajskem sistemu financiranja kulture veliko počasnejše, kot so raznolika dogajanja na sceni. Na področju umetnosti so državne umetniške ustanove in podjetja (ali »entitete znotraj sistema«, kot se imenujejo) še vedno večinski prejemniki različnih stopenj javnega financiranja. Kitajski nacionalni sklad za umetnost, ki sta ga leta 2013 ustanovila kitajska Ministrstvo za finance in Ministrstvo za kulturo, z letnim proračunom v višini dveh milijard juanov, je bil težko pričakovan, saj je bilo državno financiranje umetnosti prvič na voljo ne samo prosilcem »znotraj sistema«, temveč tudi ostalim umetnikom, kot so samostojni ustvarjalci, samostojni producenti in zasebne organizacije. V resnici pa so merila za financiranje povezana z vsebinsko in estetsko izbiro, zato so posamezni umetniki, zlasti gledališki ustvarjalci, ki so kritični, vedno izključeni iz sistema financiranja. Glede na letno poročilo, ki ga je Kitajski nacionalni umetniški sklad objavil na svoji spletni strani decembra 2020, so v letu 2019 podprli 1.083 umetniških projektov, kjer sta bili dve kategoriji za uprizoritvene umetnosti – »velika produkcija« in »mala produkcija« – v višini 0,304 milijarde juanov oziroma 0,034 milijarde juanov. Zasebna podjetja so v kategoriji velikih produkcij prijavila le 4 od 127 projektov, vsi ustvarjalci tradicionalne kitajske operne ali zabavne vsebine. Odstotek uspešnih prosilcev »zunaj sistema« ni nič višji kot veliko manj financirana kategorija »malih produkcij«. Gledališki in plesni umetniki, ki iščejo sodobni izraz in niso povezani z državnim sistemom, imajo malo možnosti, da bi prejeli sredstva neposredno od javnega organa, kot je ta.

Ni presenetljivo, da ima mlada generacija kitajskih gledaliških in plesnih umetnikov večinoma sedež v svetovljanskih mestih, kot sta Peking in Šanghaj, saj so za ohranjanje svoje umetnosti in načina življenja veliko bolj odvisni od razvitega

zasebnega sektorja in raznolike kulturne scene, kot ga nudi sistem javnega financiranja. Ti umetniki lahko s svojo publiko, sponzorji in strankami komunicirajo brez cenzure konservativnega »sistema financiranja«. Alternativen model umetniškega ustvarjanja privlači in koristi ne samo umetnikom, ki se odločijo biti neodvisni in kritično misleči, temveč tudi vedno mlajšim umetnikom, ki se ne želijo podrediti tradicionalnim hierarhijam in strukturi moči tega sektorja.

GLOBALNA PANDEMIJA IN KITAJSKA GLEDALIŠČA

Predstavila sem zgoščen povzetek, kako se je v zadnjih desetletjih razvijal ekosistem scenske uprizoritvene umetnosti na območju osrednje Kitajske. Leta 2020 je svetovna pandemija prizadela skoraj ves svet in skoraj vse sektorje, uprizoritvene umetnosti pa so med najbolj oškodovanimi po vsem svetu. Čeprav je bila Kitajska ena izmed držav, ki je najhitreje začela okrevati po uvedbi strogih ukrepov, pa je bil sektor uprizoritvenih umetnosti eno zadnjih področij, kjer so odpravili prepovedi, saj je v času krize pogosto razumljen kot nebitven. Nadalje bom preučila, kako so pandemični ukrepi vplivali na gledališča uprizoritvenih umetnosti in na umetnike same.



Slika št. 2. Li Ge s svojimi starši v nasadu češenj. Foto Li Shangye, last Li Ge.

Sredi januarja so prebivalce Kitajske začele skrbeti novice o virusu. Konec decembra 2019 je bilo v več bolnišnicah v Wuhanu hospitaliziranih veliko bolnikov z neznano pljučnico, 3. januarja pa je Peking o tem obvestil WHO. Ko se je kitajska vlada odločila, da bo v Wuhanu, mestu z enajst milijoni prebivalcev, 23. januarja 2020 uvedla strogo karanteno, se je to sprevrglo v vsesplošno nacionalno skrb. Splošna karantena naj bi se po vsej državi uvedla po novoletnih praznikih, 24. januarja. Kulturna prizorišča po državi, ki so bila med novoletnimi prazniki običajno zaprta, so takoj upoštevala napovedane ukrepe in preložila, kasneje pa celo odpovedala, vse javne prireditve. Nihče ni pričakoval, da bo vpliv tega virusa tako dolgotrajen. Ljudje so bili prepričani, da bo bitko sčasoma mogoče dobiti po kratkem obdobju zelo strogih ukrepov, kot je bilo ob izbruhu virusa SARS leta 2003, vendar temu ni bilo tako. Odpovedi dogodkov so se napovedovale do aprila. Na srečo so se splošna karantena, nošenje mask in strogi karantenski ukrepi izkazali za učinkovite. Ko se je aprila število novih dnevniških primerov prenosa na lokalni ravni v celotni državi zmanjšalo na enomestno številko in je bila splošna karantena po provincah odpravljena, so gledališča lahko nadaljevala z vajami ob obveznem nošenju mask in upoštevanju pravil o ohranjanju medsebojne razdalje. Kljub temu pa naj bi bili javni nastopi dovoljeni šele konec maja.

Pandemični ukrepi na Kitajskem so enotni, saj za celotno državo veljajo isti standardi, kot so identificiranje območij z nizko, srednjo in veliko stopnjo tveganja, določitev datuma ponovnega odprtja kulturnih prizorišč in določitev meje zmogljivosti prizorišč. Ukrepe v zvezi z gledališči v celoti izvaja Ministrstvo za kulturo in turizem in ni razlikovanja med javnimi in zasebnimi prizorišči. Ko so se aprila 2020 razmere s covidom-19 stabilizirale, je postopek za ponovno odprtje gledališč potekal v več fazah: gledališča so se lahko prvič odprla za javnost 12. maja 2020 z manjšimi predstavami in z omejitvijo kapacitet na 30 %; nato so se 12. avgusta dovoljene kapacitete zvišale na 50 %, dovoljene so bile tudi srednje velike predstave; 18. septembra je bila dovoljena kapaciteta že 75 %, dovoljeno pa je bilo igrati tudi velike predstave. V času pisanja tega članka je bila omejitev kapacitet za kitajska gledališča, 16. marca 2021, popolnoma odpravljena. Kljub vsemu pa morajo gledališča skrbeti za dobro prezračevanje prizorišč, popis publike in meritve temperature. Vsak obiskovalec mora predložiti svojo digitalno zdravstveno kodo in nositi masko ves čas predstave. Ti ukrepi so še vedno veljavni.

Od izbruha covida-19 se morajo kulturna prizorišča boriti z negativnimi finančnimi posledicami, nastalimi, zaradi dodatnih stroškov izvajanja ukrepov in izgubljenega dohodka. Na Kitajskem je večina prizorišč za gledališke in plesne predstave v javni lasti. Čeprav mnoga prejemajo določen odstotek državnih sredstev, so za ohranitev svojega programa še vedno zelo odvisna od dohodka od prodaje vstopnic. Ker je omejitev kapacitete na 50 % otežila kritje stroškov izvedb, številna prizorišča niso nadaljevala z javnimi prireditvami, ampak so se odprla šele konec septembra, ko je bila meja zvišana na 75 %. Tudi domača gostovanja, ki so finančno bolj občutljiva, so bila dovoljena šele oktobra. Trg uprizoritvenih umetnosti pa si je zelo hitro opomogel. Občinstvo je rado obiskalo dogodke v živo iz več razlogov: vedno več ljudi se odloča preživljati prosti čas v svoji okolici, saj so potovanja postala zapletena, zaradi razvite digitalne ekonomije in bogate spletne ponudbe zabave pa je postal obisk gledališča bolj poseben. K hitremu okrevanju tega sektorja je pripomoglo tudi dejstvo, da je večina publike, ki v osrednji Kitajski obiskuje gledališke in plesne predstave, mlado urbano prebivalstvo, mlajše od 40 let, na splošno manj občutljivo na zdravstveno tveganje, povezano s covidom-19, ali pa na dolgotrajno neprijetno nošenje mask.

V večjem delu sveta so epidemične razmere še vedno hude, zaradi česar ostaja

kitajska vlada zelo striktna pri nadzorovanju meja. Začasna ukinitve vizuma oziroma dovoljenja za vstop na Kitajsko za vsa ne nujna potovanja, vključno s kulturnimi dejavnostmi ali kratkotrajnim delom, velja že skoraj eno leto (začasna ukinitve je bila razglašena 28. marca 2020). Trenutno vaje ali srečanja v živo z mednarodnimi umetniki in umetniškimi strokovnjaki niso mogoča. Tudi mednarodni leti so omejeni na najnujnejše. Mesta, kot sta Peking in Šanghaj, so vsako leto privabila številne mednarodne organizacije uprizoritvenih umetnosti, ki so izvajale svoj program ali pa sodelovale s številnimi prizorišči in z mednarodnimi festivali. Ker pa je mednarodni program začasno onemogočen, morajo gledališča in festivali več sodelovati z lokalnimi umetniki, da zapolnijo prazna mesta v programih. Na primer mednarodni program Šanghajskega mednarodnega centra plesnega gledališča je pred pandemijo obsegal okoli 40 % celotnega programa. Leta 2020 pa so namesto tega predstavili več kot 15 novih projektov kitajskih koreografov v zgodnjem ali srednjem obdobju kariere, nekateri od njih pa še niso nikoli nastopili v državno financiranem gledališču, kot je to v Šanghaju. Vsako leto poteka Mednarodni gledališki festival Šanghaj ACT, ki predstavlja predvsem sodobne produkcije iz tujine. Po odpovedi festivala leta 2020 je ekipa uporabila sredstva za vzpostavitev laboratorijske platforme, ki podpira poizkuse lokalnih umetnikov in alternativne produkcijske modele.

Prezgodaj je še trditi, ali je ta preobrat začasen in v kolikšni meri se bo po koncu pandemije spremenil način dela, ko se bodo gledališča vrnila v umirjeno stanje. Kljub temu pa gre za pozitivne pojave, saj umetniki trenutno dobivajo bistveno več priložnosti v teh gledališčih. Za mnoge umetnike, ki delujejo na neodvisni sceni, so bila gledališča »znotraj sistema« nedostopna, vendar se stvari sedaj spreminjajo. Pritisk po zagotovitvi dobre lokalne vsebine jih spodbuja, da namenjajo več pozornosti vzdrževanju stikov z lokalnimi talenti, in ne samo mednarodnemu sodelovanju. Posledično postajajo nekateri med njimi bolj pogumni pri snovanju programa.

UMETNIKI V NOVI PANDEMIČNI REALNOSTI

Situacija je zapletena tudi pri umetnikih, zlasti tistih, ki se odločijo ostati zunaj sistema financiranja. Umetniki, ki so bili denimo zaposleni v gledališkem ansamblu ŠCDU, so v obdobju, ko so bila gledališča zaprta, še vedno prejeli osnovno plačo in 75 % drugih honorarjev za odpovedane projekte. Umetnikom, ki so bolj odvisni od dohodka projektov, pa je bilo veliko težje od tistih z redno plačo. Ker so številne države sprejele podoben ukrep glede vizuma ali dovoljenja za vstop, ne morejo potovati v tujino in so morali odpovedati ali prestaviti načrtovane mednarodne projekte ali gostovanja. V osrednji Kitajski ni vzpostavljena nobena shema pomoči v primeru pandemije, ki bi bila posebej namenjena kulturnemu sektorju ali posameznim umetnikom. Slednji pa so se hitro organizirali in pokazali svojo odpornost, solidarnost in ustvarjalnost. Neodvisna mreža umetnikov in strokovnjakov IPANDA je organizirala vrsto razprav, ki so omogočale izmenjavo izkušenj o ustvarjanju dohodka, zaposlitvi in podpori skupnosti. Njeni člani so prepričani, da bi se bilo treba v tem sektorju bolj odprto pogovarjati o denarju.

Pekinški gledališki producent Li Ge je s svojo kampanjo *Češnjev vrt* začel podobno medijsko pobudo za *samopomoč*. Od izbruha covid-19 je moral Li več mesecev ostati pri svojih starših v vasi podeželskega Shandonga, kjer se je rodil. Ker so bili vsi projekti ustavljeni, je veliko časa pomagal staršem v njihovem češnjem sadovnjaku. Območje je znano po pridelavi češenj, zato se je domislil, da bi družini in sosedom pomagal pri promociji prihajajoče letine ter preko svoje mreže gledališč sprejemal spletna naročila. Zasebno gledališče v Pekingu je za to izvedelo

preko njegovih družabnih omrežij in se mu nekoliko pozneje pridružilo, kar je bil velik uspeh. Ne samo da so razprodali češnje iz njegovega družinskega sadovnjaka mesec dni prej kot po navadi, temveč sta Li Ge in gledališče tudi drugim okoliškim kmetom pomagala do več naročil in boljših izkušenj s spletno prodajo. Dobiček, ki so ga kmetje in gledališče pridelali, so si razdelili in pomagali gledališču, da si je hitreje opomoglo.



Slika št. 3. Parada v času Festivala Duanwu v Qingshan Village, organizirana s strani gledališkega kolektiva aoaoing, 25. junij 2020. Foto Xiao.

Li Ge ni osamljen primer, mnogi umetniki se odločijo, da bodo s svojimi umetniškimi ali ustvarjalnimi veščinami v težkih časih vzpostavili povezavo s skupnostjo. Mladi gledališki kolektiv Aoaoing je organiziral hibridni dogodek s prebivalci na podeželskem območju Zhejiang, da bi maja proslavili festival Duanwu (ali Dragonboat). Na festivalu so s sodobno predstavo prikazali niz tradicionalnih ritualov odganjanja demonov. Namen projekta je bil izumiti nov ritual za prihodnost in pozvati k večjemu sodelovanju s podeželjem in podeželsko dediščino. Gledališki umetniki iz skupine So What Original so v svojem projektu *Gledališče oblakov* od februarja do aprila 2020 sodelovali z javnostjo in v seriji dvotedenskih spletnih gledaliških delavnic ustvarjali spletne predstave. Ne raziskujejo samo nove umetniške forme spletnih predstav, ampak tudi potencial veščin uprizoritvenih umetnosti za povezovanje ljudi in skupnosti v času, ko prevladuje izoliranost. Zgoraj omenjene projekte so umetniki začeli in financirali sami, včasih tudi s prispevki udeležencev iz lokalne skupnosti. To so iskreni, nujni in neposredni odzivi posameznih umetnikov na resničnost brez posredovanja javne ustanove, kar predstavlja medsebojni negovalni odnos med umetniki in skupnostjo.

MEDIJSKA TEHNOLOGIJA IN UMETNIŠKA AVTONOMIJA

Prilagodljivost in odpornost, ki so jo kitajski umetniki pokazali kot odziv na pandemijo, je delno posledica navade varčevanja v kitajski družbi, deloma pa tudi razmeroma hitrega okrevanja gospodarstva in celotnega družbenega življenja. Pandemija je bolj kot kdaj koli prej postavila v središče pozornosti tudi tehnologijo in digitalno gospodarstvo. Zato me bo v nadaljevanju zanimalo, kako vedno večje število umetnikov na Kitajskem dobiva več umetniške avtonomije s tehnološkim razvojem v času pandemije.

Različni poslovni modeli, povezani z mobilnimi plačili in pretočnimi mediji, so na Kitajskem umetnikom omogočili neposredno interakcijo z lastnim občinstvom brez potrebe po institucionalni platformi. Na primer leta 2020 so umetniki večino spletnih predstav na Kitajskem organizirali sami na pretočni platformi, kot je Bilibili, ali pa na brezplačni aplikaciji za konferenčne klice. Tehnologija omogoča organizacijo predstave na spletu z zelo nizkim proračunom. Za dolgoročni razvoj lahko umetniki zlahka vzpostavijo javni Wechat račun in tako ostanejo v stiku s svojim občinstvom. Včasih celo prodajajo vstopnice za svoje predstave, ki niso na spletu, in kar sami preko telefona poberejo prihodek od prodaje vstopnic. Internetni model plačevanja znanja nekaterim umetnikom omogoča plačilo za njihovo poučevanje ali strokovno znanje, tako da so lahko finančno bolj neodvisni od državnih sredstev ali umetniške usmeritve velikih hiš.

Čeprav na Kitajskem ni odprtega, celovitega sistema javnega financiranja umetnosti, je dinamika med umetniki, gledališči in trgom nekako ustvarila raznoliko okolje na področju uprizoritvenih umetnosti, kjer umetniki lahko in obenem tudi morajo raziskati lastne načine za preživetje in vzdrževanje svoje umetnosti. Takšen način delovanja je svoboden, pa vendar enako zahteven kot življenje v džungli, prepreden s pastmi različnih vrst in brez ene same jasne poti. Kot nam pove narava, ima lahko zapleten ekosistem z višjo stopnjo biotske raznovrstnosti boljše možnosti za spopadanje z izzivi in okrevanje po katastrofah. S tem ne mislim, da ni potreben dober sistem financiranja umetnosti ali da se umetnikov ne bi smelo finančno podpirati. Prav nasprotno, verjamem, da nam lahko preučevanje te spreminjajoče se dinamike pomaga bolje razumeti kulturno okolje na Kitajskem, ki izhaja iz zelo drugačnega konteksta kot Evropa. Upam, da bo ta izmenjava informacij o tem, kako se Kitajska odziva na svetovno krizo, prispevala k razpravi, kako izboljšati naše sedanje sisteme, se izogniti morebitnemu vprašanju enotnega modela ali pristopa od zgoraj navzdol ter skupaj zgraditi bolj dinamično in raznoliko mednarodno umetniško skupnost.

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A DYNAMIC JUNGLE

Theatre, the Artist and the Market of China in a Changing Time

INTRODUCTION

How do theatres operate, and how do theatre and dance artists live and work in China? Can the pandemic bring any change to the landscape, especially in the dynamics between artists and theatres? This article is intended to provide a perspective on this subject. As most readers may not be familiar with the structure of the performing arts scene in China, which is quite different from the European Union context, I will start with a concise summary of the history and policies that have shaped “the system” as they are key to understanding the phenomena I describe later. Then I will briefly introduce the COVID-19 measures in mainland China and their impact on performing arts since January 2020. I will focus on the changes brought to performing arts venues, followed by examples of how some artists responded to the situation and how technology has changed the dynamics. As China is a vast country with an uneven level of development in culture and arts, especially the performing arts, I have selected cases primarily from economically developed urban areas such as Beijing and Shanghai. This article is partly based on my observation of the sector as an artist and a programmer of a producing house. Therefore, it may inevitably be subjective and limited by my own experience.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT BEFORE THE 1990s

As many researchers whose subject is China would agree, one has to understand its past to understand its present. Chinese society has been through drastic changes in the past five decades, and the cultural sector reflects it. After the entire country recovered from the catastrophic ten years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, national, regional or local levels of fully-subsidised theatre and dance troupes were the only units to practice and create performing arts. Artists had to be employed by one of them to be recognised and work as an artist. The employment was always permanent. The culture sector operated in a socialist “plan economy” model from 1978 to 1992, which means limited numbers of productions with a unitary style. There was also no market for performing arts. Tickets to performances were free or very low-priced, usually distributed to the public through their working units as welfare or education. Artists did not need to consider their audience except “the people”. However, with China’s economic reform and opening up, the performing arts sector soon had to deal with changes.

The theatre where I currently work was established in such a period. In 1995, the Shanghai People’s Art Theatre and the Shanghai Youth Theatre Troupe, two fully-subsidised troupes founded in the 1950s with important roles in the Chinese

history of drama, merged to create a new enterprise entity called the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre (SDAC). The mission of the SDAC was to explore new ways of producing and management, including building a theatre of its own. The performing arts sector, with thousands of troupes and a massive amount of lifelong employees, was called “the last fortress of Plan Economy” by Chinese media and academia. The SDAC was a pioneering experiment of the “structure change of station-owned art troupes” in China, driven by the need to reduce its heavy financial pressure on the government and find a new model to motivate and sustain performing arts production. In the following decade, hundreds of arts troupes followed the SDAC model to change themselves from fully-subsidised institutions to public-owned enterprises. In 1998, the Chinese central government announced a total shift to market orientation for all state-owned enterprises, including cultural ones such as SDAC. Performing arts units must reform their management structure towards an enterprise way of operating. Up to 2012, 95% of 2102 performing arts troupes across the country subject to the structural change had completed the target. Among them, 61% had changed into an enterprise that was only partly funded by public money. The companies have had more freedom to decide their own production and business model according to market demands. To survive, artists and performing arts professionals have started thinking seriously about their audience.



Image No. 1. Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre on Anfu Road, Shanghai. Courtesy of Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre.

With the deepening process of reform and establishment of the market economy since the 2000s, private businesses and freelancers also started to find room in the cultural ecosystem of China. An increasing number of art venues such as theatres, museums and private spaces, a prominent young urban population with an appetite for arts and more disposable income, and large commercial corporations with branding or marketing budgets have contributed to this change with their diverse demands. Artists finally have more choices in their artistic career and way of life, other than to be hired by or associated with a subsidised theatre or company. They can earn a living and even fund their art through teaching in private educational enterprises, providing artistic services to businesses or setting up their own company to work on art projects. Nowadays, many mid-career or established artists in the Chinese performing arts scene, such as theatre directors Meng Jinhui and Li Jianjun or choreographer Tao Ye, operate and produce through their own companies and collaborate with different arts venues to get income through ticket sales. Some have also developed a successful for-profit business model within their own artistic company, such as choreographer and dancer Xie Xin, who also runs her own dance/casual apparel brand. A title or project from a state-owned art institution is no longer the only way to survive or sustain one's art practice. By linking directly with the market and audience, artists can work entirely independently from the funding system. Some of them receive some public funding through theatre hosting their public performances, but it is not essential for their survival or practice.

CHANGES IN THE CULTURAL SECTOR AFTER THE 2000s

Change in China's cultural funding system is much slower than in the scene. Different levels of public funding to the arts are still mostly given to state-owned art institutions and enterprises (or "entities within the system", as we call them). The China National Arts Fund, established in 2013 by the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Culture in China with an annual budget of two billion yuan, was highly expected as it was the first time national public funding for the arts was open not only applicants "within the system", but also to those outside it, such as individual artists, freelance producers and private companies. In reality, however, as the criteria to get funded is associated with the content and aesthetic choices, individual artists, especially theatre makers whose practices are contemporary with critical expression, are always excluded from the funding system. According to the annual report published on its website in December 2020, China National Arts Fund supported 1083 art projects in 2019. Among them were two categories for performing arts: "big-scale production" and "small-scale production", receiving a total funding of 0.304 billion yuan and 0.034 billion yuan, respectively. Only 4 out of 127 projects in the big scale category were submitted by a private company, while all four of them are producing mainstream, traditional Chinese opera or entertainment content. The percentage of successful applicants from "outside the system" is no higher in the much less funded "small-scale production" category. Theatre and dance artists who seek contemporary expression and are not associated with the state system have little chance of receiving funding directly from public funding bodies like this one.

Unsurprisingly, the young generation of Chinese theatre and dance artists are mostly based in cosmopolitan cities like Beijing and Shanghai, as they rely much more on a developed private sector and diverse cultural scene to sustain their art

and life rather than on the public funding system. These artists can interact with their audience, sponsors and clients without the conservative censored funding “system”. The alternative model of making art attracts and benefits not only those artists who choose to be independent and critical-thinking but also, increasingly, young artists who do not want to submit themselves to the traditional hierarchies and power structure within the sector.

GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND THEATRES IN CHINA

The above was an overly concise summary of how the ecosystem of the performing arts scene has evolved in mainland China in the past decades. In 2020, the pandemic hit every corner of the world and almost all sectors; globally, the performing arts sector was among the most damaged. Even though China is one of the quickest to start recovery after taking strict measures, the performing arts was one of the last areas for the ban to be lifted, as it is often considered non-essential in a crisis. In the following paragraphs, I will examine how the pandemic measures have impacted the performing arts theatres and artists, respectively.



Image No. 2. Li Ge with his parents in cherry orchard. Author Li Shangye, courtesy of Li Ge.

After several Wuhan hospitals received patients with unknown pneumonia in late December 2019, and Beijing informed WHO on 3 January, people in China started to worry about the news of a virus in mid-January. It soon became a real national concern when the Chinese government decided to put Wuhan, a city with a population of 11 million, on strict lockdown on 23 January 2020. The whole country was put on lockdown days after the lunar New Year holidays began on 24 January. The culture venues across the country, usually closed for several days during New Year holidays, complied with the measures immediately with an announcement to postpone and later to cancel all public performances. No one expected the impact of this virus would last so long, as people thought the battle could be eventually won after a short period of stringent measures, as seen in the SARS virus outbreak in 2003. They were wrong. New cancellations kept being announced until April. Luckily lockdown, wearing masks, and strict quarantine measures proved effective. With the number of new locally-transmitted cases per day in the whole country reduced to one digit in April and the lockdown lifted province by province, theatres could get back to rehearsals with masks and social distancing rules. But public performances were yet to be allowed until late May.

Pandemic measures in China are unified as the same standards applied to the entire country, such as identifying low, middle and high-risk areas, the time to open cultural venues and the venue capacity limits. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism in China made the measures concerning theatres, and there was no difference between public-owned and private-owned venues. While the COVID-19 situation has remained stable since April 2020, the process for theatres to reopen to the public has undergone several stages: theatres were first allowed to reopen to the public on 12 May 2020 with small-scale performances, with a capacity limit of 30%; it was then raised to 50% on 12 August with mid-scale performances also allowed; on 18 September, the limit was raised to 75%, and big-scale performances were finally permitted. While finalising this article, the capacity limit for Chinese theatres was lifted entirely on 16 March 2021. At any stage, theatres must keep good ventilation in the venue, register each audience's information and measure their temperature. At the same time, audiences must show their digital health code and keep a mask on throughout the performance. These measures remain in effect now.

Since the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, the extra costs to implement the measures and the loss of income have caused the venues to fight against the negative financial impact. Most venues to hold ticketed performances for theatre and dance in China are public-owned enterprises. Although many receive a certain level of government funding, they still rely on ticket income to sustain their programme. As a 50% capacity limit makes it difficult to cover the performance costs, many venues did not resume public performances until late September, when the limit was raised to 75%. Domestic touring, which is financially more sensitive, did not happen until October. The market for performing arts, however, recovered very quickly. The audience has been eager to go back to live events for a few reasons: more people choose to spend their leisure time locally as travel gets more complicated, and the developed digital economy and abundant online entertainment make offline activities like going to the theatre more special. The fact that most of the audience for theatre and dance in mainland China are young urban population under 40 has also contributed to the fast recovery of the sector, as they are generally less vulnerable to COVID-19 health risks or the discomfort of wearing masks for a longer time.

On the other hand, as the pandemic situation remains severe in most parts of the world, the Chinese government remains tight on border control. A suspension of visa or entry permit for all non-essential travels to China, including for cultural activities or short-term work, has been in effect for almost a year since it was announced on 28 March 2020. No performance, rehearsal or face-to-face exchange with international artists and arts professionals is possible. International flights have also been reduced to a minimum. Cities like Beijing and Shanghai attract international performing arts companies to perform or collaborate yearly with various venues and international festivals. With the suspension of international programmes, theatres and festivals have to programme more local artists to fill the empty slots. For example, Shanghai International Dance Centre Theatre with usually 40% of their programme international before the pandemic, instead commissioned or presented over 15 new projects by early or mid-career Chinese choreographers in 2020, some of them had never been presented in a subsidised theatre in Shanghai before. The annual ACT Shanghai International Theatre Festival presents mainly contemporary productions from abroad. After the cancellation of its 2020 edition, the team used the resources to launch a lab platform supporting local artistic experiments and alternative producing models.

It is too early to say whether this turn is temporary or how much the way of working in subsidised theatres will change after the end of the pandemic. It is nonetheless a positive phenomenon as artists are getting considerably more opportunities now from these theatres. For many artists working in the independent scene, the theatres “within the system” were a world closed to them, which are now more open in their gestures. For venues, the pressure to secure good local content pushes them to think more about nurturing a network of local talents rather than just buying internationally. As a result, some have also taken more risks in their programming.

ARTISTS IN THE NEW PANDEMIC REALITY

The situation is also complicated for the artists, especially those who choose to stay outside the funding system. For example, artists working in SDAC’s ensemble still received their basic salary and 75% of their other fees for cancelled projects while theatres were closed. It was more difficult for artists who relied more on project-based income than payroll. As many countries have also adopted similar measures on visas or entry permits, they are not able to travel to other countries and have to cancel or postpone their international projects or tours. No pandemic relief scheme in mainland China is specifically dedicated to the culture sector or individual artists. These artists, however, quickly mobilised to show their resilience, solidarity and creativity. The independent network of performance artists and professionals IPANDA organised a series of discussions to share experiences about income making, job and community support as members believe there should be a more open discussion about money in the sector.

Beijing-based theatre producer Li Ge pioneered a similar “self-help” media initiative with his Cherry Orchard campaign. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Li had to stay at his parents’ place for months in a countryside village in Shandong, where he was born. With all projects suspended, he spent a lot of time helping his parents in their cherry orchard. The area is famous for cherry production. Therefore, he came up with an idea to help his family and neighbours promote the upcoming harvest and to take online orders directly through his network of theatres. A private theatre in Beijing found out about it through his social media and joined it a bit later. It was a great success. Not only were the cherries from his

family orchard sold out one month earlier, but Li Ge and the theatre also helped other cherry farmers in the village to get better orders and experience online sales with profits shared between farmers and the theatre to recover from the hit.



Image No. 3. Duanwu Festival parade in Qingshan Village, organised by performance collective aaoing, 25 Jun 2020. Author Xiao.

Li Ge is not alone, as many artists have also chosen to build community links through their art or creative skills in this trying time. The young theatre collective aaoing organised a hybrid event with villagers in a rural area of Zhejiang to celebrate the Duanwu (or Dragonboat) Festival in May of the lunar calendar, mixing the traditional demon-repelling ritual of this festival with contemporary performance. The project intended to reinvent a new ritual for the future and to call for more engagement with the countryside and our rural heritage. Theatre artists in *So What Original* worked with members of the public from February to April 2020 in their project *Cloud Theatre*, creating online performances through a series of two-week online theatre workshops. They explored new artistic formats of online performance and the potential of performing art skills to connect people and communities in a time full of isolation. The artists themselves initiated and funded all the projects mentioned, sometimes with contributions by participants from the local community. They are honest, urgent and direct responses individual artists made to the reality without the mediation of a public institution, representing a mutually nurturing relationship directly between artists and the community.

MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AND ARTISTIC AUTONOMY

The flexibility and resilience Chinese artists have shown in response to the pandemic, of course, are partly thanks to the habit of keeping savings in Chinese society and partly benefit from the rather quick recovery of the economy and overall life of the society. The pandemic has also put technology and the digital economy in the spotlight more than ever. What interests me is how an increasing number of artists in China are getting more artistic autonomy through the development of technology during the pandemic. Various business models related to mobile payment and streaming media in China have enabled artists to engage their audience directly without needing an institutional platform. For example, in 2020, most of the online performances in China were self-organised by the artists on a streaming platform such as Bilibili or a free conference app. Technology makes it possible to organise a performance online with a very low budget. For long-term development, artists can easily set up a public WeChat account to keep in touch with their audience, sometimes even selling tickets for their self-produced offline performances and collecting ticket income by themselves on their phones. The internet-based knowledge payment model provides opportunities for some artists to get paid for their teaching or expertise online so they can be less financially dependent on government funding or the artistic direction of big houses.

Although an open, comprehensive public funding system in China for the arts is absent, the dynamics among artists, theatres and the market have somehow created a diverse environment in the performing arts sector in which artists can and must explore ways of surviving and sustaining their art. It is as free, as challenging as living in a jungle with layers of different species and no single, clear path. As nature tells us, a complex ecosystem with a higher level of biodiversity may have a better chance of dealing with challenges and recovering from disasters. I am not suggesting that there is no need for a good funding system for art or that artists should not be supported financially. On the contrary, I believe that examining these changing dynamics can help us better understand the cultural environment in China, which comes from a context very different from European Union. I hope this sharing on how it reacts to a global crisis may contribute to the discussion on how to improve our current systems, avoid the potential issue of unitary or top-down model and build a more dynamic and diverse international arts community together.

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ZGODBA O USPEHU

Sodobni cirkuški festival Cirkuliacija med pandemijo covid-19 leta 2020

UVOD

Cirkuliacija je mednarodni izobraževalni sodobni cirkuški festival, ki se od leta 2015 odvija v Kaunasu, drugem največjem mestu v Litvi. Razvil se je zaradi pomanjkanja profesionalnih kulturnih dejavnosti v mestu in manka sodobnega cirka v litovskih regijah. Namen festivala je približati sodobni cirkus gledalcem ter oživiti zapuščene stavbe in prostore s sodobno kulturo in družbenimi vsebinami. Cirkuliacija poteka vsako leto dva tedna v poletnem času zunaj mestnega središča.

Na žalost je bilo poletje 2020 za ves svet drugačno. Tako kot drugod so bile razmere zaradi covid-19 zapletene tudi v Litvi. Litovska vlada je napovedala karanteno in kulturni sektor se je soočil z resnimi izzivi. Karantena se je začela marca 2020, festival pa je bil predviden junija. Marca ni bilo možno vedeti, kaj se bo dogajalo in kakšne vladne zahteve bo treba izpolniti v naslednjih nekaj mesecih. Kljub temu so se organizatorji festivala odločili, da bodo sledili načrtu B in ne bodo odpovedali festivala, temveč bodo spremenili njegovo obliko in program – torej vse, kar je bilo odločeno že septembra 2019.

Naslednje poglavje bo bralca seznanilo z uspešno prilagoditvijo festivala upriporitvenih umetnosti Cirkuliacija pandemiji covid-19. Pojasnili bomo, kako se je bilo v določenih okoliščinah mogoče uspešno prilagoditi in kateri učinki so organizatorje navdihnili k uvedbi stalnih sprememb festivalskega programa v prihodnje.



Slika št. 4. Foto Donatas Ališauskas. Arhiv festivala Cirkuliacija.

ZAČETEK IN RAZVOJ FESTIVALA

Društvo Teatronas je nevladna organizacija v Kaunasu, ki je ustanovila festival Cirkuliacija in je še vedno vključena v izvedbo. Organizacija je bila ustanovljena leta 2009 z namenom povezovanja in zastopanja raznovrstnih mladih umetnikov, kasneje pa se je osredotočila predvsem na gledališko produkcijo. V zadnjem času Teatronas pospešuje razvoj sodobnega cirkusa in gledališča.

Leta 2015 je bila Cirkuliacija izvedena v obliki poletnega tabora z izobraževalnimi delavnicami za otroke in mlade. Povabili so mentorje in ustvarjalce iz tujine, leta 2017 pa je projekt začel pridobivati značaj festivala. To leto je bilo prelomno, saj so se organizatorji Cirkuliacije odločili, da bodo nekatere predstave izvedli v majhni četrti Eiguliai¹ zunaj mestnega jedra. Češnja na vrhu torte je bil nastop dveh prvih diplomantov litovske profesionalne cirkuške šole.²

Leta 2018 so spremenjeni pogoji dopuščali razširitev umetniškega izobraževanja in najširše dostopno ponudbo raznolikih kulturnih dogodkov. Festival je potekal v mikro okrožju Šilainiai v bližini sovjetskega stanovanjskega bloka in zapuščene tržnice. V festivalskem programu³ so sodelovali Big Wolf Company, Circus I Love You, Anton Safonov, vključenih je bilo več brezplačnih dogodkov, organizirana je bila tudi delavnica družabnega cirkusa za otroke s težjimi motnjami v razvoju, izobraževalne in ustvarjalne dejavnosti za starejše in najmlajše, pa tudi dve četrti kolesarski turi, ki sta udeležence seznanili s soseseo in z možnostmi za umeščanje sodobnega cirkusa.



Slika št. 5. Foto Donatas Ališauskas. Arhiv festivala Cirkuliacija.

- ¹ Izobraževalni ogledi profesionalnih sodobnih cirkusantov v Litvi (2017). Arhiv združenja Teatronas.
- ² Mednarodni festival sodobnega cirkusa Cirkuliacija 2017. Poročilo o izvedbi (2017). Arhiv združenja Teatronas.
- ³ Mednarodni festival sodobnega cirkusa Cirkuliacija 2018. Poročilo o izvedbi (2017). Arhiv združenja Teatronas.

Izvedena je bila tudi ustvarjalna delavnica z naslovom *Kako prinesiti ustvarjalnost v cirkus (How to Bring Creativity to Circus)* kot navdih za ustvarjanje sodobne cirkuške skupnosti v Litvi, ki takrat še ni obstajala. V okviru tega dogodka je Roberto Magro združil sodobne cirkuške umetnike iz Litve in tujine ter na dvorišču dveh stanovanjskih stavb ustvaril *Predstavo za 66 balkonov in eno teraso (Performance for 66 Balconies and One Terrace)*. Izoblikovan je bil tudi končni koncept festivala. Vzpostavljenih je bilo več pomembnih elementov, ki so Cirkuliacijo opredelili kot izobraževalni, družbeni in ustvarjalni festival:

- decentralizacija vseh dejavnosti,
- vključenost lokalne skupnosti,
- povezava med strokovnjaki za uprizoritvene umetnosti iz Litve in tujine.⁴

VRHUNEC FESTIVALA CIRKULIACIJA: LETO PRED COVIDOM-19

Leta 2019 se je festival Cirkuliacija odvijal v zapuščeni sirotišnici, ki je bila v preteklosti sicer prenovljena, a so jo kasneje delno poškodovali vandali. V poslopju ni bilo elektrike, vode in toaletnih prostorov. Organizatorji so bili soočeni z izzivom, da zapuščeno stavbo spremenijo v primeren prostor za sodoben cirkuški festival.⁵ Nedvomno je bil to prostor simbolnega pomena za sodobni cirkus, saj je bil slednji v Litvi še vedno *sirota*: brez sodobne cirkuške šole, sodobna cirkuška skupnost pa se je šele razvijala.



Slika št. 6. Foto Donatas Ališauskas. Arhiv festivala Cirkuliacija.

⁴ Prav tam.

⁵ *Mednarodni festival sodobnega cirkusa Cirkuliacija 2019. Poročilo o izvedbi (2019)*. Arhiv združenja Teatronas.

Teatronas je zato ustanovil začasni, a perspektivni dom za sodobni cirkus in s programom, kot ga še ni bilo, zasnoval *družino*. Sodelovali so Barely Methodical Troupe, finska šola SaSak, diplomanti NoNine, fizično gledališče in sodobna cirkuška družba GLiMT, Giorgio Bertolotti s klovnovsko predstavo za otroke v cirkuškem igluju in BeFlat. Poleg tega sta Alexis Kaziridis in Ben Smith iz umetniške institucije Svalbard združila profesionalne umetnike in ustvarila sodobni cirkuški performans za balkone. Obiskovalcem so bile na voljo različne dejavnosti, npr.: zumba, DJ za otroke, popoldanska tombola za starejše, vodeni ogled sošeske z lokalnim vodnikom, delavnica socialne antropologije in parkurna cirkuška predstava *Za menoj (Follow Me)*, prilagojena specifični urbani krajini.

Obiskovalci niso prišli samo iz sošeske in mesta Kaunas, ampak iz širšega prostora, tudi iz tujine⁶. Cirkuliacijo 2019 so obiskali tudi koordinatorji dveh največjih in najpomembnejših cirkuških mrež (Baltic Nordic Circus Network in Cirkostrada), prav tako pa je bilo organizirano srečanje z litovskimi predstavniki lokalne samouprave in gospodarstva.

Kljub kratkosti festivala in ob neuspehu pridobitve zgradbe za nadaljnje sodobne cirkuške dejavnosti se je Cirkuliacija leta 2019 razširila tako po velikosti kot po odzivu, k čemur organizatorji stremijo tudi v prihodnje.

NAČRTI ZA LETI 2020 IN 2019

Kot omenjeno je bil festival leta 2019 izjemno uspešen, vendar je bilo kljub temu nekaj neizogibnih in nepredvidenih težav. Dejstvo, da se je festival odvijal pol ure vožnje izven mestnega središča, je bilo del festivalskega šarma, a obenem tudi njegova težava. Organizatorji so morali javnost dodatno obveščati o festivalu, zato so bili stroški oglaševanja v celotnem mestu in na spletu veliko višji, kot je bilo pričakovano. Med drugim eden izmed cirkuških umetnikov ni ujel prestopnega leta na Dunaju, zaradi česar so nastali dodatni stroški. Tretje, kar predstavlja vsakoletni izziv med pripravami na festival, je vzpostavitev različnih prostorov brez elektrike, sanitarij in vode. Slednje zahteva veliko dodatne opreme, ki zagotavlja oskrbo z vodo, generatorje električne energije, gorivo in mobilne sanitarne enote.

Da bi se izognili vsem omenjenim težavam, je bil festival Cirkuliacija 2020 zelo skrbno načrtovan že septembra 2019. Na osnovi preteklih izkušenj so bile pretehtane različne stopnje tveganja.⁷ Izvedba festivala je bila načrtovana v četrti Viliampolė, po mnenju večine prebivalcev Kaunasa neprivlačnem kraju za bivanje. Sošeska ima dolgo zgodovino negativnih zgodb: med drugo svetovno vojno je bil tam judovski geto, pozneje naselje za delavske družine, okrožje je bilo znano tudi po visoki stopnji kriminala in vojnah tolpa.⁸

Organizatorji so se odločili, da naj festivalski dogodki udeležence spodbudijo k razmisleku o preteklosti sošeske ter prevrednotenju negativne podobe četrti in lokalnih zgodb, dodatno pa podprejo razpravo v mestu in optimistično preobrazbo. Po načrtu naj bi bile prireditve izvedene v zaprtih lokalnih šolah, v zapuščenih stavbi pivovarne Wolf Engelmann, na javnih prostorih in v spominskem muzeju skladatelja Juozasa Gruodisa. Tako bi festival simbolno redefiniral mestno obzidje, spodbudil k premisleku o prostoru, razkril mestno večkulturnost in začasno spremenil status

⁶ Prav tam.

⁷ Renida Baltrušaitytė, intervju fokusne skupine s člani ekipe Cirkuliacija Gildas Aleksa in Monika Citvaraitė-Lansbergienė. Kaunas, 26. 1. 2021, osebni arhiv.

⁸ Mednarodni festival sodobnega cirkusa Cirkuliacija 2020. Prijava (2020). Arhiv združenja Teatronas.

mesta v cirkus.

V skladu s tem konceptom je prijava programa festivala Cirkuliacija 2020 vsebovala več izobraževalnih delavnic za profesionalne interdisciplinarne umetnike in lokalno skupnost. Predstave in izobraževanja so bili dogovorjeni z naslednjimi ustvarjalci: Le Contrebande (FR), HYPHAE (ES), Claudelom Doucetom in Cooperjem Leejem Smithom (CA), My!Laika (IT, FR), Circus EIA (ES), Soci t  Protectrice de Petites Id es (FR), Arielom Bronzem (IL).⁹ Festival naj bi za el gostiti vsakoletno konferenco z uveljavljenimi cirkuškimi izvajalci in teoretiki ter z lokalnimi govorcji. Slavnostni govorniki na konferenci 2020 *Razkrivanje zatiranja: raziskovanje drubenih narativov (Exposing Oppression: Exploration of Social Narratives)* naj bi predstavili zatiranje umetnikov in tabuje (Ariel Bronz), belce in Litovce kot zatiralce v Afriki (Stacey Stacks) ter zatiranje etni nih manjsin (John-Paul Zacharinni).¹⁰

Konec leta 2019 je Litovski svet za kulturo odobril financiranje festivala, kar je bilo klju no za na rtovani razvoj. Naslednji korak je bil v mesecu marcu za etek priprav na izvedbo.

LITOVSKA KULTURNA POLITIKA LETA 2020

Za etek leta 2020 je bil obetaven, saj je bil festival vklju en v dve cirkuki mrei, in sicer v Baltic Nordic Circus Network in Circostrado.¹¹ Obenem je v za etku leta  lanu ekipe uspelo obiskati festival *Cirkopolis*, drugi pa je prejel izobraevalno stipendijo za obisk festivala *Letn  Letn * in cirkuke mree *Fresh Street #4*. Februarja se je organizatorjem v Kaunasu uspelo sre ati s Claudelom Doucetom in se dogovoriti za naslednjo predstavo za balkone. Prav tako je bila v potrjevanju odobritev financiranja mestne ob ine Kaunas.

Zaradi covid-19 se je sredina marca v Litvi al za ela z napovedjo karantene; prvi so bili odpovedani razli ni moi ni kulturni dogodki. V Kaunasu je mestna ob ina zaprla vse kulturne ustanove brez monosti dela na daljavo. Zaprtje se je kasneje izkazalo za nezakonito, zaposleni so se lahko vrnili v delovne prostore ali pa za eli delati na daljavo.

e 12. marca je Litovski svet za kulturo napovedal, da bo karantena obravnavana kot primer *vije sile* in da drava od organizacij ne bo zahtevala vra ila sredstev za odpovedane projekte, v kolikor jih bodo preoblikovali.¹² Isti svet je 16. marca objavil 3. april kot rok za nov razpis za zbiranje predlogov za financiranje. Obljubili so financiranje 333 individualnih stipendij, vendar se je med kulturnimi izvajalci pojavilo nezadovoljstvo.

O itek je bil, da se razmere reujejo z novimi nate aji, namesto z neposredno podporo.¹³

Aprila je postalo jasno, da festival Cirkuliacija junija ne bo mogel izpolniti programa iz preprostega razloga: ve ino predstav in izobraevalnih vsebin naj bi

⁹ Prav tam.

¹⁰ Prav tam.

¹¹ Renida Baltruaitytė.

¹² Aura Kaminskaitė, *Culture during the Coronavirus: It's harder for us than for everyone else*, (2020). Dostopno na <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/1152277/ausra-kaminskaite-kultura-koronos-metu-mums-sunkiau-nei-visiems-kitiems>, 4. 3. 2021.

¹³ Prav tam.

izvajali tuji izvajalci. Hkrati je bilo že jasno, da je litovska vlada iz svojih podpornih načrtov namerno izključila nevladne organizacije (NVO). Litovsko ministrstvo za kulturo ni prepoznalo, da ta del kulturnega sektorja ustvarja dobiček in za svoje delovanje potrebuje podporo.

Ker do leta 2020 ni obstajala organizirana podpora nevladni organizacij na področju uprizoritvenih umetnosti, je bilo ustanovljeno Združenje nevladnih organizacij uprizoritvenih umetnosti (Association of Non-Governmental Performing Arts Organizations). Aprila je poslalo poziv različnim visokim političnim osebnostim Republike Litve, v katerem jih je opozorilo na pomen nevladnih organizacij in njihov prispevek k litovski kulturi. Dokument je podpisalo 88 nevladnih organizacij in neodvisnih umetnikov, ki so od Ministrstva za kulturo zahtevali, da svoje predstavnike vključi v delovno skupino za odločanje o karanteni.¹⁴ Ta poziv sta podpisala tudi združenje Teatronas in festival Cirkuliacija.

Kasneje je bila dodeljena vladna pomoč tudi področju kulture. Nekatere nevladne organizacije so si z neposredno podporo lahko finančno opomogle. Litovski svet za kulturo je 6. maja naznanil, da lahko ustvarjalci zaprosijo za enkratno podporo v višini 600, 1.200 ali 1.800 evrov. Obravnavali bi lahko 880 vloženih zahtevkov, a so naslednje jutro obrazec umaknili, potem ko so prejeli več kot 900 zahtev.¹⁵ Na družbenih omrežjih so se pojavili ironični komentarji, da je bila ta podpora razdeljena po načelu »kdor prvi pride, prvi melje«. 8. maja je bilo napovedano, da bo Litovski svet za kulturo zagotovil dodatna 2,1 milijona evrov za financiranje posameznih štipendij na osnovi zahtevkov iz meseca aprila.¹⁶ Posledično je financiranje dobilo veliko ustvarjalcev: 880 umetnikov je prejelo enkratno plačilo, 991 prosilcev pa štipendije.¹⁷

Poleg tega je Litovski svet za kulturo razdelil še več sredstev, mnoge organizacije pa so preoblikovale svojo strukturo financiranja in namenile sredstva za štipendije sodobnim plesnim in cirkuškim umetnikom. Ekipa festivala Cirkuliacija se je v teh okoliščinah odločila izkoristiti priložnost in uresničiti zamisel o poskusu odprtja prvega sodobnega cirkuškega izobraževalnega centra v Litvi. Čeprav ni bilo mogoče obiskati drugih festivalov, sta dva člana ekipe festivala Cirkuliacija, zahvaljujoč omenjenim štipendijam, prejela finančno podporo za pripravo sodobnega programa in strategije cirkuške šole.¹⁸ Finančna podpora je služila tudi za razvoj šole, usposabljanje učiteljev in oblikovanje progresivnih modelov kompetenc.¹⁹

Konec maja je vlada odobrila postopno naraščanje števila gledalcev na poletnih prireditvah (do 900 ljudi na prostem do konca avgusta).²⁰ Pa vendar so oblasti, ko so se karantenski ukrepi začeli sproščati, dajale žaljive pripombe. Kulturnemu sektorju so očitali, da so kulturniki leni berači, čeprav velik del finančne podpore

¹⁴ Association of Independent Performing Arts' Organisations. *An appeal addressing the situation of performing arts organizations and creators during the quarantine period*, (2020). Dostopno na <https://www.scenosmenoasociacija.lt/kreipimasis-del-scenos-menu-organizaciju-ir-kureju-situacijos-karantino-laikotarpiu-2/>, 4. 3. 2021.

¹⁵ Aušra Kaminskaitė. *Pickets from the outside and their legacy*, (2020). Dostopno na <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/1180671/ausra-kaminskaite-piketai-is-uzribio-ir-ju-palikimas?fbclid=IwAR0yZhg373s-DE7UySeX97Qw2KtiU0spjTxyPOjPU4hw4xS49gnrK-MigcsQ>, 4. 3. 2021.

¹⁶ Prav tam.

¹⁷ Renida Baltrušaitytė, Intervju z umetnostno kritičarko Aušro Kaminskaitė (22. 1. 2021). Osebni arhiv.

¹⁸ Litovski svet za kulturo. *Odločitev z dne 5. junija 2020*. Dostopno na <https://www.ltkt.lt/files/cirkas-individualios-stipendijos-ii-konkursas0633.pdf>, 4. 3. 2021.

¹⁹ Litovski svet za kulturo. *Odločitev z dne 24. julija 2020*. Dostopno na <https://www.ltkt.lt/files/cirkas0703.pdf>, 4. 3. 2021.

²⁰ Renida Baltrušaitytė, intervju z umetnostno kritičarko Aušro Kaminskaitė.

med epidemijo covid-19 ni bil namenjen za plače ljudi, ampak za obnovo stavb.²¹ Temu je sledilo več protestov in drugih javnih dogodkov, ki so želeli opozoriti na kulturne ustvarjalce.²²

Nastala situacija zaradi covid-19 se je blažila s podporo desetkrat več umetnikom in petkrat večjim finančnim obsegom.²³ Litovski svet za kulturo je razdelil dodatnih 16,6 milijonov evrov.²⁴ Kljub težavam na kulturnem področju pa so umetniki v letu 2020 lahko uprizarjali predstave skoraj osem mesecev. Vendar ni bilo lahko: večina ustvarjalcev ni vadila tudi po dva meseca, dvorane so bile napol prazne zaradi omejitev in nujne razdalje, poleti je večina umetniških ustanov običajno zaprtih, ljudje raje preživljajo prosti čas v naravi.²⁵ Dodatno težavo je predstavljalo sočasno delovanje več kulturnih ustanov, zaradi česar je simultano potekalo veliko dogodkov, vsi pa so se potegovali za pozornost občinstva. Obenem so nevladne organizacije težko najele dvorano, saj so večino prostorov zasedli rezidenčni umetniki.²⁶

Kot navaja umetnostna kritičarka Aaušra Kaminskaitė, se je festival Cirkuliacija 2020 s težavami spopadel »hitro in smiselno, ne da bi se odrekel glavnim ciljem«. ²⁷ Omeniti velja, da je bilo društvo Teatronas leta 2021 trikrat nominirano na natečaju *Najpomembnejše kulturne pobude mesta Kaunas 2020*.²⁸

Omenjeni so bili otvoritev sodobnega cirkuškega centra Cirko Sapiens,²⁹ festival Cirkuliacija in novi podkast *Kad Neliktų Tos Įtampos (Brez pritiska)*. Festival Cirkuliacija ni bil odpovedan, ampak prilagojen kontekstu. Posledično je postal primer uspešno izvedenega dogodka.

PRILAGOJENA RAZLIČICA FESTIVALA CIRKULIACIJA 2020

Opazovalci kulturnega področja poročajo, da se je leta 2020 veliko razpravljalo o digitalizaciji, selitvi in financiranju. Družabni dogodki so postali veliko pomembnejši od decentraliziranih umetniških dogodkov, kultura pa je dobila

²¹ "Head of the State: Let's make a breakthrough in culture, not build a sarcophagus for it." Dostopno na <https://www.lrp.lt/lt/salies-vadovas-kurkime-proverzi-kulturoje-o-ne-statykime-jai-sarkofaga/34126>, 5. 3. 2021.

²² Aušra Kaminskaitė, "Pickets from the outside and their legacy."

²³ Več kot 30 milijonov evrov je bilo namenjenih kulturnemu sektorju z namenom zmanjšanja vpliva covid-19. Dostopno na <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1233627/mazinant-koronaviruso-pasekmes-kulturos-sektoriui-skirta-daugiau-kaip-30-mln-euru>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁴ Litovski svet za kulturo, "Measures to reduce the effects of the pandemic in 2020." Dostopno na <https://www.ltkt.lt/apie-ltkt/priemones-pandemijos-pasekmams-mazinti-2020m/bendrieji-duomenys>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁵ Aušra Kaminskaitė, "Pickets from the outside and their legacy."

²⁶ Jolanta Kryževičienė, "The challenges for the non-governmental performing arts sector: fear of premises and loss of earnings." Predvajano na LRT KLASIKOS, Time to Talk, LRT.lt. Dostopno na <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1167100/issukiai-nevyriausybiniam-scenos-menu-sektoriui-baime-del-patalpu-ir-prarandami-uzdarbiai>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁷ Aušra Kaminskaitė, "TOP events of the Lithuanian Theatre of 2020." Dostopno na <https://www.15min.lt/kultura/naujiena/teatras/kritike-ausra-kaminskaite-2020-uju-lietuvos-teatro-topai-283-1428310>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁸ "The invitation to vote for the most memorable initiative of Kaunas culture 2020." Dostopno na <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1340263/kvieciama-balsuoti-uz-isimin-tiniausia-kauno-kulturos-iniciatyva>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁹ "Cirko Sapiens." Dostopno na <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQffzvj3Cnc>, 5. 3. 2021.

priložnost, da se sooči z lastnimi *starimi* hierarhičnimi strukturami in prepričanji.³⁰

Tudi organizatorji Cirkuliacije so razpravljali o teh temah. Čeprav brez namena spremeniti obliko ali cilje festivala je bilo narejenih več sprememb za uravnoteženje glavnih ciljev in karantenskih pogojev.³¹ Posledično je bil festival izveden po načrtu, in sicer med 6. in 14. junijem, delavnice pa so se odvijale maja na spletu.³²

Čeprav je projekt prejel finančno podporo Litovskega sveta za kulturo, je mestna občina Kaunas financiranje programa prekinila. Kljub temu je festival izvedel dve delavnici na daljavo: eno za profesionalne sodobne cirkuške ustvarjalce, drugo za ustvarjalce uprizoritvenih umetnosti. Obe delavnici sta se zaključili z javno predstavitvijo. V spletni predstavitvi dela v nastajanju, poimenovanega *DIG-IT!*,³³ je več umetnikov prikazalo absurden avtorski scenarij: tuji milijarder, sin preživele žrtve holokavsta iz Vilijampolēja, se vrne v svojo nekdanjo domovino, da bi v spomin na očeta priredil bizarno športno prireditev, *Prvo evropsko prvenstvo v tekmovalnem kopanju lukenj*. Produkcija v razvoju je v obliki priprav na prvenstvo potekala na območju nekdanjega geta v Kaunasu in prikazala absurdno trčenje zainteresiranih strani: novinarjev televizijskega programa Sport 9, protestnikov, tekmovalcev, organizatorjev, sodobnih umetnikov in skrbnikov dediščine. Skušala je spodbuditi družbeni aktivizem, obuditi spomin na geto in na konfliktno območje. Režiral je A. Bronz, posnetek je na voljo na kanalu YouTube. Projekt se bo leta 2021 razvil v ulično gledališko predstavo.

Druga delavnica, s C. Doucetom, se je v Vilijampolēju razvila v več dogodkov. Pomembno je omeniti, da se je zdelo, da so se umirile celo karantenske omejitve; zaščitne maske v juniju niso bile obvezne, dovoljeno pa je bilo le omejeno zbiranje. Vendar je bilo nemogoče spremljati in omejevati število ljudi na brezplačnih prireditvah na odprtih prizoriščih. Na koncu festivala se je zvrstilo več nenapovedanih cirkuških predstav, ki so povzele lokalno zgodovino. Tako so festivalska ekipa in naključni neznanci ves popoldan sodelovali in program spremljali z *razdalje*.³⁴

Odvile so se predstave o dediščini in nesmiselnosti početja, možno je bilo obiskati diskoteko z duhovi in se z duhom sprehoditi ter poskusiti skriti in najti kamne v okolici.

Na žalost konferenca ni bila izvedena, prav tako ni bilo mogoče izvesti mnogih skupnostnih vsebin. Kljub temu je bilo posnetih osem podkastov³⁵ s sodobnimi cirkuškimi umetniki, delavnice in predstave, ki so na voljo na spletu, vzpostavila so se nova sodelovanja za prihodnje dogodke. Navsezadnje je festival ustvaril prostor za razvoj litovskega profesionalnega sodobnega cirkusa, tako da je zagotovil možnost za izražanje in prikaz litovske kulturne dediščine. Kulturna politika in festivalska organizacija sta okrepili dejavnosti za odprtje prvega sodobnega cirkuškega centra *Cirko Sapiens*.

³⁰ "Office Office," sezona 1, epizoda 4. Dostopno na <https://soundcloud.com/oo-office/se01ep04>, 4. 3. 2021.

³¹ "Welcome to Cirkuliacija'20." Dostopno na <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REd5yuDE018>, 5. 3. 2021.

³² "International Contemporary Circus Festival CIRKULIACIJA 2020." Poročilo o izvedbi (2020). Arhiv društva Teatronas.

³³ "Cirkuliacija'20 – Dig it." Delavnica z Arielom Bronzem. Dostopno na <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enKITpZWle8>, 5. 3. 2021.

³⁴ "Cirkuliacija'20." Dostopno na <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrfYtc1r8A>, 5. 3. 2021.

³⁵ "Cirkuliacija'20." Dostopno na <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObJ0JCDnXXY&list=PLMgWL7xqfxfzOmvQ54SI4Z2nX0WLEGrWV>, 5. 3. 2021.

CIRKULIACIJA 2021: KAJ OHRANITI IN KAJ OPUSTITI?

Društvo Teatronas je začelo leto 2021 s splošnim sloganom *Neresno gledališče in resen cirkus*.³⁶ Teza izpodbija mite, da mora biti gledališče le resno ter da je neresno gledališče neumno in nezrelo, sodobni cirkus pa namenjen samo za prosti čas in zabavo, saj ne more obravnavati filozofskih idej ali družbenih problemov.

Vse to se bo odražalo na festivalu Cirkuliacija junija 2021. Cirkuliacija bo nadaljevala s svojimi dejavnostmi v načrtovanih prostorih četrti Vilijampolė. Organizatorji upajo, da bo festival izveden, vendar ponovna reorganizacija ni izključena. V vsakem primeru se bo festival zgodil, organizatorji imajo pripravljena scenarija B in C. Cilj festivala je prikazati predstave manjšemu številu občinstva ter program razširiti z obiskom okrožja Kaunas in širše regije. Kljub temu ni izvzeto, da tuji izvajalci ne bodo mogli priti. V tem primeru bo vzpostavljen umetniški laboratorij, kjer bodo sodobni cirkuški umetniki procesno razvijali svoja dela.

V povzetku velja omeniti, da so se organizatorji v letu 2020 veliko naučili. Čeprav je bila Cirkuliacija leta 2020 uspešno izvedena, je festivalu umanjala komunikacija s skupnostjo in izmenjava vtisov. Zato sta bili velikost festivala ter podpora kolegov in države najpomembnejša dejavnika uspeha. Ne glede na to so organizatorji ugotovili, da lahko nekatere ustvarjalne delavnice potekajo na daljavo; podkasti so zelo zanimiva oblika, ki promovira sodobni cirkus; pretočne predstave med delavnicami bodo dosegle širši krog občinstva; prav tako so zanimive in izjemno vključujoče tudi kratke predstave na prostem. To je bila zgodba o uspehu, za katero upamo, da je ustvarila podlago za nadaljnje festivale.



Slika št. 7. Foto Donatas Ališauskas. Arhiv festivala Cirkuliacija.

³⁶ "Increasing The Mobility of The Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija: From Kaunas Micro-Districts to Lithuanian Regions." Prijava (2021). Arhiv združenja Teatronas.

Renida Baltrušaitytė je doktorska študentka sociologije na univerzi Vytautas Magnus v Litvi. Deluje kot vodja in koordinatorica projekta sodobnega cirkuškega festivala Cirkuliacija.

THE STORY OF SUCCESS

The Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija in 2020 during the COVID-19 Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Cirkuliacija is an educational and international contemporary circus festival situated in Lithuania's second-biggest city since 2015. It originated from the lack of professional cultural activities around the city and the absence of contemporary circuses in Lithuanian regions. That is why the specificity of this festival is to bring the contemporary circus to places within the spectator's distance and to colonise abandoned buildings and spaces with contemporary culture and communal activities. Cirkuliacija, as an annual event, lasts for two weeks during summer and occupies spaces and places not in the capital city of Lithuania and not even in any other city centre.

Unfortunately, the summer of 2020 was different for the whole world. Like everywhere else, the situation in Lithuania was also complicated because of COVID-19. The government announced the quarantine, and the cultural sector faced serious challenges. The quarantine started in March 2020, but the festival needed to happen in June. During March, there was no way to know what would happen and what kind of requirements from the government would need to be fulfilled within the next several months. Nevertheless, the festival's organisers decided to follow plan B and not to cancel the festival but to change its form and programme – everything that had already been planned in September 2019.

This chapter will acquaint the reader with the successful adaptation of the performing arts festival Cirkuliacija to the COVID-19 pandemic. I will explain how it was possible to adapt successfully in specific circumstances and what kind of consequences inspired the organisers to make permanent changes to the future festival programme.



Image No. 4. Author Donatas Ališauskas. The archive of Cirkuliacija.

THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FESTIVAL

The NGO Teatronas association in Kaunas started to organise and is still involved in organising Cirkuliacija. The organisation was established in 2009 to connect and represent various young artists, but it later focused on theatre production. Recently, Teatronas has been purposefully working on developing contemporary circus and theatre.

In 2015, Cirkuliacija took the form of a summer camp of educational workshops for children and young adults. Teachers and performers were invited from abroad. In 2017, the project started to look more like a festival. The year was a turning point because the organisers of Cirkuliacija decided to present some performances outside of the city centre for Eiguliai micro-district community.³⁷

The cherry on top was the participation of two performers who were the first Lithuanian graduates of professional circus schools.³⁸

In 2018, various opportunities were created to expand arts education and offer diverse cultural activities by bringing them closer to the people. The festival took place in the Šilainiai micro-district near the residential Soviet-era block of flats and an abandoned market. Thus, Big Wolf Company, Circus I Love You and Anton Safonov participated in the festival programme.³⁹ A lot of free-of-charge social activities were presented. There was a social circus workshop for children with complex disabilities, training and creative activities for the elderly residents and children, and two cycling tours around the micro-district, highlighting the neighbourhood and the possibilities for a contemporary circus in it.



Image No. 5. Author Donatas Ališauskas. The archive of Cirkuliacija.

³⁷ Educational Tours of Professional Contemporary Circus Performers in Lithuania (2017). Archive of association Teatronas.

³⁸ International Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija 2017. Implementation Report (2017). Archive of association Teatronas.

³⁹ Educational Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija 2018. Implementation Report (2018). Archive of association Teatronas.

Moreover, there was a creative workshop, *How to Bring Creativity to Circus*, as the inspiration to create a contemporary circus community in Lithuania that did not exist at that time. During this event, Roberto Magro brought together contemporary circus artists working in Lithuania and abroad and created *Performance for 66 Balconies and One Terrace* in the courtyard of two residential buildings. The final idea of the festival was developed at the time. Several important components of Cirkuliacija as an educational, social and creative festival were established:

- the decentralisation of all activities;
- the involvement of the local community;
- the connection between performing arts professionals from Lithuania and abroad.⁴⁰

THE PEAK OF CIRKULIACIJA: THE YEAR BEFORE COVID-19

The 2019 Cirkuliacija happened in an abandoned orphanage, once renovated but later partially destroyed by vandals. Moreover, there was no electricity, water or restrooms. Due to this, it was a challenge for the organisers to change the abandoned building into a suitable space for a contemporary circus festival.⁴¹ Undoubtedly, it was a symbolic place for a contemporary circus to happen. The circus in Lithuania was still an “orphan” itself, with no contemporary circus schools and the contemporary circus community still in the process of developing.



Image No. 6. Author Donatas Ališauskas. The archive of Cirkuliacija.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ International Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija. Implementation Report (2019). Archive of association *Teatronas*.

Due to this, Teatronas created a temporary but prospective home for a contemporary circus, and with a programme not seen before, it joined this “family”. The participants were Barely Methodical Troupe, the Finnish school SaSak graduates NoNine, the physical theatre and contemporary circus company GLiMT, Giorgio Bertolotti with a clownery performance for children in a circus igloo and BeFlat. Moreover, Alexis Kaziridis and Ben Smith from the Svalbard company brought performing arts professionals together and created an annual contemporary circus performance for the balconies. The visitors were introduced to various activities: Zumba, a DJ for kids, a bingo afternoon for the elderly, a tour around the micro-district led by a local guide, a social anthropology workshop and the circus-parkour performance *Follow Me*, which was adapted to the specific urban landscape.

The visitors not only came from the neighbourhood or Kaunas city but also from other cities and abroad.⁴² Cirkuliacija 2019 was visited by the coordinators of the two largest and most relevant circus networks (Baltic Nordic Circus Network and Circostrada). Also, there was a meeting with Lithuanian representatives from the local government and business sector.

Despite the short duration of the festival and the inability to get the building for further contemporary circus activities, in 2019, Cirkuliacija grew bigger by size and impact, and the organisers were keen to keep it that way for the future.

THE PLANS FOR 2020 IN 2019

The festival was extremely successful in 2019. However, some unforeseen and unavoidable problems were detected. The fact that the festival was happening 30 minutes away from the city centre by public transport was part of the festival’s charm and its problem. The organisers were obliged to inform people about the festival, so the advertising throughout the city and online cost way more than expected. There were other problems, too. One of the circus artists missed the transfer flight from Vienna, so the festival once again had extra expenses. The third – annual – challenge while preparing for the festival was adapting the different spaces without electricity, restrooms and water, so there were a lot of additional expenses covering the water supply, electrical generators, fuel and bio-toilets.

To avoid these problems, the festival Cirkuliacija 2020 was carefully planned in September 2019. Thus, various risks and threats were weighed, and lessons were learnt.⁴³ The organisers planned to hold the festival in Vilijampolė micro-district, which most residents of Kaunas considered an unattractive place to live. It could also be said that the area has a history of negative narratives. During World War II, it was a Jewish ghetto, and later, primarily families of manual labourers lived there. After that, this micro-district was also known for its high crime rate and criminal wars.⁴⁴

Therefore, the organisers decided that the events should invite the participants to rethink the neighbourhood’s history, re-evaluate negative and other local

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Focus group interview with Cirkuliacija team members Gildas Aleksa and Monika Citvaraitė-Lansbergienė by the author. Kaunas, 26. 1. 2021, personal archive.

⁴⁴ International Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija 2020. Application (2020). Archive of association *Teatronas*.

narratives, inspire a discussion in the city, and promote a more optimistic communal neighbourhood. It was planned that the events would occupy the closed local schools, the abandoned building of the Volfas Engelman brewery, public spaces and the memorial museum of composer Juozas Gruodis. Thus, the festival would metaphorically rearrange the city walls, encourage rethinking the space and reveal the city's multiculturalism and temporary circus town.

Accordingly, the application of the Cirkuliacija 2020 programme was filled with several educational workshops for interdisciplinary professional performing artists and local communities. Hence, performances and teaching were agreed with Le Contrebande (France), HYPHAE (Sweden), Claudel Doucet & Cooper Lee Smith (Canada), My!Laika (Italy, France), Circus EIA (Spain), Société Protectrice de Petites Idées (France), Ariel Bronz (Israel).⁴⁵ At the same time, the organisers anticipated hosting an annual conference where circus practitioners and theorists would present their insights and invite local speakers for discussion. The keynote speakers in the 2020 conference *Exposing Oppression: Exploration of Social Narratives* were expected to present the oppression of artists and taboos (Ariel Bronz), whiteness and Litvaks as oppressors in Africa (Stacey Stacks) and the oppression of ethnic minorities (John-Paul Zacharinni).⁴⁶

Furthermore, at the end of 2019, funding from the Lithuanian Council for Culture was approved. That was the final piece for which the organisers were waiting. The next step was to start the main organising work in March.

LITHUANIAN CULTURAL POLITICS DURING 2020

The year 2020 started out promising because the festival was included in two circus networks, Baltic Nordic Circus Network and Circostrada.⁴⁷ Another lucky streak was that at the beginning of the year, one of the team members managed to visit the Cirkopolis festival, and another member got an educational scholarship for visiting the festival Letní Letná and circus network Fresh Street #4. In February, the organisers managed to meet Claudel Doucet in Kaunas and arrange a future performance for the balconies. The funding for community activities was also awaited from Kaunas City Municipality.

Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, mid-March started with an announced quarantine in Lithuania and the cancellation of various mass cultural events. In Kaunas, the City Municipality closed all cultural institutions with no possibility for employees to work remotely. This action was later recognised as an illegal act, and the employees returned to the institutions or started working remotely.

On 12 March, the Lithuanian Council for Culture announced that the quarantine would be seen as a *force majeure* situation; the state would not require organisations to return funds for cancelled projects if they redesigned them.⁴⁸ On 16 March, the same council announced 3 April as the deadline for a new call for proposals. It promised to fund 333 individual scholarships, but in this context, there was dissatisfaction among cultural operators that the situation was solved

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Renida Baltrušaitytė.

⁴⁸ Aušra Kaminskaitė, "Culture during the Coronavirus: 'It's harder for us than for everyone else'" (2020). Available at <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/1152277/ausra-kaminskaite-kultura-koronos-metu-mums-sunkiau-nei-visiems-kitiems>, 4. 3. 2021.

through new competitions rather than direct support.⁴⁹

When April appeared, it became clear that the festival Cirkuliacija would not be able to fulfil the programme in June, simply because most of the performances and educational activities were to be performed or taught by foreign performers. At the same time, it was already evident that the Lithuanian government purposely excluded NGOs from their support plans. The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture did not understand the profit created and the support needed for this sector.

As there had been no organised advocacy for NGOs of performing arts until 2020, the Association of Non-Governmental Performing Arts Organisations was established. In April, this organisation wrote an appeal to various supreme political figures of the Republic of Lithuania, reminding them of NGOs importance and contribution to Lithuanian culture. Eight-eight NGOs and independent artists signed the document demanding the Ministry of Culture to include their representatives in the working group on quarantine decisions.⁵⁰ The association Teatronas and the contemporary circus festival Cirkuliacija also signed this appeal.

Later, assistance from the government for the cultural field was established. Some NGOs could recover financially through direct support. On 6 May, the Lithuanian Council for Culture announced the possibility for creators to apply for one-time support of 600, 1200 or 1800 euros. It was possible to cover 880 creator claims, but this form was suspended the following morning after receiving more than 900 requests.⁵¹ There were ironic comments on social networks that this support was distributed on a “first come, first served” basis. On 8 May, the Lithuanian Council for Culture announced it would provide an additional 2.1 million euros to fund individual scholarships submitted in April.⁵² As a result, many creators got funding: 880 artists got a one-time payment, and 991 applicants got scholarships.⁵³

Moreover, the Lithuanian Council for Culture distributed more funds. Several organisations also transformed their structural funding into scholarships for contemporary dance and contemporary circus artists. The Cirkuliacija team decided to take the opportunity under these circumstances to fulfil the idea of trying to open the first contemporary circus educational centre in Lithuania. Even though there was no possibility to visit other festivals, thanks to the latter scholarships, two members of the Cirkuliacija team received financial support to prepare a contemporary circus school programme and strategy⁵⁴ and develop this school teachers’ training and progressive competence models.⁵⁵

At the end of May, the government approved a progressively increasing

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Association of Independent Performing Arts' Organisations, “An appeal addressing the situation of performing arts organizations and creators during the quarantine period” (2020). Available at <https://www.scenosmenoasociacija.lt/kreipimasis-del-scenos-menu-organizaciju-ir-kureju-situacijos-karantino-laikotarpiu-2/>, 4. 3. 2021.

⁵¹ Aušra Kaminskaitė, “Pickets from the outside and their legacy” (2020). Available at <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/nuomones/3/1180671/ausra-kaminskaite-piketai-is-uzribio-ir-ju-palikimas?fbclid=IwAR0yZhg373s-E7UySeX97Qw2KTIU0spjTxyPOjPU4hw4xS49gnrK-MigcsQ>, 4. 3. 2021.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Renida Baltrušaitytė, interview with art critic Aušra Kaminskaitė (22 January 2021). Personal archive.

⁵⁴ Lithuanian Council for Culture, “Decision. 5 June 2020” (2020). Available at <https://www.ltkt.lt/files/cirkas-individualios-stipendijos-ii-konkursas0633.pdf>, 4. 3. 2021.

⁵⁵ Lithuanian Council for Culture, “Decision. 24 July 2020” (2020). Available at <https://www.ltkt.lt/files/cirkas0703.pdf>, 4. 3. 2021.

number of spectators at events during the summer (up to 900 people in open spaces by the end of August).⁵⁶ But still, as quarantine softened, the authorities made offensive statements. The cultural sector was criticised as being lazy beggars even though a large part of COVID-19 financial support was spent not on people's wages but on renovating buildings.⁵⁷ Following this, there have been several protests and other events seeking to draw attention to culture creators.⁵⁸

To sum up, the COVID-19 situation was facilitated by supporting ten times more artists and giving them five times more financial support.⁵⁹ There were additional 16,6 million euros for Lithuania Council for Culture to distribute.⁶⁰ Even though there were difficulties in the cultural field, artists were allowed to show performances for almost eight months in 2020. Nonetheless, it was not easy. Most of the creators had no rehearsals for nearly two months. The halls were half-empty because of the distance restrictions and because people prefer to spend their time outside during the summer when most art institutions usually tend to be closed.⁶¹ Another problem was that many cultural institutions were opened at the same time. Thus, there were a lot of simultaneous events competing for the audience's attention, and it was hard for NGOs to rent a hall when most of those spaces were already occupied by local governmental artists.⁶²

Therefore, as art critic Aušra Kaminskaitė stated, the festival Cirkuliacija 2020 dealt with the problems "quickly and meaningfully, without giving up the main goals".⁶³ It is worth mentioning that in 2021, the association Teatronas was nominated thrice in the competition "The Most Memorable Cultural Initiatives of Kaunas City 2020".⁶⁴

The opening of the contemporary circus centre Cirko Sapiens,⁶⁵ the festival Cirkuliacija and the new podcast "Kad Neliktų Tos Įtamos" ("No Pressure") were mentioned. Thus, Cirkuliacija was not cancelled but adapted to the context and became quite a memorable, successful event.

⁵⁶ Renida Baltrušaitytė, interview with art critic Aušra Kaminskaitė.

⁵⁷ "Head of the State: Let's make a breakthrough in culture, not build a sarcophagus for it." Available at <https://www.lrp.lt/lt/salies-vadovas-kurkime-proverzi-kulturoje-o-ne-statykime-jai-sarkofaga/34126>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁵⁸ Aušra Kaminskaitė, "Pickets from the outside and their legacy."

⁵⁹ More than 30 million euros has been allocated to the cultural sector to decrease the effects of coronavirus. Available at <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1233627/mazinant-koronaviruso-pasekmes-kulturos-sektoriui-skirta-daugiau-kaip-30-mln-euru>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁶⁰ Lithuanian Council for Culture, "Measures to reduce the effects of the pandemic in 2020." Available at <https://www.ltkt.lt/apie-ltkt/priemones-pandemijos-pasekmes-mazinti-2020m/bendrieji-duomenys>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁶¹ Aušra Kaminskaitė, "Pickets from the outside and their legacy."

⁶² Jolanta Kryževičienė, "LRT KLASIKOS radio show "Time to Talk," LRT.lt The challenges for the non-governmental performing arts sector: fear of premises and loss of earnings." Available at <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1167100/issukiai-nevyriausybiniam-scenos-menu-sektoriui-baime-del-patalpu-ir-prarandami-uzdarbiai>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁶³ Aušra Kaminskaitė, "TOP events of the Lithuanian Theatre of 2020." Available at <https://www.15min.lt/kultura/naujiena/teatras/teatro-kritike-ausra-kaminskaite-2020-uju-lietuvos-teatro-topai-283-1428310>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁶⁴ "The invitation to vote for the most memorable initiative of Kaunas culture 2020." <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1340263/kvieciama-balsuoti-uz-isimintinausia-kauno-kulturos-iniciatyva>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁶⁵ "Cirko Sapiens." Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQffzvj3Cnc>, 5. 3. 2021.

THE ADAPTED VERSION OF CIRKULIACIJA 2020

Researchers of the cultural field have stated that in 2020 it was a worldwide tendency to discuss the cultural field's digitisation, relocation and financing. Moreover, neighbourhood events became much more important than art events happening far away, and culture had the opportunity/necessity to confront its old hierarchies and beliefs.⁶⁶

Correspondingly, the organisers of Cirkuliacija also discussed these topics. They did not intend to change the form or goals of the festival but did make several changes to balance the primary purposes and quarantine conditions.⁶⁷ Consequently, the festival happened as planned on 6–14 June; however, the workshops took place online in May.⁶⁸

Although the project received financial support from the Lithuanian Council for Culture, the Kaunas City Municipality funding for community programmes was cancelled. Despite that, the festival implemented two remote workshops. One workshop was for contemporary circus professionals, and the other was for performing arts professionals. Both workshops had final public presentations. One was an online work-in-progress called *DIG-IT!*⁶⁹ in which several artists presented the absurd fictional scenario about a foreign billionaire, the son of a holocaust survivor from Vilijampolė, who returns to his former homeland to arrange a bizarre sports event in memory of his father: “The First European Championship in Competitive Hole Digging”. The work-in-progress as a preparation for the championship was held on the former Kaunas Ghetto ground and presented an absurd collision of stakeholders: journalists of Sport 9 TV channel, protestors, competitors, organisers, contemporary artists and heritage managers.

The presentation sought to stimulate social activism and the commemoration of ghetto areas and conflict zones. Directed by Ariel Bronz, it is available on YouTube and will be developed into a street theatre performance in 2021.

Another workshop with Claudel Doucet developed into several events in Vilijampolė. Even though quarantine restrictions seemed to have eased, face masks were optional in June, and only limited gathering was possible. Thus, counting or regulating the number of people in free-of-charge events in open spaces was impossible. Therefore, the end of the festival was an unannounced event of several circus performances summarising local history. For the entire afternoon, the festival team and random strangers participated and watched at a distance.⁷⁰ Accordingly, there were performances about heritage and the absurdity of doing anything. There was also an opportunity to visit a ghost discotheque and walk with the ghost to hide and find stones in the landscape.

Unfortunately, the conference and many community activities did not take place. Still, eight podcasts⁷¹ were recorded with contemporary circus artists,

⁶⁶ “Office Office,” season 01, episode 04. Available at <https://soundcloud.com/oo-of-fice/se01ep04>, 4. 3. 2021.

⁶⁷ “Welcome to Cirkuliacija'20.” Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REd5yuDEO18>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁶⁸ “International Contemporary Circus Festival CIRKULIACIJA2020.” *Implementation Report* (2020). Archive of association Teatronas.

⁶⁹ “Cirkuliacija'20 - Dig it.” Workshop with Ariel Bronz. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enKITpZWle8>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁷⁰ “Cirkuliacija'20.” Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrlyYtc1r8A>, 5. 3. 2021.

⁷¹ “Cirkuliacija'20.” Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObJ0JCDnXXY&list=PLMgWL7xqfxzfOmvQ54SI4Z2nX0WLEGrWV>, 5. 3. 2021.

workshops and performances happened and are available online, and new collaborations were created for future events. In conclusion, the festival created a space for developing a professional Lithuanian contemporary circus by providing an opportunity to express and reflect Lithuanian cultural heritage. Also, the cultural politics and festival activities accelerated plans to open the first contemporary circus centre Cirko Sapiens.

CIRKULIACIJA 2021: WHAT TO BRING AND WHAT TO LEAVE BEHIND?

The association Teatronas began in 2021 with a general slogan: “unserious theatre and serious circus”.⁷² It is a claim to debunk myths: that theatre must be only serious, and unserious theatre is only silly and immature, as well as that a contemporary circus is only for leisure and entertainment, which cannot put into question philosophical ideas or social problems.

All of this will be reflected in the festival Cirkuliacija which will take place in June 2021. Cirkuliacija will also continue its activities in planned spaces of the Vilijampolė micro-district. The organisers hope the festival will be implemented, but the opportunity to re-plan the festival is not omitted. In any case, the festival will happen, and the organisers have scenarios B and even C. There is a wish to show performances to smaller audiences and expand the festival by visiting not only the Kaunas micro-district but also other Lithuanian regions. Nevertheless, foreign performers may not be able to come, so an art laboratory will be created for contemporary circus artists to develop their works in progress.

To sum up, it is worth mentioning that the organisers learned a lot from 2020. Unfortunately, despite the successful implementation of Cirkuliacija in 2020, the festival lacked communication with the community and the exchange of emotions. Thus, the festival size and support from colleagues and the state were among the most important factors for its success. No matter how the organisers understood that some creative workshops could take place remotely, the podcasts are a very attractive form of promoting contemporary circus, and performances made during the workshops will reach more audiences once they are digitised. Short performances in open spaces are also attractive and very inclusive. It was a success story that hopefully creates insights for further festivals.

⁷² “Increasing The Mobility of The Contemporary Circus Festival Cirkuliacija: From Kaunas Micro-Districts to Lithuanian Regions,” Application (2021). Archive of association Teatronas.



Image No. 7. Author Donatas Ališauskas. The archive of Cirkuliacija.

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O BITEFU, PANDEMIJI IN NOVIH FORMAH

Leta 2020 ni bilo mogoče izvesti Beograjskega mednarodnega gledališkega festivala Bitef, saj je pandemija covid-19 močno vplivala na mednarodne gledališke festivale. Na eni strani je ohranjanje fizične razdalje onemogočilo oziroma otežilo izvedbe predstav (ne samo na festivalih, ampak tudi na splošno), po drugi strani pa so karantena, samoizolacija, zaprtje meja in drugi ukrepi za zajezitev pandemije okrnili mednarodna potovanja. Izvedba 53. Bitefa je bila posledično preložena na leto 2021 in se bo – ob ugodnih epidemioloških razmerah – odvila v obliki dvojne edicije (skupna izvedba 54. in 55. edicije). Festival Bitef neprekinjeno poteka že od leta 1967. Organizatorji so se zaradi te zgodovinske kontinuitete, pa tudi da ponovno poudarijo, da gledališča in festivali kot dve pomembni manifestaciji *agore* lahko živijo in morajo preživeti v najtežjih okoliščinah, odločili za izvedbo kratke, tridnevne edicije Bitef-Prologa. Potekala je v običajnem festivalskem terminu (september 2020) in nudila vpogled v del programa, načrtovanega za leto 2020. Slednji bo izveden tudi letos z nekaj spremembami in dopolnitvami. Predstavi *Nelagodna dolina* (*Uncanny Valley*, Rimini Protokoll in Kammerspiele München) ter *Be Arielle F* avtorja Simona Senna (avtorjeva igralska skupina in Gledališče Vidy-Lausanne) sta tako umetniško kot produkcijsko ustrezali ukrepom za zajezitev širjenja virusa, saj sta vključevali majhno število sodelujočih, kar je zmanjšalo tveganje za odpo-ved zaradi bolezni na minimum.

Namen tega prispevka je predstaviti tri eksemplarične projekte, ki so bili izvedeni v sklopu edicije Bitef-Prolog oziroma bodo predstavljeni na letošnjem festivalu Bitef ali so načrtovani za leto 2022. Predstavljajo tri *generične* odzive sodobnih uprizoritvenih praks na omejitve, ki jih povzročata pandemija koronavirusa, kot tudi na izzive, ki jih postavlja svetovna ekološka kriza in z njo povezani koncepti trans- in posthumanizma.⁷³ Ne smemo namreč pozabiti, da je – če odmislimo teorije zarot – ta pandemija, pa tudi tiste, ki še prihajajo, posledica uničenja globalnega ekosistema. Poleg te vzročne zveze sta ekološka kriza in pandemija z vidika gledališč in gledaliških festivalov povezani, saj gre za uvajanje podobnih omejitev. Poleg tveganj, povezanih s fizičnim zbiranjem, torej fizične bližine množice ljudi, mednarodna potovanja, zlasti z letali, predstavljajo dodaten izziv. Uvedba splošne karantene zaradi pandemije je v veliki meri povzročila škodo zračnemu prometu; po drugi strani pa se tovrstna oblika prometa dojema kot eden glavnih virov onesnaževanja zraka in se ga zaradi tega razume kot grožnjo svetovnemu ekosistemu.

Omenjeni trije *eksemplarični* odzivi gledališč na ekološko krizo in pandemijo so: a) franšizne predstave, b) predstave na spletnih platformah in c) zamenjava nastopa živega telesa z *digitalnim*.⁷⁴ Ne trdim, da ne obstajajo drugi možni odzivi,

⁷³ Omenjene pojme razumem, kot jih je predstavila Cary Wolfe: transhumanizem v krepitvi humanističnih idealov v smislu tehnološke nadgradnje človeka, posthumanizem pa kot kritiko tega koncepta, še vedno v bistvu antropocentričnega, v imenu ideje o ravnovesju in enakosti med vsemi živimi bitji.

⁷⁴ Po Stevu Dixonu performerjevo *digitalno telo* pomeni virtualno, kiborgovo in robotsko telo. Virtualno telo pripada samo virtualnemu prostoru in je kot takšno vedno podoba,

vendar se v tem prispevku osredotočam na tiste modele antipandemičnega in/ali ekološko trajnostnega gledališča, ki sem jih v zadnjih dveh letih kot umetniški direktor festivala Bitef prepoznal za pomembne. Posledično metodološki vidik tega prispevka *eksplícitno* predstavlja skupek dveh izvedbenih analiz in pregleda projekta v nastajanju (podkrepljenega s teoretično razpravo o estetski naravi uprizoritvenih umetnosti), *implicitno* pa gre za samorefleksijo z vidika umetniškega direktorja. Omenjeni trije primeri so:

a) projekt *Trajnostno gledališče? (Sustainable Theatre?)* v letu 2021, avtorja Katie Mitchell in Jérôme Bel v produkciji gledališča Vidy-Lausanne – franšizna predstava;

b) *Češnjev vrt v češnjevem vrtu (Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard)* režiserja Boba Jelčića, v izvedbi gledališča De facto iz Zagreba – predstava na spletni platformi;

c) zgoraj omenjena *Nelagodna dolina (Uncanny Valley)* – digitalna telesa.

Projekta *Trajnostno gledališče?* ne morem analizirati, saj bo premierna uprizoritev septembra 2021, tako da ga bom zgolj *predstavil*. Posledično ta članek ni kronološko urejen, pa vendar imam tehten razlog, da začnem ravno s tem projektom. *Trajnostno gledališče?* ni samo odziv na izzive, ki jih postavlja pandemija covida-19, temveč se nanaša na širše in večje izzive, ki so obstajali še pred temi, ki so povzročili pandemijo: ekološka kriza.

Glavna predpostavka *trajnosti* tega projekta, ki je hkrati tudi njegova najpomembnejša značilnost v začetni fazi, je, da izključuje kakršno koli potovanje. Avtorja projekta, angleška režiserka Katie Mitchell in francoski koreograf Jérôme Bel, ne bosta potovala niti v obdobju začetnih priprav, kot tudi ne bosta fizično prisotna na vajah v Lozani. Sledila bosta pristopu, ki ga Jérôme Bel izvaja že od leta 2007 pri vseh svojih projektih, ki vključujejo službene poti z letalom.⁷⁵ Avtorja ne bosta zapustila kraja bivanja, ampak bosta imela vaje z nastopajočimi v Lozani preko spleta. Razlog za tovrsten pristop ni niti akuten niti pragmatičen – težave, ki jih povzročajo karantena, samoizolacija in drugi ukrepi za zaježitev virusa –, ampak kroničen in načelen: kot že omenjeno je zračni promet eden največjih povzročiteljev škodljivih emisij in izjemno velik vir onesnaževanja zraka, ki povzroča motnje v ekološkem ravnovesju. Pravzaprav je avtorja povezala njuna ekološka ozaveščenost, saj nihče izmed njiju iz istega razloga ne potuje z letali. Do začetka pisanja tega besedila se v resničnem življenju še nista srečala.

Ta omejitev se ne nanaša samo na pripravo projekta, temveč tudi na uprizoritev, saj je ne bodo uprizarjali izven matičnega gledališča. Povedno drugače, ker avtorja projekta ne bosta potovala med pripravami, tudi predstava ne bo potovala v druga mesta. Ta odločitev terja obrazložitev: švicarski performerji in člani tehnične ter producentske ekipe ne bodo potovali, kot tudi ne bodo premeščali scenografije in drugih fizičnih elementov, vendar bo predstava vseeno odigrana izven Lozane.

reprezentacija drugega telesa. Kiborg je človeško telo z nekaterimi mehanskimi posegi, medtem ko je robot v celoti stroj. Glej Steve Dixon, *Digital performance: a history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation* (Cambridge, MA): The MIT Press, 2007).

⁷⁵ Roslyn Sulcas, "When the Choreographer Won't Fly, the Dancers Rehearse by Skype," *The New York Times*, 23. 9. 2019.

Partnerji iz drugih mest, ki jo želijo uprizoriti, bodo sodelovali z lokalnimi izvajalci in lokalnim režiserjem (ki bo lahko v predstavo uvedel lokalne motive), vse pa bo temeljilo na podrobnem scenariju, ki ga bo pripravilo gledališče Théâtre Vidy. Pomemben del, če ne kar ključni estetski parameter, je, da scenarij ne obsega samo klasičnega govornega besedila (recimo temu *igra*), temveč vključuje tudi odrske smernice (na primer koreografijo) in tehnične zahteve. Glavna tehnična zahteva sodi v koncept *ekološke trajnosti*, saj vključuje zmanjšano rabo električne energije. To pomeni, da predstave, ki bodo odigrane izven gledališča Théâtre Vidy, ne bodo nikoli predstavljale nove uprizoritve istega *dramskega besedila*, temveč ponovno uprizoritev tega podrobnega *odrškega besedila*.⁷⁶ Iz tega razloga to vrsto dela pri snovanju predstave – ker gre za generični produkcijski model, ne pa tematske in slogovne značilnosti določenega performansa – imenujem s široko uporabljenim izrazom franšiza.

Kljub temu projekt ni dejanska franšiza, saj lokalnim umetnikom ni samo dovoljeno, temveč se jih tudi spodbuja k vključevanju nekaterih lokalnih motivov, povezanih s tematiko predstave. Poleg umetnikov lahko k lokalnemu značaju prispevajo tudi drugi, tako kot so pri izvirnem konceptu: od znanstvenikov in številnih strokovnjakov, ki jih povezuje ekološka problematika, do okoljskih aktivistov. Mitchell odločno zavrača očitke, da bi vztrajanje pri lokalnem značaju predstave lahko ogrozilo mednarodno gledališko sodelovanje in vodilo v oženje družbenih in kulturnih meja. Trdi, da je projekt avantgarden v smislu vzpostavljanja novih oblik mednarodnega sodelovanja.

In kaj (konkretno) je tema? V času, ko je bil ta prispevek napisan, in glede na spletno stran gledališča Théâtre Vidy⁷⁷ tema še vedno ni znana. Sodeč po intervjuju s Katie Mitchell, objavljenem na spletni strani, je jasno, da bo tema v celoti ustrezala opisani obliki produkcije: osredotočila se bo na ekologijo, reševanje vprašanj v zvezi z globalnimi podnebnimi spremembami, onesnaževanjem zraka itd. Gledališka oblika, ki predstavlja tretji pomemben vidik, bo prav tako skladna s pristopom in temo, kar pomeni, da bo ustrezala konceptu ekološko (samo)ozaveščenega gledališča. Vsekakor pa predstavlja vidik gledališke oblike velik izziv. Kot poudarja Katie Mitchell, bi bil najprimernejši gledališki modus dramska predstava o vplivih podnebnih sprememb na posameznikovo usodo, vendar pa Mitchell zagovarja antropocentrizem, pri katerem gre za pristop, ki bi se mu morali izogniti pri prizadevanjih za obnovitev ekološkega ravnovesja. Tako je režiserka dosegla področje *eko-dramaturgije* in si izmislila zgodbe, ki se ne osredotočajo na človeško usodo. Kot primer navaja svoj drugi projekt – *Češnjev vrt* A. P. Čehova, zasnovan z vidika češenj.

Čeprav so dileme projekta *Trajnostno gledališče?* (vprašaj v naslovu se nanaša na eksperimentalno naravo projekta, ki ima posledično negotov izid), povezane z izbiro teme in odrsko formo, zanimive in relevantne, niso ključnega pomena za naše prepoznavanje in razvrščanje možnih generičnih odgovorov, ki bi jih sodobno gledališče lahko nudilo kot odziv na izzive ekološke krize in s tem povezano

⁷⁶ Izraz *odrsko besedilo* uporabljam v smislu globalne uprizoritvene partiture, ki vključuje vse gledališke jezike: govor, prostor, zvoke, igralske naloge, ritem, osvetlitev ... Kot piše Richard Schechner: »Odrsko besedilo je partitura, skupna mizanscena in vse, kar je pred izvedbo, da se omogoči ustvarjanje partiture. Pri ustvarjanju besedila predstave je pomemben sistem odnosov: konflikti, ali drugače povedano, odnosi med besedami, gestami, igralci, prostorom, gledalci, glasbo, svetlobo – vsem, kar se dogaja na odru.« Richard Šekner, *Ka postmodernom pozorištu* (Beograd: FDU – Institut za gledališče, film, radio in televizijo, 1992), 97.

⁷⁷ Glej <https://vidy.ch/sustainable-theatre>.

pandemijo covida-19. Za klasifikacijo zadostuje ta osnovni koncept dela na daljavo brez potovanj (z letalom) in posledično gostovanja predstave po modelu franšize.

Od začetka pandemije, ki traja že skoraj eno leto, se v gledališču srečujemo s konceptualno in teoretično zmedo. Povsod po svetu so številna gledališča zaradi nezmožnosti nastopanja v živo začela predvajati posnetke svojih predstav na svojih kanalih na YouTubu, podobno pa so ravnale tudi številne televizijske hiše. Zagotovo gre za način, ki je koristen in lahko prispeva k razvoju občinstva, vendar te posnetke oziroma striminge težko opredeljujemo kot gledališče, četudi se pred njimi nemalokrat pojavljata pridevnika *spletno* oziroma *digitalno*. Teza, da pretakanje posnetkov/strimanje predstav ni gledališče, temelji na osnovni estetski premisi uprizoritvenih umetnosti, ki jo dandanes najbolj prepričljivo formulira Erica Fischer-Lichte. Estetsko izhodišče predstave je fizičen *soobstoj* performerjev in občinstva (pojem *soobstoj* pomeni, da si dve skupini ljudi delita isti fizični prostor); njihova afektivna, duhovna in intelektualna izmenjava predstavlja *električni krog* dejanj in reakcij, ki ga je Fisher-Lichte poimenovala »avtopoetična povratna zanka«, kar je mogoče enačiti s pojmom *predstava*. Posledično predstava ni nikoli zgolj estetska izkušnja, temveč tudi družbena. Po teoriji Fischer-Lichtejeve je tisto, kar pogovorno imenujemo performans, skupek predhodno pripravljenih umetniških dejanj na odru, le uprizoritev, ki se v predstavo spremeni komaj po interakciji z odzivi občinstva.⁷⁸

Posnetkov ali strimingov predstav ni mogoče preimenovali v *spletno* oziroma *digitalno gledališče*, saj ne pride do fizičnega soobstoja in neposredne izmenjave med nastopajočimi in občinstvom, zaradi česar tega sploh ne moremo imenovati gledališče. Če striktno sledimo tej estetski logiki, potem pod izraz gledališče, četudi digitalno, ne gre umestiti nobene specifične forme, ki se je pojavila kot odgovor na nujnost ohranjanja fizične razdalje v času pandemije: gledališče, ustvarjeno na internetnih platformah, med katerimi nas še posebej zanima *zoom-gledališče*. Kot vsi vemo, je med pandemično (samo)izolacijo aplikacija Zoom, ki omogoča virtualna srečanja velikega števila ljudi in je posledično primerna za spletne konference, čez noč postala ena najbolj razširjenih globalnih komunikacijskih sredstev. Začela se je uporabljati tudi v gledališču, najprej v obliki več virtualnih odrov, kjer igralci igrajo v živo v svojih (ločenih) fizičnih prostorih, računalniške kamere pa jih prikazujejo v okencih, kot da bi bili na zoom sestanku. (Tudi gledalci imajo svoja okenca, vendar so običajno izklopljena, zato da so vidni samo izvajalci.)

Na tem mestu se moramo za trenutek ustaviti. Oblike, ki jih zaradi trenutne pandemije – brez kakršne koli utemeljitve (snemanje in predvajanje v živo) ali razloga (predstave na spletnih platformah) – imenujemo *spletno* oziroma *digitalno* gledališče, niso novost na področju prepleta gledališča in interneta. Od sredine devetdesetih let dvajsetega stoletja se »internetno gledališče izvaja v sodobnih institucijah gledaliških in uprizoritvenih umetnosti, vendar kot posebna oblika prakse, ki namesto paradigmatične predstave/performerja v živo uporablja digitalno tehnologijo, internetni prostor in računalniški zaslon za svoje konstitutivne elemente«. ⁷⁹ Če pa bi se dosledno držali estetskih kriterijev, gledališče na internetu ne bi ohranilo svojega gledališkega statusa, ker temelji na stališču, da v uprizoritvenih umetnostih ni mogoče ničesar nadomestiti s »paradigmatično predstavo v živo«. Ta status bi bilo mogoče uveljaviti v teoretičnem kontekstu, ki ni

⁷⁸ O pojmi avtopoetična povratna zanka in performans (v povezavi z izrazom uprizoritev) glej Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance* (London in New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁷⁹ Ana Vujanović, "Globalni/digitalni performans: cyberperformans između kapitala i umetnosti," v *Uvod u studije performansa*, ur. Aleksandra Jovičević in ur. Ana Vujanović (Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, 2006), 131–139.

estetski ali ontološki, ampak pretežno kulturni. Vujanović pri pisanju o eni izmed podkategorij internetnega gledališča, imenovani *kibernetični performans*, ki bi lahko vključevala tudi projekte, ustvarjene na platformi Zoom, navaja, da gre za »eno izmed umetniških praks v času kulture«. ⁸⁰ Tezo pojasni z navedbo, da »/.../ na to [kibernetični performans, I. M.] ne bi smeli gledati kot na ekskluzivno in avtonomno umetniško delo, ki je izvirni produkt umetniškega genija, ampak gre za umetniški artefakt, ustvarjen v gosti mreži sorodnih družbenih in kulturnih besedil, ki ni izvzet iz omenjene mreže, saj le-ta vpliva na njegov nastanek in razvoj ter ga vzajemno definira«. ⁸¹ Vendar pa ostaja vprašanje, ali je mogoče s kulturnimi argumenti zanikati estetske; gre za dva popolnoma različna teoretična konteksta.

Pa vendar, ali je mogoče najti estetski argument, ki podpira teze, da lahko kibernetični performans in temu podobne oblike štejemo za *imanentno gledališke*? V nasprotju s splošnim prepričanjem nekatere oblike kibernetičnih performansov (velja lahko tudi za predstave po Zoomu) vključujejo možnost interakcije: čeprav ni ustvarjena z izmenjavo energije v skupnem fizičnem prostoru, ta izmenjava ni zaradi tega nič manj *odločilna* za razvoj dogajanja. Pomembno je omeniti, da je ta interakcija neločljiva značilnost digitalnih tehnologij kot takšnih. Z drugimi besedami, gledalci ne morejo vplivati na dogajanje s svojimi reakcijami, vzdih, kriki, vzkliki, oglušujočo tišino, usmerjeno pozornostjo ali z naelektrenim ozračjem, vendar pa lahko vplivajo s samo naravo interneta (če jih k temu povabi konceptualna zasnova predstave). Če se na primer od njih zahteva, da z všečki, komentarji in drugimi sredstvi izberejo, recimo v videoigri, novo *hiperpovezavo*: ena od poti, ki lahko usmerja nadaljnje dogodke (če bi na primer število všečkov, ki jih lik prejme, določilo, ali bo ostal v igri ali *bo ubit*). Potencialno pripombo, da bi lahko pri zoom predstavi, tako kot pri predstavi v živo, naleteli na nepredvidljiv odziv občinstva, ki bi lahko vplival na dogajanje – nekateri gledalci na primer vklopijo mikrofona in motijo ali prekinejo nastop z glasnim komentiranjem –, zavrne argument, da so, kot že omenjeno, okenca gledalcev med predstavo običajno izključena.

Če smo zdaj vsaj pogojno uspeli dokazati, da je zoom-predstavam mogoče z estetskega stališča potrditi status (digitalnega) gledališča, lahko sedaj preidemo na analizo primera, projekta *Češnjev vrt v češnjem vrtu* (*Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard*) priznanega hrvaškega gledališkega in filmskega režiserja Boba Jelčiča. ⁸² Prvo, kar bodo opazili tisti, ki so seznanjeni z Jelčičevim gledališčem, je njegova prepričljiva prilagoditev novega medija svoji odrski poetiki, predvsem v smislu dramaturgije in dela z igralci.

Podobno kot pri nekaterih njegovih zgodnejših uprizoritvah dram Čehova, na primer *Galebu* (*The Seagull*), je bilo besedilo korenito predrugačeno, dramaturgija predstave je bila zreducirana na ključni dogodek in/ali temo, medtem ko so situacije, odnosi in liki posodobljeni, torej spisani na novo v skladu z »izvirnikom«. Zgodba se osredotoča na dražbo, kjer se bo prodal češnjev vrt, vključeni so le glavni udeleženci tega dogodka: lastniki zemljišč, aristokrati, madam Ranevska in njen brat Gajev, njena hči Anja, njena posvojena hči Varja, ki upravlja posestvo, nedavno obogateli Lopahin, ki lastnikov ni uspel prepričati, da sprejmejo pragmatični načrt za rešitev vrta, in ga na dražbi zato kupi, družinski prijatelj in večni študent Trofimov. Drugi liki in z njimi povezane zgodbe so bili odstranjeni. Tako sta bila preoblikovana dramaturgija in njen medijski kontekst, srečanje na

⁸⁰ Prav tam, 278.

⁸¹ Prav tam.

⁸² Ta izjava se morda zdi paradoksalna, saj opisana oblika interakcije, ki daje *gledališki* značaj zoom-predstavam, kiber-predstavam in internetnemu gledališču na splošno, v predstavi *Češnjev vrt v češnjem vrtu* ne obstaja.

platformi Zoom, prepričljivo, organsko, celo *hipernaturalistično* povezano. Namreč, (skriti) gledalci so *voajerji* zoom-konference sodobne zagrebške družine, kjer ima vsak iz svojega prostora (ki je resničen za igralce in izmišljen za like, ki jih igrajo) še zadnje posvete o dražbi, ki se bo kmalu pričela. Ker zgodba, ki je tako pripovedovalno kot časovno zgoščena, zajema tudi obdobje takoj po dražbi, ko izvemo, kaj se je zgodilo s češnjevim vrtom, se pojavi problem, kaj v tem naturalističnem kontekstu storiti glede na časovni tok (čas med dražbo). Zagata se je razrešila na preprost in duhovit način, tako da je Lopahin v tem obdobju izgubil signal.

V skladu s hipernaturalizmom – vtisom, da gledalci spremljamo zoom srečanje iz resničnega življenja – je tudi igra izjemno naravna, življenjska, torej prilagojena dejstvu, da so pred kamerami (na svojih računalnikih). Posebej zapleteno estetsko vprašanje zadeva, ali je ta igralska oblika bolj *gledališka* ali *kinematografska*, če se strinjamo, da se ti dve razlikujeta. Nekatero vlogo v predstavi *Češnjevi vrt v češnjevem vrtu*, zlasti tiste, ki so blago komične, kažejo določeno *teatralnost*, ki nas ločuje od (hiper)naturalizma in posledično tistega, kar običajno dojemamo kot filmsko igro.

Vtis o tej *življenjski resnici* ustvarja ne samo to, kako igralci igrajo s poudarkom na konkretnih fizičnih dejanjih, temveč tudi, *kje* igrajo in *kaj imajo oblečeno*. Kostumi in scena znotraj okenc, zoom okenc, so na prvi pogled dobesedno *zasebni* (brez dvoma lahko domnevamo, da vsak igralec igra v svojih oblačilih in v svojem zasebnem prostoru, naj bo to soba, avto ali ulica), vendar so obenem rahlo *semi-otizirani*. V smislu prepletanja med osebnim in izmišljenim, fenomenološkim in semiotičnim so najbolj presenetljivo predstavljeni liki Ranevske, Varje in Lopahina ter njihova okolica in okoliščine.

Melanholična, pasivno-agresivna, samopomilovanja vredna, razvajena in hipohondrična Ranevska, ki jo je v uravnoveženi komični maniri igrala Jadranka Đokić, nenehno leži, vidimo le njeno glavo v vodoravnem položaju, meri si temperaturo (covidna paranoičnost?) in pije, ne vemo ali alkohol ali toplo limonado (način, kako je ta lik predstavljen, nakazuje, da bi lahko pila karkoli od tega). Neurejena posteljina je rahlo prekrita s puhastim modrikastim šalom ali plaščem (ki tudi ostaja nejasen), kar je zelo duhovit znak njenega *oguljenega* glamurja. Varja, ki jo igra Petra Svrtan, hišna pomočnica v družinski hiši, je smrtno resna, zaskrbljena, osredotočena na gospodinjska opravila, vidimo lahko, da jih nenehno opravlja (na primer zlaga perilo). Z enakim izrazom na obrazu in v enakem razpoloženju odide ven in se sprehaja po zagrebških ulicah, verjetno spet opravlja kako gospodinjsko opravilo, kar spremljamo prek Zoom aplikacije na njenem mobilnem telefonu. Tako kot ona tudi Lopahin na družinskem spletnem srečanju ne sodeluje prek računalnika, temveč prek mobilnega telefona. Lopahin, ki ga igra Marko Makovičić, je takšen, kot ga je oblikoval Čehov: energičen novodobni človek, zaposlen, vedno v gibanju, zaradi česar je neprestano sredi pomembnih pogovorov pred in med dražbo, medtem ko se vozi v avtomobilu.

Glede na splošni interpretativni pristop h klasični dramaturgiji bi lahko projekt *Češnjevi vrt v češnjevem vrtu* opredelili kot aktualizacijo.⁸³ Iz implikacij je razvidno, da bi lahko prilagajanje besedila v tem projektu razumeli kot prepisovanje, novo pisanje besedila po klasičnem modelu, tako da bodo dialogi in monologi, tudi odnosi, liki in situacije, ki jih ustvarjajo, prilagojeni sodobnemu kontekstu. V tem primeru bi to bila nezmožnost zagrebške družine, da se sooči z izzivi tranzicije v postsocialističnih družbah – z na novo obogatelo družbo, tajkunskimi privatizacijami in neoliberalnim kapitalizmom. Peter Brooke poudarja, da je *Češnjevi vrt* igra

⁸³ Za različne pristope v sodobni režiji klasičnih iger glej Ivan Medenica, *Klasika i njene maske* (Novi Sad: Sterijevo pozorje, 2010).

o družbeni tranziciji, o koncu ene dobe/družbe in o začetku druge.⁸⁴ Kljub temu nas to ne bi smelo prepričati, da Jelčić ustvarja politično gledališče: zgodbo je postavil v sodobni kontekst, politično noto pa pustil razmeroma nevtralnno. To je popolnoma skladno s sodobnim razumevanjem dramaturgije Čehova, ki jo lahko reduciramo na glavno tezo besedila *L'entre-deux ou les bipolarités Tchékovienns*⁸⁵ enega največjih svetovnih poznavalcev njegovega opusa, zlasti Češnjevca vrta, Georges Banua: v dramskem besedilu velikega ruskega pisatelja je mogoče zaznati številne bipolarnosti (realizem-simbolizem, Rusija-Zahod, dramsko-komično ...), zato se posameznemu režijskemu konceptu ni treba enolično podrediti le eni od teh skrajnosti, ampak zgolj ohranjati napetost med njimi.

Odvijajo se dolge, resnično kinematografske scene, v katerih vsak od protagonistov v svojih okencih na zoom-konferenci izvaja svoje dejanje odsotno, melanholično in/ali obupno (Varja hodi po ulici, Ranevska joče, Lopahin vozi avto ...); melanholično vzdušje okrepi pesem *White Roses, Tender Roses* v izvedbi Predraga Cuneta Gojkovića ... Ta meditativni, ambivalentni konec pri gledalcu povzroči občutek ujetosti med dvema enakovrednima vzgiboma. Po eni strani bi se smejali tem potenciranim dramatičnim goljufijam (nihče ni umrl, samo posestvo je bilo razprodano ...), po drugi strani pa bi se jokali nad usodo teh poražencev tranzicije, medtem ko bi dejansko jokali, kot je navadno pri Čehovu, nad lastno usodo.

Za razliko od prejšnje, se predstava *Nelagodna dolina (Uncanny Valley)* igra v resničnem, fizičnem prostoru odra, z resničnim občinstvom v gledališču (pripadajo istemu *tukaj in zdaj*). Edini performer v tej oddaji večkrat neposredno nagovori občinstvo, postavlja vprašanja in daje naloge, ki jih gledalci sprejmejo (sočasno morajo zapreti oči), zaradi česar bi lahko domnevali, da je njihova interakcija bolj intenzivna kot v klasičnem gledališču. Vendar pa je ta predpostavka napačna: ne samo da interakcija ni močnejša, ampak je tudi neobstoječa. Na takšen ali drugačen način performer vpliva na občinstvo, tudi če gledalce dolgčasi ali povzroči, da jim misli odtavajo. Po drugi strani pa nikakor ne morejo vplivati nanj; čeprav je videti povsem človeški, je – robot. Ker je njegovo vedenje v celoti programirano, z občinstvom ni mogoče vzpostaviti »avtopoetične povratne zanke«. Zato ne prese- neča, da je Fischer-Lichtejeva zavrnila dilemo o estetskem bistvu te predstave, ki sem jo postavil tekom najine razprave v sklopu Bitef-Prologa 2020, ki je potekala v hibridni obliki: v živo nas je nagovorila po Zoomu iz svoje pisarne v Berlinu, pogovor pa se je v živo predvajal na zaslonih, postavljenih pred gledališčem Bitef v Beogradu, pred občinstvom in z mano v vlogi izpraševalca:

»Najprej moram reči, da mi je to delo izjemno všeč. Preizkusilo je, kako daleč lahko gremo pri izzivanju pojma gledališče. In v tej predstavi je dosežena točka, kjer to ni več gledališče. /.../ Zame je bil to tako rekoč eksperiment, ki je dokazal mojo idejo o avtopoetični povratni zanki [se smeje]. Na oder postavite robota in počakate, da vidite, kaj se bo zgodilo. Zanka ne bo vzpostavljena. Predstava Kaegija in Rimini Protokolla je bila, kot vedno, izjemno domiselno izdelana. Ko rečem, da to ni gledališče, s tem ne mislim, da to ni umetnost. Gre za nov umetniški format. To je precej pomembno in fantastično. To moramo razlikovati. To je umetnost, nanjo se lahko estetsko odzovem, ne morem pa je doživljati v družbenem smislu.

⁸⁴ Glej *Tchékhov, le témoin impartial*. Predvajano na La SEPT et l'INA, Paris, (1994).

⁸⁵ Georges Banu, "L'entre-deux ou les bipolarités Tchékovienns," v *Zbornik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti*, ur. Enisa Uspenski (Beograd: FDU, 2010), 17.

Ko je narejena dobro, to občudujem, vendar to ni gledališče. Za te umetniške oblike je treba skovati nov izraz.«⁸⁶

Testiranje meja gledališča, ki ga Fischer-Lichte omenja v predstavi *Nelagodna dolina*, ni stranski učinek ali naključni rezultat. Ravno nasprotno, to preizkušanje je avtorjeva namera, vozlišče, ki združuje gosto, skoraj nepregledno mrežo, stkano iz številnih tematskih niti. Projekt je zasnovan kot preformativno predavanje, predavatelj je humanoidni robot, ki je osupljiva *kopija* slavnega nemškega pisatelja Thomasa Melleja, tema pa je *premagovanje težav, ki jih povzroča nelagodna dolina* (*overcoming the difficulties caused by the uncanny valley*). Pomen osrednje teme predavanja je pojasnjen na koncu, tako da ideja predstave postane jasna v retrospektivi. Japonski znanstvenik Masahiro Mori je z izrazom *nelagodna dolina* opisal situacijo, ki vključuje humanoidnega robota: kljub osupljivi podobnosti se še vedno razlikuje od človeka, kar povzroča občutek odtujenosti in nelagodja.

V skladu s post- in transhumanističnimi idejami se kot ena zadnjih v neskončni vrsti intelektualnih vprašanj, ki jih poraja ta predstava, postavlja naslednja dilema: ali bo človek, *original*, Melle sam, ki nas prvič nagovori, pa čeprav prek zaslona, kmalu izginil v izolaciji, se izrodil v podobo Doriana Graya, ki propada na podstrešju, medtem ko bo njegov dvojniki, humanoidni robot, postal samostojna entiteta samega Doriana Graya? Ali bo človek, kot prikazuje resnični Melle (ponovno prek zaslona), vedno znal manipulirati s strojem, mu (boleče) zvijati zapestja in gležnje (kot to počne Melle s svojim robotskim dvojnikom) in sčasoma, če slednji postane preveč neodvisen, izklopiti njegovo električno napajanje? Teza je, da niti en stroj ni še nikoli opravil Turingovega testa za razlikovanje ljudi od strojev.

Omemba Turingovega testa neposredno nakazuje na drugo od dveh glavnih tem tega performativnega predavanja. Prva je življenjska zgodba Thomasa Melleja, druga pa tragična usoda Alana Turinga, čigar izum ni le pomagal pri dekodiranju nacističnih šifer v drugi svetovni vojni, temveč je predstavljal predhodnika računalnikov. Kar povezuje njuno usodo, je metafora *psihiatrični bolnik kot računalnik*; znano je, da se mnogi psihiatrični bolniki vidijo kot računalniki, trdi Melle-robot. Melle sam trpi zaradi bipolarnosti, ki jo zaznamujejo nihanja med maničnimi in depresivnimi stanji, medtem ko je Turing trpel za depresijo in nato storil samomor, potem ko je bil prisiljen jemati estrogen kot del *zdravljenja* proti homoseksualnosti, zaradi česar je razvil sekundarne ženske spolne znake (oblikovanje tkiva dojke). Metafora *psihiatričnega pacienta kot računalnika* je predstavljena v Mellejevi domnevni odločitvi,⁸⁷ da ga bo ob javnih priložnostih nadomestil robot, ki je njegova identična kopija, saj ima zaradi bipolarnosti tesnobo pred nastopanjem, mučijo ga negotovost in predvsem izguba nadzora: če svoj položaj subjekta prenese na računalnik/stroj/robot, bi panika izginila. V Turingovem primeru je ta metafora še bolj zapletena in jo lahko razumemo kot več prepletenih stopenj transgresij: od moškega do ženske, od duševno zdrave do depresivne osebe (ki stori samomor), od subjekta v odtujeno identiteto, od človeka v stroj.

Kljub temu pa se poraja vprašanje, kako so vse te dileme – od psihiatričnih bolezni do odnosa med človekom in strojem/računalnikom – povezana s Kaegijevim zavestnim preizkušanjem gledaliških meja, kar je bila naša prvotna trditev. Postati nekdo/nekaj drugega, imeti dvojno identiteto (moški-ženska, zdrav-duševno bolan, človek-stroj), prenesti subjektivnost na svojega dvojnika, preizkusiti, ali bo kopija

⁸⁶ Ivan Medenica.

⁸⁷ To ni odločitev, ki jo je Thomas Melle sprejel v resničnem življenju, ampak predstavlja izmišljen konstrukt, na katerem temelji projekt Stefana Kaegija.

bolj resnična kot izvirnik, se vprašati, ali imate nadzor nad (samo)zastopanjem, da se ne izpostavljate v javnosti ... Vse te teme se *par excellence* nanašajo na estetsko, celo ontološko bistvo gledališča. Zato lahko upravičeno trdimo, da *Nelagodna dolina* ni toliko projekt predhodno naštetih tem, temveč estetska identiteta gledališča.

Kot smo že poudarili, bi lahko gledališki status *Nelagodne doline* relativizirali po istem estetskem kriteriju kot projekte na platformi Zoom (odsotnost žive izmenjave med občinstvom in nastopajočimi) – njegov izvajalec je humanoidni robot, a vseeno robot. Vendar bi bil ta pristop preveč preprost in redukcioniističen. Ta inteligentni projekt Stefana Kaegija odpira toliko pravih in provokativnih vprašanj o estetski identiteti gledališča, da lahko najmanj močno zamaje naše trdne predpostavke o tej identiteti.

Navsezadnje lahko zastavimo nekaj vprašanj, na katera za zdaj zagotovo ne moremo odgovoriti: katere od teh oblik se bodo izkazale kot začasni odziv na pandemično krizo in katere bodo obstale in postale trajnejši prispevek k sodobni uprizoritveni umetnosti? Če izhajamo iz hipoteze, da bo konec pandemije pomenil tudi konec potrebe po fizičnem distanciranju in se bo fizični soobstoj nastopajočih in občinstva zagotovo izkazal kot estetsko bistvo gledališča, potem bi lahko rekli, da bodo vse oblike, ki so izključevale prisotnost v živo (predstave z roboti, projekti na spletnih platformah ...) ostale to, kar v bistvu so: poskusi na meji med gledališčem in drugimi umetniškimi in medijskimi praksami. Te oblike resnično ustrezajo zahtevi po fizični oddaljenosti kot enem od ukrepov za zajezitev virusa, vendar ne smemo zanemariti dejstva, da te zahteve niso razlog za njihov obstoj: tako spletno gledališče kot predstave z roboti so obstajale že prej in niso bile v nobeni povezavi s pandemijo covid-19. Po drugi strani pa ekološka kriza ne bo izginila, varstvo okolja mora postati merilo za vse človekove dejavnosti, tudi za gledališče. Franšizne predstave so zgolj vrh ledene gore, eden prvih odzivov gledališča na ekološko krizo, bolj specifično na onesnaženost zraka zaradi zračnega prometa. Upajmo, da bodo ti odzivi postali širši in globlji ter da bomo o njih še razmišljali in pisali.

Ivan Medenica je profesor na Fakulteti dramskih umetnosti v Beogradu, predava predmet *Zgodovina svetovne drame in gledališča*. Predaval je na berlinski Univerzi Humboldt (DE) in na Univerzi Yale na katedri za dramsko igro (ZDA). Je aktiven gledališki kritik in prejemnik šestih državnih nagrad za najboljšo gledališko kritiko. Njegova knjiga, izdana v Srbiji, *Tragedija iniciacije ali nestalni princ (The Tragedy of Initiation or the Inconstant Prince, 2017)* je bila nagrajena za najboljšo knjigo o gledališču. Prevedena je bila v slovenski in makedonski jezik. Medenica je bil umetniški direktor festivala *Sterijevo pozorje v Novem Sadu* in je eden glavnih urednikov revije *Teatron*. Je član izvršnega odbora Mednarodnega združenja gledaliških kritikov in vodja mnogih konferenc. Od leta 2015 je umetniški direktor festivala *Bitef*.

ON BITEF, THE PANDEMIC, AND NEW FORMS

In 2020, Bitef (Belgrade International Theatre Festival) did not have its regular edition. The effect that the COVID-19 pandemic had on international theatre festivals has been twofold and decisive. On the one side, the necessity of physical distancing has made performances (not only at festivals but in general) either difficult or impossible. In contrast, on the other side, quarantine, self-isolation, border closures and other anti-pandemic measures disrupted international travel. Because of all that, the 53rd Bitef was postponed until 2021, when it is supposed to be held – the situation with the pandemic permitting – as a double edition (the 54th and 55th editions combined). However, not only for the sake of its historical continuity, which has not been broken since the beginning of Bitef in 1967, but also to reconfirm that theatre and festivals, as two important manifestations of “agora”, can and should survive the most difficult circumstances, it was decided to organise a short, three-day-long edition, Bitef-Prologue, but in its usually scheduled period (September 2020). Offering a sample of the programme planned for 2020, which is also part of this year’s programme, with a few changes and additions. The two performances which were held, *Uncanny Valley* (Rimini Protokoll and Kammerspiele München) and *Be Arielle F* by Simon Senn (the author’s troupe and Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne), were both artistically and in terms of production suitable for the requirements of the anti-pandemic measures since they involved a small number of people, thus reducing the risk of cancellation due to illness to a minimum.

This paper will present three exemplary projects that were presented at Bitef-Prologue, will be presented at this year’s Bitef Festival, or are planned for 2022. These projects map three *generic* responses by contemporary performing practices to limitations caused by the coronavirus pandemic, but also to the challenges imposed by the global ecological crisis and the related concepts of trans- and post-humanism.⁸⁸ Namely, it must not be forgotten that – conspiracy theories aside – this pandemic and the ones yet to come have resulted from the destruction of the global ecosystem. Besides their causal relation, the ecological crisis and the pandemic are linked, from the point of view of theatre and theatre festivals, by the similar restrictions they impose. Apart from the risk of physical gathering, i.e., the physical closeness of people, another challenge is international travel, especially by aeroplane. The pandemic lockdown has been detrimental to air traffic. On the other hand, this means of traffic has already been recognised as one of the main sources of air pollution and, thus, very dangerous to the global ecosystem.

These three “exemplary” theatre responses to the ecological crisis and the

⁸⁸ I understand these notions as presented by Cary Wolfe: transhumanism in an intensification of humanistic ideals in terms of the technological *upgrade* of man, while posthumanism is the criticism of that concept, still essentially anthropocentric, on behalf of the idea of the balance and equality among all living beings.

pandemic are a) franchise performances, b) performances on internet platforms and c) the substitution of a live performing body with a *digital*⁸⁹ one. I am not saying that other possible responses could not exist. Still, I here focus on those models of anti-pandemic and/or ecologically sustainable theatre that I have recognised as relevant over the past two years from the position of the Bitef curator. Therefore, from the point of view of methodology, *explicitly*, this text will be a sum of two performing analyses and one review of a project in the making (supported by a bit of theoretical debate on the aesthetical nature of performing arts), while *implicitly*, it will represent a curatorial self-reflection. The three concrete examples are a) the project *Sustainable Theatre?* (a project which is going to be in the making over 2021), by Katie Mitchell and Jérôme Bel, in the production of Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne (franchise performance), b) *Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard* by Bobo Jelčić, the De facto company from Zagreb (a performance on an internet platform), and c) the aforementioned *Uncanny Valley* (digital bodies).

When it comes to the project *Sustainable Theatre?*, I am not in a position to analyse it but to merely “present” it since it will premiere in September 2021. Therefore, as I have a strong reason to start with this particular project, this article is not organised chronologically. *Sustainable Theatre?* is not only a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic but to wider, prior and greater challenges, the ones that caused the pandemic in the first place: the ecological crisis.

The central premise of this project’s “sustainability”, which is also its most prominent characteristic in this initial phase, is that it excludes any type of travel. The authors, English director Katie Mitchell and French choreographer Jérôme Bel will neither travel during the period of initial preparations nor will they move and be physically present in Lausanne during rehearsals. Adopting the approach that Jérôme Bel has been exercising since 2007, whenever he has worked in places to which he would have to travel by plane,⁹⁰ the two of them will not leave their cities but will hold the online rehearsals with the performers in Lausanne. The reason for this approach is neither acute nor pragmatic – the difficulties caused by the quarantine, self-isolation and other anti-pandemic measures – but chronic and a matter of principle: as already noted, air traffic is one of the biggest generators of harmful emissions and a significant source of air pollution which leads to disturbance in the ecological balance. Actually, their environmental awareness, the fact that both refuse to fly by plane for the same reason, has primarily linked these two artists who – by the time I am writing this text – have never met in real life.

This restriction relates not only to the preparation of the project but also to the performance itself. Once finished, it will not be played outside the theatre where it is produced. In other words, just as the project’s authors will not travel during the preparations, so the performance will not travel to other cities. However, this requires an explanation: the Swiss performers and technical and production staff will not travel, nor will the stage design and other physical elements

⁸⁹ According to Steve Dixon, a performer’s “digital body” implies virtual, cyborg, and robot body. The virtual one belongs only to a virtual space and is as such always an image, a representation of another body. Cyborg is human body with some mechanical interventions, while robot is completely a machine. See Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation* (Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ See Roslyin Sulcas, “When the Choreographer Won’t Fly, the Dancers Rehearse by Skype,” *The New York Times*, 23 9. 2019.

be transported, but the performance will still be played outside Lausanne. Partners from other towns who want to present this performance will work with local performers and a local director (who will be free to introduce some local motifs), all based on a detailed script provided by Théâtre Vidy. An important, if not the crucial aesthetic parameter, is that this script is not only a classic spoken text (let's call it a *play*) but also includes stage directions (choreography, for example) and technical requirements. The main technical requirement also belongs to the concept of "ecological sustainability" since it concerns the reduced use of electricity. In other words, performances played outside Théâtre Vidy will never represent a new staging of the same "dramatic text" but a re-enactment of the same, detailed "stage text".⁹¹ That is why I refer to this type of work on a performance – since this is a generic production model, not thematic and stylistic features of one particular performance – by the widely used term "franchise".

Still, this project does not represent an actual franchise since, as already mentioned, local artists are not only allowed but also encouraged to include some local motifs related to the topic of the performance. Besides artists, others can also contribute to the local character, as is the case with the original concept: scientists in various disciplines linked to ecology issues and environmental activists. Faced with objections that insisting on the local character could jeopardise international theatre cooperation and lead to closing within narrow social and cultural boundaries, Mitchell vehemently rejects them and claims that, on the contrary, the project is avant-garde in terms of shaping new forms of establishing international cooperation.

And what is the (concrete) topic? By the time I have written this text and based on the Théâtre Vidy website,⁹² it is still unknown. Still, judging from Mitchell's interview on the website, it is clear that the topic will fully correspond to the described form of production: it will also focus on ecology, tackling the issues of global climatic changes, air pollution and so on. The third important aspect, theatre form, will also be in line with the approach and the topic, which means that it will be suitable for the concept of ecologically (self-)aware theatre. However, this third aspect, theatre form, is a big challenge. As stated by Katie Mitchell, the most appropriate theatre mode would be a play on how climate changes influence human destinies. Yet, it supports anthropocentrism, which should be avoided when we advocate for the renewal of ecological balance. That is how the director reached the area of "eco-dramaturgy", inventing stories that are not focused on human destiny.

She gives an example of another one of her projects – Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, conceived from the point of view of the cherry trees.

Albeit interesting and relevant, the dilemmas linked to the choice of a topic and, above anything else, the stage form of the project *Sustainable Theatre?* (the question mark in the title refers to the experimental nature of the project, which, therefore, has an uncertain outcome) are not crucial for our recognition and classification of possible generic answers that contemporary theatre might give to the

⁹¹ I use the term "stage text" in the sense of a global staging score which involves all the theatre languages: spoken language, space, sounds, actors' tasks, rhythm, lighting ... As Richard Schechner put it: "The stage text is the score, the total mise-en-scene, and everything that precedes a performance in order to enable the creation of the score. Significance in the creation of performance text lies in the system of relationships: conflicts, or to put it in a different way, relationships between words, gestures, actors, space, spectators, music, light – everything that happens on stage." Ričard Šekner, *Ka postmodernom pozorištu* (Beograd: FDU – Institut za pozorište, film, radio i televiziju, 1992), 97.

⁹² See <https://vidy.ch/sustainable-theatre>.

challenges of the ecological crisis and the related COVID-19 pandemic. What is sufficient for classification is this basic concept of remote work, without travelling (by plane), and the subsequent touring of the performance based on the model of – *franchise*.

Since the pandemic began, a full year now, we have been facing a conceptual and theoretical mess in theatre. Facing the inability to perform live, many theatres worldwide have started playing recordings of their performances on their YouTube channels, and many TV channels have done the same. Although they are useful information about performances, which can also contribute to the development of the audience, those recordings or live-streams could hardly be considered theatre, even if preceded by the adjective *online* or *digital*, as often is the case. The thesis that recordings/live-streams of performances are not theatre is based on the core aesthetic premise of performing arts, as is nowadays most convincingly formulated by Erica Fischer-Lichte. The aesthetic premise of a performance is the physical *co-presence* of performers and the audience (the notion “co-presence” means that the two groups of people share the same physical space); their affective, spiritual and intellectual exchange constitutes an *electrical circuit* of actions and reactions. Fisher-Lichte named this the “autopoietic feedback loop”, which can be equalled to the notion of *performance*. Therefore, performance is never merely an aesthetic experience but also a social one. According to theorisation by Fischer-Lichte, what we colloquially call performance, a sum of previously prepared artistic actions on stage, is just a staging, which turns into a performance only after an interaction with the audience’s reactions is achieved.⁹³

Recordings or live-streams of performances cannot be renamed *online*, or *digital theatre* since they do not imply physical co-existence and direct exchange between performers and audience and are thus not theatre. If we adhere to that aesthetic logic, then we can use the term theatre, not even digital theatre, to refer to another specific form that has appeared as a response to the necessity of physical distance in the pandemic: theatre created on internet platforms, amongst which we are particularly interested in “Zoom theatre”. As we all know, during the pandemic (self-)isolation, the Zoom application, which facilitates a virtual encounter of a large number of people and is thus suitable for online conferences, virtually overnight became one of the most widely spread global means of communication. It has also become applicable in theatre, first as a multiple virtual/screen stage, on which actors play live in their own (separate) physical spaces, which computer cameras then place into the Zoom meeting windows (spectators have their own windows as well, but they are usually switched off, so only the ones with performers remain visible).

Here we should stop for a second. In the current pandemic, these forms, which we now call – without any justification (recording and live-streaming) or for a reason (performances on online platforms) – *online* or *digital theatre*, do not represent a novelty in terms of the fusion between theatre and the internet. Since the 1990s, “the internet theatre has been realised within contemporary institutions of theatre and performance art, but as their specific practice which, instead of paradigmatic live performance/performer, uses digital technology, the internet space, and computer screen as their constitutive elements”.⁹⁴ However, if we

⁹³ On the concept of “autopoietic feedback loop” and “performance” (in correlation to the term “staging”), see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁹⁴ Ana Vujanović, “Globalni/digitalni performans: cyberperformans između kapitala i umetnosti,” in *Uvod u studije performansa*, eds. Aleksandra Jovičević and Ana Vujanović (Beograd:

strictly adhered to the aesthetic criteria, internet theatre would be denied its theatre status, based on the attitude that nothing in performing arts can be substituted for “paradigmatic live performance”. That status could possibly be acknowledged in a theoretical context which is not aesthetical or ontological but predominantly cultural. Writing about one of the subcategories of internet theatre, “cyber-performance”, which could also include projects created on the Zoom platform, Ana Vujanović states that it is “one of the practices of art in the time of culture”.⁹⁵ She supports the thesis by stating: “What it practically means is that it should not be seen [cyber-performance, I.M.] as an exclusive and autonomous piece of art created by an art genius out of nothing, but as a work of art which is created in a dense network of converging texts of society and culture, the one that does not get excluded from the network but, being created in its centre, it gets defined by it but also definable for it”.⁹⁶ However, the question remains whether cultural arguments can be used to negate aesthetic ones; these are two completely different theoretical contexts.

Still, is it possible to come up with an aesthetic argument to support the thesis that cyber-performance and similar forms can be considered *immanently theatrical*? Contrary to popular belief, some forms of cyber-performances (also applicable to Zoom-performances) do involve the possibility of interaction. Although not created through energy exchange in a common physical space, this exchange does not have to remain any less *decisive* in the development of the action. It is important to add that this interaction represents an inherent, defining characteristic of digital technologies. In other words, spectators cannot influence the action by their reactions, sighs, sobs, exclamations, deaf silence, directed attention, or elevated atmosphere, but they can make an influence using the very nature of the internet (if the concept invites them to, of course). For example, if they are asked to use “likes”, comments, and other means to select, like on a videogame, a new “hyperlink”: one of the paths that can direct further events (if, for example, the number of “likes” a character receives could determine if he would stay in the game or get *killed off*). A potential remark that a Zoom performance could, just like a live one, meet with an unpredictable reaction by the audience that could influence the action – for example, some spectators switch their microphones on and disturb or interrupt the performance by commenting out loud – is rejected by the argument that, as is already noted, spectators’ windows are usually switched off during the performance.

If we have now managed to prove, at least conditionally, that Zoom performances can be aesthetically confirmed to have the status of (digital) theatre, we can move on to the analysis of an example, the project *Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard*, by renowned Croatian theatre and film director Bobo Jelčić.⁹⁷ The first thing anyone acquainted with Jelčić’s theatre will notice is how convincingly he has adapted a new media to his stage poetics, mostly in terms of dramaturgy and working with actors.

Like in some of his earlier stagings of Chekhov’s plays, the first being *The Seagull*, the text has undergone a radical adaptation. The play’s dramaturgy has been reduced to the crucial event and/or topic. In contrast, the situations,

Fabrika knjiga, 2006), 131–139.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 278.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ This statement might seem paradoxical since the described form of interaction, which provides the “theatre” character to Zoom performances, cyber-performances, and the internet theatre in general, does not exist in the performance *Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard*.

relationships and characters have been modernised, that is to say, rewritten according to the “original”. The story has been reduced to the auction at which the cherry orchard will be sold, involving only the main participants of this event (the landowners, the aristocrats Madame Ranevskaya and her brother Gayev; her daughter Anya; her adopted daughter Varya, who manages the estate; the nouveau riche Lopakhin who, having failed to persuade them to accept a pragmatic plan for its salvation, buys the cherry orchard at the auction; the family friend and eternal student Trofimov), while all the other characters and the related plots have been removed. Thereby the reshaped dramaturgy and its media context, a meeting on the Zoom platform, have been linked in a convincing, organic, even *hyper-naturalist* fashion. Namely, the (hidden) spectators are “voyeurs” of a Zoom conference of a contemporary Zagreb family, which is having, each of them from their own space (which is real for the actors and fictional for the characters they play), the final consultations on the auction which is about to begin. Since the story, dense both in terms of narration and time, also includes the period right after the auction, when we find out what happened to the cherry orchard, the problem appears as what to do, in this naturalistic context, about the time flow (the time during the auction). It was solved in a simple and witty manner by Lopakhin losing the signal in that period.

In line with this hyper-naturalism – the impression that we, the spectators, are watching a Zoom meeting from real life – the acting is also greatly naturalistic and lifelike, thus adapted to the fact that they are in front of the cameras (of their computers). A particularly complex aesthetic question is whether this form of acting is more “theatrical” or “cinematic” if we agree that those two are different. Some roles in *Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard*, especially the mildly comic ones, display a certain *theatricality* which dissociates us from the (hyper)naturalism and, consequentially, what we typically see as film acting.

The impression of this “lifelike truth” is created not only by how the actors play, emphasising concrete physical actions, but also by *where* they play and *what they have on* while they do. The costumes and the setup within the frame, the Zoom-windows, are, on the first level, literally “private” (we can safely assume that every actor plays in their own clothes and in their own private space, whether it is a room, a car, or on the street). At the same time, they are mildly *semioticised*. In terms of intertwining between personal and fictional, phenomenological and semiotic, the most strikingly presented are the characters Ranevskaya, Varya and Lopakhin, as well as their surroundings and situations.

Melancholic, passive-aggressive, self-pitying, spoilt and hypochondriac Ranevskaya, played in a well-balanced comical manner by Jadranka Đokić, is constantly lying down. We can only see her slanted head, taking her temperature (COVID-paranoid?). She is drinking something, and we do not know whether it is alcohol or hot lemonade (the way this character is presented, she might easily drink either). Messy bed linens are slightly covered with a fuzzy, bluish shawl or an overcoat (that also remains unclear), which is a very witty sign of her *shabby* glamour. Varya, played by Petra Svrtan, the housekeeper of the family house, is deadly serious, worried and focused on household chores which we can see she is constantly doing (folding laundry, for example). With the same facial expression and mood, she goes out and walks the streets of Zagreb, probably again carrying out another household task, which we keep following via the Zoom application on her mobile phone. Just like her, Lopakhin participates in the family online meeting neither via laptop nor computer but via his mobile phone. Played by Marko Makovičić, Lopakhin is, just like Chekhov made him, a new-age man, energetic, busy and always in motion, which is why he is having these important conversations

before and during the auction while driving his car.

In terms of its general interpretative approach to classic dramaturgy, the project *Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard* could be defined as actualization.⁹⁸ As already implied, the text adaptation in this project could be considered a re-writing, a new writing of the text based on a classical model, so that the dialogues and the monologues, as well as the relationships, characters and situations they create, are adapted to a contemporary context. In this case, that would be the inability of a Zagreb family nowadays to face the challenges of transition in post-socialist societies, the societies of the nouveau-riche, tycoon privatisation and neoliberal capitalism. The great Peter Brooke stresses that *The Cherry Orchard* is a play about social transition, about the end of one epoch/society and the beginning of another.⁹⁹ Still, this should not lead us to believe that Jelčić is making political theatre: he has put the story into a contemporary context but has left the political attitude towards it relatively neutral. That remains completely in line with the contemporary understanding of Chekhov's dramaturgy, which can be reduced to the main thesis of the text *L'entre-deux ou les bipolarités Tchékovienns*¹⁰⁰ by one of the best world experts of this playwright, *The Cherry Orchard*, in particular, Georges Banu. The play by the grand Russian writer exists in numerous bipolarities (realism–symbolism, Russia–the West, dramatic–comic ...), so the directing need not unambiguously decide for any of those extremes but should maintain the tension they generate.

Long, truly cinematic scenes take place in which each of the protagonists, in their own windows within the Zoom conference, perform their action in an absent, melancholic and/or desperate manner (Varya is walking down the street, Ranevskaya is sobbing, Lopakhin is driving his car ...); the overall melancholy is reinforced by the song "White Roses, Tender Roses" performed by Predrag Cune Gojković ... That meditative, ambivalent ending makes a spectator feel trapped between two equally powerful urges. On the one side, one would laugh at these overly dramatic goofballs (no one has died, just an estate was sold off ...), while on the other, one would cry over the destiny of these losers of the transition, which, as is usually the case with Chekhov's plays, is the same as one's own.

Unlike the previous performance, *Uncanny Valley* is played in a real, physical space of a stage, with a real audience in the theatre (they belong to the same *here* and *now*). The only performer in this show addresses the audience directly several times. He asks questions and gives them tasks they accept to perform (that they should all simultaneously close their eyes), which would lead one to assume that their interaction is more intense than in a classic theatre. However, that assumption is wrong: not only is the interaction not stronger, but it is also non-existent. In one way or the other, this performer does influence the audience, even if he makes them bored or absentminded. On the other hand, they cannot influence him in any way; although he looks completely human, he is – a robot. Since his behaviour is completely programmed, it is impossible to establish an "autopoietic feedback loop" with the audience. That is why it does not surprise that Fischer-Lichte rejected the dilemma of the aesthetic essence of this performance, which I posed during our debate at Bitef-Prologue 2020 in a hybrid form: she addressed us via Zoom from her Berlin office, which was live-streamed on the screens set up in front of Bitef Theatre in Belgrade, in front of the audience and

⁹⁸ For different approaches in contemporary directing of classical plays, see Ivan Medenica, *Klasika i njene maske* (Novi Sad: Sterijino pozorje, 2010).

⁹⁹ See the TV programme: *Tchékhov, le témoin impartial*, La SEPT et l'INA, Paris (1994).

¹⁰⁰ Georges Banu, "L'entre-deux ou les bipolarités Tchékovienns," in *Zbornik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti*, ed. Enisa Uspenski (Beograd: FDU, 2010), 17.

myself in the capacity of the interviewer:

First, I have to say that I love this work. It has tested how far we can go in challenging the notion of theatre. And in this production, the point is reached where it is no longer theatre /.../ For me, it was an experiment that was done, so to say, to prove my idea of the autopoietic feedback loop [she laughs]. You put a robot on stage and wait to see what happens. The loop will not be established. As usual with Kaegi and Rimini Protokoll, the piece was very intelligently made. When I say it is not theatre, it does not mean it is not art. It is a new art format. That is quite important, and it is fantastic. We have to make a distinction. This is art, I can respond aesthetically to it, but I cannot experience it in social terms. When it is done well, I admire that, but it is not theatre. One should coin a new term for these art forms.¹⁰¹

In the performance *Uncanny Valley*, testing the borders of theatre mentioned by Fischer-Lichte is not a side effect or an accidental result. On the contrary, this testing is the author's deliberate intention, a node which holds together the dense, almost opaque network woven out of numerous thematic threads. The project is structured as a lecture-performance, the lecturer is a humanoid robot who is a stunning copy of the famous German writer Thomas Melle, and the topic is *Overcoming the difficulties caused by the "uncanny valley"*. The meaning of the lecture's main topic is explained at the very end, so the idea of the performance becomes clear in hindsight. Japanese scientist Masahiro Mori has used the term "uncanny valley" to describe a situation which involves a humanoid robot: despite the stunning resemblance, it still does differ from a human, which provokes a feeling of alienation, uneasiness and discomfort.

In line with post- and trans-humanistic ideas, as one of the latest in an endless string of intellectual questions raised by this performance, the following dilemma is posed: will the man, the *original* Melle himself, who then addresses us for the first time, albeit via screen, soon disappear in isolation, get degenerated into the *picture* of Dorian Gray decaying in the attic, while his double, a humanoid robot, turns into an independent agent, Dorian Gray himself? Or, as the real live Melle demonstrates (again via the screen), will man always be able to manipulate the machine, to (painfully) twist its wrists and ankles (as Melle does to his robot-double), and eventually, in case it becomes too independent, switch off its electrical charging?

It is claimed that not a single machine has ever passed the Turing Test for distinguishing people from machines.

Mentioning the Turing Test points directly to the other two main themes of this lecture-performance. The first one is the life story of Thomas Melle, and the other is the tragic destiny of Alan Turing, whose invention not only helped decode Nazi cyphers in World War II but represented a forerunner of computers. What links their destinies is the metaphor of "psychiatric patient as a computer"; it is known that many psychiatric patients see themselves as computers, claims Melle-robot. Melle himself has bipolar disorder, which is marked by fluctuation between manic and depressive states. Turing suffered from depression and then committed suicide after being forced to take oestrogen as a part of a "cure" against his homosexuality, which caused him to develop secondary female sex characteristics

¹⁰¹ Ivan Medenica.

(forming of breast tissue). The metaphor of the *psychiatric patient as a computer* is brought forward in Melle's alleged¹⁰² decision to be substituted by a robot that is the spitting image of him on public occasions since bipolarity is followed by performance anxiety, uncertainty and, above all, the loss of control. If he delegated his position of a subject to a computer/machine/robot, the panic would disappear. In Turing's case, this metaphor is even more complex, and we can read it as several entwined levels of transgression: from a man into a woman, from a mentally sane person into a depressed one (who commits suicide), from a subject into an estranged identity, from a man into a machine.

Still, how are all these questions – from psychiatric illnesses to the relation between the man and the machine/computer – linked to Kaegi's conscious testing of theatre borders, which was our initial claim? To become someone/something else, to have a double identity (male-female, healthy-mentally ill, man-machine), to delegate subjectivity to one's own double, to test if the copy will be more real than the original, to wonder whether you have control over (self-)representation, to not expose oneself in public ... all of those themes refer par excellence to the aesthetic, even ontological essence of theatre. That is why we can justly claim that *Uncanny Valley* is not so much a project on previously listed topics but on the aesthetic identity of theatre.

However, as we have already emphasised, one could relativise the theatrical status of *Uncanny Valley* according to the same aesthetic criterion as applied to the projects on the Zoom platform (the absence of live exchange between the audience and the performers) – its performer is a *humanoid* robot but still a robot. That approach would, however, be overly simple and reductionist. This intelligent project by Stefan Kaegi raises so many right and provocative questions about the aesthetic identity of the theatre that, if anything, it can vigorously upset our fixed presumptions about that identity.

In the end, we can pose a few questions which, for now, surely cannot be answered: which of these forms will turn out to be a temporary response to the pandemic crisis, and which ones will survive and become a more lasting contribution to the contemporary performing arts? Suppose we start from the hypothesis that the end of the pandemic will also mean the end of the necessity of physical distancing and that the physical co-presence of performers and the audience will surely be confirmed as an aesthetic essence of theatre. In that case, one might say that all the forms that excluded live presence (performances with robots, projects on online platforms ...) will remain what they essentially are: experiments on the border between theatre and other artistic and media practices. These forms really do fit into the requirement of physical distancing as one of the anti-pandemic measures. Still, we should not neglect that these requirements are not the reason for their existence. Both internet theatre and performances with robots existed long before and unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, the ecological crisis will not vanish; protection of the environment should become a criterion for all human activities, including theatre. Franchise performances are merely the tip of the iceberg, one of the first responses by the theatre to the ecological crisis, namely air pollution caused by air traffic. Let's hope that these responses will become wider and deeper and that we are yet to think and write about them.

¹⁰² This is not a decision made by Thomas Melle in real life but represents a fictional construct that this project by Stefan Kaegi is based on.

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VODO IZ KAMNA

Kratek pregled vpliva pandemije na slovensko uprizoritveno umetnost

Epidemija je slovensko uprizoritveno sceno ujela v nezavidljivem in nestabilnem stanju. Javni zavodi, gledališke hiše, so se že pred tem vrsto let spopadali s cikli hiperprodukcije, z rigidnostjo sistema javnih uslužbencev, nižanjem budžetov in standardov ter s staranjem opreme in prostorov. Nevladni uprizoritveni sektor se je soočal s podobnimi težavami, le z veliko manj sredstvi.

Večina zunanjih sodelavcev institucionalnih gledališč – dramatikov, režiserjev, scenografov, kostumografov, svetlobnih in zvočnih oblikovalcev, koreografov, dramaturgov idr. – je delala v prekarnih statusih, prav tako rednih zaposlitev niso imeli mladi ustvarjalke in ustvarjalci.

V takih razmerah si seveda mnogi izmed delavk in delavcev v uprizoritvenih umetnostih nikakor niso mogli ustvariti varnostne mreže, prihrankov, lastnih stanovanj, investicij, virov zaslužka, ki niso vezani na razpisne cikle ali projekte.

Epidemija je bila v Sloveniji razglašena 15. marca 2020, te vrstice pišem skoraj leto dni kasneje. Javni kulturni dogodki so bili med prvimi ustavljenimi dejavnostmi. Sem so seveda spadale tudi premiere in ponovitve predstav.

Zaradi ciklične in projektne narave našega dela – večinoma nismo plačani *samo* od nastopov – se posledice niso udejanjile takoj, za razliko od npr. glasbene industrije ali industrije dogodkov. Smo se pa, sploh na nevladni sceni, takoj zavedeli nevarnosti in smeri razvoja dogodkov. Pri priči smo pričeli z zagovorniškimi dejavnostmi, odločevalcem smo posredovali vrsto predlogov, ki bi preprečili najhujše posledice ukrepov za zaježitev epidemije s poudarkom na najbolj ranljivih skupinah – prekarnih delavkah in delavcih. Dosledno smo opozarjali na dobre prakse iz tujine in izvajali raziskave stanja. Dopisi so na Ministrstvo za kulturo in na Vlado RS romali z vseh mogočih strani, pošiljale so jih strokovne komisije na ministrstvu, stanovska društva, krovne organizacije. Skupni imenovalec? Ukrepi bodo ogrozili velik del delavk in delavcev v kulturi. Potrebujemo konkretno pomoč za konkreten sektor!

Odločevalski stroj je mlel počasi. V tako imenovanih protikoronskih paketih (PKP), v resnici gre za zakone »o začasnih ukrepih za omilitev in odpravo posledic COVID-19«, se je občasno in z veliko prigovarjanja in lobiranja, znašla tudi kaka drobtina za samozaposlene. Ti na področju umetnosti predstavljajo večinski delež »žive« kulture. Samozaposleni so tisti del kulturnih delavcev, ki ustvarjajo in oblikujejo vsebine, ki jih nato institucije »poustvarjajo«, predstavljajo javnostim, tržijo. V večini umetniških panog torej prav samozaposleni prvenstveno izvajajo mandat ustvarjanja novih kulturnih dobrin. V ožjem smislu so na področju uprizoritvenih umetnosti redno zaposleni predvsem administrativni kadri in igralci, večina ostalih pa je zunanjih, samozaposlenih izvajalcev. Na področju sodobnega plesa javne institucije Slovenija ne premore in so torej samozaposleni tako rekoč vsi.

Tako so v spomladanskem valu vsem samozaposlenim (poleg kulturnikov torej še dobri tretjini prebivalstva) namenili 1.750 evrov neto, nato pa od oktobra 2020 do marca 2021 še po 700 evrov neto mesečne pomoči za nadomestilo izpada dohodkov, izgubljenih kot posledice vladnih ukrepov.

$(1.750 + 6 \times 700) : 12 = 496$ evrov

496 evrov pomoči na mesec. Pod pogoji. Da so se ti prihodki v letu 2020 v primerjavi z 2019 zmanjšali za 20 %. Da je imel posameznik status samozaposlenega že pred epidemijo.

Da se znajde z birokracijo in je vse zahteve oddal pravočasno. Da se ni preglasno izjavljal proti vladi (primer »Zlatko«¹⁰³). Da se status ni zataknil v ministrovem predalu. In še kaj bi se našlo.

496 evrov pomoči na mesec.

Neto minimalna plača za redno zaposlitev je v Sloveniji v letu 2020 znašala okrog 700 evrov na mesec. A redna zaposlitev vključuje vsaj še dopust, dodatke za prevoz na delo in malico, regres, plačano bolniško odsotnost in ostale bonuse, ki jih prekarni delavci niso deležni.

700 evrov na mesec za enočlansko gospodinjstvo je po definiciji Statističnega urada Republike Slovenije tudi prag tveganja za revščino.

496 evrov pomoči na mesec za tiste, ki se jim je to bolj ali manj slučajno izšlo.

Prvi PKP je povsem ignoriral projektno delo in primerjal mesečne prihodke. Z veliko muko smo jim razložili, da to ne bo šlo, zato so potem popravili na letno povprečje.

Še vedno pa so izpadli vsi, ki so status prejeli prepozno, ki so bili v daljšem bolniškem staležu ali na porodniškem dopustu, ki so delali na večletnih projektih, za katere niso prejeli sprotne plačila, ali pa tisti, ki so imeli enostavno slabo leto 2019.

Obenem so bile institucije z informacijami izredno skope. Ministrstvo za kulturo se na poizvedbe povečini ni odzivalo (»Vse piše v zakonu!«). Bolj odzivni so bili na Finančni upravi Republike Slovenije in Ministrstvu za gospodarski razvoj in tehnologijo, a tudi tam so, predvidljivo, vztrajali na legalistični latovščini. Različni uslužbenci so odgovarjali različno, mnogih malo kompleksnejših primerov pa niso bili sposobni raztolmačiti.

Civilna družba je bila ves čas epidemije odločna, dosledna in aktivna.

Na področju kulture smo spisali vrstno skupnih javnih pobud, med odmevnejšimi morda *Ostanimo v družbi najboljših*¹⁰⁴ maja 2020 in pa *7 zahtev za ministra*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Zlatan Čordić – Zlatko je glasbenik s statusom samozaposlenega v kulturi, ki mu je ministrstvo brez pravne podlage samovoljno odvzelo status, da bi ga kaznovalo za javna izrekanja proti vladnim politikam. Upravno sodišče je odlok v zelo kratkem času razveljavilo, a sporočilo vlade je bilo jasno – bodite tiho ali pa vam bomo odvzeli še to pomoč, ki jo zaenkrat nudimo.

¹⁰⁴ Dostopno na <http://www.asociacija.si/si/2020/05/06/javno-pismo-ostanimo-v-druzbi-najboljsih/>, 10. 3. 2021.

¹⁰⁵ »Začnite dosledno opravljati tekoče posle. [...] Dejavno se vključite v pripravo življenjskih in pravičnih priporočil in zahtev NIJZ za kulturne dogodke in prireditve. [...] Takoj umaknite svoj predlog za rebalans državnega proračuna. [...] Predstavite načrt rešitev za posamezne sektorje. [...] Umaknite predlog sprememb in dopolnitev medijske zakonodaje in v skladu s priporočili in predlogi večine strokovne in zainteresirane javnosti pripravite

septembra 2020. Naših priporočil, pobud in zahtev niso upoštevali.

Asociacija, združenje nevladnih organizacij in samozaposlenih v kulturi, je dosledno vlagala zakonske predloge in predloge amandmajev na vsak posamezni PKP (pripravljajo devetega), ponovno pretežno brez učinka. Podobno so počele druge organizacije, kot so Center nevladnih organizacij Slovenije CNVOS,¹⁰⁶ stanovska društva na področju kulture in sindikati.

V sodelovanju s Centrom za kreativnost¹⁰⁷ je Asociacija¹⁰⁸ pripravila vrsto video posvetovalnic za samozaposlene – *full disclosure*. Z ekipo svetovalcev sem posvetovalnico vodil jaz, trudili smo se pomagati pri konkretnih primerih in tolmačiti aktualno zakonodajo.

Ekipa, zbrana okrog Aktiva delavk in delavcev v kulturi ADDK je že zelo zgodaj sprožila pobudo *Solidarni s kulturo*, kjer so, večinoma iz lastnih vrst, zbrali že

30.000 evrov pomoči za delavke in delavce v kulturi, dobri dve tretjini pa tudi že podelili v obliki najnujnejše pomoči kulturnikom, ki so se znašli v stiski.

A recimo bobu bob.

Republika Slovenija v vsem času epidemije ni izvedla ali pripravila niti enega namenskega ukrepa za kulturo. Vsa dosedanja pomoč izvira iz dveh dejstev: prvič, da je pravna oblika samozaposlitve v kulturi tako rekoč identična »samostojnim podjetnikom« in je bila deležna identične, mestoma rahlo manjše pomoči. In drugič, da Slovenija javne zavode še naprej financira identično kot pred epidemijo, da torej redno prejemajo dvanajstine za plačno maso in program, čeprav slednjega ne izvajajo, ker ga ne smejo.

To je vse.

To je vse kljub dejstvu, da je Evropska unija predstavila raziskave, da je kultura med najbolj prizadetimi panogami. Kljub dejstvu, da je priporočila dodatne, usmerjene ukrepe in zanje namenila namenska nepovratna sredstva. Kljub dejstvu, da celotna scena na probleme opozarja že od samega začetka. Da je začetno stanje znano, podprto z raziskavami, ki pravijo, da je bila že pred epidemijo tretjina delavk in delavcev v kulturi pod pragom revščine.

Socialno stanje na področju je torej vsaj zaskrbljujoče. Pa produkcijsko?

Tu pogrom šele sledi.

Najprej se odpira vprašanje publik. Z izjemo kratkih in tradicionalno za gledališče mrtvih poletnih mesecev, ko so delovala predvsem zunanja prizorišča, se je velika večina producentov bolj ali manj organizirano preselila na spletno posredovanje vsebin.

Pustimo ob strani osebna mnenja, koliko je gledališče sploh mogoče preseliti v video format: dejstvo je, da na izziv nismo bili pripravljene. Video je svoj žanr, ki zahteva ločena znanja in veščine, opremo, ekipe, strokovnjake. Zato je bil marsikateri poskus izveden amatersko, skoraj prostovoljno. Urejena niso ne vprašanja avtorskih (ki so pri avdiovizualnih delih izrazito kompleksne) ne izvajalskih pravic.

novega. [...] Vzpostavite redne komunikacijske poti z deležniki in uporabniki storitev ministrstva. [...], Sankcionirajte katastrofalno vodene postopke ter funkcionarje in uradnike, ki ne spoštujejo zakonskih in etičnih norm. [...] Sicer odstopite.« Dostopno na <https://www.sviz.si/sedem-zahtev-za-ministra/>, 10. 3. 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Center nevladnih organizacij – krovna organizacije, ki zastopa interese nevladnih organizacij (NVO) z vseh področij, tudi kulturnega.

¹⁰⁷ Program Muzeja za arhitekturo in oblikovanje, financiran z evropskimi sredstvi, ki skrbi za krepitev sektorja in medresorska povezovanja.

¹⁰⁸ Asociacija nevladnih organizacij in samozaposlenih s področja kulture – zagovorniška organizacija, ki spremlja in skrbi za interese kulturnih NVO in samozaposlenih v kulturi.

Monetizacija je eksperimentalna, producenti tipajo in iščejo možnosti, nobenih podatkov nimamo o dejanskem številu gledalcev ali dejanski kupni moči in interesih. Ne vemo, ali gre za nadomestek, zgolj za vzdrževanje forme, ali pa smo odprli nov konkurenčni kanal, ki ga bo treba od sedaj naprej upoštevati.

Z drugimi besedami: se bodo gledalci vrnili v gledališča? Bomo morali od sedaj redno ponujati tudi pretočne vsebine? Je tak hibriden format sploh lahko kvaliteten? Filmski set izgleda zelo zelo drugače od gledališča s tremi kamerami. Name-noma. Pogosto je težko enakovredno izkušnjo ponuditi že parterju in balkonu, kaj pa parterju, balkonu in dnevni sobi?

Drugič: ozimnica.

Tako javne institucije kot NVO so v tem letu pripravile vrsto produkcij, med katerimi so predvsem večje doživele zgolj interne, zaprte premiere. In so torej pripravljene za publike, takoj ko bo to mogoče.

Pričakujemo lahko torej, da bodo od, recimo, maja (če novi sevi ne bodo zahtevali novih zapiranj) vsi ti producenti poskušali pokazati čim več teh produkcij javnostim. Večji morajo izpolniti ogromno obveznosti abonentom, manjši pa se bodo borili za pozornost javnosti, posebno težko bo producentom, ki nimajo svojih prostorov: predvidevamo lahko, da bodo ti polno zasedeni s programi in vsebinami upravljavcev prostorov.

Že pred epidemijo je bilo na navaden sredin večer recimo v Ljubljani mogoče obiskati kakih pet različnih predstav. In že pred epidemijo so bile večerne vaje v večjih zasedbah skorajda neizvedljive, ker so bili igralci zasedeni s predstavami.

Zdaj pa si predstavljamo pomladno in poletno situacijo: na dan bo na sporedu po deset predstav, vse starejše bodo zahtevale še obnovitvene vaje, zasedbe se bodo križale, delovne obveznosti večale.

Prištejmo še vse glasbene dogodke (glasbeniki, veliko bolj odvisni od živih nastopov, so še v veliko slabšem stanju), komercialne in nesubvencionirane uprizoritvene dogodke (vsaj še stand-up, komercialna gledališča, alternativa ...) in publiko, za katero nihče ne ve, kako se bo odzvala na ponovno odpiranje prizorišč, in bo seveda takoj, ko bo lahko, iskala oddih na potovanjih.

Kdo, kdaj in kje(!) bo vadil za nove uprizoritve? Koliko novih predstav bo sploh mogoče realizirati, medtem ko bomo poskušali nadoknadi izgubljene ponovitve starih? Posledice – izgubo dela – pa bodo seveda spet nosili najbolj prekarni zunanji sodelavci gledališč.

Napovedujem, da bo, tudi če ne pride do tretjega ali četrtega vala, trajalo vsaj še dve ali tri sezone, da bomo pokrili zaostanek in prišli nazaj na »normalen« tempo dela. Pri tem pa nad NVO visi damoklejev meč naše »kdor ne dela, naj ne je« vlade, ki lahko v vsakem trenutku reče, da bo financiranje zmanjšala zaradi neizpolnjenih obveznosti, javni zavodi, predvsem večji, pa beležijo izpade tržnih prihodkov vse od nekaj sto tisoč pa do milijona evrov letno. In slednji spet pogosto pokrivajo – dohodke prekarne zunanjih sodelavcev.

Epidemija je slovensko uprizoritveno sceno ujela v nezavidljivem in nestabilnem stanju. In ga močno poslabšala. Scena se navznoter sicer trudi omiliti posledice in se stabilizirati, prihaja do pohvalnih sodelovanj in iniciativ, a brez politične volje in odločnih ukrepov z vrha – ne bo šlo.

Oziroma bo šlo.

Na slabše.

Jure Novak je bil dolga leta neodvisni gledališki režiser, avtor in performer, ki se ljubiteljsko ukvarja s kulturno politiko. Piše in prevaja literarna in teoretska dela za številne portale in publikacije doma in v tujini. Trenutno je direktor in umetniški vodja Prešernovega gledališča Kranj.

ROMANCING THE STONE:

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON SLOVENIAN PERFORMING ARTS

The epidemic has caught the Slovenian performing arts scene in an unenviable and unstable state. For many years, public institutions and theatre companies have struggled with cycles of hyperproduction, the rigidity of the civil service system, declining budgets and standards and the ageing of equipment and premises. The non-governmental performing arts sector has faced similar problems but with far fewer resources.

Most of the external collaborators of the institutional theatres – playwrights, directors, stage designers, costume designers, lighting and sound designers, choreographers, dramaturgs, etc. – worked on an intermittent, that is, freelance – and usually precarious – status, and there were no regular jobs for young artists.

Under such situations, of course, many performing arts workers could not possibly create a safety net, savings, their own homes, investments and sources of income that were not tied to calls for tender cycles or projects.

In Slovenia, the epidemic was declared on 15 March 2020, and I am writing these lines almost a year later. Public cultural events were among the first activities to be suspended. This included, of course, premieres and reprises of performances.

Due to our work's cyclical and project-based nature – our pay is mostly not *only* from performances – the consequences have not been immediate, unlike in the music or events industry, for example. But, especially in the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), we were immediately aware of the dangers and the direction in which the events were heading. We immediately started advocacy activities. We made a series of proposals to decision-makers to prevent the worst consequences of the measures to contain the epidemic, specifically focusing on the most vulnerable groups – freelance workers. We have consistently drawn attention to good practices from abroad and researched the situation. We sent letters to the Ministry of Culture and the government from all sides, from expert commissions in the ministry to professional associations and umbrella organisations. The common denominator? The measures will put a large part of the cultural workforce at risk. We need concrete help for the concrete sector!

The decision-making machine was grinding slowly. In the so-called Anti-Corona Packages (ACPs) – in reality, laws “on temporary measures to mitigate and remedy the effects of COVID-19” – occasionally, and with a lot of cajoling and lobbying, some crumbs for the self-employed found their way in. In the arts, the self-employed make up most of the “living” culture. The self-employed are the part of the cultural workforce that creates and shapes content, which is then “recreated” by institutions, presented to the public, and marketed. Therefore, in most artistic sectors, the self-employed primarily carry out the mandate of creating new cultural goods.

In a narrower sense, the performing arts institutions are staffed primarily by administrative staff and actors, while most other collaborators are external, self-employed practitioners. Slovenia does not have a public institution for contemporary dance, so virtually everyone in that field is self-employed.

Thus, during the spring wave, all the self-employed (in addition to cultural workers, i.e., a good third of the population) were given a net €1,750, followed by a net €700 per month from October 2020 to March 2021 to compensate for the loss of income as a result of the government's measures.

$$1750+6*700/12= 496.$$

€496 per month. Under conditions. That your income was reduced by 20% in 2020 compared to 2019. That you were already self-employed before the epidemic. That you are up to date with the bureaucracy and have submitted all requests on time. That you did not speak out too loudly against the government (the "Zlatko"¹⁰⁹ case). That your status was not stuck in a minister's drawer. And more.

€496 of monthly help.

The net minimum wage for regular employment in Slovenia in 2020 was around €700 per month. But a regular job also includes at least holiday, transport allowances, meal stipends, a recourse allowance, paid sick leave and other bonuses that freelance workers do not get.

€700 per month for a one-person household is also the poverty risk threshold defined by the Statistical Office of Slovenia.

€496 a month in aid for those who more or less somehow made it work.

The first ACPs completely ignored project work and compared monthly income. We explained to them, with great agony, that this would not work, so they corrected it to an annual average.

Still, everyone who received the status belated, who was on extended sick or maternity leave, who worked on multi-year projects for which they were not paid on time, or who simply had a bad year in 2019, fell out.

At the same time, the institutions were extremely scarce with information. The Ministry of Culture was largely unresponsive to inquiries ("it's all in the law"). The Financial Administration of the Republic of Slovenia and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development were more responsive, but even there, predictably, they insisted on legalistic Latin. Different officials responded differently and could not decipher many of the slightly more complex cases.

Civil society has been resolute, consistent and active throughout the epidemic.

In the field of culture, we have written several joint public initiatives. Perhaps the most prominent ones were "Ostanimo v družbi najboljših" ("Staying in the Company of the Best")¹¹⁰ in May 2020 and "7 zahtev za ministra" ("7 Requests to the Minister")¹¹¹ in September 2020. Our recommendations, initiatives and requests

¹⁰⁹ Zlatan Čordić – Zlatko is a musician, who has a self-employed status in culture and who was arbitrarily stripped of his status by the Ministry of Culture without any legal basis in order to punish him for publicly speaking out against government policies. The Administrative Court overturned the decree in a very short time, but the message from the government was clear – keep quiet or we will take away the help we are giving you for the time being.

¹¹⁰ Available on <http://www.asociacija.si/si/2020/05/06/javno-pismo-ostanimo-v-druzbi-najboljsih/>, 10. 3. 2021.

¹¹¹ "Start consistently running your day-to-day business. [...] Actively engage in the

have not been taken on board.

Asociacija, an association of NGOs and the self-employed in culture, has consistently tabled legislative proposals and amendments to every single ACP, again largely to no avail. Other organisations such as CNVOS,¹¹² professional associations and trade unions have done likewise.

In cooperation with the Centre for Creativity¹¹³ and Asociacija,¹¹⁴ we organised a series of video consultations for the self-employed – full disclosure: I ran the consultations with a team of consultants – where we tried to help with concrete cases and interpret the current legislation.

A team gathered around the *Aktiv delavk in delavcev v kulturi* (ADDK) (Cultural Workers' Action). launched the Solidarity with Culture initiative very early. Within this initiative, they have already raised €30,000, mostly from their own ranks, to help cultural workers. They have already given out a good two-thirds of it as emergency aid to disadvantaged cultural workers.

And let's call a spade a spade.

The Republic of Slovenia has not implemented or prepared a single measure dedicated to culture during the entire epidemic. So far, all the aid has been based on two facts: firstly, the legal form of self-employment in culture is virtually identical to that of "sole traders" and has received identical, sometimes slightly less, aid. And secondly, Slovenia continues to fund public institutions the same as before the epidemic, i.e., they are still regularly receiving twelfths for their wage bill and programme, even though they are not carrying out the latter because they are currently not allowed to do so.

That is all.

Even though the European Union has presented research showing that culture is one of the most affected sectors and even though it has recommended additional, targeted measures and provided dedicated grants for them. Even though the whole scene has pointed out the problems from the beginning.

And even though the initial situation is well known, backed up by research which shows that, even before the epidemic, a third of cultural workers were already below the poverty line.

The social situation in the area is, therefore, alarming, to say the least. And the production situation?

Here the pogrom is yet to come.

development of viable and fair recommendations and requirements for cultural events and events by the National Institute of Public Health. [...] Immediately withdraw your proposal for rebalancing the State budget. [...] Present a roadmap for sectoral solutions. [...] Withdraw your proposal for amendments to the media legislation and prepare a new one in line with the recommendations and suggestions of the majority of the professional and interested public. [...] Establish regular channels of communication with stakeholders and users of the ministry's services. [...] Sanction disastrously managed procedures and officials and officials who do not respect legal and ethical norms [...] Otherwise, resign."

¹¹² The national umbrella network representing the interests of NGOs in all fields, including culture.

¹¹³ The Museum of Architecture and Design's European-funded programme for strengthening the sector and inter-departmental networking.

¹¹⁴ An association of NGOs and the self-employed in culture – an advocacy organisation that monitors and cares for the interests of cultural NGOs and the self-employed in culture.

First of all, there is the question of the audience. Except for the short and traditionally theatre-dead summer months, when mainly outdoor venues were in operation, the vast majority of producers have moved, more or less in an organised way, to online content distribution.

Leaving aside personal opinions about the extent to which theatre can be moved to video format, we were not ready for the challenge. Video is its own genre. It requires different skills, equipment, teams and professionals. That's why many of the attempts were made in an amateurish, almost voluntary way. Neither copyright issues (which are highly complex in the case of audio-visual works) nor performance rights are regulated. Monetisation is experimental, producers are groping and searching for possibilities, and we have no data on the actual number of viewers or real purchasing power and interests. We do not know if this is a substitute, mere maintenance of form, or if we have opened up a new, "competitive" channel that will have to be acknowledged from now on.

In other words: will audiences come back to the theatres? Will we have to regularly offer "streaming" content from now on? Can such a hybrid format be of any quality at all? A film set looks very, very different from a three-camera technique in theatre. For a purpose. It is often difficult to offer an equivalent experience to the stalls and the balcony, but what about the stalls, the balcony and the living room?

Secondly: the pantry.

This year, both public institutions and NGOs have staged numerous productions, of which the larger ones, in particular, have only had in-house, closed premieres. Thus, they will be ready for the public as soon as possible.

We can therefore expect that from, say, in May (if the new strains do not require further closures), all these producers will try to show as many of these productions to the public as they can. The larger ones have an enormous commitment to fulfil to season-ticket holders, while the smaller ones will be fighting for the public's attention, and it will be particularly difficult for producers who do not have their own venues: we can assume that these will be fully booked with the programmes and content of the venue operators.

Even before the epidemic, on an ordinary Wednesday evening in Ljubljana, for example, it was possible to attend around five different performances. And even before the epidemic, evening rehearsals in larger ensembles were almost impossible because the actors were busy with performances.

Now imagine the situation in the spring and summer: there will be ten performances a day, all the older ones will require revival rehearsals, casts will cross, and work commitments will increase.

Add to that all the music events (musicians, much more dependent on live performances, are in a much worse state), the commercial and unsubsidised performance events (at least stand-up, commercial theatres, alternative theatres ...) and the audiences. No one knows how audiences will react to the reopening of venues. They will, of course, want to take a break and travel as soon as possible.

Who – and when and where(!) – will rehearse for the new productions? How many new productions will it even be possible to realise while we are trying to make up for lost reprises of old ones? The consequences – the loss of work – will, of course, be borne again by the most intermittent external theatre staff.

I predict that even if there is no third or fourth wave, it will take at least another two or three seasons to catch up and get back to a "normal" pace of work. In the meantime, the sword of Damocles is hanging over NGOs from our "he who does not work, shall not eat" government, which can at any moment say that it

will cut funding because of unfulfilled obligations. Public institutions, especially the larger ones, are experiencing shortfalls in market revenues of anything from a few 100,000 to up to a million euros a year. And the latter often covers – again – the income of freelance (and precarious!) external staff.

The epidemic has caught the Slovenian performing arts scene in an unenviable and unstable state. And it has made it much worse. The scene is trying to mitigate the consequences and stabilise itself, there are commendable collaborations and initiatives, but without political will and decisive action from the top – it will not work.

Or it will.

For the worse.

Jure Novak is a freelance theatre director, author and performer who dabbles in cultural politics. He has written and translated literature and theory for several portals and publications at home and abroad. Currently, he is a director and artistic director of Prešernovo gledališče Kranj.

REDEFINIRANJE GLEDALIŠKEGA PROSTORA V ČASU COVIDA-19

Analiza italijanskega primera

UVOD

9. marca 2020 je Italija kot prva evropska država uvedla popolno karanteno. Prizorišča uprizoritvenih umetnosti so se delno odprla 15. junija 2020, a so se ponovno zaprla 26. oktobra istega leta.¹¹⁵

V vsakem od teh obdobjih smo lahko spremljali razvoj pobud za digitalizacijo, ki so skušale zagotoviti kontinuirano gledališko ponudbo in ohranjati odnos s publiko na daljavo. Umetniki in gledališčniki so v digitalnem okolju sprva delovali negotovo in brez kakršnega koli zagotovila za uspeh, a so sčasoma razvili bolj strukturirane pristope, za kar gre zahvala tudi pozivom za financiranje digitalnih projektov.

Poskusi ohranitve gledališča v času popolne karantene so ponovno odprli diskusije na temo razmerja gledališča do digitalne kulture in tehnologije, pri čemer so bila mnenja mnogokrat razdvojena. Kako lahko specifičnost gledališča vzdrži brez gledališča? Kako lahko gledališki umetniki prispevajo k produkciji digitalnih vsebin? Katere vrste diskriminacije in vstopnih ovir so posledica digitalnih omejitev? Katere od digitalnih praks se bodo obdržale, ko se vrnemo v »normalno življenje«? To je le nekaj premislekov, ki so se razvili okoli vprašanja umetniške legitimnosti digitalnih del italijanskih gledaliških umetnikov.

Nedavno (28. decembra 2020) je Romeo Castellucci, eden najbolj prepoznavnih še aktivnih italijanskih režiserjev, izjavil, da je »gledališče na internetu absurd. Je nesmisel, majhna vulgarnost.«¹¹⁶ Umetniki so mnoge predstave na spletu pospremili z obrazložitvijo v smislu »to ni gledališče ...« ali pa so jim sledile diskusije, ki so poudarjale nadomestno, neobičajno naravo predstave. Kljub temu da so multimedija in digitalni eksperimenti v zadnjih desetletjih redefinirali pomen žive predstave, je izredno stanje zaradi pandemije ponovno vzbudilo določeno nujno po vzpostavitvi in določitvi specifičnosti gledališča.

V tem prispevku ne želimo problematizirati težav, povezanih z definicijo gledališča, ampak se osredotočiti na načine, s katerimi je italijanski gledališki sektor moral poseči in preoblikovati svoj prostor v različnih fazah epidemije. V ta namen bomo na kratko predstavili pristop mediatizacije, na katerem temelji naša analiza. V osrednjem delu prispevka bomo analizirali način, s katerim so italijanski gledališki umetniki konceptualizirali uprizoritveni prostor tekom treh faz, ki smo jih poimenovali *gledališče v karanteni*, *gledališče distanciranosti* in *gledališče praznih*

¹¹⁵ Gledališča so še vedno zaprta (stanje marca 2021).

¹¹⁶ Iacopo Gardelli, "Il teatro su internet è una scemenza. L'immagine della pandemia? Il Papa in piazza," (Ravenna: Ravenna & Dintorni, 2020).

sedežev. Sledeče poglavje se osredotoča na dopolnitev analize s pregledom financiranja italijanskega sektorja uprizoritvenih umetnosti in na najnovejše raziskave o publiki, ki spremlja uprizoritvene umetnosti po spletu.

RAZISKOVALNI KONTEKST: Poudarek na gledališču in mediatizaciji

Eno izmed najbolj plodnih področij refleksije v gledališču in uprizoritvenih študijah je odnos med mediji in gledališčem.¹¹⁷ Specifična lastnost hipermediatizacije¹¹⁸ oziroma *medijska mobilnost*¹¹⁹ gledališča omogoča ohranjanje njegove avtonomije, tudi ko na odru integrira druge oblike medijske tehnologije. Gledališko-uprizoritvene študije so se pri analiziranju odnosa z mediji pogosto omejile na spremljanje, kako gledališča uporabljajo komunikacijske tehnologije na odru ali pa za dokumentiranje predstav. V nasprotju s tem pa naša analiza izhaja iz pristopa mediatizacije,¹²⁰ ki vidi vse večji vpliv medijev pri oblikovanju dinamik, vpletenih v ustvarjanje družbene realnosti. Ta vpliv se ne omejuje na način, s katerim posamezniki ali institucije sprejemajo formate in sloge, izposojen iz medijske industrije, za izdelavo svojih simbolnih oblik – kot v pristopu *logike medijev*.¹²¹ Ravno nasprotno, vpliv je tisti, ki strukturira ustvarjanje teh oblik. V primeru medijev in uprizoritev je nujno zaobiti ustaljeni način razmišljanja, kjer so medijske tehnologije uporabljene zgolj na odru, in opazovati, kako umetnikova mediatizirana vsakdanost vpliva na njegov način delovanja. Mediatizacija ne označuje spremembe paradigme, ampak je »uporaben konceptualni vodnik za empirično raziskovanje družbenih transformacij, ki preučuje stopnjevanje medijske nasičenosti v današnjih družbenih interakcijah«.¹²²

Na podlagi navedenega se je to nenavadno obdobje za uprizoritvene umetnosti izkazalo kot edinstvena priložnost za opazovanje preobrazbe življenja.¹²³ V teh mesecih smo sicer bili priča pospešitvi že obstoječih mediatizacijskih procesov, vendar pa so zdaj vidnejši in jih lahko raziskujemo.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ Laura Gemini, *L'incertezza creativa: I percorsi sociali e comunicativi delle performance artistiche* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2003); Andrea Balzola in Anna Maria Monteverdi, *Le arti multimediali digitali: Storia, tecniche, linguaggi, etiche ed estetiche delle arti del nuovo millennio* (Milano: Garzanti, 2004); Steve Dixon, *Digital performance: A history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Chris Salter, *Entangled: Technology and the transformation of performance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Freda Chapple in Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in theatre and performance* (Amsterdam in New York: Rodopi, 2006).

¹¹⁹ Claudia Georgi, *Liveness on Stage: Intermedial Challenges in Contemporary British Theatre and Performance* (Berlin in Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2014).

¹²⁰ Stig Hjarvard, *The mediatization of culture and society* (London in New York: Routledge, 2013); Giovanni Boccia Artieri, "Mediatizzazione e Network Society: un programma di ricerca," *Sociologia della Comunicazione* 50, 2 (2015): 62–69; Nick Couldry in Andreas Hepp, *The mediated construction of reality* (Cambridge: Polity press, 2017); Laura Gemini in Stefano Brillì, "On theatre mediatization: Exploring transmediality in Aldo Moro," *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 16, 2 (2020): 150–167, 54.

¹²¹ David L. Altheide in Robert P. Snow, *Media logic* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979).

¹²² Giovanni Boccia Artieri, 66.

¹²³ Paul Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999); Laura Gemini, "Liveness: le logiche mediali nella comunicazione dal vivo," *Sociologia della Comunicazione* 51, 1 (2016): 43–63.

¹²⁴ Laura Gemini, Stefano Brillì in Francesca Giuliani, "Il dispositivo teatrale alla prova del

1. *Mediatizacija dramaturgije*, naraščanje transmedialnosti gledaliških zgodb, ki se pojavljajo (a) z uporabo *serialnosti*¹²⁵ (b) v logiki *palimpsesta*, (c) pri *adaptaciji besedila na platformo* in (d) v primerih *participativne dramaturgije*.
2. *Mediatizacija navzočnosti*, ki smo jo lahko zasledili v mnogih niansah *digitalne živosti*¹²⁶ in s katero so umetniki eksperimentirali pri povezavi med spletnim in analognim (*on-line* in *off-line*). Mnoge pobude so si pri digitalnih predstavah prizadevale obnoviti občutek za prostor in minevanje časa.
3. *Mediatizacija gledališkega odnosa*, ki jo lahko zasledimo v dnevni navzočnosti umetnikov in gledališč v medijih in presega zgolj promocijsko vrednost.

Tako kot mediatizacijo bi morali preučiti tudi *platformizacijo gledališke produkcije*.¹²⁷ Morali bi se zavedati, da »platforme ne odsevajo družbe, ampak proizvajajo družbene strukture, v katerih živimo«. ¹²⁸ V tem pogledu premestitev gledaliških dejavnosti v digitalno okolje odpira ključna vprašanja, ki presegajo problematiko specifičnosti gledališča. Naenkrat vprašanje »kaj se zgodi z gledališčem v njegovem odnosu do digitalnega okolja?« ni dovolj. Namesto tega moramo »digitalnemu« odvzeti vlogo singularnega in nevtralnega člana, ki vzpodbuja kroženje vsebin, in preučiti, kako tehnične, normativne in ekonomske težnje platform vplivajo na obliko kulturne ponudbe, kadar je onemogočena uporaba fizične infrastrukture.

ITALIJANSKA GLEDALIŠČA NA PREIZKUŠNJI ZARADI COVIDA-19

Da bi lažje razločili pobude, ki so jih italijanska gledališča in umetniki razvili kot odziv na zdravstveno krizo, se nam zdi smotrno uporabiti trifazno periodizacijo:

- a) *gledališče v karanteni* od 9. marca do 15. junija 2020,
- b) *gledališče distanciranosti* sovpada z delnim ponovnim odprtjem od 15. junija do 25. oktobra 2020,
- c) *gledališče praznih sedežev*, ki se je pričelo z novim obdobjem ukrepov za zaježitev pandemije od 26. oktobra 2020.

Ta kategorizacija izpostavlja, kako so različne faze pravil omejevanja sovpadale z različnimi načini predstavljanja in uporabe izvedbenega prostora.

Gledališče v karanteni

Za prvo fazo, ki je sovpadala s splošno zaustavitvijo javnega življenja, je značilna uporaba digitalnih platform, ki so omogočile več manevrskega prostora za

covid-19. Mediatizzazione, liveness e pubblici,” *Mediascapes Journal* 15 (2020): 44–58.

¹²⁵ Laura Gemini, “Serialità teatrale. Osservazioni esplorative fra teatro e media,” *Mediascapes journal* 7 (2016): 8–20; Vincenzo Del Gaudio, “Modelli di serialità teatrale: Pratiche per un approccio mediologico al teatro a partire dai modelli seriali della Tragedia Endogonidia della Societàs Raffaello Sanzio e Ada. Una cronaca familiare di Fanny & Alexander,” *Mediascapes journal* 8 (2017): 253–264.

¹²⁶ V tem kontekstu je ključnega pomena, da si življenje zamišljamo s fenomenološkega vidika, torej ne kot značilnost dogodka samega po sebi niti zgolj kot enega od njegovih učinkov, temveč kot obliko, ki izhaja iz gledališkega pakta.

¹²⁷ David B. Nieborg in Thomas Poell, “The platformization of cultural production: Theorizing the contingent cultural commodity,” *New Media & Society* 20, 11 (2018): 4275–4292.

¹²⁸ José van Dijck, Thomas Poell in Martijn De Waal, *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 24.

delovanje znotraj domačega prostora. Prvi val pobud je narekovala nuja, da gledališče ponovno vzpostavi svojo prisotnost in relevantnost. To je pomenilo, da so umetniki črpali iz že znanega nabora mediatiziranih gledaliških oblik ali pa so poskušali z začasnim, velikokrat negotovim raziskovanjem novih platform.

Sprva je bilo najbolj razširjeno deljenje *arhivskega gradiva* in strimanje literarnih branj.

Nova vloga arhivskega gradiva je pogosto preoblikovala tudi določen občutek dogodka v živo. Cilj poustvarjanja sedanosti v dokumentiranih predstavah je bil zgraditi video-gledališke zapise – kot v predstavah, ki jih je na televizijskem kanalu Lepida predvajalo gledališče Emilia Romagna – ali z eksperimentiranjem s prilagoditvijo predstav za digitalne platforme: gledališče Fortebraccio Teatro je zvočni del svoje predstave *Visoka pesem (Cantico dei Cantici)* preoblikovalo v seznam predvajanja na Spotifyju; v *Teatru a tradimento* je gledališče Frosini/Timpano po aplikaciji Whatsapp pošiljalo izseke iz preteklih predstav.

Popularnost spletnih branj je sprožilo kulturno združenje Capotrave/Kilowatt. Že 11. marca 2020 so začeli z branjem knjige Giannija Rodarija *Bil je nekoč dvakrat baron Lamberto (C'era due volte il Barone Lamberto)*, kjer je bilo vključenih petdeset igralcev in gledaliških delavcev, ki so vsi sodelovali od doma.

Ko je postalo očitno, da bodo gledališča ostala zaprta, so umetniki in gledališčniki pričeli temeljiteje razmišljati o razpoložljivih tehničnih in umetniških sredstvih. Domače okolje se je iz kulise preoblikovalo v dramaturško strategijo. Eden takšnih primerov je *Dnevni odlok (Decreto Quotidiano)* igralca in režiserja Micheleja Sinisa (slika št. 8): Sinisi je vsak dan na Facebooku iz svoje kuhinje v času kosila v živo poročal, kako preživlja karanteno, kot kontrast periodičnim obvestilom predsednika vlade o novih ukrepih.



Slika št. 8. Posnetek zaslona iz predstave *Dnevni odlok (Decreto Quotidiano)* avtorja Micheleja Sinisa.

Zaslediti je bilo tudi razvoj medijsko zasnovanih uprizoritvenih okolij: v *Gledališču na liniji (Theatre on a line)* je Cuocolo/Bosetti ustvaril telefonsko predstavo za enega samega gledalca; radijski medij se je preoblikoval z dramaturškimi podkasti Radio India na platformi Spreaker, ki jo je ustvaril umetniški kolektiv Oceano Indiano (Muta Imago, mk, DOM-, Fabio Condemini, Industria Indipendente) v sodelovanju z igralko Darie Deflorian v času njihovega gostovanja v gledališču Teatro India v Rimu. Videokonferenčne platforme, npr. Zoom, ki so predstavljale temelj delovnega življenja, so bile uporabljene kot slikovit prostor za prilagajanje preteklih del, kot na primer predstavi *Moli za nas (Ora pro nobis)* gledališča Dioniza Elevanterskega (Teatro di Dioniso) ali *Hamlet Private* v izvedbi kolektiva Scarlattine Teatro Gnab.

Posnete predstave so bile v vlogi *zapomnjenega prostora*, branja in predstave na domu so postale *domači prostor*, medijske predstave pa so bile *namišljeni prostor*. To so trije glavni načini, s katerimi se je gledališki prostor ohranjal v prvi fazi uvedbe splošne karantene, vse do ponovnega delnega odprtja 15. junija 2020.

Gledališče distanciranosti

Faza, ki jo imenujemo gledališče distanciranosti, se začne z dogodkom v organizaciji združenja (Associazione Marchigiana Attività Teatrali (AMAT – Združenje za gledališke dejavnosti Marche) med 14. in 15. junijem opolnoči: Ascanio Celestini, eden najbolj znanih gledaliških pripovedovalcev na italijanski sceni, je na odru gledališča Sperimentale v Pesaru izvedel svoj slavni monolog. Istega dne popoldne, tokrat *na prostem*, na trgu Piazza della Pace v Castel Maggioreju, je Kepler-452 debitiral z *Lapsus Urbano//Il primo giorno possibile*, avdio-vodenim performansom, napisanim med karanteno.

Kot ponazarjata zgornja primera, je značilnost te vmesne faze predrugačenje gledaliških prostorov pod vplivi omejitev za zaježitev širjenja virusa. Tovrstno prestrukturiranje se odraža v omejenih zmogljivostih gledališč in pri izbiri dramaturških rešitev, ki sovpadajo z ukrepi o distanciranju. Pod to spadajo monologi, predstave za omejeno število nastopajočih in eksperimentiranje s prostorom, ki vse vključujejo ohranjanje razdalje.

Prva skupina eksperimentov se je ukvarjala z ustvarjalno uporabo odprtega prostora, kot v projektu Marca Balianija in Marche Teatra *Igralec v kristalni hiši (L'Attore nella scatola di cristallo)* (slika št. 9), kjer so igralci nastopali v steklenih ohišjih. Drugi primer so festivali, ki se vračajo na zunanje javne površine. Festival v Raveni se je na primer v celoti odvijal znotraj obzidja Rocce Brancaleone, kjer je leta 1990 potekala prva edicija dotičnega festivala. Festival Santarcangelo je simbolično zavzel celotno mesto in s tem opomnil na »odprti« izvor enega najpomembnejših italijanskih festivalov sodobne uprizoritvene umetnosti.



Slika 9. Posnetek zaslona s predstave *Igralec v kristalni hiši* (*L'attore nella scatola di cristallo*) avtorjev Marca Balianija in Marche Teatra.

Druga skupina eksperimentov je vključevala predružačenje gledališkega prostora z vidika scenografije. Operna hiša Teatro La Fenice v Benetkah je na primer obrnila odnos med odrom in sedišči, tako da je gledalce postavila na oder kot del stalne instalacije, ki je spominjal na leseni gredelj ladje v gradnji.

V tretji skupini eksperimentov pa so z digitalnimi orodji ustvarili *mešane prostore*, kjer se prepletata spletna in analogna (*on-line* in *off-line*) oblika komunikacije. Če je bila po eni strani ta rešitev sprejeta za ublažitev težave s pogosto razprodanostjo zaradi omejenih sedišč, je po drugi strani spodbudila razmislek o možnih logističnih alternativah, ki jih lahko dogodki ohranijo tudi po koncu pandemije. Festival Ravenna je to dvojno modalnost uporabil tako, da je na svoji spletni strani omogočil predvajanje oddaj v živo. Festival Romaeuropa je sprejel konstitutivno mešano logiko in »oder« razširil z nastopi v živo na digitalnih platformah – kot si je mogoče ogledati pri delu *Sledovi Antigone* (*Traces of Antigone*) režiserke Elli Papakonstantinou – in s projekti, ki so pripravljene specifično za digitalne strani, kot sta *Shakespeare: domača izdaja* (*Shakespeare: At Home Edition*) v produkciji gledališča Forced Entertainment ali pa projekt *LaTurbo Avendon* avtorja Alexandra Whitleyja.

Vendar pa veliko gledališč in festivalov ni uspelo reorganizirati in pripraviti svojih programov za poletno fazo. Ta neskladnost je sprožila razpravo o stroških in pogojih ponovnega odprtja, o sprejetih kompromisih tistih, ki so se ponovno odprli, in o novi vlogi festivalov in gledališč. Že med karanteno so nekateri gledališčniki videli prostor za sestanke onkraj zaprtega prostora. Z ustanovitvijo Facebook skupine DREAM SUQ je festival Santarcangelo želel ustvariti prostor, kjer bi lahko vse vrste uporabnikov, ne samo umetniki in strokovnjaki, delilo svoje zamisli o prihodnosti. Tovrstne izkušnje nakazujejo, da ni samo vprašanje, kako še naprej zagotavljati nastope v živo, temveč tudi kako zagotoviti kontinuiteto dialoga z referenčnimi prostori in občinstvi.

Gledališče praznih sedežev

26. oktober 2020 je zaznamoval vstop v novo obdobje poskusa zaježitve virusa in posledično vnovično zaprtje kulturnih prizorišč za javnost.

V primerjavi s prvo fazo pa lahko v gledališčih delujejo gostujoči umetniki s statusom rezidenčnega umetnika. Prav tako tudi ukrepi, ki podpirajo sektor, zagotavljajo financiranje tistim, ki še naprej pripravljajo in organizirajo dejavnosti preko spleta. Posledično se ustvarja napetost v odnosu do digitalne sfere, tudi same soočene s problematiko neenakosti med tistimi, ki imajo priložnosti biti vključeni v to tehnološko okolje, in tistimi, ki te možnosti nimajo. Poleg tega pa je v zadnjem času prišlo tudi do delne asimilacije izkušenj in razmišljanj, ki so se v preteklih mesecih neposredno razvile iz predstav na spletu. Ti dejavniki napeljujejo, da sedanjost obravnavamo kot gledališče praznih sedežev, torej gledališče, ki se vrača v svoje domače prostore, a se je prisiljeno srečevati z občinstvom zunaj tradicionalnih razmerij, ne med odrom in sedišči.

Fizični gledališki prostor se tako povrne v funkcionalen prostor za predstave, nastopa v vlogi prostora za *umetniške rezidence*, *prostora za vaje*, *studia za snemanje in strimanje* ter v vlogi *studia televizijskih produkcij*.

V gledališču Bellini v Neaplju so rezidenčni umetniki na primer ubrali ustvarjalno pot in v projektu *Zona Rossa* uporabili spletno strimanje, ki je združevalo odprte vaje in resničnostne šove. Gledališče Metastasio v Pratu se je preoblikovalo v gledališko-radijski studio, kjer je petnajst umetnikov sodelovalo pri produkciji retro-digitalnih formatov, kot so radijske igre, oddaje *arte varia* in črno-bele televizijske nadaljevanke. Festival Teatri di Vetro je v gledaliških prostorih zgradil filmsko okolje, primerno za snemanje in predvajanje predstav na festivalskem kanalu Youtube (slika št. 10).

Drugi festivali, ki so se bili primorani ustaviti, kot so Teatro Akropolis, Teatro della Tosse v Genovi in zimska edicija festivala Santarcangelo, so se odločili, da bodo te dogodke spremenili v trenutke razmišljanj in poglobljenega študija. Santarcangelo je pripravil deseturni maraton, kjer so umetniki, ki naj bi nastopili na odru, organizirali pogovore, mikro-dokumentarce in kritične razprave, namenjene razmisleku o samem pomenu prekinitve.

V tej fazi se je vzbudilo tudi ponovno zanimanje televizije za gledališče. Na nacionalnih televizijskih omrežjih smo lahko spremljali povečanje števila televizijskih oddaj iz gledališč brez občinstva. Med temi so bili najbolj uspešni operni nastopi v živo, na primer opera *Seviljski brivec (Barbiere di Siviglia)* v režiji Maria Martona, s katero so otvorili sezono v Rimski operni hiši (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma) ali opera *In ponovno vidim zvezde (A riveder le stelle)*, s katero so otvorili sezono v milanski La Scali. Nasprotno pa je bil poskus snovanja in predvajanja gledališke sezone v sodelovanju s televizijskim programom *Ricomincio da Rai 3*, kjer so v osrednjem terminu predvajali predstave iz rimskega gledališča Sistina, ostro kritiziran z zanemarljivo gledanostjo.



Slika št. 10. Margherita Masè snema koreografijo Paole Bianchi med edicijo *Teatra di Vetro* 2020.

Prazna gledališča pa v tem obdobju niso bila edina možnost. Nekateri so eksperimentirali z novimi načini srečavanja z gledalci, na primer v mestu, ki predstavlja fizični prostor. Ta poskus je sledil principu, da je poleg strimanja drugi veliki prototip mobilnosti dobrin in informacij v pandemičnih časih dostava na dom. Predstava *Coprifuoco* v izvedbi kolektiva Kepler-452, projekt *Barbonaggio Teatrale* avtorja Ippolita Chiarella, projekt gledališča Teatro dei Venti *Predstave na domofonu (Favole al citofono)* in projekt dostave poezije v izvedbi gledališča Patalò z naslovom *Pesniška vrata – pesmi na domu (Porta poetica – Poesie a domicilio)* so le nekateri primeri »gledališča v majhnih prostorih«,¹²⁹ oziroma t. i. kreacij »vzemi s seboj«, kjer igralci, kot gledališki kolesarji, dostavljajo predstave ljudem na dom.

Sočasno se je nadaljevalo eksperimentiranje na *domaćih spletnih straneh*, zahvaljujoč pozivom in sredstvom za rezidenčne umetnike in digitalne sezone. Po eni strani je to povzročilo manj taktično in negotovo rabo digitalnih platform tistih umetnikov, ki so že sodelovali v posrednih raziskavah. Po drugi strani pa se je razširilo tudi med umetniške institucije, ki prej niso imele virov, spretnosti ali preprosto potrebe po uporabi digitalnih medijev kot vmesnih členov. AMAT je na primer tako promoviral projekt *Marche Palcoscenico Aperto. Gledališki festival brez gledališč (Festival del Teatro Senza Teatri)* pripravlja spletno sezono, v kateri bo od januarja do maja 2021 sodelovalo šestdeset umetniških institucij iz regije. Za mnoge izmed njih bo to prva spletna izkušnja, kjer se bo več kot dvesto gledaliških, glasbenih, plesnih in sodobnih cirkuških dogodkov odvijalo preko strimanja, aplikacij za sporočanje, videoklicev ali preko elektronske pošte. Kljub začasni prekinitvi nastopov v živo se sektor še vedno upira, eksperimentira z novimi formati, raziskuje nove prostore in se še vedno srečuje z občinstvom v skladu s predpisanimi ukrepi.

¹²⁹ Lorenzo Donati, "Kepler-452: Teatro nel coprifuoco," *Doppiozero* (2021). Available at <https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/kepler-452-teatro-nel-coprifuoco>, 26. 1. 2021.

GLEDALIŠČE V KARANTENI	Uprizoritveni prostor je skupek domačega okolja in digitalnih platform.	preoblikovanje radia v podkast platformo
		gledališče na telefonu
		gledališče na platformah za videokonference
GLEDALIŠČE DISTANCIRANOSTI	Gledališki prostori so omejeni s predpisi za zajezitev virusa.	preoblikovanje gledališke scenografije v skladu s pravili o ohranjanju varnostne razdalje
		krepitev zunanjih prizorišč in mestnih prostorov
		ohranjanje varnostne razdalje kot del pisanja gledaliških iger
		spojena okolja, interakcija z spletnim in analognim (<i>on-line</i> in <i>off-line</i>) okoljem
GLEDALIŠČE PRAZNIH SEDEŽEV	Preoblikovana je namembnost gledaliških prostorov.	prostor za rezidenčne umetnike
		prostor za vaje
		snemalni in pretočni studio
		gledališče kot televizijski produkcijski studio
	Dostava predstave na dom.	dostava gledališča
gledališče na domofonu		
POBUDE MED FAZAMI		deljenje arhivskega gradiva
		digitalna gostovanja

Tabela 1. Preoblikovanje gledališkega prostora v treh fazah

STANJE FINANCIRANJA IN RAZISKAVA OBČINSTVA PREDSTAV V ŽIVO V ITALIJI

Pandemija je v Italiji, tako kot drugod,¹³⁰ razkrila institucionalno obrobno svetla uprizoritvenih umetnosti in endemično krhkost sektorja glede politik dela in socialne varnosti. Ob upoštevanju ukrepov (tabela 2), ki jih je sprejelo italijansko Ministrstvo za kulturno dediščino, kulturne dejavnosti in turizem (Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism – MiBACT), se pojavlja pomanjkanje

¹³⁰ Mark Banks, "The work of culture and C-19," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 23, 4 (2020): 648–654; Melanie Bourge, "The pandemic's immediate impact on performing arts in Australia," *Eye-to-eye Magazine* (2020); Roberta Comunian in Lauren England, "Creative and cultural work without filters: Covid-19 and exposed precarity in the creative economy," *Cultural Trends* 29, 2 (2020): 112–128; Ioannis Tsioulakis in Ali Fitzgibbon, "Performing artists in the age of COVID-19: A moment of urgent action and potential change," *Queen's Policy Engagement blog* (2020). Dostopno na https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/204727792/Performing_Artists_in_the_age_of_COVID_19.pdf, 17. 1. 2021.

dolgoročnega načrtovanja in splošne vizije. V tem pogledu je kontroverzna ustanovitev ItsArt¹³¹ emblematična.

Gre za digitalno platformo za distribucijo kulturnih vsebin v državni lasti, ki naj bi se ustanovila predvidoma aprila 2020 in nosi neposrečeno oznako *Netflix italijanske kulture*.

Ukrepe, ki jih je MiBACT izvedlo po zaprtju gledališč, lahko razvrstimo v a) takojšnje ukrepe pomoči, b) optimizacijo uporabe že razpoložljivih virov, c) nujna sredstva za posebne intervencijske ukrepe.

Prva večja intervencija je del tako imenovane uredbe *Cura Italia* (italijanski zakonodajni odlok št. 18 z dne 17. 3. 2020), ki med drugim uvaja sklad za nujne primere za umetniški sektor. Del teh sredstev je bil namenjen gledališčnikom, ki predhodno niso prejeli nobenega državnega financiranja iz Enotnega sklada za uprizoritve (Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo – FUS). Vendar se je tovrstna delitev sredstev zgodila brez upoštevanja kakršnih koli pogojev, s čimer so postavili gledališča in umetniške institucije z najrazličnejšo zgodovino in velikostjo na isto raven. Problematično je bilo tudi preoblikovanje sklada FUS – primarna oblika državnega financiranja uprizoritvenih umetnosti – za obdobje 2020–2022, ki od gledališč in umetnikov, upravičenih do pomoči, zahteva, da v drugi fazi zapiranja ustvarjajo spletne vsebine. Zadnji poseg v kronološkem zaporedju je odlok *Ristori* (italijanski zakonodajni odlok št. 137 z dne 28. 10. 2020), ki je začel veljati 29. oktobra, s čimer so obnovili vse predhodne ukrepe in za nekaj milijonov evrov povečali tako Sanacijski sklad kot FUS.¹³²

Če so sprejeti ukrepi po eni strani podprli sektor, ki je leta 2020¹³³ izgubil 90 % gledalcev in 70 % prihodka, so po drugi strani prizadeli predvsem tiste, ki imajo stabilne delovne odnose; to so večinoma organizacijsko, vodstveno in administrativno osebje. Osebe, ki so v delovnih razmerjih za določen čas, to so igralci, tehniki, glasbeniki in številni drugi delavci, ki se ukvarjajo s svetom uprizoritvenih umetnosti, so bili v veliki meri kaznovani.

¹³¹ ItsArt bo digitalna platforma za gledališče, glasbo in umetnost na zahtevo. Njen namen, ki ga skupaj z Cassa Deposito Prestiti (CDP) promovira MiBact, podpira italijansko umetniško in kulturno dediščino. ItArt bo v 49-odstotni lasti italijanske platforme za pretakanje filmov Chili, medtem ko bo MiBact nadzornik projekta in bo iz Sklada za oživitve vložil dodatnih 10 milijonov evrov. Kritiki te pobude so se osredotočili na: a) vlaganje sredstev v novo platformo, namesto da bi okrepili že obstoječe digitalne kulturne kanale; b) pomanjkanje sredstev, vloženi v tovrstne operacije, ki bi zahtevale povsem drugačno vrsto naložbe; c) hitrost in tajnost, s katero so bili podpisani sporazumi s podjetjem Chili S.p.a. Glej Laura Gemini, "Culture Platformization. Lo strano caso della Netflix italiana," *Comunicazione politica* 22, 1 (2021).

¹³² Skupni znesek ukrepov za sektor znaša približno enajst milijard evrov.

¹³³ Indagine Impresa Cultura Italia-Confcommercio e Swg, "Con Covid-19 dimezzati i consumi culturali nel 2020 (-47 %)," (2021). Dostopno na <https://www.confcommercio.it/-/comunicato-7-2021-indagine-consumi-culturali-2020?redirect=%2F-%2Fcomunicato-121-2020-bonus-consumi%3FinheritRedirect%3Dtrue>, 1. 3. 2021.

Odlok italijanskega predsednika vlade z dne 8. 3. 2020	Prepoved kulturnih prizorišč za umetnike in občinstvo.
Italijanski odlok št. 18 z dne 17. 3. 2020 Odlok Cura Italia	Poseben dodatek v višini 600,00 EUR za občasne delavce in strokovnjake s področja uprizoritvenih umetnosti, namenjen tistim, ki so v letu 2019 plačali 30 dnevni prispevkov. Odpuščanje delavcev v sektorju uprizoritvenih umetnosti. Ustanovitev dveh skladov za podporo nujnih primerov v zabavnem, filmskem in avdiovizualnem sektorju s proračunom 80 milijonov EUR oziroma 50 milijonov EUR za leto 2020.
Odlok italijanskega predsednika vlade z dne 23. 4. 2020	20 milijonov EUR je dodeljenih Skladu za nujne primere in delavcem, ki delujejo v gledališkem, plesnem, glasbenem in cirkuškem sektorju in v letu 2019 niso bili prejemniki državnih sredstev.
Italijanski odlok št. 34 z dne 19. 5. 2020 Odlok o ponovnem odprtju	Poseben dodatek v višini 600,00 EUR za občasne delavce in strokovnjake iz zabavne industrije je bil razširjen na tiste, ki so v letu 2019 plačali le 7 dnevni prispevkov. Sklad za nujne primere se je podvojil. Organizacijam za uprizoritvene umetnosti se priznajo enaki prispevki kot v letu 2019. 18-mesečni bon za povračilo stroškov za razstave, koncerte in predstave, odpovedane zaradi covida-19.
Odlok italijanskega predsednika vlade št. 278 z dne 10. 6. 2020	Sredstva Sklada za nujne primere so se povečala za 6,8 milijona EUR.
Odlok italijanskega predsednika vlade z dne 11. 6. 2020	Nadaljevanje predstav pred občinstvom, v gledališčih, koncertnih dvoranah, kinodvoranah in drugih prostorih, vključno s prizorišči na prostem; ponovno odprtje je odvisno od ukrepov distanciranja za zagotavljanje varnosti.
Italijanski odlok št. 104 z dne 14. 8. 2020	Posebni dodatek v višini 1.000,00 EUR za občasne delavce in strokovnjake iz zabavne industrije. Podaljšanje sredstev za preprečitev odpuščanja delavcev za 18 tednov do 31. decembra 2020. 100-odstotna davčna olajšava za obdobje šestih mesecev za stroške stalno zaposlenega osebja in za obdobje štirih mesecev za osebje, ki se vrača iz skladov za odpuščanje. Oprostitev drugega obroka IMU (davek na nepremičnine) za kinodvorane, gledališča in koncertne dvorane.
Odlok italijanskega predsednika vlade z dne 24. 10. 2020	Prepoved vstopa občinstva v prostore s predstavami, ki potekajo v živo.

Italijanska uredba št. 137 z dne 28. 10. 2020 Odlok "Ristiri"	Posebni dodatek v višini 1.000,00 EUR za občasne delavce in strokovnjake iz zabavne industrije. Povečanje sredstev Sklada za nujne primere in FUS-a (sklada za uprizoritve v živo). Možnost povračila sredstev je omogočena za vstopnice za nastope v živo med 26. oktobrom 2020 in 31. januarjem 2021.
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Tabela 2. Zbirna tabela ukrepov za zaježitev covida-19 v Italiji in glavnih ukrepov za podporo kulturnega sektorja.

Druga tema, ki je bila v javni razpravi komajda upoštevana, je gledalec in njegovo delo.¹³⁴ Beseda gledalec se je pojavila maja 2020 s prvimi namigi o ponovnem odprtju poletja. Od konca pomladi so v Italiji in na mednarodni ravni izvajali raziskave, ki so ocenjevale 1) pričakovanja in želje občinstva glede ponovnega vstopa na kulturna prizorišča in 2) vrsto vsebin, povezanih z uprizoritveno umetnostjo, ki so si jih gledalci ogledali na spletu med karanteno:

a) ekskluzivna uporaba spletnih anket; metoda, ki je v kratkem času omogočila zbir velikega števila anketirancev, a se je hkrati obseg raziskovanja omejil na ožji krog gledaliških navdušencev;

b) čas zbiranja podatkov, ki je pogosto ustvaril statične prikaze situacije, za katero so sicer značilne stalne spremembe in negotovost;

c) od anketirancev se zahtevajo pretirane podrobnosti, saj so jih v številnih vprašanih prosili, da izrazijo mnenje in zavzamejo stališče o povsem novih situacijah, kot je vrnitev v gledališča v času virusa ali možnost uporabe pretočnih platform za uprizoritvene umetnosti v prihodnosti.

Izpostavljanje teh metodoloških vprašanj ne pomeni zavračanja vrednosti tovrstnih raziskav. S tem se zgolj poudarja potreba po dolgoročnih raziskovalnih posegih z uporabo mešanih metod, da bi tako opazovali srednjeročne in dolgoročne spremembe v gledalčevih dejanjih in odnosih.

Po podatkih iz italijanskega raziskovalnega korpusa pri anketiranih gledalcih zelo močno izstopa nostalgija po dogodkih v živo. Gledalci najbolj pogrešajo »prisotnost na predstavi« (69,5 %), bolj kot »srečanje z drugimi gledalci« (18,5 %),¹³⁵ kar sovпада z drugimi mednarodnimi raziskavami.¹³⁶ Italijansko občinstvo se počuti varneje na dveh vrstah prizorišč: a) srednje/male prireditve na prostem s sedeži b) gledališča ali srednja/velika prizorišča s sedeži.¹³⁷ Če pogledamo spletno

¹³⁴ Leonardo Altieri in Marco De Marinis, "Il lavoro dello spettatore nella produzione dell'evento teatrale," *Sociologia del Lavoro* 25 (1985): 201–224; Anna Lisa Tota, "»Theatrical Frame«: Processi interpretativi e attività cognitive dello spettatore teatrale," *Studi di sociologia* (1998): 419–441.

¹³⁵ Alberto Castelli, et al., "Caro spettatore, come stai?" (2020). Dostopno na https://www.carospettatore.it/carospettatore_racconto.pdf, 1. 3. 2021.

¹³⁶ Katy Raines, "National Audience Research – After the Interval & Act 2," *Indigo Ltd* (2020). Available at <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/supercool-indigo/Act-2-Report-wave-2-results.pdf>, 1 3. 2021; The Pattern Makers, "COVID-19 Audience Outlook Monitor. Australia Snapshot Report." Available at <https://www.thepatternmakers.com.au/covid19>, 1 3. 2021.

¹³⁷ Alberto Castelli, et al., "Caro spettatore, come stai?"

udeležbo, z izjemo omenjenih omejitev, so anketiranci večinoma zadovoljni s ponujeno vsebino uprizoritvenih umetnosti, vendar poudarjajo, da so jim ljubši nastopi v živo. Večini bi še naprej ustrezala tovrstna vsebina in bi bili pripravljeni plačati, zlasti za vsebine, ustvarjene posebej za spletne platforme, vendar po nižji ceni kot pri predstavah v živo. Izjema je glasbeno občinstvo,¹³⁸ za katerega digitalni način spremljanja sploh ni zadovoljiv.

Za konec naj še omenimo podatek iz edine italijanske raziskave, ki je zajela celotno populacijo, in ne samo tistih, ki so že bili del občinstva predstav v živo. To so torej tisti, ki pred pandemijo niso obiskovali gledaliških ali plesnih predstav in niso koristili digitalnih vsebin, ki jih je ponujal kulturni sektor.¹³⁹ Čeprav ni presenetljivo, je rezultat žal razblinil že tako majhno upanje, da bi s spletnimi predstavami pridobili novo občinstvo. Konec koncev je v Italiji, kot gre razbrati iz zadnjega poročila Federicultura,¹⁴⁰ v gledališče leta 2018 vstopilo le 19 % populacije in prav tu bi morali začeti razpravo.

SKLEP

V tem prispevku smo na kratko predstavili, kako se je italijanski gledališki sektor odzval in se še odziva¹⁴¹ na zaprtje gledališč zaradi pandemije. Poskušali smo poudariti več načinov, kako se je razmišljalo o uprizoritvenem prostoru izven poenostavljene ideje o »gledališču na spletu«. Prvič, gre za poenostavljen pogled, saj je še vedno odvisen od predsodka, ki spletno okolje vidi kot unificirano področje. Drugič, ne upošteva novih smernic pri predrugačenju gledališkega prostora, ki smo mu bili priča v zadnjih mesecih in se osredotoča na iskanje urbanih prostorov in fizičnih gledališč. In kot zadnje, gre za perspektivo, omejeno na načelo »prenosa gledališča«. Namesto da bi zastavili vprašanje, ali je gledališče ob prenosu na splet še vedno gledališče, se nam zdi bolj produktivno zastaviti vprašanje, kakšne raziskave medijskih tehnologij in formatov lahko ponudijo gledališki umetniki. Po drugi strani pa je problematika glede možnosti gledališča zunaj gledališča redko naslovljena zaradi nepripravljenosti zakonodajnih, ekonomskih in kulturnih aparatov, da bi spremljali in podpirali tovrstne produkcije. Pravzaprav je eksperimentiranje z uprizoritvenimi prostori težko poenotiti z ukrepi za zaščito sektorja. Z zakonodajnega vidika je na primer možnost, da regionalne vlade podpirajo umetniške rezidence, odvisna od umetnikov, ki dejansko prebivajo na območju, kar pa ni primerno za izvajanje digitalnih ali čezmejnih rezidenc. Vprašanja odnosa med gledališčem in digitalno sfero torej ni mogoče omejiti na raziskovanje estetskih potencialov in restrikcij. Dopolniti ga je treba z analizo procesov regulacije in financiranja, z

¹³⁸ Carlo Pastore, "I concerti dopo il covid-19. Indagine sul mondo della musica live dopo la pandemia," (2020). Dostopno na <https://rockitpubblici.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Concerti-dopo-il-Covid-19-MI-AMI-ROCKIT.pdf>, 1. 3. 2021.

¹³⁹ Indagine Impresa Cultura Italia-Confcommercio e Swg, *Covid: la cultura si sposta sul digitale* (2020). Dostopno na <https://www.confcommercio.it/-/comunicato-97-2020-impresa-cultura-italia-covid-19-cultura-sposta-su-digitale>, 1. 3. 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Federicultura, Impresa Cultura. *Dal tempo della cura a quello del rilancio* (Roma: Gangemi editore S.p.a., 2020).

¹⁴¹ V zaključni fazi pisanja tega besedila (konec februarja/začetek marca 2021) je kulturni sektor prišel na konec svojih moči. Nacionalna zveza gledaliških in avdiovizualnih izvajalcev (UNITA) je 23. februarja v različnih italijanskih mestih organizirala pobudo *Osvetlimo gledališče* (*Facciamo luce sul teatro*) in prosila za vrnitev uprizoritvenih umetnosti v javno razpravo, da bi načrtovali varno ponovno odprtje. Najnovejši odlok predvideva ponovno odprtje gledališč 27. marca v regijah z manj primeri okužb. Vendar pa dejstvo, da majhna gledališča zaradi omejevalnih predpisov ne morejo zaslužiti z omejenimi zmogljivostmi, predstavlja težavo, ki je še vedno skoraj popolnoma spregledana.

analizo infrastrukture za produkcijo in kroženje kulture ter z analizo vedenja občinstva. Ti dejavniki predstavljajo predpogoj za stabilizacijo in razvoj umetniške inovacije.

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***Francesca Giuliani** je doktorska študentka humanistike na Oddelku za komunikologijo, humanistiko in mednarodne študije (DISCUI) Univerze v Urbinu Carlo Bo. Njena glavna področja raziskovanja so uprizoritvene umetnosti, ki potekajo v živo, s posebno pozornostjo na občinstvu in razvoju občinstev.*

*Dr. **Giovanni Boccia Artieri** je redni profesor za sociologijo komunikacije in digitalnih medijev ter vodja Oddelka za komunikologijo, humanistiko in mednarodne študije Univerze v Urbinu Carlo Bo. Njegova primarna raziskovalna dejavnost se osredotoča na teorije medijev s posebnim poudarkom na družbi socialnih omrežij in participativni kulturi. Trenutni raziskovalni projekti vključujejo socialno zgodovino interneta.*

THE REINVENTION OF THE THEATRE SPACE DURING COVID-19

An Analysis of the Italian Case

INTRODUCTION

On 9 March 2020, Italy became the first European country to go into total lockdown. Venues dedicated to performing arts were partially reopened on 15 June 2020, only to be closed again on 26 October of the same year.¹⁴²

In each phase, we witnessed the development of digital initiatives that attempted to ensure the theatrical offer's continuity and nurture the relationship with remote audiences. Artists and cultural actors initially moved tentatively and without any guarantee of success in the digital environment. With time, and also thanks to the activation of funding calls for digital projects, they later developed more structured interventions.

The attempts to make theatre endure lockdown renewed the debate on its relationship with digital cultures and technologies, sometimes with polarised positions clashing. How can the specificity of theatre persist without theatres? How can theatre artists contribute to the production of digital content? Which discriminations and entry barriers are produced by digital constraints? Which of these online practices will continue once we return to "normality"? These are some of the reflections developed around the artistic legitimacy of Italian theatre artists' digital work.

A few months ago (28 December 2020), Romeo Castellucci, perhaps the best-known Italian director active today, declared that "theatre on the internet is ridiculous. It is nonsense, a small vulgarity".¹⁴³ Many online performances, too, were introduced by artists' disclaimers in the vein of "this is not theatre but ..." or followed by discussions that stressed the performance's surrogate, extraordinary nature. Despite the multimedia and digital experiments that have redefined the meaning of live performance in the last decades, the pandemic emergency has reactivated a certain need to establish and circumscribe theatrical specificity.

In this contribution, we would like to leave these definitional issues in the background, focusing on how the Italian theatre sector has rethought its space of intervention in the pandemic's various phases. To this end, we will briefly introduce the mediatisation approach that informs our analyses. Subsequently, in the paper's main paragraph, we will analyse how Italian theatre artists have conceptualised the performance space during the three phases that we have named *lockdown theatre*, *theatre of distancing* and *theatre of empty seats*.

¹⁴² Theatres are still closed (as of March 2021).

¹⁴³ Iacopo Gardelli, "Il teatro su internet è una scemenza. L'immagine della pandemia? Il Papa in piazza", (Ravenna: Ravenna & Dintorni, 2020).

The following section aims to complement the analysis by reviewing the state of funding for Italy's performing arts sector and the most recent research on online performing art audiences.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT: A FOCUS ON THEATRE AND MEDIATISATION

The relationship between media and theatre is one of the most fruitful areas of reflection in theatre and performance studies.¹⁴⁴ The specific *hypermediality*¹⁴⁵ or *media mobility*¹⁴⁶ of theatre makes it capable of maintaining its autonomy even when it materially integrates other media technologies on stage. In analysing the relationship with the media, theatre-performance studies have often limited themselves to observing how theatre uses communication technologies on stage or for the documentation of performances. Instead, we draw from the mediatisation approach,¹⁴⁷ which sees all the dynamics involved in the social construction of reality as increasingly influenced by media. This influence is not limited to how individuals and institutions adopt formats and styles borrowed from media industries to produce their symbolic forms – as in the *media logic* approach.¹⁴⁸ Instead, it is an influence that structures the very creation of such forms. In the case of media and performance, this involves looking beyond the way media technologies are employed on stage to observe how artists' mediatised everyday experience influences their practices. Mediatisation does not mark a paradigm shift but a “useful guiding concept for the empirical exploration of social transformations, which considers how the level of media saturation of social interaction has intensified today”.¹⁴⁹

Based on the above, this unprecedented phase for performing arts also proves to be a unique opportunity to observe the transformations of liveness.¹⁵⁰ These months have indeed seen an acceleration in the mediatisation processes that were

¹⁴⁴ Laura Gemini, *L'incertezza creativa: I percorsi sociali e comunicativi delle performance artistiche* (Milano: FrancoAngeli 2003); Andrea Balzola & Anna Maria Monteverdi; *Le arti multimediali digitali: Storia, tecniche, linguaggi, etiche ed estetiche delle arti del nuovo millennio* (Milano: Garzanti, 2004); Steve Dixon, *Digital performance: A history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Chris Salter, *Entangled: Technology and the transformation of performance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

¹⁴⁵ Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in theatre and performance* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2006).

¹⁴⁶ Claudia Georgi, *Liveness on Stage: Intermedial Challenges in Contemporary British Theatre and Performance* (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2014).

¹⁴⁷ Stig Hjarvard, *The mediatisation of culture and society* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013); Giovanni Boccia Artieri, “Mediatizzazione e Network Society: un programma di ricerca,” *Sociologia della Comunicazione* 50, 2 (2015): 62–69; Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, *The mediated construction of reality* (Cambridge: Polity press, 2017); Laura Gemini and Stefano Brilli, “On theatre mediatisation: Exploring transmediality in Aldo Moro,” *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 16, 2 (2020): 150–167, 54.

¹⁴⁸ David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, *Media logic* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979).

¹⁴⁹ Giovanni Boccia Artieri, 66.

¹⁵⁰ Paul Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999); Laura Gemini, “Liveness: le logiche mediali nella comunicazione dal vivo,” *Sociologia della Comunicazione* 51, 1 (2016): 43–63.

already in place. Such processes are now becoming more visible and researchable:¹⁵¹

1. The *mediatisation of dramaturgy*, with the increasing transmediality of theatrical narratives emerging in (a) the use of *seriality*,¹⁵² (b) the logic of the *palimpsest*, (c) the *adaptation of the text to the platform* and (d) cases of *participatory dramaturgy*.
2. The *mediatisation of presence*, which we witness in the many gradients of *digital liveness*¹⁵³ that artists experimented in the continuity between online and offline. Numerous initiatives have indeed worked on reconstructing a sense of place and an ephemeral time for digital performance.
3. The *mediatisation of the theatrical relationship*, observable in the daily social media presence of artists and theatres that goes beyond the promotional function.

Next to the framework of mediatisation, we should also consider the *platformisation of the cultural production* framework.¹⁵⁴ We should acknowledge how “platforms do not reflect the social: they produce the social structures we live in”.¹⁵⁵ In this sense, the relocation of theatrical activities to online spaces raises crucial questions beyond the issue of theatrical specificity. It is not enough to ask, “What happens to theatre in its relationship with the digital?”. Instead, we need to denaturalise “the digital” as a singular and neutral container that amplifies content circulation. Instead, it is necessary to look at how platforms’ technical, normative and economic biases influence the shape of the cultural offer when it becomes impossible to resort to physical infrastructures.

ITALIAN THEATRES TO THE TEST OF COVID-19

To better discern the initiatives that Italian theatres and artists have developed in response to the health crisis, we consider it useful to use a three-phase periodization:

1. *Lockdown theatre*, from 9 March to 15 June 2020;
2. *Theatre of distancing*, corresponding to partial reopening from 15 June to 25 October 2020;
3. *Theatre of empty seats*, which began with the new phase of pandemic containment on 26 October 2020.

This categorisation highlights how the different stages of containment rules correspond to different ways of imagining and managing the performance space.

¹⁵¹ Laura Gemini, Stefano Brillì, Francesca Giuliani, “Il dispositivo teatrale alla prova del covid-19. Mediatizzazione, liveness e pubblici,” *Mediascapes Journal* 15 (2020): 44–58.

¹⁵² Laura Gemini, “Serialità teatrale. Osservazioni esplorative fra teatro e media,” *Mediascapes journal*, no. 7 (2016): 8–20; Vincenzo Del Gaudio, “Modelli di serialità teatrale: Pratiche per un approccio mediologico al teatro a partire dai modelli seriali della Tragedia Endogonidia della Societas Raffaello Sanzio e Ada. Una cronaca familiare di Fanny & Alexander,” *Mediascapes Journal* 8 (2017): 253–264.

¹⁵³ In this context, it is crucial to conceive liveness from a phenomenological point of view, i.e., not as a feature of the event in itself, nor merely as one of its effects, but as a form emerging from a spectatorial pact.

¹⁵⁴ David B. Nieborg and Thomas Poell, “The platformization of cultural production: Theorizing the contingent cultural commodity,” *New Media & Society* 20, 11 (2018): 4275–4292.

¹⁵⁵ José van Dijck, Thomas Poell and Martijn De Waal, *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 24.

Lockdown Theatre

The first phase, the one concomitant with the national lockdown, is characterised by the use of digital platforms to amplify the capacity for action of domestic spaces. The urgency for theatre to rebuild its presence and relevance drove the first wave of initiatives. This urgency meant that artists drew from a known repertoire of mediated theatre forms or attempted provisional, sometimes uncertain explorations of new platforms.

At first, the most widespread activities were disseminating *archive materials* and streaming *literary readings*.

The requalification of archive materials has often tended to recompose a certain sense of the live event. The aim of reconstructing a present time for the documented performances was pursued by building video-theatre palimpsests – as in the case of the performances programmed by Emilia Romagna Teatro on the Lepida TV channel – or by experimenting with the adaptation of the plays for digital platforms: the company Fortebraccio Teatro adapted the audio part of their *Cantico dei Cantici* into a Spotify playlist; in *Teatro a tradimento*, the company Frosini/Timpano review their old plays sending portions via Whatsapp as one-to-one vocal performance.

The “fashion” of networked readings was launched by the cultural association Capotrave / Kilowatt. As early as 11 March 2020, they began an expanded reading of Gianni Rodari’s *C’era due volte il Barone Lamberto* with 50 actors and theatre operators participating from their homes.

As the persistence of theatres’ closure became clear, artists and operators began a more thorough reflection on the technical and artistic means at their hand. The domestic space was thus transformed from an obligatory scenery into a dramaturgical strategy. One example is the *Decreto Quotidiano* (Daily Decree) by actor and director Michele Sinisi (Image No. 8). Every day at lunchtime, Sinisi streamed live on Facebook from his kitchen, broadcasting news from his time in quarantine as a daily counterpart of the Prime Minister’s periodic transmission of legislative updates.



Image No. 8. Screenshot from the *Decreto Quotidiano* by Michele Sinisi

Alongside the domestic space, we also find the development of media-based performance spaces: In *Theatre on a line*, Cuocolo/Bosetti produced a telephone performance for a single spectator; the radio medium was reinvented in *Radio India*'s dramaturgical podcasts on the Spreaker platform, created by the artist collective Oceano Indiano (Muta Imago, mk, DOM-, Fabio Condemini, Industria Indipendente) in residence at the Teatro India in Rome, with the collaboration of actress Daria Deflorian. Video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, which were the cornerstones of the period's working life, were used as a scenic space to re-adapt past works, as done by *Ora pro nobis* by Teatro di Dioniso or *Hamlet Private* by ScarlattineTeatro_Gnab collective.

The *remembered space* of recorded performances, the *home space* of readings and domestic performances and the *imagined space* of media performances are the three main ways the theatre space was remediated in the first phase of the lockdown until the partial reopening on 15 June 2020.

Theatre of Distancing

The phase that we call "theatre of distancing" opens with an event organised by AMAT, the Marche region theatre circuit, at the stroke of midnight between 14 and 15 June 2020. Ascanio Celestini, one of the most renowned theatre storytellers on the Italian scene, brought his famous monologue *Radio Clandestina* to the stage of Teatro Sperimentale in Pesaro. In the afternoon of the same day, this time *en plein air* in Piazza della Pace in Castel Maggiore, Kepler-452 debuted with *Lapsus Urbano // Il primo giorno possibile*, an audio-guided performance written during the quarantine.

As the two cases exemplify, this intermediate phase is characterised by theatrical spaces reshaped by the constraints of the virus containment rules. This restructuring translates into theatres' limited capacity and in selecting dramaturgical solutions suited to the distancing: monologues, performances for a limited number of performers, and experiments with space that insert distance into the writing.

The first group of experiments worked on the creative use of the open space, as in *L'Attore nella scatola di cristallo* by Marco Baliani and Marche Teatro (Image No. 9), where actors perform inside glass cases. Another example is provided by festivals returning to outdoor public spaces. The Ravenna Festival, for instance, took place entirely inside Rocca Brancaleone, where the first edition of the festival took place in 1990. The Santarcangelo Festival symbolically reoccupied the entire city, thereby retracing the "open" origins of one of the most important Italian festivals of contemporary performing arts.



Image No. 9. Screenshot from the performance *L'attore nella scatola di cristallo* by Marco Baliani and Marche Teatro

The second group of experiments involved the scenographic reinvention of theatre space. Teatro La Fenice in Venice, for example, overturned the stage/stalls relationship by placing spectators on the stage in a permanent installation evoking the wooden keel of a ship under construction.

We then found a third group of experiments that used digital tools to create *blended spaces* where online and offline interacted. If, on the one hand, this solution was adopted to mitigate the problem of frequent sold-outs due to the limitation of seats, on the other, it has fuelled reflection on possible logistical alternatives that events can maintain even after the pandemic crisis. The Ravenna Festival used this double modality by activating the live-streaming of shows on its website. The Romaeuropa Festival adopted a constitutive blended logic, expanding the “on-stage” with live performances on digital platforms – as in the work of director Elli Papakonstantinou *Traces of Antigone* – and with digital-site-specific projects, such as *Table Top Shakespeare: At Home Edition* by Forced Entertainment or *LaTurbo Avendon* by Alexander Whitley.

However, many theatres and festivals also failed to reorganise their programming for this summer phase. This disparity has raised the debate about the costs and conditions of reopenings, the compromises those who reopened have made, and the new roles festivals and theatres have found themselves playing. Already during the lockdown, some in the theatre field rethought themselves as meeting spaces beyond the confinement. With the creation of the *DREAM SUQ* Facebook group, the Santarcangelo Festival wanted to create a place where all kinds of users, not just artists or experts, could share their imaginaries of the future. These and other experiences show that the question is not only how to continue offering live performances but also how to guarantee continuity in dialogue with territories and communities of reference.

Theatre of Empty Seats

26 October 2020 marked the entry into a new phase of virus containment and, therefore, new cultural venues' closures to the public.

Compared to the first phase, however, theatres in this phase can be used by artists working in residencies. In addition, the measures supporting the sector provide funding for those who continue to programme activities online, creating tension towards the digital, which is not devoid of problematic dynamics of inequality between those included in the technological opportunity and those excluded from it. Moreover, we find ourselves at a time when partial assimilation of the experiences and reflections that have emerged in the previous months on digitally mediated performance has taken place. These factors lead us to consider the present as the theatre of empty seats, i.e., the theatre that returns to extra-domestic spaces but is forced to meet the audience outside the canonical relationship between the stage and the stalls.

The physical theatre space thus returns to be a functional place for performances, in the roles of a space for *artistic residencies*, a space for *rehearsals*, as a *recording and streaming studio* and as a *television production studio*.

In the *Zona Rossa* project at the Bellini Theatre in Naples, for example, the artists' creative path in residence becomes an online streamed flux combining open rehearsals and reality shows. The Metastasio Theatre in Prato has been transformed into a theatre-radio studio where 15 artists are involved in producing retro-digital formats, such as radio plays, *arte varia* shows and black-and-white TV dramas. The Teatri di Vetro festival has set up an actual film set in the theatre spaces, suitable for filming and broadcasting the performances on the festival's YouTube channel (Image No. 10).

Other suspended festivals, such as Teatro Akropolis, Teatro della Tosse in Genoa and the winter edition of the Santarcangelo Festival, decided to transform these events into moments of reflection and in-depth study. Santarcangelo, in particular, produced a 10-hour marathon where the artists who were supposed to appear on stage curated talks, micro-documentaries and critical debates aimed at reflecting on the very meaning of the interruption instead.

In this phase, we also find a renewed interest in television in the theatrical setting. We experienced an increase in television broadcasts from theatres without an audience on national television networks. Among these, the most successful were the live events of opera performances, such as the *Barbiere di Siviglia* directed by Mario Martone for the inauguration of the Rome Opera House, or the show *A riveder le stelle* for the inauguration of La Scala in Milan. On the other hand, the attempt to create a theatre season for prime-time television with *Ricomincio da Rai 3*, broadcast from the Sistina Theatre in Rome, was highly criticised and scarcely followed.



Image No. 10. Margherita Masè filming Paola Bianchi's choreography during the 2020 edition of *Teatri di Vetro*

Empty theatres were not the only scenario in this phase. Some experimented with new ways of meeting the spectator in the city's physical spaces. This attempt was made by following what, next to "streaming", is the other great prototype of mobility of goods and information in pandemic times: home delivery. Kepler-452's *Coprifuoco*, Ippolito Chiarello's *Barbonaggio teatrale*, Teatro dei Venti's *Favole al citofono*, and Teatro Patalò's *Porta poetica – Poesie a domicilio* are some examples of this "theatre in the interstices",¹⁵⁶ namely "take-away" creations where actors, like theatre riders, deliver the show to people's homes.

Simultaneously, the experimentation on *native-online spaces* has continued, thanks to calls and funds for residencies and digital seasons. On the one hand, this has led to less tactical and tentative uses of digital platforms by those artists already involved in intermediary research.

On the other hand, it has also brought an expansion towards companies that had not previously had the resources, skills or simply the need to use digital media as interfaces.

For instance, AMAT promoted the project *Marche Palcoscenico Aperto. Festival del Teatro Senza Teatri*, an online season that, from January to May 2021, will involve sixty companies from the region, many of them at their first online experience, for more than two hundred theatre, music, dance and contemporary circus events through streaming, messaging apps, video chat or by mail.

Despite the suspension of live performances, the sector continues to resist, experiment with new formats, explore new spaces and still meet audiences within the constraints imposed.

¹⁵⁶ Lorenzo Donati, "Kepler-452: Teatro nel coprifuoco," Doppiozero (2021). Available at <https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/kepler-452-teatro-nel-coprifuoco>, 26. 1. 2021.

LOCKDOWN THEATRE	The performance space is a combination of the domestic setting and digital platforms	The reinvention of the radio medium on podcasting platforms
		Theatre on the phone
		Theatre on videoconferencing platforms
THEATRE OF DISTANCING	Theatre spaces constrained by virus containment regulations	Scenographic reinvention of the theatre to respect distancing rules
		Enhancement of outdoor venues and city spaces
		Distancing as part of stage writing
		Blended spaces, interaction between online and offline
THEATRE OF EMPTY SEATS	Refunctionalisation of theatres' spaces	Space for artistic residencies
		Space for rehearsal
		Recording and streaming studio
	Home-delivered performances	Theatre as television production studio
		Theatre delivery
INITIATIVES BETWEEN PHASES		Theatre at the intercom
		Sharing of archive material
		Digital residencies

Table 2 – How the theatre space was re-imagined in the three phases

THE STATE OF FUNDING AND RESEARCH ON LIVE PERFORMANCE AUDIENCES IN ITALY

In Italy, as elsewhere,¹⁵⁷ the pandemic brought to light the institutional marginality of the performing arts world and the endemic fragility of the sector in terms of labour and social security policies. Observing the measures (Table 1) adopted by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (MiBACT), a lack of long-term planning and overall vision emerges. In this sense, the controversial birth of ItsArt,¹⁵⁸ a state-owned digital platform for the

¹⁵⁷ Mark Banks, "The work of culture and C-19," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 23, 4 (2020): 648–654; Melanie Bourge, "The pandemic's immediate impact on performing arts in Australia," *Eye-to-eye Magazine* (2020); Roberta Comunian and Lauren England, "Creative and cultural work without filters: Covid-19 and exposed precarity in the creative economy," *Cultural Trends* 29, 2 (2020): 112–128; Ioannis Tsioulakis and Ali Fitzgibbon, "Performing Artists in the age of COVID-19: A moment of urgent action and potential change," *QPol (Queen's Policy Engagement)* (2020). Available at https://puread-min.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/204727792/Performing_Artists_in_the_age_of_COVID_19.pdf, 17. 1. 2021.

¹⁵⁸ ItsArt will be a digital platform for on-demand theatre, music and art. Promoted by MiBact together with Cassa Deposito Prestiti (CDP), it aims at supporting Italy's artistic and cultural heritage. ItsArt will be 49% owned by Chili, an Italian film streaming platform, while MiBact will be the project's controller, investing a further €10 million from the Recovery Fund. Critics towards this initiative focused on a) the choice of using the funds to invest in a new platform instead of enhancing already existing digital cultural channels; b) the scarcity of funds invested for an operation of this kind, which would require a

distribution of cultural content, announced in April 2020 with the unfortunate designation of “Netflix of Italian culture”, is emblematic.

We can classify the actions taken by MiBACT following the closure of theatres as a) immediate relief actions, b) optimisation of the use of already available resources, and c) emergency funds for specific intervention actions.

The first significant intervention is part of the so-called *Cura Italia* decree (Italian Legislative Decree no. 18 of 17/03/2020), which, among other measures, establishes an emergency fund for the live arts sector. Part of these resources was directed to cultural actors that had not previously received state funding from the *Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo* (FUS). However, such a necessary extension happened without considering any requirements, thereby putting theatres and companies with the most disparate histories and sizes on the same level. Another problematic issue was the reshaping of the FUS – the primary form of state funding for the performing arts – for the 2020–2022 period, which requires beneficiary theatres and artists to produce online material in their second closing period. The last intervention in chronological order is the *Ristori* Decree (Italian Legislative Decree no. 137 of 28/10/2020), which entered into force on 29 October and renewed the previous measures by increasing both the Restoration Fund and the FUS by a few million euros.¹⁵⁹

On the one hand, the measures adopted have supported a sector that lost 90% of spectators and 70% of consumer spending in 2020.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, they have primarily affected those with stable working relationships, mostly in the organisational, managerial and administrative staff. Those with intermittent employment relationships, i.e., actors, technicians, musicians and many other workers involved in the performing arts, have been largely penalised.

<p>Italian Prime Ministerial Decree of 8/03/ 2020</p>	<p>Interdiction of cultural venues for artists and audiences</p>
<p>Italian Decree-Law no. 18 of 17/03/2020 “Cura Italia” decree</p>	<p>A special allowance of €600 for intermittent workers and professionals in the performing arts, intended for those who paid 30 daily contributions in 2019</p> <p>Lay-off for workers in the performing arts sector</p> <p>Establishment of two funds to support emergencies in the entertainment, film and audiovisual sectors, with a budget of €80 million and €50 million, respectively, for 2020</p>

completely different type of investment; c) the speed and secrecy with which the agreements were signed with the company Chili S.p.a: Laura Gemini, “Culture Platformization. Lo strano caso della Netflix italiana,” *Comunicazione politica* 22, 1 (2021).

¹⁵⁹

The total amount of these measures for the sector is about eleven billion.

¹⁶⁰

Indagine Impresa Cultura Italia-Confcommercio e Swg, “Con Covid-19 dimezzati i consumi culturali nel 2020 (-47%),” (2021). Available at <https://www.confcommercio.it/-/comunicato-7-2021-indagine-consumi-culturali-2020?redirect=%2F-%2Fcomunicato-121-2020-bonus-consumi%3FinheritRedirect%3Dtrue>, 1. 3. 2021.

<p>Italian Ministerial Decree of 23/04/2020</p>	<p>€20 million are allocated to the Emergency Fund and to workers operating in the theatre, dance, music and circus sectors that have not been the recipients of state funds grants in 2019</p>
<p>Italian Decree-Law no. 34 of 19/05/2020 Relaunch Decree</p>	<p>A special allowance of €600 for intermittent workers and entertainment professionals was extended to those who paid only 7 daily contributions in 2019</p> <p>Emergency fund doubled</p> <p>Recognition of the same contribution as in 2019 for performing arts organisations</p> <p>18-month voucher for reimbursement for exhibitions, concerts and performances cancelled due to COVID-19</p>
<p>Italian Ministerial Decree no. 278 of 10/06/2020</p>	<p>Emergency Fund resources increased by €6.8 million</p>
<p>Italian Prime Ministerial Decree of 11/6/2020</p>	<p>Resumption of performances before audiences in theatres, concert halls, cinemas and other spaces, including open-air spaces, the re-opening is subject to distancing conditions aimed at ensuring safety</p>
<p>Italian Decree-Law no. 104 of 14/08/2020</p>	<p>A special allowance of €1,000 for intermittent workers and live entertainment professionals</p> <p>Extension of the funds for workers' lay-offs by 18 weeks until 31 December 2020</p> <p>100% tax relief for six months on the costs of personnel hired on a permanent basis and for four months on personnel returning from redundancy funds</p> <p>Exemption of the second IMU (property tax) instalment for cinemas, theatres and concert halls</p>
<p>Italian Prime Ministerial Decree of 24/10/2020</p>	<p>Interdiction of live performance venues to the audience</p>
<p>Italian Decree-Law no. 137 of 28/10/2020 "Ristori" decree</p>	<p>A special allowance of €1,000 for intermittent workers and entertainment professionals</p> <p>Increase in the Emergency Fund and FUS (state funds for live arts)</p> <p>The possibility of reimbursement is extended to admission tickets for live performances in the period between 26 October 2020 and 31 January 2021</p>

Table 2. Summary table of COVID-19 containment measures in Italy and the main actions in support of the cultural sector

Another figure that has been scarcely considered in the public debate is that of the spectator and their *labour*.¹⁶¹ The word “spectator” peeped out in May 2020 with the first hints of summer reopenings. Starting from the end of the spring, surveys were conducted in Italy and internationally, assessing 1) the audience’s expectations and desires as to re-entry in cultural venues and 2) what content related to performing arts users had watched online during the lockdown:

a) the exclusive use of online surveys, which is a method that enables gathering many respondents in a short time but which also reduces the research range to the close circle of theatre enthusiasts;

b) the timing of data collection, which often produced static photographs of a situation characterised by constant change and uncertainty;

c) the excessive simulation demanded from respondents since many questions asked them to express opinions and take positions on entirely new situations, such as returning to theatres with the virus still in progress or the possibility of using streaming platforms for performing arts in the future.

To highlight these methodological issues is not to dismiss the value of such research. Rather, it is to emphasise the need for longitudinal research interventions, preferably using mixed methods, to observe the medium- to long-term changes in the spectators’ actions and attitudes.

Among the main data emerging from the Italian corpus of research, a very strong nostalgia for live events stands out among the intercepted spectators. What spectators miss the most is the “experience of being present at the performance” (69.5%), more than “meeting other spectators” (18.5%),¹⁶² a finding that resonates with other international research.¹⁶³ Italian audiences feel safer in two types of venues a) medium/small outdoor events with seating and b) theatres or medium/large venues with seating.¹⁶⁴ Looking at online participation, apart from the limitations highlighted, respondents are, for the most part, satisfied with the performing arts content they have consumed. However, they emphasise a preference for live physical performance. Most would also be willing to continue to enjoy this type of content and would be willing to pay, especially for content created specifically for online platforms, but at a lower price than the live experience. The exception is the independent music audience,¹⁶⁵ for whom the digital mode of enjoyment has not been satisfactory at all.

To conclude, we should mention a datum that emerges from the only Italian survey that intercepted the overall population and not only those who were already part of the live arts audience: those who did not attend theatre or dance

¹⁶¹ Leonardo Altieri and Marco De Marinis, “Il lavoro dello spettatore nella produzione dell’evento teatrale,” *Sociologia del Lavoro* 25 (1985): 201–224; Anna Lisa Tota, “‘Theatrical Frame’: Processi interpretativi e attività cognitive dello spettatore teatrale,” *Studi di sociologia* (1998): 419–441.

¹⁶² Alberto Castelli, et al., “Caro spettatore, come stai?” (2020). Available at https://www.carospettatore.it/carospettatore_racconto.pdf, 1. 3. 2021.

¹⁶³ Katy Raines, “National Audience Research – After the Interval & Act 2,” Indigo Ltd (2020). Available at <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/supercool-indigo/Act-2-Report-wave-2-results.pdf>, 1. 3. 2021; The Pattern Makers, “COVID-19 Audience Outlook Monitor. Australia Snapshot Report.” Available at <https://www.thepatternmakers.com.au/covid19>, 1. 3. 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Alberto Castelli, Laura Curti et al.

¹⁶⁵ Carlo Pastore, “I concerti dopo il covid-19. Indagine sul mondo della musica live dopo la pandemia,” (2020). Available at <https://rockitpubblici.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Concerti-dopo-il-Covid-19-MI-AMI-ROCKIT.pdf>, 1. 3. 2021.

shows before the pandemic did not use the digital contents offered by the sector.¹⁶⁶ Although hardly surprising, it is a result that unfortunately dispels the already low hopes placed in online shows' potential to involve new audiences. After all, in Italy, as emerges from the latest Federcultura report,¹⁶⁷ only 19% of residents entered a theatre in 2018, and this is where we should start the discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

In this contribution, we have offered a brief account of how the Italian theatre sector has reacted and is continuing to react¹⁶⁸ to the closure of theatres due to the pandemic. We have tried to underline the multiple ways the performance space has been rethought beyond the simplistic idea of the "theatre on the internet". Firstly, this is a reductive view because it still depends on prejudice that sees the online environment as a unitary field. Secondly, it does not consider the re-materialisation trajectory we have witnessed in recent months, which is moving towards a retrieval of urban spaces and physical theatres. Finally, it is a perspective limited to the principle of "transferring theatre". Rather than asking whether online theatre is still theatre when it is transferred online, we find it more fruitful to ask what kind of research into media technologies and formats theatre artists can offer. On the other hand, a seldom-discussed problem concerning the possibilities of theatre outside theatres is the reluctance of the legislative, economic and cultural apparatuses to follow and support these kinds of productions. Experimentation with performance spaces, in fact, results in a difficult synchronisation with the measures to protect the sector. From a legislative point of view, for example, the possibility for regional governments to support artistic residency depends on the artists physically staying in the area, which is unsuitable for implementing digital or trans-territorial residencies. Therefore, the question of the relationship between theatre and the digital sphere cannot be limited to an investigation of the aesthetic potentials and constraints. It must be complemented by analysing the processes of regulation and funding, the infrastructure for the production and circulation of culture, and the audience's behaviour. Together, these factors constitute the preconditions for stabilising and developing artistic innovation.

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¹⁶⁶ Indagine Impresa Cultura Italia-Confcommercio e Swg, "Covid: la cultura si sposta sul digitale," (2020). Available at <https://www.confcommercio.it/-/comunicato-97-2020-impresa-cultura-italia-covid-19-cultura-sposta-su-digitale>, 1. 3. 2021.

¹⁶⁷ Federcultura, Impresa Cultura. Dal tempo della cura a quello del rilancio (Roma: Gangemi editore S.p.a, 2020).

¹⁶⁸ At the time of finalising this text (end of February/beginning of March 2021), the sector has reached the end of its rope. On 23 February, the National Union of Theatre and Audiovisual Performers (UNITA) organised the initiative "Facciamo luce sul teatro" (Let's shed light on theatre) in various Italian cities, asking for a return of performing arts in the public debate with the aim of planning a safe reopening. At the moment, the latest decree envisages a reopening of theatres on 27 March in regions with fewer cases. However, the fact that small theatres are unable to make a profit with the limited capacity due to containment regulations is a problem that is still almost completely overlooked.

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GLEDALIŠČA V TEMI

Vpliv covid-19 na digitalne uprizoritve, zagovorništvo in spletno javno sfero v britanski gledališki industriji

16. marca 2020 so gledališča v londonskem West Endu zaprla svoja vrata zaradi vladne objave, ki je javnosti svetovala, da se »izogiba pivnicam, klubom, gledališčem in drugim tovrstnim družabnim prizoriščem«. ¹⁶⁹ V naslednjem tednu so se zaprla tudi gledališča v preostalih delih Združenega kraljestva, kar je vsem iz te industrije povzročilo veliko mero negotovosti in stisk. Z besedami izvršnega direktorja Društva londonskih gledališč (Society of London Theatre) in Britanskega gledališča (UK Theatre) Juliana Birda: »Zaprtje prizorišč ni bila odločitev, ki bi bila sprejeta zlahka, in zavedamo se, da bo to močno vplivalo na mnoge izmed 290.000 posameznikov, zaposlenih v naši industriji«. ¹⁷⁰ V naslednjih tednih pa so člani te iste industrije poskrbeli za razcvet spletnih dejavnosti. Po vsej državi so kot odziv na zaprtje gledališč potekala strimanja, predstave po Zoomu, internetna srečanja in spletna druženja ob jutranji kavi. Ko je konservativna vlada Borisa Johnsona 23. marca 2020 uvedla stroga nacionalna pravila splošne karantene in tako sprožila nastanek digitalnih skupnosti, je slednje samostojnim gledališkim ustvarjalcem odprlo prostor za nove aktivnosti in medsebojna sodelovanja.

Gibanje za preselitev gledališke skupnosti na splet v času pandemije ne zadeva samo načina, kako se kreativne industrije povezujejo z javno sfero, ampak postavlja tudi temeljna vprašanja o vrzeli med živo in virtualno predstavo in položajo gledališkega delavca v času nedelovanja te industrije. Po besedah Christopherja Balmeja je gledališče v 21. stoletju uporabilo internet za širjenje gledališke javne sfere. ¹⁷¹ Gledališke hiše in organizacije so ustvarile virtualna spletna mesta, ki ne služijo samo kot platforme, namenjene promociji, deljenju vsebin in oblikovanju identitet, ampak omogočajo tudi spletno širjenje umetniških del. V času trajanja pandemije (2020–2021) pa je internet postal obsežen teren za ustvarjanje novih hibridnih modelov predstav in močno orodje za zagovorništvo, aktivizem in izmenjavo znanj v času socialne izolacije. Naslednje poglavje preučuje, kako je britanski gledališki sektor uporabil digitalni in spletni prostor za gradnjo skupnosti, nudenje podpore in umetniške inovacije.

¹⁶⁹ Izjava predsednika vlade o koronavirusu (16. 3. 2020). Dostopno na <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-16-march-2020>, 1. 3. 2021.

¹⁷⁰ "Coronavirus: West End shuts down as Boris Johnson's advice sparks anger." Predvajano na BBC News, 17. 3. 2020. Dostopno na <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51906370>, 1. 3. 2021.

¹⁷¹ Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 66.

Poglavje temelji na strnjenem pregledu medijskih poročil, spletnih strani in spletnih platform, dopoljenih z osebnimi izjavami, pridobljenimi iz serije stotih intervjujev z neodvisnimi gledališkimi delavci iz naše študije z naslovom *Samo-stojni kulturni delavci v temi (Freelancers in the Dark)*, ki raziskuje vpliv covida-19 na gledališke umetnike v Združenem kraljestvu. Študijo je financiral Ekonomsko-socialni raziskovalni svet (Economic and Social Research Council). Prednosti in slabosti, ki jih je prinesel prehod gledaliških delavcev v digitalno sfero, so primeri, kako lahko v prihodnjih letih covid-19 spremeni način, kako gledališka industrija komunicira med sabo in z javnostjo.

PREDSTAVA SE MORA NADALJEVATI NA SPLETU: STRIMING IN DIGITALNA PREDSTAVA

Pandemija je okrepila tezo, da raznolike aplikacije na družbenih omrežjih predstavljajo tisto, kar Christopher Balme označuje kot »naslednjo stopnjo udeleževanja« med gledališčem in javno sfero, kjer sodobni gledalci aktivno sodelujejo z individualiziranim dostopom do gledališke prakse in njenega doživljanja.¹⁷² Spletne predstave in pretakanje se je začelo dojemati kot platformo, ki občinstvu omogoča ohranjati povezanost z gledališčem, obenem pa predstavlja potencialni vir prihodkov številnim kulturnim institucijam po vsej državi za lajšanje finančnega izpada kot posledice ukrepov, povezanih s covidom-19. Tovrstno spletno gibanje se je izkazalo za več kot le kratkoročno rešitev, saj raziskave nakazujejo, da se lahko strimanje kot pomemben segment te industrije nadaljuje tudi v postcovidnem času. Raziskovalci z univerze v Exetru so opravili študijo digitalne preobrazbe umetniške industrije, ki je pokazala, da je približno 75 % vprašanih izjavilo, »da bodo kupili vstopnice za ogled gledališke predstave po Zoomu, tudi ko bodo gledališča znova odprta«.¹⁷³ Baz Kershaw v svoji monografiji *Gledališka ekologija: okolja in uprizoritveni dogodki (Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events)* iz leta 2006 piše, da na razvoj digitalnih tehnologij ne bi smeli gledati »kot na grožnjo za gledališče v živo, temveč kot potencialen vir njegovega preporoda in izboljšav skozi novo vrsto občutij«.¹⁷⁴

Od pričetka pandemije se je obseg dela za pripravo digitalnih produkcij povečal za trikrat. Organizacije in gledališke družbe, ki so se predhodno upirale povečanju obsega virtualnih in hibridno-digitalnih predstav, so začele v času pandemije temu namenjati prednost ne samo zaradi preživetja, ampak tudi zaradi inovacij. Umetniške ustanove, kot je Birminghamski kraljevi balet (Birmingham Royal Ballet), in gledališki festivali so v sodelovanju s kreativnimi digitalnimi tehnikami in umetniki začeli oblikovati strategije, s katerimi bi nadgradili svoje platforme in razvijali nove hibridne digitalne vsebine. Tehnični direktor vizualnih komunikacij, ki dela v okolici Londona, trdi, da trend in ponovna obravnava virtualne, hibridne in multimedijske produkcije ne bosta vplivali le na spletne izkušnje, temveč bosta v Veliki Britaniji spremenili prihodnost gledališča v živo.

¹⁷² Ibid, 68.

¹⁷³ Pascale Aebischer in Rachael Nicholas, *Digital Theatre Transformations: A Case Study and Digital Toolkit Final Report* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2020), 27. Dostopno na <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/123464>, 3. 1. 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 73.

»Celoten svet mešane realnosti, dogajanje virtualnih odrov se pospešuje ... eksponentno. Torej, namesto virtualnega okolja ali kot dodatek k virtualnemu okolju, vanj ujeta človeška bitja z laserjem in realističnimi vrstami oblik (z njimi eksperimentirajo). Vsi moji prijatelji tehniki, veste, se potapljajo v Netflix in v vse te vrste zadev, v katere se potapljamo pri treningu in mreženju.«¹⁷⁵

Multimedijske predstave dajejo vpogled, kot tudi kritično noto, v vpliv medijskih tehnologij na sodobno kulturo, kar izhaja iz vedno večjega poudarjanja *multimedijske* narave kritičnih perspektiv, ki zadevajo mediatizacijo družbe.¹⁷⁶

Sunkovit prehod na spletne predstave in na spletni način dela je tako uveljavljenim kot samostojnim gledališkim ustvarjalcem, ki so šele na začetku svoje poti, omogočil, da so vzajemno redefinirali lastne umetniške prakse na načine, ki pred pandemijo morda niso bili finančno vzdržni. Selitev gledališke produkcije na splet je izvajalcem omogočila več možnosti za eksperimentiranje z večregionalnimi in intermedialnimi digitalnimi projekti. Londonska gledališka režiserka se je svojega prehoda na digitalno uprizoritveno platformo v času prve splošne karantene v Združenem kraljestvu spominjala kot prostora za ohranjanje ustvarjalnosti in napredovanja pri pridobivanju novih veščin. Režiserka je v sodelovanju s televizijskim producentom pripravila serijo kratkih filmov po najbolj znanih Shakespearovih igrah skupaj s filmskim urednikom ter skupino igralcev in pisateljev ki so se odrekli proviziji za svoje delo. Ta projekt so ustvarili kot »odo gledališču«, in da bi »ohranili mentalno zdravje« v času prve splošne karantene. Prehod v digitalni prostor ji je omogočil, da je v času socialnega in delovnega manka razvila nove umetniške veščine in uveljavila lastno identiteto ustvarjalke. Kot trdi sama, »smo kreativni ljudje ... zdi se mi, da je bilo res neverjetno, da sem lahko sodelovala z igralci in režirala ... tudi če je bilo preko Zooma«. Obenem pa je priznala, da je bilo to delo, kljub temu da sta o njem poročala BBC in Royal Lyceum, težko vnovčiti pri umetniških organizacijah, ki niso prepričane, kako zaslužiti s filmom.

»Zdi se mi, da je ravno to najbolj zahteven del pri digitalnih vsebinah ... Nacionalno gledališče je ponujalo veliko spletnih vsebin, vendar v zameno za donacije ... Nisem prepričana, kako si lahko samostojni umetniki, ki so del tega, pridobijo finančno podporo v tem času. ... Zdi se mi, da je bilo super, da smo bili kreativni in smo nekaj počeli, vendar to ni finančno stabilno.«¹⁷⁷

Številni gledališki delavci so imeli občutek, da manjše gledališke družbe ne morejo konkurirati z brezplačnimi vsebinami, ki so jih ponujale večje kulturne ustanove, kot so Narodno gledališče (The National Theatre), Kraljeva Shakespearova družba (Royal Shakespeare Company) in Old Vic. Te ustanove so nudile produkcijsko vrednost, ki so jo mala in srednje velika gledališka prizorišča težje replicirala. Mnogi naši anketiranci, vključeni v študijo *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*, pa so menili, da je brezplačno pretakanje, ki so ga omogočale večje kulturne ustanove, ustvarilo ovire za manjše gledališke družbe, ki so skušale k ogledu svojih predstav na spletu privabiti občinstvo proti plačilu.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV03, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (26. 9. 2020). UKRI ESRC: *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁷⁶ Rosemary Klich in Edward Scheer, *Multimedia Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

¹⁷⁷ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV001, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (23. 9. 2020). UKRI ESRC: *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁷⁸ Sodelujoči v raziskavi Interviews, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (23. 9. 2020–16. 3. 2021).

Gledališke družbe so se jeseni posvetile strateškemu načrtovanju, kako v finančnem smislu čim bolje izkoristiti digitalne vsebine. National Theatre Live in druge platforme so ustvarili plačljive platforme za strimanje. Manjše gledališke družbe, ki so svoje spletne in digitalne veščine razvile tekom dela v prvih mesecih pandemije, so začele ustvarjati bolj dovršene spletne predstave, zaračunavati cene vstopnic in predstavljati svoje delo na spletnih festivalih. Še vedno pa so se soočali z izzivom, kako spremeniti javno mišljenje, ki je bilo navajeno na brezplačno prejetje spletnih vsebin.

Številne gledališke umetnike je pri prehodu na spletne platforme obhajal dvom. Nekateri verjamejo, da je pritisk po selitvi umetniških del na splet, ki so ga med pandemijo občutile mnoge gledališke družbe in ustanove, ogrozil kakovost dela.¹⁷⁹ V zadnjem desetletju je veliko umetnikov ustvarjalo in razvijalo digitalne vsebine, nekateri pa so se morali v preteklem letu naučiti uporabljati spletne platforme povsem na novo. Občutek, da morajo za vsako ceno raziskati novonastale platforme, je pri nekaterih vodil v strah pred ogrožanjem lastne narave dela in posledično povzročil razočaranje in napetost.¹⁸⁰ Neki britansko-azijski umetnik je menil, da lahko spletni predstavi na Zoomu primanjkuje kakovosti:

»To ni gledališče ... v tem nisem dober. Veselim se vrnitve k predstavam v živo. Mislim, da se veliko družb vede kot 'Ah, saj bomo digitalno prenesli na splet' in ... edini ljudje, ki te stvari koristijo, so drugi umetniki. In podobno, jaz pa tega ne želim koristiti. Hočem gledati Netflix.«¹⁸¹

Nekateri so bili mnenja, da je selitev v digitalni prostor predstavam v živo odvzela temeljni vidik grajenja skupnosti. Na spletu je težko poustvariti gledališke avle in druge »vmesne« prostore, ki spodbujajo razpravo med občinstvom. Kot je trdil eden od umetnikov iz plesnega gledališča v Walesu, »želimo doseči lokalni element in to vsekakor manjka pri digitalni platformi, zlasti zato ker imamo tu starajoče se prebivalstvo. Zagotovo je prišlo do izgub«.¹⁸² Gledališki delavci so poleg pretiranega zanašanja na spletne platforme omenjali tudi težave z internetno povezljivostjo, kar močno vpliva na geografsko marginalizirane skupnosti in na pripadnike delavskega razreda, na težave starejših in digitalno nepismenih posameznikov pri upravljanju s spletnimi platformami, na pretirano uporabo Zooma in na pomanjkanje družabnega bontona v spletnih prostorih, kot je Zoom. Nekateri gledališki ustvarjalci so to težavo poskušali rešiti s pogovori po koncu predstav in z razdelitvijo v skupine, kar je udeležencem in publiki omogočalo čas za medsebojni pogovor, vendar so mnogi ugotovili, da v virtualnem prostoru ta vidik žive predstave ni prisoten.¹⁸³

UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi.

¹⁷⁹ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV078, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (24. 11. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi.*

¹⁸⁰ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV016, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (28. 9. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi.*

¹⁸¹ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV078, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (24. 11. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi.*

¹⁸² Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV095, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (16. 3. 2021). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi.*

¹⁸³ Sodelujoči v raziskavi *Interviews*, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (23. 9. 2020–16. 3. 2021). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi.*

Stroški, povezani s pripravo digitalne oblike žive predstave, nakazujejo, da so na trgu prevladovali uveljavljene storitve pretakanja na zahtevo, vključno z National Theatre Live in mednarodnimi ponudniki vsebin, kot sta Broadway HD in Stage Russia HD, ki omogočajo dostop do številnih profesionalnih posnetkov predstav in visoko proračunskih produkcij s celega sveta z le klikom na gumb. Zaradi povpraševanja po digitalnih predstavah so tudi manjše gledališke družbe začele analogno uvajati lastne storitve strimanja, da bi občinstvu ponujale posnetke gledaliških predstav. Februarja 2021 je gledališče Orange Tree v južnem Londonu v svojem digitalnem projektu *OT On Screen (OT na zaslonu)* napovedalo vrsto predvajanj novih predstav pod sloganom *ZNOTRAJ/ZUNAJ (INSIDE/OUTSIDE)*.

Na podoben način delujejo tudi obrobna gledališča, ki še naprej vodijo lastne platforme za strimanje, pri čemer je predvajanje predstav predvideno vsaj do poletja 2021.¹⁸⁴ Ljudsko gledališče Camden (Camden People's Theatre CPT) je pri ustvarjanju virtualnih del med pandemijo nudilo velik vir podpore manjšim umetnikom in umetnikom, ki se šele uveljavljajo. CPT je bil naročnik spletnih festivalov in tudi pobudnik ustvarjanja digitalnih predstav. V ta namen so vzpostavili posebno platformo za podporo in naročanje projektov, s čimer spodbujajo hibridno-virtualne predstave in predstave v živo.¹⁸⁵ HOME Manchester in Narodno gledališče v Walesu prav tako ponujata živahne platforme za neodvisne umetnike. Upamo tudi, da bodo lokalni organi financiranja nudili raznoliko podporo regionalnim gledališkim umetnikom in ustvarjali nove priložnosti za strokovnjake, ki bodo lahko nudili nujno potrebne družbene vsebine, in še naprej spodbujali umetniške inovacije. Odzivi gledaliških ustvarjalcev, ki sodelujejo z lokalnimi skupnostmi, imajo potencialno moč, da reprezentirajo pomembno alternativo digitalni prevladi komercializiranih produkcij. Primer takšnih produkcij s številnimi zvanečimi imeni, sta predstavi *Pljuča (Lungs, 2020)* in *Božična pesem (A Christmas Carol, 2020)*, ki ju je predvajalo gledališče Old Vic in vzpostavljajo nove sklope lokalizirane estetike po vsej Veliki Britaniji.

OD JUTRANJH KAV DO SAMOSTOJNIH PROJEKTNIH SKUPIN: DIGITALNE SKUPNOSTI IN SPLETNI AKTIVIZEM

Sprememba paradigme digitalne in spletne platforme ni bila pomembna samo zato, ker je umetnikom nudila možnost, da si povrnejo nujno potrebni občutek nadzora nad življenjem, ampak je tudi odprla pomembne nove poti zagovorništva in razprav za samostojne gledališke delavce po vsej Veliki Britaniji. Jen Harvie v svoji knjigi *Gledališče in mesto (Theatre & The City)* pronicljivo poudarja, da platforme socialnih medijev »ustvarjajo več kontekstov za performativne posege, za usklajevanje komunikacije pri načrtovanju upornih uprizoritvenih praks in za vzpostavljanje novih digitalnih psiho-prostorskih krajin«.¹⁸⁶ Digitalizirane ustvarjalne skupnosti, ki so se razvile med pandemijo, poleg zagotavljanja platform za izmenjavo znanja in spretnosti delujejo tudi kot spletna mesta discipliniranih podpornih skupin. Ena takšnih je tedenska zoom-konferenca, namenjena samostojnim gledališkim režiserjem, ki jo vodita ugledna režiserja Robert Icke in Lyndsey Turner. Tovrstne dejavnosti zagotavljajo pomemben vir za gledališke ustvarjalce, da revidirajo svojo prakso in svoje umetniške izkušnje, kar spodbuja prevrednotenje

¹⁸⁴ Southwark Playhouse v Londonu vsako noč (do junija 2021) predvaja predstave v živo, poleg tega pa na zahtevo ponuja posnetke preteklih produkcij, vključno z mednarodno premiero filma *The Poltergeist* Philipa Ridleyja (2020).

¹⁸⁵ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV044, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (27. 10. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁸⁶ Jen Harvie, *Theatre & The City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56.

načinov, kako lahko ustvarjamo gledališče v postcovidni družbi.

V intervjujih za študijo *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi* smo intervjuvance prosili, da delijo svoje izkušnje sodelovanja s podpornimi mrežami na spletu med pandemijo. Producent, s katerim smo se pogovarjali, je poudaril pomen neformalnih digitalnih mrež za gledališke umetnike, ki delujejo kot sredstvo zagovorništva in spodbujanja širših komunikacijskih praks v gledališki industriji. Kot producent spletnega podjetja za podporo umetnikom v krizi v času pandemije je bil jasnega mnenja, da so tovrstne mreže delovale kot ključne točke za povezovanje samostojnih gledaliških ustvarjalcev: »To je izjemno zanimiv prostor in ga prej nismo imeli. [...] Mislim, da je v tem resnična moč. Trenutno obstaja resnična moč [...], to je res močan, razburljiv čas.«¹⁸⁷ Drugi udeleženci v naši študiji so prav tako spregovorili o pomenu teh novih virtualnih skupin med vrstniki in o vsakdanji podpori. Vključen je bil tudi londonski gledališki režiser, ki je povedal, da je zanj pandemija covida-19 razkrila dejstvo, da »imamo vsi čas in prostor, da se nekako povežemo med seboj«.¹⁸⁸ Razvidno je, da so ta generativna mrežna mesta dialoške interakcije pri naših anketirancih spodbudila tako epistemološko kot osebno refleksijo in ponovno poudarila bolj eksperimentalen in spontan pristop k zagovorništvu med sodobnimi gledališčniki.

Številni udeleženci raziskave so poudarili tudi pomen gledaliških spletnih socialnih omrežij pri razvoju skupnosti, soočanju s socialno izolacijo in pri težavah v duševnem zdravju zaradi izgube dela med pandemijo. Gledališki in prireditveni tehnik na Škotskem je povedal, da je bilo to še posebej pomembno za tehnične in odrske delavce:

»V mislih imam pogovore o duševnem zdravju, v kolikor se seveda želite pogovarjati o tem. Temu je namenjena jutranja kava vsak torek ob 11. uri. Eden od adminov organizira zoom-klepet in ljudje se lahko prijavijo za eno uro in se pogovarjajo o tem, kaj se dogaja oziroma kaj se v bistvu ne dogaja.«¹⁸⁹

Nudnje podpore na področju čustvenega in duševnega zdravja je bilo ključnega pomena pri gledaliških spletnih podpornih skupinah in v facebook-skupinah običajnih gledaliških delavcev. Študija je pokazala, da so te platforme zagotavljale podporo in komunikacijo, zlasti za inspiciente, tehnike in oblikovalce, ki so večinoma ostajali brez dela vse od marca 2020. Izkazalo se je, da je bilo to bistvenega pomena za samopomoč in za podpiranje skupnosti.

Druga podporna mreža, značilna za skupine, ki se v gledališki industriji počutijo marginalizirane, je preko družbenih medijev povezala skupnosti delavskega razreda, mreže umetnikov invalidov, BAME in aktiviste za trans in LGBTQ+ pravice. Ena izmed intervjuvank, trans performerka, je omenila, da so k njej na posvete prihajali tudi njeni trans umetniški prijatelji, pogovarjali so se o pogajanjih, s katerimi so se soočali v zvezi s svojim položajem v produkcijskih, vadbenih in

¹⁸⁷ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV045, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (27. 10. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁸⁸ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV078, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (27. 10. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁸⁹ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV007, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (25. 9. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

izvedbenih prostorih.¹⁹⁰ Valižanski dramatik in zagovornik pravic invalidov pa je ugotavljal, da se mu je povečal obseg dela, ko je v sodelovanju z gledališči in drugimi organizacijami preko Zooma nudil treninge.¹⁹¹

Poleg Zooma in Facebooka so bile za samostojne gledališke umetnike, ki so delili informacije, koristne tudi druge platforme. Aplikacija WhatsApp je postala močno orodje za igralce, gledališke družbe in skupnosti iz te industrije. Nudila je podporo in prostor za diskusije po tem, kar se je marca 2020 zdelo kot nenavaden in travmatičen konec te industrije. Številni udeleženci raziskave *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*, ki so bili vključeni v produkcije ali vaje pred uvedbo prve splošne karantene, so začeli uporabljati aplikacijo WhatsApp za čustveno podporo in prostor za izmenjevanje informacij o financiranju, nadomestilih za samozaposlene in drugih rečeh, ki so gledališkim delavcem koristile v času pandemije. Vse večja uporaba aplikacije WhatsApp je zagotovila tudi pomembno orodje za lobiranje in zagovorništvo pri načrtovanju kolektivnih akcij, zlasti za gledališke delavce v West Endu, ki so bili po zaprtju gledališč izpuščeni iz produkcijskih razprav.¹⁹²

Nekateri so našli podporo na forumih, ki so se razvili v času pandemije z namenom razprave o aktivnih strategijah za izboljšanje razmer v gledališki industriji. Londonski oblikovalec luči opisuje svoje sodelovanje v številnih tovrstnih forumih, ki so se razvili poleti 2020 po protestih Black Lives Matter: »Po Zoomu sem sodeloval v številnih razpravah z Združenjem oblikovalcev luči (Association of Lighting Designers), z Equity and Bectu (Zveza za radiotelevizijo, zabavo, komunikacije in gledališče) ter s skupnostjo Samostojni umetniki delajo gledališče (Freelancers Make Theatre Work) kot tudi s posameznimi prireditvenimi prostori, vključno z The Bush, The Gate in The Orange Tree, ki so se pridružili nazadnje. Te razprave bi lahko poimenovali kot *seje mestnega sveta*, kjer smo lahko nekako razpravljali, saj veste, kam naprej ... Kako se naj gledališče izboljša? Kaj želimo od vlade in od lastne industrije?«¹⁹³ Gibanje za odprto razpravo o izzivih v industriji je ustvarilo nov val zagovorništva glede delovnih pogojev, rasne, spolne in razredne neenakosti v gledališki industriji.

To je sovpadalo z razgretimi pozivi k večjemu dialogu med ustvarjalci, institucijami ter organi financiranja britanske umetniške industrije. Kot je poudaril naš sogovornik:

»Pred covidom-19 niso bile razprave med sindikati, strokovnimi skupinami in v nekaterih primerih tudi producenti nikoli tako odprte, diskurzivne, sodelovalne in transparentne. Sedaj se razpravlja o tem, kaj je šlo narobe in kako je treba postopati dalje. To je ena od stvari, za katero upam, da se bo ohranila tudi po covidu.«¹⁹⁴

Zagovorniki samostojnih gledaliških delavcev, kot sta Delovna skupina samostojnih kulturnih delavcev (Freelancers Task Force) in organizacija Samostojni umetniki delajo gledališče (Freelancers Make Things Work), so na spletnih

¹⁹⁰ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV033, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (12. 10. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁹¹ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV054, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (2. 11. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁹² Sodelujoči v raziskavi *Interviews*, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (23. 9. 2020–16. 3. 2021). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁹³ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV008, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (24. 9. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁹⁴ Prav tam.

platformah vzpostavili dialog s prijatelji iz drugih gledališč po Veliki Britaniji in oblikovali spletne strani kot prostor za izmenjavo informacij in spodbujanje aktivizma pri težavah, povezanih z ustvarjanjem boljših delovnih pogojev znotraj celotne gledališke industrije. Ena izmed pozitivnih lastnosti spletne platforme je, da omogoča širši krog udeležencev in številčnejšo udeležbo, ki v živo ne bi bila mogoča. Aktivni član jugozahodne izpostave Delovne skupine samostojnih kulturnih delavcev Anglije je takole opisal svoje sodelovanje:

»To je precej velika skupina, ki organizira, medsebojno podpira, zajema širok spekter starostnih skupin. Je res raznolika skupina z raznovrstnimi praksami in vključuje vse od režiserjev in koreografov do izvajalcev, umetnikov ter producentov. Res zajema širok spekter.«¹⁹⁵

Te organizacije so lahko skupaj z regionalnimi, lokalnimi spletnimi organizacijami in še nekaj drugimi, povezanimi z gledališko industrijo, spodbudile medsebojni sodelovalni dialog, ki ga predhodno v gledališki industriji ni bilo mogoče zaslediti. Za številne gledališke delavce, vključene v študijo, je edina pozitivna sprememba, ki jo je povzročila pandemija, rast področnih omrežij in zagovorniških skupin.

Pandemija covida-19 in zaporedne uvedbe splošne karantene so še dodatno izpostavile problematiko, da so bili samostojni gledališki umetniki marginalizirani ter izključeni iz dialoga in razprav o načinu delovanja gledaliških hiš. V letu 2020 se je na spletu pojavila vrsta novih umetniških diskurzov, ki so zagovarjali vključitev samostojnih umetnikov v procese odločanja večjih kulturnih ustanov. To je bilo povezano z zaskrbljenostjo, da so samostojni umetniki izključeni iz pomembnih pogovorov o prihodnosti gledališke forme in vsebine, ko se kriza covida-19 umiri. Pandemija je poudarila bistvene napake v britanski gledališki industriji in okrepila potrebo po priznanju obsega vpliva samostojnih kulturnih delavcev. Poleg tega so širši družbeno-politični dogodki, vključno s protesti, ki so bili v Veliki Britaniji organizirani maja in junija 2020 v podporo gibanju Black Lives Matter po umoru Georgea Floydja v ZDA, pospešili pojav nove vrste digitalnega udejstvovanja. Globalni in domači dogodki leta 2020 so zastavili vrsto vprašanj, katerih cilj je izzvati zakoreninjene kulturne vrednote v Združenem kraljestvu in zahtevati, da se po koncu tretje karantene, ki je v veljavi od januarja 2021, prepreči vrnitev k togim hierarhičnim ločnicam v gledališki industriji. Pri tem aktivizmu je osrednjega pomena hitrost, s katero se lahko odvijajo pogovori v virtualnih platformah. Kot pronicljivo trdi Mohamed Samir El-Khatib, je »prostor glavno besedilo, kjer moč uveljavi svojo prisotnost skozi rekonstruiranje spomina na določen kraj in z manipuliranjem njegovih zgodovinskih in kulturnih konotacij, ki služijo lastnim interesom«.¹⁹⁶ Samostojni umetniki, ki so se počutili izključene iz javnega prostora in uradnega odziva gledaliških hiš na pandemijo, so uporabili socialna omrežja in druge digitalne platforme, da so si izpogajali alternativno umetniško pot v času pandemije. S tem so politizirali vloge in izkušnje samostojnih umetnikov med pandemijo ter vpeljali nov družbeni diskurz. Z deljenjem informacij in spletnih povezav

¹⁹⁵ Sodelujoči v raziskavi INV074, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (20. 11. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

¹⁹⁶ Mohamed Samir El-Khatib, "Tahrir Square as Spectacle: Some Exploratory Remarks on Place, Body and Power," *Theatre Research International* 38, 2 (2013): 104–115, 105.

na Twitterju so ustvarili nove oblike kibernetnega aktivizma in zagovorništva, ki revidirajo gledališke načine dela in izzovejo ključno reinterpretacijo sodobne gledališke ekologije v Veliki Britaniji.

KAJ PA ZDAJ? GLEDALIŠČE V (POST)PANDEMIČNEM SVETU

22. februarja 2021 je Boris Johnson nagovoril spodnji dom britanskega parlamenta, kjer je predstavil *načrt* za previdno odpravo karantenskih ukrepov v prihajajočih mesecih. Johnson je v svojem govoru, ki je bil neposredno predvajan na osrednjih televizijskih poročilih na BBC One, napovedal, da bodo »gledališča in koncertne dvorane odprli svoja vrata najpozneje 17. maja«. ¹⁹⁷ Temu je sledil okvirni predlog, da se bodo po 17. maju lahko odprla notranja in zunanja gledališča z upoštevanjem ukrepov ohranjanja varnostne razdalje. 21. junija bi lahko že delovala s polno zmogljivostjo. ¹⁹⁸ Ni presenetljivo, da je vsa angleška kulturna industrija sprejela Johnsonovo napoved z začetnim optimizmom, ki je sledil več mesecem mučne negotovosti glede morebitnega ponovnega odpiranja gledališč za občinstvo. Kljub temu pa se v gledališki industriji v Združenem kraljestvu še vedno širi nelagodje, da se bodo morali tako zaposleni kot samostojni gledališki umetniki soočiti s precejšnjimi srednjeročnimi in dolgoročnimi izzivi glede načinov ustvarjanja in posredovanja svojih del. V istem mesecu, kot je Johnson predstavil svoj načrt, je britanski rumeni časopis *The Stage* poročal, da se je zaupanje občinstva v gledališče močno poslabšalo zaradi zaporednih uvedb splošne karantene in pojava novih sevov covid-19 decembra 2020. ¹⁹⁹ V času pisanja te publikacije je *Guardian* šokiral z novico, da je Sklad za reševanje umetnosti Velike Britanije (UK arts rescue fund), ki naj bi podpiral ogroženi sektor uprizoritvenih umetnosti, doslej izplačal le polovico dodeljenega denarja. ²⁰⁰ V tem prelomnem trenutku za razvoj gledališča v Združenem kraljestvu, prežetem z negotovostmi in prepiri, je ključnega pomena, da naslovimo pomembno vprašanje, kaj se bo zgodilo, ko se bodo karantenski ukrepi sproščali tekom leta 2021.

Paul B. Preciado je nedavno opazil, da je pogosta raba digitalnih platform med pandemijo covid-19 omogočila dostop do obsežnih komunikacijskih vozlišč, hkrati pa okrepila socialno izolacijo. »Domači prostor postaja novo središče produkcije, potrošnje in političnega nadzora, za razliko od tradicionalnih tovrstnih ustanov (bolnišnice, tovarne, zapori, šole itd.),« piše Preciado. ²⁰¹

»Delo na daljavo in naprave za daljinsko upravljanje so odslej na dosegu naše roke. Vertikalni delavci nižjega statusa, feminizirana in rasno diskriminirana telesa so v zunanjem svetu obsojana. [...] Naši prenosni telekomunikacijski stroji so naši

¹⁹⁷ Celoten prepis Johnsonovega govora si je mogoče prebrati na <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-on-roadmap-for-easing-lockdown-restrictions-in-england-22-february-2021>, 5. 3. 2021.

¹⁹⁸ Johnson se je izrecno skliceval na gledališča v Angliji, pričakuje pa se, da bodo ponovna odprtja gledališč na Škotskem, v Walesu in na Severnem Irskem tesno povezana z gledališči v Angliji.

¹⁹⁹ Georgía Snow, "Audience confidence knocked by lockdown and new variants, survey suggests," *The Stage*, 19. 2. 2021. Dostopno na <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/audience-confidence-knocked-by-lockdown-and-new-variants-survey-suggests>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁰⁰ Rajeev Syal, "UK arts rescue fund has paid out just over half of money allocated," *Guardian*, 12. 3. 2021. Dostopno na <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/series/culture-in-peril>, 12. 3. 2021.

²⁰¹ Paul B. Preciado, *Learning from the Virus*, Artforum 9 (2020).

novi ječarji, notranjost lastnega doma pa je postala mehek in ultra povezan zapor prihodnosti.«²⁰²

Povedano drugače, oblike dela, kot je gledališko ustvarjanje, so bile na daljavo odtujene od vsakdanjih izkušenj in raztelešene s pomočjo digitaliziranih delovnih praks. Vse od vrhunca pandemije leta 2020 je večina evropskih vlad poudarjala nujnost dela od doma, s čimer pa je številne sodobne umetnike ločila od tradicionalnih prostorov umetniškega ustvarjanja. Številni anketiranci, ki so sodelovali v študiji *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*, so navajali digitalno utrujenost in razočaranje nad virtualnimi načini dela. Eden od naših intervjuvancev je to izkušnjo podkrepil s trditvijo: »Mislím, da se vsi počutíjo, kot da je prišlo do neke vrste izgorelosti in prenasičenosti spletnih vsebin. Na vse pretege skušam dohajati, vendar se mi zdi, da se moji možgani ne povezujejo s temi stvarmi na enak način kot pred uvedbo splošne karantene«. ²⁰³ Del udeležencev naše študije je prav tako omenjal digitalno »izgorelost«. Še bolj zaskrbljujoč je podatek, da so udeleženci te študije s statusom samostojnega kulturnega delavca spregovorili tudi o tesnobi, ki izhaja iz tega, da so neodvisni gledališki umetniki zaradi nenadnega prehoda na spletno digitalno platformo finančno prikrajšani. Te zgodbe utemeljujejo potrebo, da gledališke ustanove vzpostavítvijo dolgoročen dialog s svobodnimi umetniki, kar bo ključnega pomena za nadaljnjo izvirno uprizoritveno produkcijo v Veliki Britaniji.

Kljub globoko zasidranim pomislekom glede trenutne razširjenosti digitalnih del je očitno, da bo predvajanje predstav zagotovo ostalo v ospredju gledališke pokrajine. Ustvarjalec gledališkega dokumentarnega filma in performansa, intervjuvan 16. marca 2021, opisuje, da je »previdno optimističen« glede naraščajočega poudarka na digitalnih delih in večanja zanimanja gledaliških družb vseh vrst, da svojemu delu dodajo digitalno komponento. ²⁰⁴ Morda ni presenetljivo, da sta zvočna umetnost (avdio-umetnost) in zvočno gledališče (avdio-gledališče) doživela renesanso v tem pandemičnem svetu. Zvočno gledališče bo še naprej zavzemalo osrednji prostor skozi vse leto 2021, saj bodo umetniki iskali načine za krmarjenje med strogimi pravili družbenega distanciranja in nizko stopnjo zaupanja občinstva v vrnitev v tradicionalne uprizoritvene prostore. ²⁰⁵ Številni nastopajoči in gledališki ustvarjalci, vključeni v študijo, so ugotovili, da so podkasti, zvočni sprehodi (avdio-sprehodi) in zvočno gledališče koristen način dela v okolju, ki je prekomerno nasičen z Zoomom. Naložbe v zvočno opremo so se obrestovale, zlasti med uvedbo druge splošne karantene, ki je trajala od sredine decembra do aprila 2021; naročila za zvočna dela pa so razširila tako žanr kot število umetnikov, ki prehajajo na to področje ustvarjanja.

V času pandemije, med zimskim in pomladnim obdobjem, je prišlo tudi do eksperimentiranja z računalniškimi igrami. Londonsko podjetje Parabolic Theatre

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Sodelujoči v študiji INV024, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (5. 10. 2020). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

²⁰⁴ Sodelujoči v študiji INV100, avtorica intervjuja Holly Maples (16. 3. 2021). *UKRI ESRC: Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*.

²⁰⁵ Projekta, kot sta avdio-pešpot *The Whisper Tree* (2021) gledališča Royal & Derngate in *Curse of Crackles!* (2021) Shoreditch Town Halla, združujejo stapljanje v živo z zvočnimi posnetki in ustvarjajo interaktivne digitalne dogodivščine za mlado občinstvo, udeležencem omogočajo, da se ponovno povežejo z lokalnimi območji v času trajanja ukrepov za zajezitev virusa.

je sodelovalo s strokovnjakom za oblikovanje iger, da bi v letu 2020 svoji interaktivni predstavi *Anglija pričakuje* (*England Expects*) in *Imamo situacijo* (*We Have a Situation*) preselili na hibridno spletno platformo. Zaradi uspešnosti teh podvigov so marca 2021 v celoti opustili običajen način dela, da bi v priredbi predstave *The Cenci* dodelali spletno pripovedno igro z nekaj elementi žive predstave.²⁰⁶ Spletna predstava v živo z naslovom *Dream* v organizaciji Royal Shakespeare Company, ki je bila premierno predstavljena marca 2021, bo še bolj premikala meje digitalnega gledališča. Ambiciozna predelava *Sna kresne noči* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) temelji na prepletanju predstave v živo z interaktivnimi digitalnimi mediji, ki jih je navdihnili serija videoiger *Fortnite*.²⁰⁷ Predstava *Dream* občinstvu ponuja interaktiven spoj sveta igre, ki združuje nastop v živo z vrhunsko oblikovanimi videoigri. Center za umetnost Cambridge Junction je marca 2021 prav tako eksperimentiral s spletno interaktivno igro *The House Never Wins*, ki jo je izvedlo gledališče Kill the Cat in raziskuje, kako se zahodna družba spopada s podnebno krizo.²⁰⁸ Tovrstne predstave, ki občinstvo povabijo k aktivni udeležbi, spodbujajo, da se slednji na to, kar gledajo v živo, odzovejo na igriv in kreativen način. Spoj predstave in interaktivne igre v predstavah *Dream* in *The Cenci* izpostavlja potencialne priložnosti, da gledališki ustvarjalci eksperimentirajo z revolucionarnimi novimi tehnologijami, ki bodo preizpraševale pričakovanja o tem, kako je mogoče ustvarjati gledališče ter predrugačile in revolucionirale uprizoritve kanonskih besedil. Predstava *The House Never Wins* pa ponazarja domiselni način, kako se občinstvo in gledališki ustvarjalci povežejo pri aktualnih vprašanjih. Upajmo, da bodo prihodnje produkcije ne le premaknile meje inovativne umetniške prakse, ampak bodo tudi potencialne priložnosti za pridobitev novega občinstva in ustvarjanja novega gledališkega občinstva.

Ko Evropa vstopa v drugo leto pandemije covid-19, je prihodnost gledališča v Veliki Britaniji negotova. Inovativni strokovnjaki bodo v prihodnjih mesecih in letih še naprej oblikovali nove digitalne trende, vendar bo treba odgovoriti še na številna vprašanja. Ali bodo gledališki ustvarjalci še naprej vlagali v digitalne prakse, ko se bodo ukrepi ohranjanja varnostne razdalje umirili? Ali bodo kibernetske oblike zagovorništva tudi naprej obveljale kot vir zagotavljanja vitalne podpore in širše povezanosti samostojnih gledaliških umetnikov? Na kakšen način se bodo inovativne, multidisciplinarne oblike družbeno angažirane umetniške prakse odzvale na nujne politične izzive, kot se bodo pojavili v svetu po covidu-19? Nujne zahteve, ki jih postavlja pandemija, bodo nedvomno ostale v ospredju načina produkcije in potrošnje gledališča, kar bo korenito spremenilo odnos med gledališkimi umetniki in občinstvom.

IZJAVA O FINANCIRANJU

Raziskave, vključene v ta članek, izhajajo iz projekta, ki ga je financiral Ekonomsko-socialni raziskovalni svet za hitro odzivanje na covid-19 UKRI, *Socialni, ekonomski in kulturni vpliv covid-19 na neodvisne umetniške delavce v Združenem*

²⁰⁶ Za več informacij o Parabolic Theatre obiščite spletno stran <https://www.parabolictheatre.com/>.

²⁰⁷ Todd Martin, "The Tech Behind Fortnite and The Mandalorian Is Now Driving ... Shakespeare?," *Los Angeles Times*, 4. 3. 2021. Dostopno na https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2021-03-04/fortnite-mandalorian-tech-powering-royal-shakespeare-co?fbclid=IwAR2xTtiDs-Y5WWmeuGieQ2V_LkuZoEHjdfsGHj3eV9YnE89nkwrZcJPnEj0, 4. 3. 2021.

²⁰⁸ Glej <https://www.killthecattheatre.co.uk/the-house-never-wins>.

kraljestvu, 2020–2022 (Maples, H; Edelman, J; Klich, R; Fitzgibbon, A; Taroff, K; Harris, L; in Rowson, J).

IZJAVA O ETIČNOSTI

Intervjuje, opravljene v okviru študije *Samostojni kulturni delavci v temi*, je odobril Odbor za etiko Univerze v Essexu (ETH2021-0045). Udeleženci so podali pisno soglasje. Anketirancem sta bili zagotovljeni zaupnost odgovorov in pravica do odstopa od sodelovanja v študiji.

James Rowson je podoktorski raziskovalec na šoli za igro East 15 Univerze v Essexu. Je član projekta *Freelancers in the Dark* financerja UKRI ESRC, ki raziskuje vpliv pandemije covida-19 na samostojne gledališke ustvarjalce v Združenem kraljestvu. Doktoriral je na Oddelku za dramo, gledališče in ples na londonski univerzi Royal Holloway. Je tudi uredniški asistent pri reviji *Contemporary Theatre Review*.

Holly Maples je višja predavateljica in direktorica podiplomskih raziskav na šoli za igro East 15 Univerze v Essexu. Je glavna raziskovalka projekta hitrega odzivanja na covid-19 financerja UKRI ESRC, poimenovanega *Freelancers in the Dark*, ki preučje družbeni, kulturni in gospodarski vpliv covida-19 na neodvisne umetniške delavce v Združenem kraljestvu. Je gledališka ustvarjalka, režiserka in raziskovalka. Njene raziskave se osredotočajo na: imerzivne zgodovinske predstave, dekolonizacijo muzejskih prostorov, raziskave občinstva, kulturne travme in britansko gledališko industrijo v spreminjajočem se svetu. Doktorirala je na Trinity College v Dublinu.

THEATRES IN THE DARK

COVID-19's Impact on Digital Performance, Advocacy and the Online Public Sphere in the UK Theatre Industry

On 16 March 2020, the West End theatres in the heart of London closed their doors due to a government announcement advising the public to “avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and other such social venues”.²⁰⁹ The following week, theatres across the rest of the UK shut down, causing much uncertainty and distress for industry members. According to the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre chief executive Julian Bird: “Closing venues is not a decision that is taken lightly, and we know that this will have a severe impact on many of the 290,000 individuals working in our industry”.²¹⁰ In the weeks that followed, there came a blossoming of online activities by members of the industry. Live-streaming, Zoom performances, internet meet-ups and online coffee mornings took place throughout the country as the industry began to respond to the theatre closures. The emergence of nascent digital communities in the wake of the strict national lockdown rules introduced by Boris Johnson’s Conservative government on 23 March 2020 created an open space for freelance theatre makers to engage in exciting acts of collective collaboration.

The movement to go online for members of the theatre community during the pandemic not only expanded the way the creative industries engage with the public sphere but also raises fundamental questions about the gap between live and virtual performance and what it means to be a theatre worker in the time of industry closure. According to Christopher Balme, the theatre has used the internet to expand the theatrical public sphere throughout the 21st century.²¹¹ Buildings and theatre companies have forged virtual sites as promotional, sharing and identity formation platforms, as well as providing online dissemination of artistic work. However, during the 2020–2021 pandemic, the internet became an expansive terrain for the production of new hybrid performance models as well as a powerful tool for advocacy, activism and skills-sharing in a time of social isolation. By combining media reports, websites and online platforms with personal testimony taken from a series of one hundred interviews conducted with independent theatre workers from our Economic and Social Research Council-funded study on COVID-19’s impact on theatre artists in the UK, *Freelancers in the Dark*, the following

²⁰⁹ Prime Minister Statement on the Coronavirus, 16 March 2020. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-16-march-2020>, 1. 3. 2021.

²¹⁰ “Coronavirus: West End shuts down as Boris Johnson’s advice sparks anger.” BBC News, 17 March 2020. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51906370>, 1. 3. 2021.

²¹¹ Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 66.

chapter investigates the UK theatre industry's use of the digital and online space for community-building, support and artistic innovation. The benefits and limits of theatre workers' move to the digital provide an example of how COVID-19 may change how the industry engages with the public, and each other, in the years to come.

THE SHOW MUST GO ONLINE: ONLINE STREAMING AND DIGITAL PERFORMANCE

The pandemic has reinforced how multifarious social media applications represent what Christopher Balme terms “the next stage of engagement” between theatre and the public sphere, where contemporary spectators are actively engaged through individualised access to theatre practice and its reception.²¹² Virtual performance and online streaming have become seen as a platform for keeping audiences engaged in theatrical practice during the pandemic and providing a potential revenue source to alleviate the financial hit that COVID safety closures caused many companies and cultural institutions across the country. Moreover, the movement online has proved more than just a short-term solution, with research indicating that in the post-COVID world, live-streaming may continue as an important part of the industry. A study into the digital transformation of the industry by researchers at the University of Exeter found that approximately 75% of respondents “said they would purchase tickets to watch a live Zoom theatre production at any time, even when theatres were re-opened”.²¹³ As Baz Kershaw writes in his 2006 monograph *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events*, we should see the rise of digital technologies “not as a threat to living theatre but as a possible source of its rebirth and enhancement in a new kind of sensorium”.²¹⁴

Digital performance work has increased three-fold since the pandemic. Organisations and companies that may have previously been resistant to moving to increased virtual and hybrid-digital performance began prioritising the genre throughout the pandemic as a matter of survival and innovation. Arts institutions like the Birmingham Royal Ballet and theatre festivals have been strategising with creative digital technicians and digital artists on how to both innovate their platforms and develop new digital hybrid content. A visual technical director working out of London has argued that the trend and reconsideration of virtual, hybrid and multimedia production will not just impact online experiences but change the future of live theatre in the UK.

The whole world of mixed reality, virtual stages happening, which has accelerated ... exponentially. So, instead of a virtual environment or in addition to a virtual environment, capturing human beings in it in with laser and realistic kind of forms [is being experimented with] ... All my technician friends, instead of like getting, you know, getting immersed in Netflix and all that sort of thing, we've got immersed in training and networking.²¹⁵

²¹² Ibid., 68.

²¹³ Pascale Aebischer and Rachael Nicholas, *Digital Theatre Transformations: A Case Study and Digital Toolkit Final Report*, 30 October 2020, 27. (Exeter: University of Exeter.), 27. Available at <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/123464>, 3. 1. 2021.

²¹⁴ Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 73.

²¹⁵ Research Participant INV03, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviews by Holly Maples, 26 September 2020.

By celebrating the increasingly “multimedial” nature of critical perspectives regarding the mediatization of society, multimedia performance also presents an insight into – and a critique of – the impact of media technologies on contemporary culture.²¹⁶

This alacritous transition to online performance and ways of working provided the opportunity for both established and emerging theatre freelancers to reciprocally reconceptualise their own artistic practices in ways that may have been financially non-viable before the pandemic. As theatre work moved online, it created wider opportunities for practitioners to experiment with multi-regional and intermedial digital projects. A London-based theatre director reflected on her move to digital performance platforms during the first UK national lockdown as a space to both remain creative and advance a new set of skills. In collaboration with a television producer, the director organised a series of short films based on Shakespeare’s best-known plays created without a financial commission with a group of actors, writers and a film editor. She and the project’s other creatives did it “as an ode to the theatre” and to “stay sane” during the first lockdown. The transferral to the digital space allowed her to develop new artistic skills and assert her own identity as a creative during a time of social and work-related deprivation. She argues, “because we’re creative people ... I feel like that was such an amazing thing to be able to work with actors and get to direct ... even if it’s through Zoom”. However, she acknowledged that this work, which received exposure through release on the BBC and the Royal Lyceum websites, remained difficult to monetise, with arts organisations unsure how to make money from the films.

I feel like that’s the tricky thing with digital content /.../ The National Theatre put up loads of content online, but for donations /.../ I’m not sure how the freelance artists who are part of those got financially supported during that time. /.../ I feel like it was great ... for us to be creative and do stuff, but it’s not financially stable.²¹⁷

Many theatre workers also felt that smaller companies could not compete with the free content being made by larger cultural institutions such as the National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company and the Old Vic. The production value provided by these institutions was harder to replicate for small and mid-sized theatre venues. Many of our respondents for the Freelancers in the Dark study felt that the free streaming made available by the larger cultural institutions created barriers for smaller companies to attract paying audiences to their online performances.²¹⁸

Over the course of the autumn, companies began to be more strategic in finding ways to benefit financially from digital content. National Theatre Live and other platforms created pay-wall streaming platforms. At the same time, smaller companies, who had developed their online and digital skills through work in the early months of the pandemic, began to create more sophisticated online performances, charge ticket prices for their work and present work in online festivals. However, it has still proved challenging to change the mindset of the public used

²¹⁶ Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer, *Multimedia Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

²¹⁷ Research Participant INV001, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewed by Holly Maples, 23 September 2020.

²¹⁸ Research Participant Interviews, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 23 September 2020–16 March 2021.

to receiving online content for free.

For many theatre artists, there has also been a feeling of scepticism over the move to online platforms. Some believe that the pressure many theatre companies and institutions felt to move work online during the pandemic has jeopardised the quality of work.²¹⁹ While many artists have been working and developing digital content over the last decade, others have had to learn to use the new platforms from scratch over the past year. For some, the fear of compromising the nature of their work has created frustration and anxiety over the need to explore these new platforms.²²⁰ As one British Asian artist argued, an online performance on Zoom can lack quality,

It's not theatre /.../. it's not my forte. I'm looking forward to [returning to live performance]. I think a lot of companies are like, oh, we're gonna go move digital online, and /.../ the only people consuming this stuff are other artists. And, like, I don't want to consume it. I want to watch Netflix.²²¹

Others felt that the move to the digital space for performance cut out the fundamental community-building aspect of live performance. The theatre lobby and other “in-between” spaces that promote audience discussion were hard to replicate in online spaces. As one community-based dance theatre artist in Wales argued, “The local element of what we want to achieve is definitely missing with the digital side of things, especially because we have an ageing population here. So there was definitely a loss”.²²² Other issues with an over-reliance on online platforms articulated by theatre workers include internet connectivity issues greatly impacting more geographically marginalised and working-class communities, difficulties for the elderly and non-digital natives to engage with online platforms, Zoom fatigue and the lack of socialising etiquette for many in navigating online spaces, such as Zoom. Some theatre makers have attempted to solve this issue by including post-show discussions and breakout groups to give the participants and audience members time to speak amongst themselves. Still, many found that aspect of live performance and facilitation to be absent in the virtual space.²²³

The expense of producing digital versions of live performances means that the market has been dominated by established on-demand streaming services, including National Theatre Live and international content providers such as Broadway HD and Stage Russia HD, which provide access to a multiplicity of professionally filmed, high-budget productions from around the world at the click of a button. Reacting to the obvious demand for digital performance, smaller institutions have begun to analogously initiate streaming services to offer audiences filmed

²¹⁹ Research Participant INV078, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 24 November 2020.

²²⁰ Research Participant INV016, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 28 September 2020.

²²¹ Research Participant INV078, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 24 November 2020.

²²² Research Participant INV095, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 16 March 2021.

²²³ Research Participant Interviews, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 23 September 2020–16 March, 2021.

theatre productions. In February 2021, the Orange Tree Theatre in south London announced a series of live-streamed performances of new plays under the banner “INSIDE/OUTSIDE” on their “OT On Screen” digital project.

Similarly, fringe theatres are continuing to run their own live-streaming platforms, with broadcast performances planned to continue to run until summer 2021 at the earliest.²²⁴ The Camden People’s Theatre (CPT) has provided a large source of support for small-scale and emerging artists to create virtual work during the pandemic. CPT has commissioned online festivals and celebrated digital performance work with a featured platform supporting and commissioning projects that celebrate hybrid virtual and live performance.²²⁵ HOME Manchester and National Theatre Wales have also provided vibrant platforms for independent artists. It is also hoped that local funding bodies around the UK will provide diverse support to regional theatre artists, creating new opportunities for practitioners to produce urgent community work while continuing to advance artistic innovation. These responses to the pandemic by theatre makers working with local communities have the potential power to represent an important alternative to the digital dominance of commercialised, star-studded productions, such as the Old Vic’s broadcast performances of *Lungs* (2020) and *A Christmas Carol* (2020), establishing new sets of localised aesthetics across the UK.

FROM COFFEE MORNINGS TO FREELANCE TASK FORCES: DIGITAL COMMUNITIES AND ONLINE ACTIVISM

The digital and online platform paradigm shift has been significant in that it has not only provided an outlet for artists to urgently regain a vital sense of agency but also opened up important new avenues for advocacy and debate for freelance theatre workers across the UK. In her book *Theatre & The City*, Jen Harvie astutely highlights that social media platforms “create more contexts for performative interventions, for coordinating communication in the planning of resistant performance practices, and for new digital psycho-geographies”.²²⁶ Providing platforms for knowledge and skill exchange, the digitised creative communities developing throughout the pandemic also act as an online locus for discipline-led support groups, such as the weekly Zoom conference for freelance theatre directors run by prominent directors Robert Icke and Lyndsey Turner.

These activities provide a key resource for theatre makers to revise their practice and experiences as artists, prompting a reevaluation of how theatre can be made in a post-COVID society.

In our interviews for the Freelancers in the Dark study, we asked our respondents to share their lived experiences of engaging in online support networks during the pandemic. One producer we spoke to foregrounded the importance of informal digital networks for theatre artists as a means of generating advocacy and stimulating wider communicative practices within the theatre industry. A facilitator of an online company to support artists in crisis during the pandemic, this producer was clear that such networks have acted as crucial points of connection for theatre freelancers: “This is such an interesting space, and we didn’t

²²⁴ For example, the Southwark Playhouse in London is live-streaming performances each night until at least June 2021, as well as offering on-demand recordings of previous productions including the international premiere of Philip Ridley’s *The Poltergeist* (2020).

²²⁵ Research Participant INV044, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 27 October 2020.

²²⁶ Jen Harvie, *Theatre & The City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56.

have this going before [...] I just think there's real power in that. There's real power at the moment [...] it's really an empowering, exciting time".²²⁷ Other participants in our study also spoke about the value of these new virtual peer groups and quotidian acts of support, including one London-based theatre director who vocalised that for them, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fact that "we all happen to have the time and space to kind of connect with each other".²²⁸ It is clear that these generative networked sites of dialogic interaction have encouraged both epistemic and personalised reflection in our respondents, reemphasising a more experimental and spontaneous approach to advocacy among contemporary theatre practitioners.

Many of our research participants also emphasised how important online industry-related social network platforms have been during COVID-19 for developing community and confronting social isolation and mental health issues caused by the loss of work during the pandemic. A theatre and event technician in Scotland articulates this need, especially for technical and backstage workers,

In terms of things like mental health, like if [you] want to talk. There is a weekly coffee morning. So, 11 o'clock on a Tuesday. And one of the admins will set up Zoom chats, and people can just pop in for an hour to just sit and talk about what's going on or, you know, what's not going on, essentially.²²⁹

Emotional and mental health support was key in online industry support groups and grassroots theatre worker Facebook pages. Our study found that, particularly for stage managers, technicians and designers whose work has been hard to generate since March 2020, these platforms provided community sharing and support that was found to be essential for providing self-care and community support.

Other support networks specific to groups that feel marginalised within the theatre industry have developed strong connections via social media, including those from working-class communities, disabled artists networks and BAME, trans and LGBTQ+ rights activists. A trans performer interviewed mentioned how fellow trans artists would come to her for consultation on negotiating their position within production, rehearsal and performance spaces.²³⁰ At the same time, a Welsh disability activist and playwright found increasing work in providing online Zoom training sessions with theatres and other organisations.²³¹

Platforms beyond Zoom and Facebook were also useful for freelancers to share information. Whatsapp became a powerful tool for actors, companies and industry communities to share support and continue dialogue after what felt like a sudden and traumatic end to the industry in March 2020. Many of the Freelancers

²²⁷ Research Participant INV045, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 27 October 2020.

²²⁸ Research Participant INV078, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 24 November 2020.

²²⁹ Research Participant INV007, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 25 September 2020.

²³⁰ Research Participant INV033, *UKRI ESRC Freelancer in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 12 October 2020.

²³¹ Research Participant INV054, *UKRI ESRC Freelancer in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 2 November 2020.

in the Dark research participants involved in productions or rehearsals before the first lockdown found themselves using WhatsApp to offer emotional support and share information about funding, self-employment benefits and other resources needed for theatre workers throughout the pandemic. The increasing use of Whatsapp also provided an important lobbying and advocacy tool to create collective action, particularly for West End theatre workers who found themselves left out of the production discussions in the wake of the theatre closures.²³²

Others found support through forums designed to discuss active strategies to improve industry conditions developing over the pandemic. A London-based lighting designer describes his participation in a number of such forums which developed over the summer of 2020 in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests:

... I [took] part in a lot of Zoom discussions with the Association of Lighting Designers, and with Equity and Bectu [Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union] and Freelancers Make Theatre Work and various individual venues, including The Bush and The Gate and The Orange Tree, just joining in Zoom discussions, that they mostly called them then “town hall forums” of being able to discuss, kind of, you know, where we go next ... How should theatre be better? What do we want from the government and from our own industry?²³³

The movement to openly discuss challenges to the industry has created a new wave of industry-related advocacy around working conditions and racial, gender and class-based inequities. This has been allied with an animated call for more dialogue between creative workers and the institutions and funding bodies of the UK Arts industries. As the interviewee emphasised:

[Before COVID] it never felt as coherently open and discursive and collaborative and transparent, the discussions between unions and professional bodies and members, and in some cases producers all discussing together what went wrong, what needs to happen next. That’s one of the things that I hope will be maintained after COVID.²³⁴

Freelance theatre worker advocacy groups such as the Freelancers Task Force and the Freelancers Make Things Work organisation used online platforms to create a dialogue with fellow theatre workers throughout the UK and design websites as essential spaces to share information and promote activism around issues, including better working conditions within the industry as a whole. The virtue of the online platform allowed for a wider range of participants and attendance that would not have been possible in a live space. As an active member of the South West Freelancers Task Force described the participation,

It’s quite a large group /.../ organising, mutually supporting, covering the whole sort of span of age ranges, and a really diverse group, and a diverse group of practices as well from kind of movement directors and choreographers through

²³² Research Participant Interviews, UKRI ESRC Freelancer in the Dark Study, Interviewer Holly Maples, 23 September 2020–6 March 2021.

²³³ Research Participant INV008, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 24 September 2020.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

performers to the artists and producers. So a really good sort of sector-wide view.²³⁵

These organisations, plus other sector-specific, regional and local online organisations, were able to foster a collaborative intersectional dialogue arguably not seen before in the industry. For many theatre workers consulted in our study, the growth of industry networks and advocacy groups is the one positive change caused by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the successive lockdowns in the UK have further highlighted how theatre freelancers have been marginalised from dialogue and debate surrounding how theatre buildings are operated. Throughout 2020, a series of new artistic discourses emerged online that advocated for freelancer artists to be included in the decision-making processes of major cultural institutions. This was linked to a core creative anxiety that freelancers are being excluded from crucial conversations on the future of theatrical form and content as the COVID-19 crisis subsides. The pandemic has emphasised substantive fault lines in the UK theatre industry, intensifying the need to acknowledge the scale of influence prescribed to freelancers. Alongside this, wider socio-political events, including the resonance of the protests staged by Black Lives Matters UK in May and June 2020 following the killing of George Floyd in the United States, accelerated the emergence of an explosive new kind of digital engagement. The global and domestic events of 2020 have posed a series of questions that aim to challenge entrenched cultural values in the UK and urge the need to repudiate the return to rigid hierarchical divides in the theatre industry after the third national lockdown, in place since January 2021. Central to this activism is the speed at which conversations can be held across virtual platforms. Moreover, as Mohamed Samir El-Khatib insightfully argues, “place is the principal text in which power establishes its presence by means of restructuring place’s memory and manipulating its historical and cultural associations to serve its own interests”.²³⁶ Freelance artists who felt excluded from the public space and the official response to the pandemic promoted by theatre buildings used social media and other digital platforms to renegotiate an alternative artistic narrative of the pandemic. In doing so, they politicised freelancers’ roles and experiences during the pandemic, staking a fresh claim to public discourse.

Through the act of sharing information and re-tweeting links, they have created new forms of cyber activism and advocacy that revise theatrical ways of working and provoke a crucial reinterpretation of contemporary theatre ecology in the UK.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?: THEATRE IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

On 22 February 2021, Boris Johnson addressed the House of Commons and set out a “roadmap” for cautiously lifting the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in England over the following months. In his speech, which was simultaneously

²³⁵ Research Participant INV074, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 20 November 2020.

²³⁶ Mohamed Samir El-Khatib, “Tahrir Square as Spectacle: Some Exploratory Remarks on Place, Body and Power,” *Theatre Research International* 38, 2 (2013): 104–115, 105.

broadcast live to a prime-time television audience on BBC One, Johnson announced that no earlier than 17 May, “theatres and concert halls will open their doors”.²³⁷ The implication was a tentative proposal that from 17 May, indoor and outdoor theatres would be allowed to reopen with social distancing measures in place, followed by a return to full-capacity performances on 21 June.²³⁸ After months of agonising uncertainty across the English theatre industry over the potential re-opening of buildings to audiences, Johnson’s announcement was unsurprisingly met with initial optimism. Despite this, however, there remains a widespread unease across the theatre industry in the UK that both buildings and freelance artists face substantial medium- and long-term challenges to how their work will be created, programmed and received. In the same month that Johnson laid out his roadmap, British entertainment newspaper *The Stage* reported that successive lockdowns and the emergence of new strains of COVID-19 in December 2020 had severely damaged audience confidence in the theatre.²³⁹ While writing this publication, the *Guardian* newspaper has just revealed the shocking reality that the UK arts rescue fund, conceived to support the faltering performing arts sector, has to date only paid out half of the money allocated.²⁴⁰ As we reach a watershed moment fraught with uncertainty and contention for the development of theatre in the UK, it is crucial to address the urgent question of what happens next as lockdown measures are lifted throughout 2021.

Paul B. Preciado has recently observed that the manifold use of online digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed access to extensive communication nodes while simultaneously amplifying social isolation: “The domestic space, and not traditional institutions of social confinement and normalization (hospital, factory, prison, school, etc.), now appears as the new centre of production, consumption, and political control”.²⁴¹ He continues:

Telecommuting and devices of telecontrol are henceforth at the tip of our fingers. Outside, subaltern vertical workers, racialized and feminized bodies, have been condemned. [...] Our portable telecommunication machines are our new jailers and our own domestic interiors have become the soft and ultraconnected prisons of the future.²⁴²

In other words, forms of labour such as theatre-making have been remotely alienated from everyday experience and disembodied through digitalised working practices. As the essential need to work from home stressed by governments around most of Europe since the height of the pandemic in 2020 continues, contemporary artists have been severed from their traditional sites of creative

²³⁷ The full transcript of Johnson’s speech can be viewed online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-on-roadmap-for-easing-lockdown-restrictions-in-england-22-february-2021>, 5. 3. 2021.

²³⁸ Johnson was explicitly referring to theatres in England but it is expected that the re-opening of buildings in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be closely linked to those in England.

²³⁹ Georgia Snow, “Audience confidence knocked by lockdown and new variants, survey suggests,” *The Stage*, 9 February 2021. Available at <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/audience-confidence-knocked-by-lockdown-and-new-variants-survey-suggests>, 5. 3. 2021.

²⁴⁰ Rajeev Syal, “UK arts rescue fund has paid out just over half of money allocated,” *Guardian*, 12 March 2021. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/series/culture-in-peril>, 12. 3. 2021.

²⁴¹ Paul B. Preciado, “Learning from the Virus,” *Artforum* 58, 9 (2020).

²⁴² Ibid.

production. A number of our respondents in the Freelancers in the Dark study have cited notions of digital fatigue and frustration with virtual ways of working. One of our interviewees articulated this experience by affirming: “I think everyone feels like there’s been some kind of like burnout as well about too much online stuff. [I’m] trying to desperately keep up with it, but I don’t feel like my brain is quite connecting with it in the same way it did prior to lockdown”.²⁴³ Digital “burn-out” has been similarly echoed by a section of participants included in our study. Even more concerning, our freelance participants have also expressed anxiety that independent theatre artists have been financially disadvantaged by the abrupt move to online digital platforms. These testimonies foreground the need for build-ings to establish long-standing working dialogues with freelancers, which will be vital for the continued production of original theatre practice in the UK.

Despite these deep-rooted concerns about the current pervasiveness of dig-ital work, it appears clear that in the short term, broadcast performances are certain to remain at the forefront of the theatrical landscape in the UK. A theatre documentary and performance trailer filmmaker interviewed on 16 March 2021 de-scribes being “cautiously optimistic” about the increased focus on digital work and more of an interest from theatre companies of all kinds to add a digital com-ponent to their work.²⁴⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, audio work and headphone theatre have also had a renaissance in the new world of the pandemic. Headphone theatre will further take centre stage throughout 2021 as artists look for ways to navigate the UK’s strict social distancing rules and low levels of audience confidence in returning to traditional performance spaces.²⁴⁵ Many performers and theatre mak-ers consulted during the study have found podcasts, audio walking tours and headphone theatre a useful way to work in a time of Zoom fatigue. Investing in audio equipment has been lucrative, particularly over the second national lock-down from mid-December to April 2021, and commissions for audio work have expanded both the genre and number of creatives moving into this area.

Further experimentation with game design has also developed over the winter to spring pandemic season. The London-based Parabolic Theatre company collab-orated with a game design practitioner to move their immersive, participatory shows, *England Expects* and *We Have a Situation*, to a hybrid online platform in 2020. Encouraged by the success of these ventures, in March 2021, they departed entirely from their normal work to make an elaborate website narrative game with some live performance elements in an adaptation of *The Cenci*.²⁴⁶ The RSC’s live online performance *Dream*, which premiered in March 2021, is set to further push the boundaries of digital theatre. An ambitious re-working of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the piece draws on the interplay of live performance with interactive dig-ital media inspired by the video game series *Fortnite*.²⁴⁷ *Dream* offers audiences

²⁴³ Research Participant INV024, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 5 October 2020.

²⁴⁴ Research Participant INV100, *UKRI ESRC Freelancers in the Dark Study*, Interviewer Holly Maples, 16 March 2021.

²⁴⁵ Projects such as the Royal & Derngate Theatre’s audio walking tour *The Whisper Tree* (2021) and Shoreditch Town Hall’s *Curse of the Crackles!* (2021) combine live embodied immersion with aural soundscapes to create interactive digital adventures for young audi-ences that allow participants to re-connect with their local areas as lockdown measures continue.

²⁴⁶ For further information see the Parabolic Theatre website: <https://www.parabolictheatre.com/>.

²⁴⁷ Todd Martin, “The tech behind ‘Fortnite’ and ‘The Mandalorian’ is now driving ...

interactive intermedial immersion with the world of the play and powerfully blends live performance with cutting-edge video game design. The Cambridge Junction, also in March 2021, experimented with online interactive game performance, *The House Never Wins*, by the company Kill the Cat Theatre, exploring the thorny ground of Western society's handling of the climate crisis.²⁴⁸ By inviting active participation from the audience, these performance challenges them to playfully engage with their own individual creative responses to what they are watching live. The apposition of performance with interactive gaming in *Dream* and *The Cenci* foreground the potential opportunities for theatre makers to experiment with ground-breaking new technologies that will challenge expectations of how theatre can be made, reinventing and revolutionising the staging of canonical texts, while *The House Never Wins* illustrates imaginative ways for audiences and theatre makers to engage with topical issues. These liminal future productions will, hopefully, not only push the boundaries of innovative artistic practice but also provide potential opportunities to establish new audiences as well as the creation of new theatre publics.

As Europe enters its second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the future of theatre in the UK is uncertain. New digital trends will continue to be forged by innovative practitioners over the coming months and years, but many questions remain to be answered. Will theatre makers continue to advance digital practice as social distancing measures are relaxed? Will cyber forms of advocacy remain in place to provide vital support and wider connection for theatre freelancers? In what ways will innovative, multidisciplinary forms of socially-engaged artistic practice respond to the urgent political challenges that will emerge in a post-COVID-19 world? The exigent demands posed by the pandemic will arguably remain at the forefront of how theatre is produced and consumed, radically reinscribing the relationship between theatre artists and audiences.

FUNDING DECLARATION

The research included in this article comes from a Rapid Response COVID-19 UKRI Economic and Social Research Council-funded project, The Social, Economic and Cultural Impact of COVID-19 on UK Independent Arts Workers, 2020–2022 (Maples, H; Edelman, J; Klich, R; Fitzgibbon, A; Taroff, K; Harris, L; and Rowson, J).

ETHICS DECLARATION

Interviews conducted in the Freelancers in the Dark study have been approved through the University of Essex Ethics Committee (ETH2021-0045).

Written informed consent was also obtained from the participants. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and their right to withdraw from the study.

Shakespeare?," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 March 2021. Available at https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2021-03-04/fornite-mandolorian-tech-powering-royal-shakespeare-co?fbclid=IwAR2xTtiDs-Y5WWmeuGieQ2V_Lku-ZoEHjdfsGHj3eV9YnE89nkwrZcJPnEj0, 4. 3. 2021.

²⁴⁸ See <https://www.killthecattheatre.co.uk/the-house-never-wins>.

James Rowson in Holly Maples | Theatres in the dark: *COVID-19's Impact on Digital Performance, Advocacy and the Online Public Sphere in the UK Theatre Industry*

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O SENZORIČNOSTI ASINHRONIH IN SINHRONIH, A POSREDOVANIH IZKUŠENJ

Študij dveh primerov

Opis predstave *Višnjik u višnjiku (Češnjev vrt v češnjevem vrtu)* Boba Jelčiča (gledališka skupina de facto, 2020), »gledališke predstave, uprizorjene v virtualnem prostoru«, kot je navedeno v njihovem programu, se ne razlikuje veliko od opisa običajne vsakodnevnne dejavnosti, neuradnega srečanja ali celo učne ure prek Zooma. Vsi udeleženci počasi bledijo v svojih majhnih kvadratkih ali pa prodirajo iz njih. Kvadratki se dotikajo drug drugega in v galerijskem pogledu so vsi videti enako veliki. Kukamo v stanovanja drugih, oziramo se po vzglavju postelje, knjižnih policah, da bi le ujeli ali razkrili kakšno zanimivo podrobnost. Nekdo drži kamero svojega mobilnega telefona preblizu vidnemu herpesu, nekdo drug se delno kar izgubi zaradi svojih razširjenih por na čelu, nekdo drug je izkoristil priložnost, da med srečanjem pripravi kremno ribjo juho, posledica pa je velika packa, ki prekrije mobilni zaslon za vse druge, nekdo ni viden na sliki, ker želi skriti, da joka ali pa si na skrivaj vrta po nosu. Skoraj pri vseh se bo v nekem trenutku kamera začela tresti, saj bodo šli iz enega prostora v drugega, se iz postelje preselili v naslonjač ali sedli v avto, saj so že pozni in morajo po otroka v vrtec ali pa imajo termin pri zobozdravniku.

Kakor koli, na tem srečanju prek Zooma so Ljubov Andrejevna (Jadranka Đokić), Leonid Andrejevič Gajev (Jerko Marčić), Anja (Lana Meniga), Varja (Petra Svrtan), Lopahin, čigar ime je zapisano narobe kot Lapahin (Marko Makovčić), in Petja (Ugo Korani). V njihovih kvadratih v Zoomu jih običajno vidimo delno, večinoma njihove obraze ali druge dele telesa, (ideja) prostor(a) pa je zaradi občasno tresočih se kamer povezan(a) z rahlo slabostjo. Odnosi in dogodki so omejeni na golo osnovo, skico – Anja, zaljubljena najstnica, zažari, ko se v skupini pojavi Petja, samo da bi nam povedal, da je med njima z Anjo »veliko več kot le ljubezen«, Ljubov Andrejevna se ne loči od svoje postelje ali odeje, sin, ki je tragično umrl, je omenjen le mimogrede, enako kot parazitski ljubimec, Varja je zmedena glede svojega razmerja z Lopahinom, prestopa se po kuhinji ali zunaj po snegu, Gajev sanja o finančni rešitvi, ki bi jo prinesel general, Lopahin kliče iz avtomobila, med sestanki in licitacijo, ima slabo internetno povezavo. A ta omejitev kaže svojo moč, kot natančna linija preproste risbe namesto debelega nanosa maslene barve. Pri tem pa kot umetniški postopek poudarja (in ponavlja) to omejitev, ki jo občutimo za tako obliko *povezanosti*, ko smo bili iz kože po-manjšani v dvodimenzionalno površino nas samih.

Jelčič in njegovi soavtorji/igralci so ustvarili situacijo, ki je obratna tisti v Jelčičevih predstavah. V svojih produkcijah v živo se Jelčič skupaj s soustvarjalci osredotoča na iluzionistično dokumentarno gledališče ali kvazidokumentarno gledališče.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Una Bauer, Agata Juniku in Goran Pavlič, "Reprezentacije manjinskog u suvremenom

Na primer predstava *Govori glasnije* (gledališče Kerempuh, 2018) se začne tako, da zaradi tehničnih težav ni mogoče začeti, kar je dejanski začetek predstave. Presenečena sem bila, ko sem ugotovila, da v sedanjih nadvse ironičnih časih to pri nekaterih gledalcih še zmeraj deluje. Jelčić in soustvarjalci se pogosto poigravajo s pričakovani gledalcev in izzovejo reakcijo, ki jo potem na neki način zavrnejo, kot da gledalec ni povsem razumel, da je še zmeraj v gledališču, tako pozivajo k nekakšni psevdo-interakciji. Tudi v predstavah, zasnovanih na besedilu, npr. *Tri sestre* (2020), je nedvoumna napetost med igralcem in njegovo lastno osebnostjo ter med gledalci, ki prisostvujejo gledališki predstavi in sodelujejo v dialogu z igralci. Ugo Korani v vlogi Veršinina v *Treh sestrah* (HNK Zagreb, 2020) na primer sprašuje in želi navidezno vključiti gledalce, a ko začne neka gledalka izčrpno odgovarjati, počaka, da ta konča, in nadaljuje svoje besedilo. Po drugi stani pa Jelčić in sodelavci v svojih predstavah ustvarjajo tudi prepoznavno pretiran fizični besednjak, ki poudarja skonstruiranost gledališke produkcije.²⁵⁰ Medtem ko v svojih predstavah v živo poskušajo nežno in subtilno destabilizirati gledališki okvir, nas zmesti s tem, ali naj Nini Violić odgovorimo ali ne, ko nas neposredno nagovarja v občinstvu, včasih kar po imenu, in to v vlogi Olge, a tudi v vlogi Nine Violić (vemo, da nam tega ni treba, vendar družbene konvencije včasih nasprotujejo iluziji gledališča), nas v tej situaciji poskušajo prepričati, da nismo na srečanju prek Zooma, ampak da smo se prebili, kot muhe na steno ali kot pršice v posteljnino, v video-klic neke družine, ki si želi ohraniti svoj češnjev vrt z vsemi njegovimi simbolnimi konotacijami. V nasprotju z Jelčićevimi predstavami, v katerih je v ospredju izguba varnosti v našem položaju opazovalca, smo v tej *uprizoritvi* povsem prezrti, pravzaprav so nas celo prosili, da funkcije klepeta ne uporabljamo do konca predstave. Prisilni prehod na družbena omrežja in druge oblike komunikacije se je moral zgoditi, da je lahko Jelčić izločil iluzijo sodelovanja občinstva. To je razumna odločitev, saj tako prepreči hrup v komunikacijskem kanalu, ki pa se kljub temu pojavi (zmeraj bo kdo poslal sporočilo v skupinskem klepetu, ker ni prebral navodil ali ker je preprosto tako vesel, da se je lahko *pidružil* srečanju). Tudi če ne bi bilo tako, bi bilo vabilo občinstvu k sodelovanju odveč, saj se že tako trudimo, da te predstave ne bi izkusili kot še eno srečanje prek Zooma. Čeprav imamo opravka z drugim *medijskim* okvirom, je vzdušje podobno: srhljiv občutek, ko nisi povsem prepričan, ali gre za parodijo ali resnost iluzionizma. Ker Jadranka Đokić leži v postelji, tako kot mi, ko nas nekdo na kratko pokliče prek Zooma, ali v 125. minuti zelo kratkega sestanka o tem, ali je bolje uporabiti besedo *upravičen* ali *privilegiran* v kolektivno napisanem uvodu. Meniga svoj obraz prilepi na zaslon mobilnika, enako, kot to počnemo sami, ko si poskušamo zavezati vezalke, tako da vsi vidijo vse ogrce na našem nosu, ali pa mobilnik položi na tla, glavo pa nasloni na posteljo, saj ima *res*, *resnično* dovolj držanja mobilnika v roki. Gre za kombinacijo poznavanja očitnega in banalnega. Če bi to teoretično raztegnili, je v Jelčićevi metodi nekaj strategije subverzivne afirmacije, ki svojo umetniško moč gradi na dejstvu, da ni povsem jasno, ali bi bilo nekaj treba razumeti kot obrambo ali zaslišanje.

hrvatskom kazalištu i drami,” v *Od mobilnosti do interakcije*, ur. Leszek Malczak in Gabriela Abrasowicz (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Slaskiego, 2020), 243–262.

²⁵⁰ Marin Blažević, “Nataša Rajković i Bobo Jelčić,” v *Razgovori o novom kazalištu 2* (Zagreb: Centar za dramsku umjetnost, 2007), 235–295.

Rada bi primerjala Jelčičevo »gledališko predstavo, uprizorjeno v virtualnem prostoru« s posnetkom predstave, ki je bila predvajana med pandemijo leta 2020 (in je še zmeraj javno dostopna na platformi Vimeo),²⁵¹ tako kot so bili prikazani številni drugi posnetki kot neke vrste hitra rešitev v času paralize gledališča zaradi pandemije.²⁵² Še enkrat bi rada poudarila, kar sem že zapisala, predstava *Chinchilla Arschloch, was was* (Rimini Protokoll, 2018) v režiji Helgarda Hauga in Thila Guschasa ni bila mišljena kot virtualni dogodek ali »gledališka predstava, uprizorjena v virtualnem prostoru« in to tudi ni. Gre le za dokumentacijo predstave, za posnetek. To je poseben primer pristopa kolektiva Rimini Protokoll k dokumentarnemu gledališču, odprtost do nevrološke različnosti med gledalci in na odru. *Chinchilla Arschloch, was was* je predstava, ki raziskuje načine prisotnosti Tourettovega sindroma v gledališču. Kot razložijo in utelesijo na odru Christian Hempel, Benjamin Jürgens in Bijan Kaffenberger, je Tourettov sindrom večinoma razumljen kot nezdržljiv z obiskom gledališča ali z ustvarjanjem gledališča. Nevrotični ljudje pogosto ne poznajo ali niso doživeli težav Tourettovega sindroma. Gre za motnjo, pri kateri je izjemno težko ali neugodno zadržati ponavljajoče se tike, neželene zvoke ali kletvice. Seveda je vsak posameznik s Tourettovim sindromom edinstven in taki so tudi svojevrstni znaki te motnje. Christian Hempel razloži, kako mu je neudobno sedeti v gledališču, saj mora nadzorovati svoje tike, da ne bi motil gledališke predstave. A zgodi se, da jih ne more nadzorovati, kar razjezi tako gledalce kot nastopajoče, saj sklepajo, da je neolikan in ne ceni truda, vloženega v predstavo v živo. Še huje, vdira v predstavo in potencialno okrni njeno estetsko privlačnost. Nevrotični gledalci in gledališča niso vajeni tega, da bi se pred predstavo napovedalo, da je med gledalci oseba s Tourettovim sindromom in da naj bodo odprti za to izkušnjo.

To predstavo sem gledala v času pandemije (prvič 24. septembra 2020). Gledala sem jo z močnim občutkom strahu,²⁵³ da bo to od zdaj naprej morda edini način, kako bomo gledali gledališke predstave. Gledala sem jo oziroma sem jo poskušala gledati tako, kot beremo knjigo ali poslušamo radijsko igro, z vsem, česar ni in kar si predstavljamo, da bi moralo biti. To seveda ni bilo prvič, da sem gledala posnetek gledališke predstave, a je bila tokrat prisotna nekakšna izkustvena sprememba, ki me je prevzela. Gledala sem posnetek, kot da je to vse, kar je, in vse, kar bi lahko kdaj koli bilo. Podobno kot pri poslušanju radijske igre ali posnetka glasbene umetnosti se je pojavila dvojnost občutij. Eno referenčno – na primer, ko zaslišiš zvok valov radijske predstave in vidiš sliko morja –, drugo avtonomno/nereferenčno – užitek ob akustični kakovosti in estetski vrednosti v odvisnosti od drugih zvokov v delu, ne glede na asociacije na neki referenčni objekt. Na eni strani sem opazovala predstavo, njeno logiko, vsebino, a sem ob tem čutila in si predstavljala, da v *tistem trenutku* ne morem objektivno občutiti, kaj bi pomenilo, če bi bila v istem prostoru kot oni, kako bi dišala pica, ki bi jo neki gledalec naročil med predstavo, in ali bi nekdo z vonjem svojega parfuma vdrl v moj osebni prostor. Po drugi strani pa sem vse te stvari že res velikokrat občutila. Vonj sveže pice, vročino v nabito polni dvorani, sedeti določen čas v temi skupaj s številnimi drugimi ljudmi, brez možnosti, da zapustim prostor, ne da bi moralo zaradi tega vstati veliko ljudi, se potopiti v *svet performansa*, ki je vedno prav poseben svet, ne glede na to, ali gledamo predstavo iluzionističnega gledališča ali postdramatično produkcijo, pri čemer se vsi nagibamo k prepričanju, da smo v

²⁵¹ Glej <https://vimeo.com/358770259>.

²⁵² Ko se je pandemija začela, je bilo veliko predvajanih posnetkov resnično slabih. Nekateri so bili tako zamegljeni, kot da bi jih posneli z vogala prve vrste ali pa od tako daleč, da so igralci videti kot žuželke.

²⁵³ In najverjetneje pretirano in nerealno, ampak občutki imajo svojo realnost.

enakem prostoru in času. Poskušala sem občutiti prostor, njegovo velikost, in kaj bi pomenilo biti prisoten v tistem okolju. Predstavljala sem si, kaj bi pomenilo, če bi se lahko dotaknila puhaste umetne medvedje preproge. Lahko sem otipala to puhasto medvedjo preprogo, kot sem jo že velikokrat, tudi če te umetne medvedje preproge nisem otipala. Res je tudi, da, tudi če bi tisti večer, ko so predstavo posneli, bila v Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, se najverjetneje sploh ne bi mogla dotakniti te umetne medvedje preproge, saj v tem kontekstu ni bilo mišljeno, da bi gledalci prišli na oder. Verjetno bi imela tudi zelo slab sedež, povsem zadaj, in ne bi mogla razbrati podrobnosti izraza na obrazu Benjamina Jürgensa. Ali je to ontološko pomembno? Morda ne. Senzorično pa vsekakor je. Lahko bi rekli, da sem si preprosto predstavljala, kako bi bilo, če bi bila tam, kar dejansko nisem bila; kaj bi torej lahko bila ontološka vrednost tega *predstavljanja* senzoričnega. A gledališko izkustvo v živo je tudi povabilo k temu, da si predstavljamo, sanjarimo in se prestavimo v čevlje drugega, tudi če izkustveno ne moremo biti tam, kot v tistem trenutku sama nisem mogla biti v Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, in me najverjetneje, tudi če ne bi bilo pandemije zaradi covida-19, tam ne bi bilo. Naše vsakodnevno izkustvo biti živ vedno vključuje predstavljanje drugih resničnosti, drugih možnosti, drugih stanovanj, v katerih bi lahko prebivali, drugih partnerstev, ki bi jih lahko živeli. Biti v sedanjem trenutku za človeka ni naravna danost, saj smo pogosto le delno prisotni, v preteklosti, v prihodnosti, v nizu možnih svetov. Gianpiero Petriglieri je na Twitterju izjavil, da je razlog za vsesplošno utrujenost po video-klicih »prepričljivo zanikanje medsebojne odsotnosti«. ²⁵⁴ A ta živost je vedno bila in bo polna neprisotnosti, ko nas v resnici ni bilo tam, ko bi morali biti, ko smo bili tehnično prisotni in naša prisotnost posneta s kamero, kot pravni dokaz v primeru, da lažemo, da nismo bili nikoli tam. Ali pa da smo bili v prostoru, v katerem se je odvijala predstava, ko smo preprosto sedeli v posteljah. Zdi se mi, da je neki privilegij gledališke prisotnosti, ki ga nekatera nevrotična telesa jemljejo kot samoumevnega in ki skriva svoj pogoj obstoja, odsotnost prisotnosti na dogodkih v živo, kar je povezano z odsotnostjo prisotnosti kot pogoja človeškega obstoja.

Na začetku posnetka predstave vidimo Christiana Hempla, kako sedi med občinstvom in ustvarja tihe zvoke, občasno izgovori stavek ali dva, strese z glavo ali tleskne z jezikom. Ko sem ga gledala, sem si predstavljala, da sedim nekoliko stran od njega, sredi občinstva. Ali bi slišala njegove tike? Ali bi ga videla? Kaj bi si mislila? Ali bi mislila, da nekdo moti predstavo, ali pa bi takoj uganila, da ima ta oseba Tourettov sindrom, in bi ga sprejela kot zvok v ozadju, ki bi lahko bil pomemben ali ne, v vsakem trenutku predstave, odvisno od tega, na kaj bi se predstava osredotočala (ali morda pred predstavo ne bi prebrala programa)? Posnetek predstave *Chinchilla Arschloch* ne zanika senzorične narave svojega formata in našega sodelovanja z njim.

Bralec se morebiti sprašuje, zakaj sploh primerjam ti dve predstavi. Do neke mere ju občutim kot obrnjeni zrcalni sliki druge, a tudi kot obrnjeni zrcalni sliki samih sebe. *Višnjik u višnjiku* se zdi kot uprizoritev predstave, a hkrati bolj kot del izmišljenega gledališča, ki je le ohlapno zasnovano na eni svetovno najbolj znanih gledaliških iger. To ustvarjanje iluzije dokumentarnega gledališča z usposobljenimi igralci je v nasprotju s prakso zasedbe Rimini Protokoll z laičnimi igralci, katerih vsakdanost zaznamuje tema predstave. Zdi se, kot da prva obstaja v svojem *izbranem* mediju, ki je prikrojen za Zoom, a se zdi in občuti melanholična v svoji nezmožnosti obstoja v živo in se zanaša na našo frustracijo z Zoomom. Ker gre le

²⁵⁴ Glej <https://twitter.com/gpetriglieri/status/1246221849018720256?lang=en>.

za posnetek predstave, ki izhodiščno ni bila namenjena temu, da jo gledamo kot posnetek, in v kontekstu novega premika paradigme ob pandemiji zaradi covid-19, se zdi, da druga produkcija ponuja senzorično predstavo, povečano perspektivo, obljubo, ki je prej ni bilo.

Obe predstavi – *Višnjik u višnjiku* in *Chinchilla Arschloch, was was* –, čeprav prva ni bila načrtno zasnovana kot dogodek prek Zooma, druga pa je bila zamišljena kot predstava v živo, ki jo vidimo samo kot posnetek, se zanašata na naše občutenje tega, česar v nekem trenutku nikakor ne bi mogli občutiti, na našo predstavo občutkov, ki nam jih stvari vzbudijo, ko smo z njimi v istem prostoru. Razlika je ta, da *Višnjik u višnjiku* ne obstaja zunaj dogodka prek Zooma, razen kot živeta resničnost igralcev, ki zasedajo svoj fizični prostor, ki ga mi, njihovi gledalci, nikoli ne bi mogli. Naš edini način prisotnosti v predstavi je bil *ne biti tam*, v prostoru skupaj z vsakim posameznim igralcem. Vendar to ne pomeni, da je posnetek predstave *Chinchilla Arschloch, was was* le kopija resnične predstave, temveč je neki drug način doživljanja in zaznavanja, njegov ontološki status se je podvojil.

Una Bauer je gledališka strokovnjakinja in pisateljica, ki živi na Hrvaškem. Doktorirala je na londonski univerzi Queen Mary. Je docentka na Akademiji dramskih umetnosti v Zagrebu. Njena prva knjiga o gledališču in vsem drugem, tudi o okrasnih pokrivalih za čajnike in kolesih, *Priđite bliže: o kazalištu i drugim radostim*, je bila objavljena leta 2015. Njena druga knjiga *BADco.: Vježbanje nemogućeg*, serija dialogov s kolektivom BADco., pa je izšla leta 2021.

ON THE SENSORIALITY OF ASYNCHRO- NOUS AND SYNCHRONOUS BUT MEDI- ATED EXPERIENCES

Two Case Studies

Describing Bobo Jelčić's *The Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard* (De Facto Theatre Company, 2020), "a theatre production performed in the virtual space", as their programme notes state, is not all that different from describing a typical daily activity of an unofficial Zoom meeting or even a Zoom teaching session. Everyone is withering away in their little square or trickling out of it. The squares are touching each other, and if one applies "gallery view", all are of the same size. We are peeping into each other's apartments, bed headboards and bookshelves to catch an interesting or revealing detail. Someone is keeping his mobile phone camera too close to his herpes outbreak, someone is only partially visible through the enlarged pores on his forehead, someone is using an opportunity to make creamy seafood chowder during the session, which results in a large blotch of darkened mobile screen for the rest, and someone fell out of the shot because she is trying to cry in private or needs to pick her nose. Almost everyone will at some point start shaking the camera as they move rooms, leave the bed for the armchair, or sit in the car as they are late to pick up their child from kindergarten or for the dentist appointment.

However, in this Zoom meeting, we are with Lyubov Andreievna (Jadranka Đokić), Leonid Andreieveitch Gayev (Jerko Marčić), Anya (Lana Meniga), Varya (Petra Svrtan), Lopakhin whose name is misspelt as Lapakhin (Marko Makovčić) and Petya (Ugo Korani). In their Zoom squares, we usually see them to a certain degree, mostly their faces or other body parts, and the (idea of) space is paired with light nausea because of the occasionally shaking cameras. The relations and events have been reduced to the basics, a croquis – Anya, the teenager in love, starts beaming when Petya turns up for the group conversation, only to tell us that he and Anya are "above love"; Lyubov Andreievna is not leaving the bed or her duvet, her tragically deceased son is mentioned in passing, so is the parasite lover; Varya is confused with her relationship with Lopakhin, she is milling around the kitchen, or outside in the snow; Gayev dreams of financial salvation that a general would bring; Lapakhin is calling from the car, between meetings and the auction, his connection is weak. Yet, this reduction does show strength, as a precise line of a simple drawing, instead of a thick layer of buttery paint. And as an artistic procedure, it emphasises (and repeats) the reduction that we feel for this form of "being together" when we have been zoomed out of our skin into the two-dimensional surface of ourselves.

Jelčić and his co-authors/performers have created a situation inverse to the one established in Jelčić's performances. In his live production, Jelčić and his collaborators focus on illusionistic documentary or quasi-documentary theatre.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵

Una Bauer, Agata Juniku and Goran Pavlić, "Reprezentacije manjinskog u suvremenom

For instance, the production *Govori glasnije* (Speak Louder, Kerempuh Theatre, 2018) starts with an impossibility of a beginning due to technical problems, which is the actual beginning of the performance. I was surprised to realise that, in these highly ironic times, this trick still works with some audience members. Jelčić and his collaborators often play with the audiences' expectations and provoke participation which is then somewhat rejected, as if the audience member has not quite understood that she is still in the theatre, thus invoking a kind of a pseudo-interaction. Even in text-based productions, such as *Three Sisters* (Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, 2020), there is explicit tension between the actor and his private persona and between the audience coming to witness a theatre production and participating in a dialogue with the actors. Ugo Korani, as Vershinin in *Three Sisters*, for instance, asks a question, seemingly wanting to include the audience. Yet, when one audience member starts answering elaborately, he basically waits until she finishes and returns to his lines. On the other hand, Jelčić and his collaborators also create a recognisable exaggerated physical vocabulary in their performances, emphasising the constructed-ness of theatre production.²⁵⁶ While in their live performances, they try to gently and subtly destabilise the theatre frame, confuse us about whether we should answer Nina Violić when she is directly speaking to us in the audience, sometimes by their personal names, from the role of Olga, but also from the role of Nina Violić (we know that we do not have to, but social conventions are sometimes in contradiction with theatre illusion), in this situation they are trying to convince us that we are not on a Zoom meeting but that we have infiltrated, like flies on the wall or dust mites in the bedding, into the video call of a family who wants to keep their Cherry Orchard, with all its symbolic connotations. Unlike Jelčić's performances, where the focus is on losing the security in our position of the observer, in this "staging", we have been completely ignored. In fact, we are asked not to use chat until after the performance. Forced transition to social networks and other forms of communication had to happen so that Jelčić would exclude the illusion of audience participation. This is a reasonable decision because it stops the noise in the communication channel, which happens anyway (there will always be someone who will send a message to the group chat because they have not read the instructions or because they are simply too happy that they have had the opportunity to "come"). And even if this were not the case, attempting to provide an invitation to include the audience would be redundant as we are anyway fighting not to experience this performance as another Zoom meeting. But even though we are dealing with a different "media" frame, the atmosphere is similar: a creepy feeling that you are not entirely sure whether this is a parody or the seriousness of illusionism. Because Jadranka Đokić is lying just like you in her bed when somebody needs to contact you for a tiny minute via Zoom or in the 125th minute of a super short meeting, whether it is better to use the word "entitled" or "privileged" in a collectively written introduction, Meniga glues her face to the mobile screen just like you while you are tying your shoelaces so that everyone can see every blackhead on your nose or places the mobile phone on the floor while the bed is holding her head because she is, *really, honestly*, tired of holding it in her hand.

hrvatskom kazalištu i drami," in *Od mobilnosti do interakcije*, eds. Leszek Malczak and Gabriela Abrasowicz (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2020), 243–262.

²⁵⁶ Marin Blažević, "Nataša Rajković i Bobo Jelčić," in *Razgovori o novom kazalištu 2* (Zagreb: Centar za dramsku umjetnost, 2007), 235–295.

We are dealing with a combination of familiarity with the obvious and banal. And if this might be theoretically stretched, Jelčić's method has something of the strategies of subversive affirmation, which builds its artistic strength on the fact that one is not entirely sure whether something should be understood as a defence or questioning.

I would now like to compare Jelčić's "theatre production performed in a virtual space" with a recording of a production which was released to the public at some point during the pandemic in 2020 (and is still publicly available on Vimeo),²⁵⁷ as has happened to many recordings and as a kind of a quick fix in a time of pandemic-induced theatre paralysis.²⁵⁸ To further emphasise what I have already said, *Chinchilla Arschloch, waswas* (Chinchilla Arsehole, eyey, Rimini Protokoll, 2018) by Helgard Haug / Thilo Guschas, was not meant as an online event / "theatre production performed in a virtual space", and it is not one. It was simply a document of a performance, a recording. It is a particular example of Rimini Protokoll's way of approaching documentary theatre, openness towards neurodiverse presences in the audience and on the stage. *Chinchilla Arschloch, waswas* is a performance exploring the ways Tourette syndrome is present in the theatre. As Christian Hempel, Benjamin Jürgens and Bijan Kaffenberger explain and embody it on the stage, Tourette syndrome has been mostly understood as, in some ways, incompatible with theatre-going or theatre-making. Neurotypical people are often not familiar with or experienced in the intricacies of Tourette syndrome. It is a condition which makes it extremely painful or uncomfortable to hold in repetitive movements, unwanted sounds or offensive words. Of course, each individual with Tourette's is unique, and so are the specific manifestations of these conditions. Christian Hempel explains how uncomfortable it is for him to sit in the theatre because he has to control his ticks not to disturb the performance. As it happens, he cannot, which makes both people in the audience and performers angry as they assume he is rude and unappreciative of the effort that goes into performing live. Even worse, he is intruding into the very performance and, potentially, reducing its aesthetic appeal. Neurotypical audiences and theatre venues are not accustomed to the simple practice of announcing that a person with Tourette syndrome will be in the audience and that audience members are asked to open themselves to that experience.

I watched this piece in the midst of the pandemic (for the first time on 24 September 2020). I was watching it with an intense fear²⁵⁹ that this might be the only way that we are ever to see performances from now on. And I was watching it, or at least attempting to watch it, as one reads a book or listens to a radio play, with all that is not there and one imagines that it should be. This was, of course, not the first time I watched a recording of a theatre piece, but there was a certain experiential change that took over. I watched it as if this was all it was and all it could ever be. And in a similar way in which one listens to a radio play or a piece of sound art, there is a duplicity of sensations. One referential – for instance, when you hear the sound of the waves in a radio performance and see the image of the sea; the other, autonomous/non-referential – enjoying its acoustic quality and aesthetic value in relation to other sounds in the piece, regardless

²⁵⁷ See <https://vimeo.com/358770259>.

²⁵⁸ When the pandemic initially hit, many recordings that were released to the public were unbelievably bad. Some of them looked like they were filmed with a potato from the corner of the first row, or from a distance which made the performers look like insects.

²⁵⁹ And probably exaggerated and unrealistic, but feelings have their own reality.

of the association to a particular object of reference. On the one hand, I was observing the piece, its logic, its content, but I was also sensing and imagining what I could not objectively sense *at that moment*, what would it mean had I been in the same space as them, how would the pizza that was ordered in the middle of the performance for an audience member smell, would an audience member be wearing a perfume invading my space with his scent. On the other hand, I have sensed all of these things many, many times before. The smell of fresh pizza, the heat of a crowded room, sitting in the dark for a particular amount of time amongst a number of other people, not being able to leave the room without making many other people stand up, diving into the “world of performance” which is always a particular world, regardless whether we are watching a piece of illusionistic theatre or a postdramatic production where we are inclined to believe that we inhabit the same space and time. I was trying to feel the space, its size and what it would mean to be present in those surroundings. I imagined what it would mean to touch the fluffy fake bear skin carpet. And I could feel the fluffy fake bear skin carpet as I had done many times before, even if I had not felt that particular fake bear skin carpet. Having said that, even if I had been in Künstlerhaus Mousonturm on the night of the recorded performance, I probably would not have been able to touch the fake bear skin carpet anyway, as the audience in this context was not meant to come on stage. I probably also might have had really bad seats at the very back and not been able to see the details of Benjamin Jürgen’s facial expressions. Is that ontologically relevant? Maybe not. But sensorially, it definitely is. One could say that this was imagining how things would have been had I been there, which in fact, I was not, so what could possibly be the ontological value of that “imagining” of the sensorial? But live theatre experience is also an invitation to imagine, fantasise and place yourself in one’s shoes even if we cannot experientially be there, as I, at that moment, could not have been in Künstlerhaus Mousonturm. I probably would not have been in Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, even if it had not been for the COVID-19 pandemic. Our everyday experience of being alive always includes imagining other realities, other possibilities, other apartments that we could have inhabited and other partnerships through which we could have lived. Being in the now is not a natural condition for a human being, as we are often partially present, in the past, in the future, in a series of possible worlds. In a Twitter thread, Gianpiero Petriglieri argued that the reason why everyone is so exhausted after video calls is because of “the plausible deniability of each other’s absence”.²⁶⁰ Yet liveness has always been and always will be full of unpresence, of us not really being there when we were meant to be there when we were technically present, and our presence recorded through the camera as legal proof in case we are lying about never being there. Or being there in the space of the performance when we were simply sitting in our beds. It seems to me that there is a certain privilege of theatrical presence that some neurotypical bodies take for granted and which hides its condition of existence: the absence of presence at live events, which is related to the absence of presence as a condition of human existence.

The recording of the performance starts with a shot of Christian Hempel sitting in the audience, making soft noises, occasionally saying a phrase or two, shaking his head and clicking his tongue. While watching him, I imagined sitting somewhere further from him, in the middle of the audience. Would I have heard his tics? Would I have seen him? What would I have thought? Would I assume someone was being disruptive, or would I have immediately guessed that this person has Tourette syndrome and accepted it as background noise, which might or

²⁶⁰ See <https://twitter.com/gpetriglieri/status/1246221849018720256?lang=en>.

might not have been relevant in every particular moment of the performance, depending on the focus of the performance (had I, for instance, not read the programme notes before coming to this performance)? The recording of *Chinchilla Arschloch, waswas* does not deny the sensorial nature of its format and our engagement with it.

A reader might ask why I am even comparing these two performances. To a certain extent, they feel like a reverse mirror image of each other and a reverse mirror image of oneself. *The Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard* seems like the staging of a play, yet appears more to be a piece of devised theatre only loosely based on one of the world's most famous plays. Its creation of an illusion of a documentary theatre performance with trained actors is contrasted with Rimini Protokoll's interest in non-professional performers whose everydayness is marked by the theme of the performance. One seems to be existing in its "chosen" medium and is tailor-made for Zoom, yet seems and feels melancholic about its inability to exist live and relies on our frustration with Zoom. The other, being only a recording of the event, thus never meant to be watched initially or originally as a recording, in the context of our new COVID-19-induced paradigmatic shift, seems to offer a sensorial imagination, a heightened perspective, a promise which was not there before.

Both *The Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard* and *Chinchilla Arschloch, waswas* – even if the first was deliberately conceived as a Zoom event, and the second imagined as a live performance of which we only see a recording – rely on us sensing what we could not possibly sense in a particular moment, rely on us imagining a certain way of how things feel when we are in the room with them. The difference is that *The Cherry Orchard in the Cherry Orchard* does not exist outside of a Zoom event, except as a lived reality of performers inhabiting their physical spaces, which we, their audiences, could have never inhabited. Our only way of presence in the performance was *not to be there* in the room with each particular performer. Yet that does not make the recording of *Chinchilla Arschloch, waswas* only a copy of the real thing but another mode of experiencing and sensing. Its ontological status doubled.

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NA PREPIHU

Zunanost kot avtonomni agens v Delu panike (Rad panike, BADco., Grobničko polje, julij 2020)

Naša gledališka abstinenca zaradi izrednega stanja pandemije traja že leto dni. Poleg čakanja na odprtje so gledališča poskušala najti nadomestne načine svojega delovanja – od igranja predstav brez gledalcev, internih predstav, predstav za zelo omejeno publiko, živih spletnih prenosov, predvajanj bolj ali manj zmontiranih posnetkov predstav do redkejših novi situaciji popolnoma prilagojenih oblik prezentacije, ki se ne referirajo več na predhodno stanje, kjer je bil gledališki dispozitiv z živo publiko norma. A vse to, z izjemo zadnje opcije, ki pa je, kot že rečeno, prej izjema kot pravilo, je zgolj nadomestek. Je mimikrija gledališkega dogodka, kakor je bil razumljen v času, ko je bilo možno skupno naseljevanje prostora in časa. Za takšen nadomestek je vsaj pri na prezenco vezani umetnosti značilno, da ne zadovolji niti ustvarjalcev in igralcev niti gledalcev, saj umanjkata ravno skupni prostor in čas, ki naredita dogodek mogoč. Četudi tudi gledališče ustvarja simulaker, pa ne prenese tako enostavnega prenosa v drugi medij, brez da bi premislili njemu lastne načine simulacije. Razna predvajanja predstav tako niso več gledališki dogodki, kakor smo jih doživljaji in razumeli.

V tem prispevku ne bom raziskovala vseh možnih in mogočih načinov, ki bi lahko zaobšli prepoved živega dogodka ali orali ledino na področju spopadanja z drugimi mediji ali redefinirali sam gledališki dogodek. Posvetila se bom premišljanju dogodka, vezanega na določen kraj na prostem, ki je bil zaradi svoje specifičnosti dogajanja zunaj zaprtega prostora gledališča za organizirano situacijo žive izvedbe s publiko v dotičnem trenutku dovoljen. Trenutni odloki pri nas sicer ne dovoljujejo dogodkov, niti zbiranja več kot desetih ljudi, četudi na prostem, zato celo tak dogodek danes pri nas ne bi bil izvedljiv. O teh dogodkih ne bom govorila v množini, saj jih zaradi prepovedi ni bilo veliko ali pa so bili nedostopni, četudi so se morebiti odvili. Namesto tega se bom posvetila edinemu takemu primeru, ki sem mu v tem koronskem letu prisostvovala fizično, ki ne le da je name deloval kot celostna gledališka izkušnja, ampak je celo razširil dožemanje tega, kaj gledališče (lahko) je. Moj študijski primer, ki je primer(ek) tudi v smislu vrstnega razširjanja pojmovanja gledališča, je iz obdobja, ko so ga vremenske okoliščine in okoliščine tedanjih ukrepov v sosednji državi še omogočale in je bilo tja še mogoče priti. Gre za zadnjo predstavo kolektiva BADco. *Delo panike*, ki se je še lahko odvila v okviru Reke – Evropske prestolnice kulture na lokaciji v bližini mesta, kljub temu da je večina dogodkov v okviru EPK zaradi pandemije odpadla. S tem delom ta mednarodno priznana hrvaška skupina po dvajsetih letih delovanja (zaradi nemogočih produkcijskih pogojev) tudi zaključuje s kolektivnim ustvarjanjem.

NE-KRAJ DOGAJANJA

Navigacija nas od vrat Jadrana z avtoceste usmeri na planoto, poraščeno z nizkim, redkim, bodikavim rastjem, značilnim za prepišno kraško regijo.

Območje se, posebej ob vetru, ki je na ta dan izjemno močan in nas skoraj neprostovoljno prestavlja z mesta, zdi negostoljubno. Kot bi bilo že od nekdanj avtonomno in bi preusmerjalo človeške naselbine drugam. Človek pa je vendarle v tej pokrajini pustil svoje sledi pospeševanja in udomačevanja – čeznjo je napeljal cestne mimobežnice, za bližino vasi in mest prehrupne poligone zabave (avtomotodrom) in prometa (letališče, avtocesta), vanjo urezal rano kamnoloma kot napol uspel poskus prilastitve. To je za človeka zasilni, prehodni, zgolj utilitarni prostor – sem ne prihaja, ampak ga prehaja in koristi njegove redke danosti.



Slika št. 11. Rad Panike (Delo panike), BadCo. premiera, 10. julij 2020, Grobničko polje, Hrvaška. Foto Tanja Kanazir, last BadCo.

Vseeno pa je to živ ekosistem narave in tehnologije, mogoč ravno zaradi svoje pustosti, nezanimive za človeško uporabo in naselitev. Je polje, polno nizkega rastja, travičevja in grmičevja, gomazenja raznoraznih žuželk, rovk, srnjadi in nemara kakšnega osamljenega plenilca, ter kraj, poln skritih gnezdišč ptic, ki se v svojih preletih izogibajo daljnovodom in reagirajo na zvok motoriziranih vozil. A tudi kraj preletov letal, švigajočih vozil in električnih impulzov, ki prenašajo signale. To je kraj, poln življenja, vsaj tistega, ki ga ne (z)moti burja, ki brije čezenj, ali ropotanje tovornjakov. Predvsem pa je to kraj, kjer odsotnost človeka odpira možnost novih začetkov.

To ni naravna scenografija, saj je zaradi kontingentnosti vremenskih pojavov, prostranosti in neustavljivih svetlobnih premen samo polje dominantnejše od vsega, kar se vanj umešča. Neogibno vpliva na možnost, nemožnost in kvaliteto vsakega dogodka, ki se v njem poskuša naseliti. To ni standarden gledališki dispozitiv, ki šele ustvarja iluzijo, primerno za vsak posamični gledališki dogodek, in se mu kot črna laboratorijska škatla podreja ter skozi funkcijo pogleda proizvaja subjektiviteto. Gre za nenadzorljive okoliščine, kamor je dogodek spuščen, ki ga sicer lahko ojačajo, a tudi povsem udušijo. Grobniško polje je torej za *Delo panike* več kot scena, je gostitelj. Je organizem, na katerem se predstava hrani in živi.

V gledališču že dolgo ni v ospredju samo tekst, ki je postal le »element, plast in *material* odrske stvaritve«,²⁶¹ ne njen vladar. Je enakovreden z gibom, lučjo, zvokom, sceno. A vsak od teh elementov je *sestavni del*, del strukture enakovrednih označevalcev, vzdržuje ga kontekst, dispozitiv gledališča, ki predstavlja sam pogoj za branje. A ko izstopimo iz teatra, izstopimo tudi iz te strukture, iz diskurzivnega – v materialno. Potrebna je drugačna opreznost, materija pomeni na drugačen način kot pomenijo sami pomeni. Materija zdaj ni samo znak med znaki, ni pasivna snov, ki je vzpostavljena za nas in za predpostavljeni pomen. Obstaja neodvisno od nas in od dogodka. Ni zgolj še en pomen, ampak pomeni nekaj drugega, drugače. Preko dogodka jo vidimo in doživimo drugače – kot živo okolje, kot bodeče in mrgoleče polje, kot kraj hitrosti in hkratnega miru. Veter in sončni zahod na polju kar naenkrat nekdo občuti in doživi, čeprav vsak dan obstajata tudi brez dogodka. Taka prestavitev dogodka na polje destabilizira celoten dogodek. Zato ta postane bolj krhek, hkrati pa morata biti vsaka beseda in gib dovolj utemeljena, da se lahko kosata z neskončno močnejšim zavijanjem vetra in prostranostjo obzorja.

Ko je dogodek prestavljen na prepah, to ne pomeni zgolj nekoliko drugačne organizacije, ampak veter dodobra prepiha tudi antropocentrične in humanistične ontološke predpostavke, ki so inherentne gledališču. Zunanosti namreč ne moremo gledati zgolj kot razširjeno scenografijo, saj bi tako nekaj, kar je tam od nekdej in bo obstajalo tudi po koncu dogodka, gledali kot utilitarni objekt. Nasprotno, sili nas, da jo razumemo v okviru posthumanistične ekofeministične fenomenologije, ki pravi, da materija lahko vpliva na druge žive in nežive stvari, na neki način je gibalka, je agens, in to ne le na način kavzalnega determinizma fizikalnih danosti:

»Agencija v novomaterialističnem in poshumanističnem smislu pomeni preprosto 'spremeniti možnosti spremembe'. Vse stvari so del tega agensa-kot-delovanja, kjer možnosti za spremembo vzniknejo iz neprestanih intra-akcij stvari, ki niso nikoli dovršene. Agensa novi materializem ne razume več kot izključno človeškega faktorja, ampak nas vabi, da v obzir vzamemo ne-človeška telesa in njihov

²⁶¹ Hans-Thies Lehman, *Postdramsko gledališče* (Ljubljana: Maska, 2003), 20–21.

doprinosa k svoji lastni aktualizaciji ali njihovo zahtevo po odzivu.«²⁶²

Avtorica teh vrstic Astrida Neimanis je, zanimivo, tudi avtorica koncepta *hidroskupnosti*,²⁶³ kjer preko elementa vode, ki je del vseh nas, misli fluidnost bitij, kjer zunanost in notranost nista več tako gotovi, kot sta se nam zdeli v tradiciji zahodne misli. To je nemara premislek, ki ga ta predstava na svoj način naredi v imenu EPK Reka, ki ima v imenu mesta vodni tok.²⁶⁴

Četudi je je v predstavi dejansko malo, pa obstaja v besedilu kot vezivni tekočini, in kadar ob kopanju izbruhne iz kraške zemlje.



Slika št. 12. Rad Panike (Delo panike), BadCo. 12. julij 2020, Grobničko polje, Hrvaška. Foto Igor Bezinović, last BadCo.

S človeškega vidika je kraj Grobniškega polja, kakor pojasnijo BADco. pravzaprav kraj ne-tu, saj je zanj pust in prazen, prečijo ga zgolj funkcionalne tehnološke in prometne infrastrukture. Te so opomnik invazivne človeške prisotnosti, a tudi nekaj avtonomnega, kar je v čudnem, ne zgolj konfliktnem sožitju z naravo. A ravno

²⁶² Astrida Neimanis, "Thinking with Matter Rethinking Irigaray: A Liquid Ground for a Planetary Feminism," v *Feminist Philosophies of Life*, ur. Hasana Sharp in Chloë Taylor (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 5.

²⁶³ Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* (London, Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2017), 11.

²⁶⁴ V hrvaškem jeziku *Rijeka* pomeni "reka."

zato ker je to neki ne-kraj, je z njega mogoče drugače videti naša siceršnja življenja, zato je lahko prostor utopije. Po drugi strani pa za veter ta kraj ni nenavaden, saj čezenj često brije, niti ni nenavaden za rastje, ki se lahko v svoji robotosti neplodne zemlje širi brez omejitev. Zanj je to v kontekstu s človeškimi posegi vsesplošno preritega planeta heterotopija, kakor bi jo opisal Michel Foucault, redki *drugi prostor*, realizirana utopija.²⁶⁵ Ko razmišljamo o naseljevanju neposeljenega polja, je to vedno že poseljeno, vsaj posejano s kamni v točno določeni arhitekturi, ki koreografira korak in spotik.

Ne gre pa zgolj za določanje kraja, za orientacijo in topografijo, ampak tudi za arheologijo in geologijo: polja ne merimo samo s pogledom, ampak se skozi globino plasti zemlje poskušamo prekopati do pojma časa in včasih, kot pod plazom, ni mogoče vedeti, ali kopljemo, da bi se izkopali, ali pa se bomo zakopali do pokopa. Panika je lahko rešilna ali pogubna. Gotovo pa je to, do česar se želimo v tej predstavi dokopati, nek drugi čas. Čas po gotovem koncu, ki pa je tudi čas nekega drugega začetka. Ko je mogoče začeti znova in drugače. Ko je potrebno iz ne-kraja in ne-časa šele narediti kraj in čas. Je to mogoče narediti, ne da bi ponovili napake prve naselitve? Ne da bi ponovno poteptali vse živo in vseeno preživeli? Ne da bi si ponovno iz sveta zgradili gledališče?

ČEZ-VRSTNI PROTAGONISTI

Ob predvideni večerni uri se na polju sredi ničesar zbere precejšnja gruča ljudi. V roke dobijo nekakšne risbe, na ušesih imajo slušalke. So tehnološko ojačani, povezani na avdio-posnetke, ki jim jih je organizator poslal v naprej. Razen tega ne dobijo dodatnih navodil. Preprosto zakorakajo na odprto polje. Njihovo smer določa gibanje drugih ljudi, prepreke v obliki rastlinja ali kamenja na njihovi poti. Nekje na horizontih vseh smeri neba jo omejujejo spomeniki človeške tehnologije in modernizacije. Ti niso tujek, ampak kot v televizijski seriji *Tales from the Loop* (2020) Nathaniela Halperna njen integralni del tako, da se nihče več niti ne ozre za tavajočim robotom sredi gozda. Ne gre za idealizacijo narave, izbiro pristnejšega napram kontaminiranemu, ampak za realizem antropocena, ki je postal samostojni subjekt, nad katerim človek nima več nadzora. Ne le narava, tudi tehnologija je postala agens.

²⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces. Utopia and Heterotopias," v *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, (oktober 1984).



Slika št. 13. Rad Panike (Delo panike), BadCo., premiera, 10. julij 2020, Grobničko polje, Hrvaška. Foto Tanja Kanazir, last BadCo.

Sprva nekoliko zmedena v brezciljnem gibanju, se množica ob poslušanju prijetnega glasu Aleksandre Stojaković Olenjuk, ki interpretira tekst Gorana Ferčeca, preda pomenom, ki govorijo o situaciji *osvajanja odprtega polja*, in se počasi, tudi ob boku devetih plesalk, ki prenašajo table in nekakšna svetila, nekako opomore od vrtočlavice in končno zasilno orientira. Najmočnejše sidrišče za to je gotovo niz enajstih kratkih Ferčecjevih besedil,²⁶⁶ ki konkretno materialno izkušnjo dotičnega prostora spojijo s tokom misli, ki nas odnaša v nekakšno postapokaliptično situacijo. Ta ni postavljena nekam v nedoločeno prihodnost, ampak v sedanjost našega paničnega trenutka, na dotična tla, po katerih stopamo.

Zaradi slušalk smo kljub skupni izkušnji ves čas sami, naši posnetki tudi niso časovno sinhronizirani, besedilo nas neposredno nagovarja, poigrava se z našim razumevanjem, napotuje na asociacije, spodbuja imaginacijo, daje miselne naloge. A vse to zelo nevsiljivo. Tekst je vedno bolj poezija kot navodilo, dovolj invokativno, da nas odpelje v mogoče pokrajine, a vseeno pušča dovolj prostora, da nas hkrati prizemlji. Kakor so bolj fantazija kot pa shema ali navodilo tudi risbe Siniše Ilića, čeprav jih pred začetkom v strahu lahko zamenjamo za nekakšen obet participacijskih nalog. Risbe so skice, besedila, ki jih poslušamo, pa ne naloge, temveč zapiski. Ti so, kot nekje zapiše Bojana Cvejić, značilni za delo BADco.:

»Zapisek ni ukaz, temveč povezava na problem, performer nadalje komponira s tem zapiskom, ne uporablja ga, da bi osvojil in ukrotil odpor do prostora in časa

²⁶⁶ Goran Ferčec in Siniša Ilić, *Rad panike* (Zagreb: Kulturtreger, Multimedialni inštitut, 2020). V zvočni izvedbi Aleksandre Stojaković Olenjuk dostopno na <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN9fMQKPgzK9YcmWFdSWTYdnBKzi99fLF>, 28. 3. 2021.

gledališča. Trenje, odpor, deviacija in distorzija so delo v ozadju gledališča BADco.«²⁶⁷

Zdaj je to delo z zapiski skoraj v celoti predano tudi obiskovalki. Sprva ji zabubljenost v njen zvočni mehurček za slušalkami prebijajo zgolj sunki vetra in pa pihalni orkester KUD Sloga Ravna gora, ki se pojavi iz daljave in gledalce pripelje nazaj v dejansko skupnost tega konkretnega dogodka.

Devet plesalk je odetih v moške obleke z natisnjenimi deli fluorescentnih risb Vjenceslava Richterja, utopičnega arhitekta, v katerega zagrebškem domovanju se je odvila predhodna predstava BADco. *Izkop*, drugi del trilogije. Na ta način se motivi iz posameznih del kolektiva prepletejo – to so med drugim motivi utopije, zemlje, dela, modernizma.

Plesalke se v prostranosti polja porazgubijo. Okoli njih se ustali več skupin gledalcev, čeprav posamezniki nenehno prehajajo od ene do druge izvajalke. Tako njihovo gibanje narahlo navigira množico, kot nekakšen okvir. Naravna podlaga in prepreke pa usmerjajo njihove korake. To premikanje je preprosto, funkcionalno, hkrati pa za razliko od opotekajočega iskanja gledalcev izrazito dinamično, preletavajoče, sproženo. Plesalke niso liki, kot edine protagonistke žive izvedbe so bolj prostorski smerokazi, pa tudi afektivni kontaminatorji, ki na telesni ravni sprožijo naše odzive. Njihovo plesno delo se v zadnji fazi dogodka, ko nas odpeljejo do izkopanih grobnih jam, zgosti in postane bolj sugestivno. Utripajoča telesa ob in v zemlji so nekaj ganljivega. Ko sonce zaide, pa se zberejo vse plesalke, si svetijo s posebnimi svetili, odplešejo usklajeno koreografijo po strmem gramoznem klancu na abstrakten niz navodil (ki terjajo koreografski odgovor na problem) po megafonu in nazadnje izginejo v izkopanih jamah.



Slika št. 14. *Rad Panike (Delo panike)*, BadCo. premiera, 10. julij 2020, Grobničko polje, Hrvaška. Foto Tanja Kanazir, last BadCo.

²⁶⁷ Bojana Cvejić, "A Parallel Slalom from BADco.: In Search of a Poetics of Problems," *Representations* 136, 1 (2016):): 21–35, 31–32.

Ko poskušamo določiti protagoniste, naloga ni lahka. To bi lahko bilo tako dramsko besedilo kot glas interpretke, pa tudi koreografija plesalk ali nastop godbe na pihala. A prav toliko je to tudi sončni zahod, svetlikanje daljnovoda, ukrivljenost podlage, gostota rastja, pihanje vetra, obnašanje množice prisotnih. Smo protagonisti obiskovalci? Dramski tekst in krajina nas dekonstruirata na posamične poglede, ki se osvobodijo od nas, na imaginacijo, ki podivja in zapusti teren. Plesalke nas razstavijo na relacije med nami, veter naredi naša telesa odzivna in ranljiva. Bolj kot posamezni izvajalci ali obiskovalci so protagonisti predstave ta emocija, tisti odnos, ona misel, pa tudi to telo in tista pest zemlje.

PO GOTOVEM KONCU NOV ZAČETEK

V predstavi se pojavlja motiv gotovega konca po katastrofi, ki smo se je bali, po kateri se kot novi naseljevalci neke nepoznane, tuje pokrajine, počasi udomačujemo. To naseljevanje je negotovo, saj iz izkušnje vemo, da ima udomačevanje za posledico spet – gotovi konec. Postavljeni smo v določen ekvilibrij, kjer še ni jasno, ali bomo uspešni mi ali pustinja. Medtem ko čakamo, jemo kolačke iz blata. Delo panike je bilo že narejeno, panika ne more trajati večno, izčrpa se, na vsako stanje se nazadnje prilagodimo, tako delujejo naša telesa. Panika je akutno stanje pripravljenosti na beg, a ko vidimo, da ne moremo nikamor zbežati, se poleže, čeprav se zunanje okoliščine ne spremenijo bistveno. To dobro vemo iz našega celoletnega sobivanja z virusom covid-19.

Virus nas je izgnal iz gledališč, naselil je avditorije in prežal na žive duše. Naselil je tudi oder in nam priredil predstavo, priredil si je predstavo. To je tudi predstava o smislu gledališča, kot smo ga poznali in prakticirali, o naših medvrstnih odnosih. Virus se je izkazal za agens, ki je dodobra *spremenil možnost spremembe*. Če to pomeni (vsaj začasen) konec gledališča, kot smo ga poznali, pa ravno zaradi bistvenega vpliva nečloveških faktorjev nanj pomeni tudi premislek in prakso njegovega novega začetka.

O gledališču smo govorili kot o dispozitivu, ki je za Michela Foucaulta, kakor ga povzema Giorgio Agamben, heterogeni set praks, pravzaprav je mreža med temi praksami, ki ima strateško funkcijo in se nahaja na presečišču relacij moči in vednosti.²⁶⁸ Za Agambena je dispozitiv oziroma aparat konkretnije tudi vsak tehnični vmesnik, denimo telefon. Če gledališče razumemo kot nekakšno tehnološko-relacijsko mrežo, katere *estetska* funkcija deluje tudi strateško v smislu subjektiviranja svojega občinstva na tak ali drugačen način, tudi tovrsten izstop na preprih seveda ostaja gledališki. A očitno je to linija pobega, ki razširja pogosto zgolj diskurzivno funkcijo gledališča znakov, saj telesom ne ponuja več varnega zavetja v temi, iz katere se sveti par oči, ki znake zajemajo in interpretirajo. Zdaj so tudi te oči in ta telesa z vsemi čutili vržena na izpostavljen, zelo materialen teren. Gilles Deleuze piše, da »razvozlanje linij nekega dispozitiva/aparata«, kar je v zvezi z gledališkim dispozitivom tendenca dogodka *Delo panike*,

²⁶⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2–3.

»/.../ v vsakem primeru pomeni pripravljanje zemljevida, kartografijo, preučevanje neraziskanih ozemelj – temu (Foucault) pravi terensko delo. Treba se je pozicionirati na linije same, in te linije ne sestavljajo nujno zgolj aparata, ampak ga prečijo in odnašajo severno in južno, vzhodno in zahodno ali diagonalno.«²⁶⁹

Zares se v predstavi *Delo panike* kartografija spoji s poezijo, poezija pa se materializira do te mere, da lahko hodimo po njeni površini. Koreografija na odprtem polju kartografira nove terene gledališča.

Predstave na prostem in razni hodi-performansi, v našem prostoru jih razvija predvsem zavod Cona, v tem posebnem času dobijo še dodatno dimenzijo. Ne le da na neki način nadaljujejo situacionistično prakso psihogeografije, ki preko flanevrističnega drsenja preko urbanih ali naravnih okolij preučuje učinek pokrajin in urbanizma na čustvovanje in vedenje ljudi. Zdi se, da se tudi gostiteljica, v katero so pripuščeni ljudje za namen neke predstave, vede na določen način in čuti posege v svojo tišino. Njena prostranost nam *dopušča*, da jo mirno naseljujemo, in to celo v času panike in pandemije. Preprih odpihne celo virus.

Da je *Delo panike* zadnja predstava tega mednarodno priznanega kolektiva, so resda krivi nemogoči produkcijski pogoji. A nemara ni naključje, da je tema njihove zadnje predstave ravno tema gotovega konca in svitanjem nekega (drugega) začetka, niti ni naključje, da se to zgodi na prostem.

Kolektiv BADco je kratica za *brezimno društvo avtorjev* dramaturginje Ivane Ivković (ki pri tem delu ni sodelovala), dramaturga Gorana Sergeja Pristaša, filozofa Tomislava Medaka ter koreografinj Nikoline Pristaš, Ane Kreitmeyer in Zrinke Užbinec (slednja tokrat ni sodelovala), ki je v dvajsetih letih delovala po principu rotacije vlog glede na potrebe dotičnega dela ter želja in zanimanja posameznikov. Tako se je pogosto zgodilo, da so v posamičnem delu nastopali vsi naštetih ne glede na ekspertize. Prav tako pa pri njihovih delih ples, ki ga je v izobilju, kot pojasnjuje Bojana Cvejić, »nikoli ne predstavlja le sebe, izoliran v avratični očiščeni ekspresiji«, ampak je kontraintuitiven, je koreografija problemov. Tudi njihovo dramaturško ukvarjanje z medijem gledališča je vedno problemsko. Bojana Cvejić nekje povzame Pristaševe besede: »Pravijo, da je gledališče sposobno predstavljati/reprezentirati vse, a nas ne zanima reprezentacija celote. Zanima nas preučiti načine, kjer se stvari križajo in obračajo ... Ostro oko mora biti usmerjeno v točke trenja, odpora, deviacije ali distorzije.«²⁷⁰

Da so BADco odkorakali iz stavbe gledališča na prosto, ni zgolj posledica pragmatizma sredi koronskih ukrepov. Je direktna posledica zasledovanja trenj kot linij pobega pri risanju zemljevidov možnega, kar je bil v vseh dvajsetih letih credo tega kolektiva. Ker so v laboratorijskih okoliščinah teatra dodobra raziskali *deviacije in odpore*, so na polje stopili dobro pripravljeni. Če bi bilo njihovo dosedanje delo bolj konvencionalno, bi jih veter preprosto odpihnil, prenosa v drugi *medij* ne bi prenesli. Narava, posebej pa še z dosežki modernizacije naseljena narava kot svojevrstna estetika sedanjika antropocena, pa je celo več kot medij, je več kot dispozitiv, je gostiteljica. Tam veljajo njena pravila. A ta preprih je tudi linija pobega, azil za izgnano gledališče in hkrati možnost za njegovo širjenje, njen nujni *drift*.

²⁶⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *What is a Dispositif? Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 338–348.

²⁷⁰ Bojana Cvejić, "A Parallel Slalom from BADco.: In Search of a Poetics of Problems," 30.

Pia Brezavšček | Na prepihu: zunanost kot avtonomni agens v Delu panike
(Rad panike, BADco., Grobničko polje, julij 2020)

Gledalci, prepustimo se. Najprej bomo gotovo dezorientirani, a brez skrbi, veliko delo panike je bilo že narejeno, telo se kmalu privadi. In lahko prične z (drugačnim) osvajanjem neposeljenega terena.

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IN THE OPEN

The Outside as an Autonomous Agent in The Labour of Panic (Rad panike, BADco., Grobničko polje, July 2020)

Due to the pandemic emergency, our abstinence from the theatre has been going on for a year. Besides waiting for the re-opening, theatres tried to find alternative ways of operating – from staging performances without the audience, internal performances, performances for a limited audience, live webcasts and broadcasting edited recordings of performances to some new forms of presentation completely adjusted to the new situation that do not relate to the previous state when the theatre dispositive with a live audience had been the norm. But all this – except for the last option, which, as already mentioned, is rather the exception than the rule – is merely a substitute. It is a mimicry of a theatre event as it was understood at a time when coexistence in space and time was yet possible. Such a substitute, at least in art which relies on presence, is characterised by the fact that it satisfies neither the performers and actors nor the audience, as the common time and space are missing – the very thing that makes the event possible. Even though theatre also creates a simulation, it does not, however, withstand such a simple transfer to another medium without considering its own ways of simulation. Thus, various broadcasts of performances are no longer theatre events as we have experienced and understood in the past.

In this paper, I will not explore all the possible and feasible ways to bypass the ban on live events or break new ground in understanding other media or re-defining the theatre event itself. I will reflect on an event linked to a specific space in the open air that was – because it was set outside of the closed theatre space for an organised live performance with an audience – possible at that particular time. As the government regulations currently neither allow events nor gatherings of more than ten people, even outside, such an event would not have been possible in Slovenia today. I will not talk about these events in the plural, as there have been few due to the ban, or they have been inaccessible, even though they might have taken place. Instead, I will focus on the only such case that I have, in this corona year, attended in person, that I have not only perceived as an overall theatre experience but which has also expanded my comprehension of what theatre is or might be. My case study, which is also an example of an expansion of the theatre concept, is from a period when it was still permitted by the weather conditions and the circumstances of the measures in place in our neighbouring country, and it was still possible to travel there. Namely, the last performance of the BADco. performance collective – *The Labour of Panic* – which could still take place in Rijeka, the European Capital of Culture 2020 (ECC 2020), in a location close to the city, even though most of the events in the framework of ECC 2020 had been cancelled due to the pandemic. With this performance, this internationally acknowledged Croatian performance collective concluded its joint creation process after 20 years of activity.

THE NON-PLACE OF THE EVENT

The navigation takes us from the doors of the Adriatic off the motorway to a plateau overgrown with low, scarce, but thorny shrubs typical of this windy Karst region. Because of the day's extremely strong wind that hurries us on our way almost involuntarily, the area appears inhospitable, as if it had always been autonomous and redirected human settlements elsewhere. Humans have, however, left traces of their advance and acclimatisation in this landscape: they have built roads passing by and entertainment (race track) and traffic (airport, motorway) infrastructure – too loud to have been built in the vicinity of villages and towns – and cut a wound of a quarry as a half-successful attempt at appropriation. For humans, this is a temporary, transitional, merely utilitarian space – humans do not come here but pass by and take advantage of its few benefits.



Image No. 11. *Rad Panike* (The Labour of Panic), BadCo. premiere, 10. July 2020, Grobničko polje, Croatia. Author Tanja Kanazir, courtesy of BadCo.

However, it is a living ecosystem of nature and technology, possible precisely because of its bleakness and unattractiveness for human use and settlement. It is a field full of low vegetation, grass and shrubs, crawling insects, shrews, deer and perhaps a lone predator, and a place full of hidden nesting spots of birds, which in their flight avoid the overhead power lines and react to the sound of motor vehicles. But it is also a place where planes fly overhead, cars sweep past, and electric impulses transmitting signals travel through. This is a place full of life, at least that kind of life that is not bothered by the bora wind that sweeps over or the rumble of trucks. Above all, this is a place where the absence of humans opens up the possibilities of new beginnings.

This is not a natural scenography, as due to the unforeseeable weather, the vastness and irrepressible light change, the field itself dominates everything else that is installed in it. It inevitably affects the possibility, impossibility and quality of each event that tries to settle into it. This is not a standard theatre dispositive that is only just beginning to create an illusion suitable for each separate theatre event and submits to it as a black lab-box and which creates subjectivity through the view function. The event is dropped into uncontrollable circumstances, which can not only enforce it but also suppress it entirely. Thus, for the performance of *The Labour of Panic*, Grobničko polje is more than a backdrop; it is its host. It is an organism on which the performance feeds and lives.

The text has long ceased to be the sole focus in theatre; it has become only “an element, a layer and the ‘material’ of the stage creation”²⁷¹ rather than its ruler. It is equivalent to the movement, the lights, the sound and the scenography. Each of these elements is an “integral part,” part of the structure of equivalent markers maintained by the context, the theatre dispositive that represents the very condition for reading. But once we step out of the theatre, we also step out of the structure, of the discursive – into the material. Another kind of caution is necessary; the matter denotes differently than the very meanings. Now, the matter is not only a sign among signs. It is not a passive substance established for us and the supposed purpose. It exists independent of us and the event. It is not yet another meaning, but it denotes something else different. Through the event, we see and perceive it differently – as a living environment, a thorny and swarming field, and a place of simultaneous pace and peace. The wind and the sunset on the field are suddenly felt and lived by someone, even though they have also existed every day without the event. Such a transfer of an event into a field destabilises the whole event. Therefore, the event becomes more fragile. At the same time, each word and movement needs to be sufficiently grounded to compete with the infinitely stronger gusts of wind and the endless horizon.

When the event is set in the open, this does not only mean a somewhat different organisation; the wind really brings a breath of fresh air to the anthropocentric and humanistic ontological assumptions inherent in the theatre. The outside cannot be seen only as an extended scenography since something that has always been there and will stay there after the end of the event would thus be seen as a utilitarian object. On the contrary, it pushes us to be understood in the context of posthumanist ecofeminist phenomenology, which says that matter can affect other living and non-living beings. In a way, it is an agent, but not just in the way of causal determinism of physical resources:

Agency, in the new materialist and posthumanist sense, is quite basically about “changing the possibilities of change.” All matters take part in this agency-

²⁷¹ Hans-Thies Lehman, *Postdramsko gledališče* (Ljubljana: Maska, 2003), 20–21.

as-a-doing, where possibilities for change emerge in ongoing intra-actions of matters that are never completed. Rather than a dilution of agency as applied to humans, new materialist agency invites us to consider how non-human bodies or matters might contribute to their own actualization, or demand a response.²⁷²

Interestingly, the author of these lines, Astrida Neimanis, is also the author of the concept of “bodies of water”,²⁷³ which, through the element of water that is part of all of us, captures the fluidity of beings and where the outside and inside are no longer as certain as it may have appeared in the tradition of Western thought. This reflection might be what this performance gives on behalf of Rijeka ECC 2020, a town which carries the meaning of water in its name.²⁷⁴ Even though there is little water present in the performance, it exists in the text as its binding liquid and when, through digging, it erupts from the ground.



Image No. 12. *Rad Panike* (*The Labour of Panic*), BadCo. 12. July 2020, Grobničko polje, Croatia. Author Igor Bezinović, courtesy of BadCo.

²⁷² Astrida Neimanis, “Thinking with Matter Rethinking Irigaray: A ‘Liquid Ground’ for a Planetary Feminism,” in *Feminist Philosophies of Life*, eds. Hasana Sharp and Chloë Taylor (Montreal and Kingston: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2016), 5.

²⁷³ Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* (London, Bloomsbury, 2017), 11.

²⁷⁴ *Rijeka* means “river” in Croatian language.

From a human perspective, the place of Grabničko polje, as explained by BADco., is actually a place of not-here, a desolate and empty place that is only being cut across by functional technological and transport infrastructure. These are a reminder of human presence, but also something autonomous which is, in a strange, not only conflicting harmony with nature. But precisely because this is a sort of non-place, it gives us the opportunity to see our lives in a different light, which is why it can be a place of utopia. On the other hand, this place is neither unusual for the wind that often sweeps through it nor for the vegetation that can, in its roughness of barren land, spread without limits. For the wind, it is in the context of a heterotopia planet generally dug up by human intervention, as Michel Foucault would describe it, a rare “other space”, a realised utopia.²⁷⁵ When considering the settlement of an uninhabited field, it is always already inhabited, at least by scattered stones in a precisely defined architecture which choreographs each step and stumble.

However, it is not just about determining the place for orientation and topography but also for archaeology and geology: the field is not only measured by our sight, but we try, through the depth of soil layers, to dig through to the notion of time, and sometimes, as in an avalanche, it is not possible to know whether we are digging to dig ourselves out or bury ourselves even deeper. Panic can be life-saving or detrimental. What is certain, however, is what we want to attain in this performance, namely, another time. Time after a certain end which, at the same time, is the time of another beginning. When it is possible to start over in a different way. When, from a non-place and non-time, it is necessary to make a place and time. Is it possible to make this without repeating the mistake of the first settlement? Without trampling over everything and surviving anyway? Without rebuilding a theatre from the world?

CROSS-GENRE PROTAGONISTS

At the scheduled time in the evening, a considerable crowd of people gathers on the field. There, they get some drawings and headphones for their ears. They are technologically enhanced and connected to audio recordings sent to them by the organiser in advance. Apart from this, they do not get any additional instructions. They just step into the open field. Their direction is determined by the movement of other people, obstacles in the form of vegetation and stones in their way. Somewhere on the horizon in all directions, they are limited by monuments of human technology and modernisation. These are not foreign objects but, as in Nathaniel Halpern’s series *Tales from the Loop* (2020), its integral part so that no one even looks back at the wandering robot in the middle of the forest. It is not about the idealisation of nature, the choice of the more authentic over the contaminated, but about the realism of the Anthropocene, which has become an independent subject over which man no longer has control. Not only nature but also technology has become an agent.

²⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, “Of other spaces. Utopias and Heterotopias,” *Architecture/Movement/Continuité*, October (1984).



Image No. 13. *Rad Panike* (*The Labour of Panic*), BadCo., premiere, 10. July 2020, Grobničko polje, Croatia. Author Tanja Kanazir, courtesy of BadCo.

At first, a little confused in the purposeless movement, the crowd, while listening to the pleasant voice of Aleksandra Stojaković Olenjuk, who interprets the text by Goran Ferčec, surrenders to the meanings which speak about the situation of “conquering the open field”, slowly somehow recovers from the dizziness and finally finds its provisional bearings, alongside nine dancers who carry tables and some lights. The strongest anchor for this is definitely a series of eleven texts by Ferčič,²⁷⁶ which connect the concrete material experience of this particular space with the flow of thought that takes us into a somewhat post-apocalyptic situation. This is not set somewhere in the indefinite future but in the present of our panic-stricken moment. Onto the ground, we tread.

Because of the headphones, we are – despite the common experience – alone at all times. Moreover, our recordings are not synchronised. The text addresses us directly. It plays with our understanding, calls up associations, stimulates the imagination and gives cognitive tasks. All this in a very non-intrusive way. The text increasingly becomes poetry rather than instructions. It is invocative enough to take us to all possible landscapes leaving enough space to ground us simultaneously. Also, Siniša Ilić’s drawings are more of a fantasy rather than a scheme or an instruction, even though, before the beginning, they can, in fear, be understood as a kind of a prospect for participatory tasks. The drawings are sketches, texts that we listen to, not tasks but rather notes. These are, as Bojana Cvejić wrote somewhere, characteristic of BADco.:

²⁷⁶ Goran Ferčec and Siniša Ilić, *Rad panike* (Zagreb: Kulturtreger in Multimedialni inštitut, 2020). The audio version by Aleksandra Stojaković Olenjuk is available at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN9fMQKPgzK9YcmWFdSWTYdnBKzi99fLF>, 28. 3. 2021.

A note is not a command, but a connection to a problem, and the performer is to compose with the note, instead of using it to conquer and tame the resistance of the space and time of theatre. Friction, resistance, deviation and distortion are the shadow-work operated in BADco.'s theatre.²⁷⁷

Now, this work with notes is almost entirely handed over to the visitors. At first, this sound bubble of headphones is only broken through by gusts of wind and the KUD Sloga Ravna Gora wind orchestra, which appears in the distance and brings the audience back to the actual community of this particular event.

Nine dancers were donning men's suits with prints of fluorescent drawings of Vjenceslav Richter, a utopian architect whose Zagreb home was the venue of a previous BADco. performance – *The Foundation Pit (Izkop)*, the second part of the trilogy. Thus, the motifs from individual BADco. performances are intertwined – these are, among others, motifs of utopia, the ground, labour and modernism.

The vastness of the field scatters the dancers. Several groups of audience members settle around them, even though people constantly move from one performer to the other. Their movement lightly navigates the crowd like a frame. And their steps are directed by the natural ground and obstacles. This movement is simple, functional and, at the same time, unlike the stumbling search of the audience, exceptionally dynamic, with a flying lightness, charged. The dancers are not characters; as the only protagonists of the live performance, they are more signposts and affective contaminators who trigger our responses on the physical level. In the last phase of the event, when they take us to the grave pits, their dance work becomes more condensed and suggestive. Pulsating bodies on and in the ground are something touching. When the sun sets, all the dancers gather and light up special lights and dance a harmonious choreography on a steep gravel slope to an abstract set of instructions (that require a choreographic answer to the problem), which they receive through a megaphone and finally, disappear in the pits.



Image No. 14. *Rad Panike (The Labour of Panic)*, BadCo. premiere, 10. July 2020, Grobničko polje, Croatia. Author Tanja Kanazir, courtesy of BadCo.

²⁷⁷ Bojana Cvejić, "A Parallel Slalom from BADco.: In Search of a Poetics of Problems," *Representations* 136, 1 (2016): 21–35, 31–32.

Our endeavour to establish the protagonists is not an easy task. It could be the play or the voice of the interpreter but also the dancers' choreography or the wind orchestra's performance. But it is, at the same time, also the sunset, the glimmer of the overhead power line, the unevenness of the ground, the density of the vegetation, the blowing of the wind, and the behaviour of the crowd. Are we, as audience members, protagonists as well? The play and the landscape deconstruct us into individual views that are liberated into the imagination that runs wild and leaves the field. The dancers dismantle us into relationships between us. The wind makes our bodies responsive and vulnerable. More than individual performers or members of the audience, the protagonists of this performance are this emotion, that relationship, that thought, but also this body and that handful of soil.

A NEW BEGINNING AFTER A CERTAIN END

In the performance, there is the repeated motif of the end after a catastrophe we were afraid of, after which we slowly become familiar with the environment as new settlers of an unknown and foreign landscape. This settlement is uncertain as we know from experience that the consequence of acclimatisation is, again – the inevitable end. We are put in a certain equilibrium where it is not clear yet who will be successful – us or the wasteland. While we are waiting, we eat mud biscuits. The labour of panic has already been accomplished. The panic cannot last forever. It exhausts itself, and we adapt to any situation. This is how our bodies work. Panic is an acute state of readiness to flee, but when we see that there is nowhere to escape, it abates, even though the external circumstances do not change significantly. We know this well enough from our year-long coexistence with COVID-19.

The virus has driven us out of the theatres. It has occupied the auditoriums and been on the lookout for living souls. It also occupied the stage and staged a performance: it staged a performance for itself. At the same time, this is a performance about the meaning of theatre as we have once known it and practised about our interspecies relationships. The virus has proven to be an agent that has, to a vast extent, “changed the possibility of change.”

If this means the end of theatre as we know it (at least temporary), it also means the reflection and practice of its new beginning precisely because of the significant influence of non-human factors on theatre.

We have talked about theatre as a dispositive, which for Foucault, as Giorgio Agamben summarises, is a heterogeneous set of practices, a network between these practices with a strategic function, a network located at the intersection of power and knowledge.²⁷⁸ For Agamben, each technical interface, such as a telephone, is a dispositive or, more specifically, an apparatus. If we understand theatre as a technological-relational network whose “aesthetic” function also works strategically in the sense of subjectivisation of its audience in one way or another, also such a withdrawal into the open, of course, remains a theatre experience. But apparently, this is an escape line that often extends the purely discursive function of sign theatre. It no longer offers the bodies a safe haven in the darkness

²⁷⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2–3.

from which a pair of eyes shines, which capture and interpret the signs. Now, even these eyes and these bodies with all their senses are thrown into an exposed, very material land. Gilles Deleuze writes that “untangling the lines of an apparatus”, which in relation to the theatre dispositif is the tendency of *The Labour of Panic* event,

means, in each case, preparing a map, a cartography, a survey of unexplored lands – this is what he calls “field work.” One has to be positioned on the lines themselves; and these lines do not merely compose an apparatus but pass through it and carry it north to south, east to west or diagonally.²⁷⁹

In fact, in the performance *The Labour of Panic*, cartography merges with poetry, and poetry materialises to such an extent that we can walk on its surface. The choreography on the open field charts new terrains of the theatre.

Outdoor performances and various walking performances – in our space, they are mainly developed by the Cona Institute – are gaining an additional dimension at this specific time. Not only do they, in some way, continue the situationist practice of psychogeography, which, through the flaneuristic gliding through urban or natural environments, examines the effect of landscapes and urbanism on people’s emotions and behaviour, it also seems that the hostess, into whom people are admitted for the purpose of the performance, “behaves” in a certain way and “feels” the interference in her silence. Its vastness “allows” us to inhabit it peacefully, even in times of panic and pandemic. The wind blows out even the virus.

The fact that *The Labour of Panic* is the final performance of this internationally acknowledged performance collective is due to impossible production conditions. However, it is perhaps no coincidence that the theme of their final performance is precisely the theme of the inevitable end and the dawn of some (other) beginning, nor is it a coincidence that this happens outdoors.

BADco. collective is the acronym for “Bezimeno autorsko društvo” (Nameless Association of Authors), the artistic core being playwright Ivana Ivković (who did not participate in this production), playwright Goran Sergej Pristaš, philosopher Tomislav Medak and choreographers Nikolina Pristaš, Ana Kreitmeyer and Zrinka Užbinec (did not participate in this production), which in its 20 years of activity operated on the principle of rotating roles according to the needs of each production, as well as the wishes and interest of each team member. Thus, all the team members mentioned above often performed in a particular performance, irrespective of their expertise. Also, the dance, which has been abundant in their productions, “never represents only itself, isolated in auratic purified expression,” but is counter-intuitive, a choreography of problems, as Bojana Cvejić explains. Furthermore, their dramaturgical approach to the medium of theatre is always a problem. Somewhere, Bojana Cvejić summarises Pristaš’s words: “They say that theatre is capable of presenting/representing everything, but we are not interested in the representation of the whole. We are interested in studying the ways things cross and turn /.../ A sharp eye needs to be directed to points of friction, resistance, deviation or distortion.”²⁸⁰

That BADco. walked out of the theatre building into the open is not only a consequence of the pragmatism of corona measures. It is a direct consequence of

²⁷⁹ Gilles Deleuze, “What is a Dispositif?” in *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 338–348.

²⁸⁰ Bojana Cvejić, “A Parallel Slalom from BADco.: In Search of a Poetics of Problems,” 30.

pursuing friction as lines of escape when drawing maps of the possible, which was the credo of this collective throughout their 20 years of activity. Since they had thoroughly explored “deviations and resistance” in the laboratory conditions of theatre, they stepped into the field well-prepared. If their work so far had been more conventional, they would have been blown away by the wind; they would not have survived the transfer to another medium. Nature, especially the nature inhabited by the achievements of modernisation as a unique aesthetics of the present Anthropocene, is even more than a medium, more than a dispositif, it is a host. There, its rules apply. But the outdoors is also a line of escape, an asylum for the exiled theatre and, at the same time, an opportunity for its expansion, its necessary “drift”.

Audience – let us surrender. First, we will certainly be disoriented, but fear not. The great labour of panic has already been performed; the body will soon get used to it. And it can begin with the (different) conquering of uninhibited land.

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(KOREO)POLITIČNA INTENZIFIKACIJA

UVOD

Propaganda napredka, borzni kaos, gospodarske in naravne nesreče, nasilje, vojne, podivjane podnebne spremembe, pandemične grožnje ter pospešena prekarizacija so le nekateri izmed številnih razlogov vse bolj očitne in vseprisotne tesnobe, strah ter eksistencialne groze. Pandemija SARS-CoV-2 je takšno eksistencialno stanje zgolj in samo razprla. Negativne posledice globalizma, spojene s turbo-/nekrokapitalizmom,²⁸¹ zaznamovanega z redukcijo večplastnosti življenja in njegovo transformacijo v golo preživetje, so postale bolj razvidne kot kadarkoli prej.²⁸² Pestrost življenju nedvoumno dajeta tudi umetnost in kultura, znotraj katerih se umešča tudi polje scenskih umetnosti, ki jih naslavljam v pričujočem prispevku. Ker so le-te vselej spete s časom in prostorom, v katerem vznikajo, se razvijajo in tudi dajejo javnosti, bom najprej na kratko orisala nekatere ključne spremembe bivanja in njihov vpliv na efemerne oblike umetnosti. Nadaljevala bom z miselnimi fragmenti potentnosti scenskih praks (s poudarkom na plesni umetnosti) za nadaljnjo politizacijo življenja kot kontrapunktu njihove elitizacije in sploščitve.

PROŽNOST(I) KULTURNEGA IN UMETNIŠKEGA SEKTORJA

Leto dni je minilo od proslavljanja ponovnega odprtja umetniških odrov,²⁸³ ki so se tako rekoč čez noč zaprli slabe tri mesece prej. Četudi so se dogodki odvijali pod restriktivnimi, spreminjajočimi se, občasno celo neživljenjskimi pogoji in pravili, se je ustvarjalni sektor z njimi (relativno) uspešno spopadal.²⁸⁴ Planiranje z vzpostavljenimi alternativnimi scenariji po načelu a, b ali c, je postalo t. i. *nova realnost*, vse bolj pertinentno naslovljena in ponotranjena besedna zveza, prazni označevalec. Izpostaviti velja, da te izkazane prožnosti (ang. *resilience*) vendarle ne smemo razumeti kot pozitivne valute, saj je neskončna elastičnost inherentna neoliberalni ideologiji in kot taka zgolj potrditev nereflektiranega sprejemanja.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Za natančno opredelitev koncepta nekropolitike glej Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2019).

²⁸² O aktualnosti Agambenovih teoretizacij golega življenja in permanentnosti izrednega stanja v sodobni družbi, s katerimi je laže razumeti tudi njegovo pozicioniranje v pandemijo SARS-CoV-2 kmalu ob njeni razglasitvi, glej Giorgio Agamben, *Where Are We Now? The Epidemic as Politics*. Lanham (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

²⁸³ Besedilo je bilo napisano v maju 2021.

²⁸⁴ Izpostaviti velja, da se je delo sektorja nenadoma potrojilo, saj je bila potrebna reaktivna odzivnost producentov na spreminjajoče državne odredbe, skrb za njihovo implementacijo, odzivnost na možne izbruhe okužb na vseh ravneh (nastopajoči, organizatorji, udeleženci), možne izpade letov v mednarodnem letalskem prometu in druge ovire, povezane s sprejetimi ukrepi za preprečevanje širjenja virusa SARS-CoV-2.

²⁸⁵ Glej predavanje Juliana Reida na on-line simpoziju *About Dance – forming futures*, ki sta ga gostila Mårten Spångberg in Alex Viteri, LAKE Studio Berlin, 2. 5. 2021. Dostopno na

Kljub pozitivnim rezultatom mednarodnih analiz, da se kulturne institucije in dogodki ne umeščajo med rizična okolja širitve okužbe virusa SARS-CoV-2,²⁸⁶ so po vnovičnem zagonu in zgolj slabih nekaj mesecih obratovanja, hrami kulture svoja vrata za javnost ponovno neslavno zaprli v večini evropskih držav. A ne povsod. Medtem ko so v nekaterih državah (Hrvaška, Srbija, Romunija, Bolgarija idr.) nadaljevali z uprizoritvami v živo, so v drugih politične elite presodile, da je tveganje preveliko. Tveganje okužbe? Ali morebiti še bolj izkustvene vrednosti, ki človeka oddalji od digitalne mašinerije in s tem izziva začasne skupnosti, njene skupnostne izkušnje in (so)refleksije? Ali pa je morebiti razlog polžjega odpiranja in nesorazmernih pogojev zgolj neizdelan sistem lobiranja?

Preden nadaljujem z razliko med posredovano in neposredno izkušnjo, se velja vsaj na kratko pomuditi pri nenadni razliki med državami z zaprto in državami z odprto javno kulturno infrastrukturo kot možnim dejavnikom za prestrukturiranje odnosov in valut na polju scenskih umetnosti. Pri tem bi bilo vredno raziskati, kakšne metodologije dela, načine uprizarjanja, taktike in strategije naslavljanja skupnosti in skupnega so v času pandemije razvijali ustvarjalci v državah, kjer je bilo javno življenje prekinjeno le za krajše časovno obdobje, in do kakšnih (koreo)političnih spoznanj so se s svojimi raziskovanji dokopali ustvarjalci na polju scenskih umetnosti kot morebiti tudi iz sfere aktivizma. Ta spoznanja so namreč ključna za nadaljnjo politizacijo (scenskih) umetnosti. Prav tako so tudi v popolnem nasprotju z opazovanimi transformacijami, h katerim so se množično zatekali ustvarjalci v državah, kjer so bila zbiranja ljudi, in s tem živi dogodki, prepovedana. Pri tem merim predvsem na prenos vsebin v virtualno sfero, kar je imelo za posledico opustitev njihovega primarnega medija in njegovih esencialnih komponent. Četudi so to počeli iz strahu, pod pritiskom financerjev in v duhu preživetja. In četudi so to nameravali početi zgolj začasno, se pojavlja vprašanje, kako in če res zgolj začasno? *La vita è bella!*

PROPAGANDA NAPREDKA: POSPEŠEVANJE, HITROST IN DIGITALIZACIJA

Problematičnost prestopa v virtualni svet bo laže razvidna iz ključnih parametrov ideologije hitrosti v (post)moderni eri, kot opozarjata med drugim Paul Virilio in Peter Sloterdijk.²⁸⁷ *Pospeševanje resničnosti* je namreč »pomembna mutacija v zgodovini«. ²⁸⁸ Med drugim nas že Hannah Arendt s svojo ikonično knjigo *Izvori totalitarizma* opozarja, da »teror pomeni uresničenje zakona gibanja; njegov cilj je omogočiti sili narave ali zgodovine, da prostor vihra skozi človeštvo, pri čemer ga ne ovira nobeno spontano človeško dejanje«. ²⁸⁹ S to ugotovitvijo je treba premisliti tudi pospeševanje in opazovati hitrost, ki narekuje tok našega bivanja.

<https://vimeo.com/544244432>, 20. 5. 2021.

²⁸⁶ Navajam zgolj eno od mnogih analiz, ki so nastale v zadnjem letu: Stefan Moritz, Cornelia Gottschick, Johannes Horn, Mario Popp, Susan Langer, Bianca Klee, Oliver Purschke, Michael Gekle, Angelika Ihling in Rafael Mikołajczyk, "The Risk of Indoor Sports and Culture Events for the Transmission of COVID-19 (Restart-19)," 30. 10. 2020. Dostopno na <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.10.28.20221580v1.full.pdf>, 20. 5. 2021.

²⁸⁷ Glej Peter Sloterdijk, *Evrotaoizem: h kritiki politične kinetike* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva Založba, 2000); Paul Virilio, *Hitrost osvoboditve* (Ljubljana: Študentska organizacija Univerze v Ljubljani, 1996); Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1977); Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb* (London: Verso, 2000); Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).

²⁸⁸ Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear*, 33.

²⁸⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Izvori totalitarizma* (Ljubljana: Študentska založba, 2003), 560.

S kontinuiranim pospeševanjem smo v digitalnem svetu dosegli vrtooglavo hitrost, primerljivo s hitrostjo svetlobe. S takojšno interaktivnostjo v *pospeševani realnosti*²⁹⁰ pa še vedno premikamo »meje trenutnosti, meje človeške misli in časa«. ²⁹¹ Družba bi se morala zavedati meje takšnega pospeševanja, ga zaustavljati oziroma iz njega zavestno izstopati, saj je edina možnost ohranitve večplastnosti in bogastva življenja soodvisna od spoja in prepleta naših življenj z različnimi časovnostmi (delo in prosti čas, dan in noč, letne čase itd. je nadomestil premočrtni zakon 24/7) in kronopolitikami. Logika sinhronizacije, v katero smo ujeti s pripetostjo in odvisnostjo od digitaliziranega sveta, je že radikalno opustošila mnogoritmičnost in jo nivelirala v artimičnost, zato je nadaljnji boj možen zgolj v politizaciji življenja kot sestavljenega, večplastnega in dinamičnega prepleta različnih časovnosti.

Propagandna politika hitrosti se ni vpisala samo v mentalno in emocionalno družbeno zavest, temveč tudi v našo kinetiko: naša imobilna telesa so pripeta v razdrobljene virtualne komunikacijske mreže, ki s sočasnostjo vsiljujejo občutek nenehnega zaostajanja (neodgovorjena pošta v e-nabiralniku, /ne/posodabljeni virtualni profili, nezmožnost ohranjanja povezav s spektrom kolegov, znancev, partnerjev). Pripetost na digitalne mreže in virtualne svetove ni sproducirala le nezmožnosti dohitevanja pretočnih informacij, temveč tudi sploščila nase dožemanje stvarnosti. Zaslon spominja na »vetrobransko steklo v avtomobilu: s povečano hitrostjo izgubimo občutek za lateralizacijo, ki je slabost našega bivanja v svetu, njegovega bogastva, reliefa in globinske ostrine. /.../ Prihaja do izgube vidnega polja in pričakovanja tega, kar nas zares obdaja«. ²⁹²

Vse to razkriva, da se je s pandemijo zgodila zgolj navidezna zarez v kontinuumu pospeševane realnosti. Omejenost gibanja, ki smo ji (bili) podvrženi, smo blažili s svojo prisotnostjo na digitalnih omrežjih. Aktivnosti, ki so prispevale heterogenost in večplastnost družbenega življenja – med njimi tudi žive umetniške prakse –, smo nadomeščali s sploščenimi približki, posredovanimi v virtualne svetove. S transformacijami delov družbenega življenja, ki ji je bila posredovanost tuja, smo se jim vsaj za ne(povsem)določen čas odrekli. Na ta način smo blokirali dialog kot formo spontane, razvijajoče se oblike, medsebojnega oplajanja, učenja ter osebne in kolektivne rasti, ki sega onkraj jezika in reprezentacije. ²⁹³

Ker nekrokapitalizmu ustreza sploščenost, izolirana in odtujena telesnost, težnja razširitve tehnologije na območja, ki so ji bila tuja, ne sme in ne more presenetiti. Še več, za doseg cilja pospešene in sploščene realnosti je bilo treba prav ta območja še dodatno okrniti in jih transformirati v njihovo drugost.

Efemerna umetnost, kamor se umeščajo tudi scenske oziroma uprizoritvene prakse, je postala odlično polje že vzpostavljenega eksperimentiranja. Žal ne zgolj začasno, kot so nas poskušali mnogi prepričati, saj v smer digitalizacije sili tudi Evropska unija s svojimi finančnimi mehanizmi (glej nove smernice mehanizma Ustvarjalna Evropa). ²⁹⁴ Digitalizacija sicer zaobjema široko polje možnosti, a

²⁹⁰ Koncept *pospešene resničnosti* je v zadnjih letih zavzel pomembno mesto v humanističnih znanostih. Različne, pogosto celo kontradiktorne poglede nanj razvijajo med drugim Benjamin Noys, Mark Fisher ali Paul Virilio.

²⁹¹ Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear*, 43.

²⁹² Prav tam, 37.

²⁹³ O pomenu žive komunikacije in negativnih vplivih tehnologije na posameznika, posledično na kolektivno telo, glej predavanje *Nine Power* na simpoziju *Forming Futures* 1. 5. 2021. Dostopno na <https://vimeo.com/543944074>, 20. 5. 2021.

²⁹⁴ "2021 Annual Work Programme for the Implementation of the Creative Europe Programme." Dostopno na <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/document/2021-annual-work-programme-implementation-creative-europe-programme>, 20. 5. 2021.

sklepamo lahko, da se bosta v boju za sredstva marsikateri prijavitelj in mreža odločila tudi za razširitev svojega delovanja v paralelne, tj. digitalne prostore uprizorjanja. Pričakujemo lahko, da bodo žive prakse bolj množično prestopale v druge medije (video, film, predstave na družabnih omrežjih ipd.) in tako nadaljevale s praksami, v katere so množično stopale v zadnjem obdobju.

SKICE ZA BODOČNOST

Prihodnost ni zagotovljena in je kot taka odprta. Čaka, da jo dopišemo z lastnimi angažmaji v skupnostnih oblikah, saj lahko le skupaj sokreiramo vzdržnejši jutri. Potrebujemo skupnost in z njo kolektivno telo. Odvezati se moramo od tipiziranih in standardiziranih razumevanj sveta in z njimi mesta, ki bi ga lahko v družbi zasedel posameznik, za kar potrebujemo moč in domišljijo.²⁹⁵ Poskušajmo poiskati nekaj mest, ki jih bo v prihodnje naselila živa scenska umetnost.

SALONSKA UMETNOST VICE VERSA UNDERGROUND UMETNOST

V kolikor upoštevamo kapitalistične interese, lahko sklepamo, da je čas masovnih spektaklov kot donosnih komercialnih vsebin v zatonu. Že konec meseca marca 2020 je kar 95 % svoje delovne sile odpustil slavni *Cirque du Soleil*.²⁹⁶ Seveda ni bil edini. Predvsem ponudniki komercialnih vsebin so uvedene ukrepe za preprečevanje širjenja okužbe z virusom SARS-CoV-2 hipoma prepoznali kot indikator (samo)ukinitve ali takojšnjega prestrukturacije. S svojo usmerjenostjo v dobičke so se zavedali, da vrtoglave večmilijonske investicije v tako negotovih pogojih pomenijo preveliko tveganje.²⁹⁷ Pri tem pa so premišljevali tudi, kako že financirane posle pokriti in svoje vloške ohraniti v čim večji meri. Četudi je bil tudi ta sektor, ali vsaj njegovi ključni deli (nastopajoči, tehniki, administracija idr.), relativno dobro pokrit s strani obstoječih in novih finančnih pobud na državni in mestni ravni ali s pomočjo privatnih fundacij, donacij in drugih mecenskih oblik podpore, so investitorji stremeli k vnovičnemu zagonu zaustavljene mašenerije.

Broadway kot eden največjih ponudnikov spektakelskih scenskih vsebin je po letu dni zaprtja za novo sezono optimistično najavil odprtje s polnimi kapacitetami.²⁹⁸ Četudi se karte za muzikále že prodajajo, je težko verjeti, da bi se sistem povrnil v predhodno stanje. Predvidevamo lahko, da se bodo investitorji v izogib tveganim, finančno objestnim produkcijam v prihodnje raje odločali za vzdržnejše oblike, tj. manjše ali butične produkcije ter svojo energijo usmerili v predstavnike elit. S slednjimi bodo ponovno utrdili vse bolj odmevno salonskost.

Četudi salonski dogodki niso nikdar zares poniknili v pozabo, lahko v prihodnje pričakujemo njihov razmah. Na ta način bo svetovna elita še siloviteje podčrtovala razredne razlike in z udeležbami na dogodkih, namenjenih izbrancem,

²⁹⁵ Franco Berardi Bifo, *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility* (London: Verso books, 2017).

²⁹⁶ "V slovitim *Cirque du Soleil* so odpustili skoraj vse zaposlene." Dostopno na <https://siol.net/trendi/kultura/v-slovitem-cirque-du-soleil-odpustili-skoraj-vse-zaposlene-video-521381>, 20. 5. 2021.

²⁹⁷ "Broadway Investing Basics." Dostopno na <https://www.investingbroadway.com/broadway-investing-basics>, 20. 5. 2021.

²⁹⁸ "We Look Forward to Welcoming You Back to Broadway." Dostopno na <https://www.broadway.com/announcement/covid-19-update/>, 20. 5. 2021.

krepila svoj status. A izpostaviti velja, da saloni ne bodo izpolnjevali svoje nekdanje izobraževalne funkcije, temveč bo njihov namen vezan na potrjevanje privilegijev in zabavo. V preteklosti so mnogi saloni poskušali radikalizirati misel, utrdjati ali rušiti estetske smernice ter v manjših kolektivih in multiplem dialogu graditi ideje in generirati nove perspektive javnega intelekta.²⁹⁹

Za lažje razumevanje bom na hitro izpostavila salonsko kulturo v dveh ločenih domenah in formah. Prva je vezana na aristokracijo sedemnajstega, osemnajstega in devetnajstega stoletja. Kot neformalna oblika izobraževanja in druženja (literarni krožek) pariške inteligence so saloni kot posebna forma postali prepoznavni s Catherine de Vivonne, markizo de Rambouillet (1588–1665). Skozi stoletje so ostrili svoje poudarke namembnosti ter se s tem namenom vse bolj strukturirali: bodisi so izpostavljali literarne ali katere druge kulturno-zabavne manifestacije, postali sidrišče ostrih političnih ali drugih teoretskih debat na izbrane teme.³⁰⁰ Razstave mešanih medijev, ki so se od leta 1725 odvijale v *salonu carré* v Louvru ter so zaradi konservativnih nazorov organizatorjev (akademske stroke) in izključevanja progresivnih umetnikov iz pripravljenih razstav dobile svoj antipod v t. i. *salon des refusés* (1874, 1875 in 1886), označuje drugi tip salonov kot posebne manifestativne oblike.³⁰¹

Težko bi rekli, da saloni v 21. stoletju ohranjajo svojo prvotno usmeritev. Kot rečeno so izgubili radikalizacijo intelekta in jo nadomestili s konzumacijo praznih reprezentacij in hedonizmom. V sodobnih salonih kulturno-umetniške vsebine niso izključene, saj se z njimi artifično potrjuje družbeni status.

V skladu z vse konservativnejšimi nazori in s slavo tradicionalizmov zato v novodobnih salonih ni pričakovati progresivnih umetniških silnic, temveč bolj konvencionalne oblike umetnosti s poudarkom na lepem, ki se skriva v izpraznjeni dekorativnosti. Pričakujemo lahko brstenje form in vsebin, na katere se bodo lahko izbranci odzvali s smehom ali občudujočim aplavzom. Inovativne pristope bo nadomestilo obrtniško znanje figuralnosti, dizajniranja kompozicij iz izdelanih in prepoznavnih plesnih, gibalnih, performativnih in glasbenih stilov, ob katerih se bo občinstvo lahko navduševalo nad gibkostjo in virtuoznostjo nastopajočih telesnih lupin brez življenja s spretno zaigranimi ritmičnimi kompozicijami, se smejalo stereotipiziranim zgodbam. Salonski umetniški programi od gledalca ne bodo zahtevali poglobitve. Umetniškimi nastopi ne bodo zgenerirali razpok in se zato ne bodo zarili v gledalčevo telo. V teh okoljih bodo prevladovali krajši uprizoritveni in glasbeni komadi, izbrani z namenom zabave, sprostitve in predvsem odmika od resničnega življenja za zidovi infrastrukture elite.

Kontrapunkt temu bo razmah underground umetnosti v opuščeni in drugih skupnostnih in zasebnih prostorih. V svoji nestabilnosti in negotovosti bodo njihovi organizatorji poskušali izumljati načine, s katerimi bi vzpostavili razliko od elitiističnih pravil igre. V njej se bo ponovno obujalo prakse drugačnih časovnosti. Poudarek bo na odprtih delih, skicah, vprašanjih in raziskavah, s katerimi bi dopisovala telesa navzočih. Taka umetnost ne bo nujno lepa, prej bo brutalna, iskreno negotova in zato iskriva. Iskala bo odgovore na vadbo skupnega bivanja, delovanja in mišljenja, vzpostavljanja trdnejšega mnoštva. Neobremenjeno bo odkrivala skrite potenciale in oblikovala presunljive umetniške oblike in forme.

²⁹⁹ Med najbolj razvpitimi študijami omenjene teme glej Paul Virilio, *Slovnica mnoštva. K analizi oblik sodobnega življenja* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2003).

³⁰⁰ Antoine Lilti, *The World of the Salons: Sociability and Worldliness in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁰¹ Glej leksikografsko geslo *salon*. Dostopno na <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/salon>, 20. 5. 2021.

Podobno kot underground umetnost si predstavljam nomadske oblike bivanja po periferijah, kjer se bodo srečevali umetniki različnih disciplin, teoretiki in njihovi zvesti sledilci. Kot se je izkazalo ob pandemiji, so ruralna okolja mnogo manj stresno obšla omejitvene ukrepe gibanja in z mnogo večjo lahkotnostjo vzdrževala fizično povezana skupinska telesa. Ker se predpostavlja, da je trenutna pandemija zgolj začetek pospešenega razmaha novih bolezni in pandemičnih izbruhov, je zlahka pričakovati reorganizacijo tudi na področju umetnosti in vzpostavljanja prehodnih in začasnih skupnosti.³⁰² Namesto imunizirajočih ograd bodo te skupnosti lahko doživljale izkušnjo z odprtjem in izpostavljenostjo, ki »posameznike obrača navzven in jih osvobaja njihove zunanosti«. ³⁰³ Takšna skupnost bo vselej doživeta kot sprememba, saj bo v svoji heterogenosti naravnana k rušenju togih meja, s katerimi se ščiti identiteta posameznika. Namesto identitetnih politik bodo te skupnosti naravnane v izgradnjo kolektivnega telesa, odprtega neznanemu postajanju.³⁰⁴

V to polje se bodo prikladno umestile tudi teorija in prakse (sodobnega) plesa ter koreografije, saj te od nekdanj »iščejo in predlagajo materializirano, socialno agilno telo, odprto potencialnosti. Zanima jih telo kot polje sil, ki se o svojem položaju neprestano pogaja in bori za prilastitev in (samo)nadzor«. ³⁰⁵ V teh iskanjih je danes še posebej pertinentno izumljanje teles upora ob preišljevanju »koreografije telesnih potencialov za energično družbeno delovanje, za vključitev v diskurzivni števec, pritrjen na obliko in silo gibanja«. ³⁰⁶

(KOREO)POLITIČNA INTENZIFIKACIJA

Omenjeno mesto lahko mislimo s konceptualizacijo (koreo)politične intenzifikacije, kot jo v prispevku z naslovom *From (choreo)policed circulation to (choreo)political intensification: dance as critique of freedom (or: the task of the dances)* izpeljuje André Lepecki.³⁰⁷ Plesni teoretik osrednje mesto nadaljnji politizaciji³⁰⁸ pripiše plesalcem in koreografom prav zaradi presunljivega poznavanja telesa, pri čemer svojo tezo izpeljuje iz posthumno izdanega dela Hannah Arendt *The*

³⁰² Za podrobnejšo analizo pandemije covid-19 in spekulativnih predpostavk o razmahu pandemičnih izbruhov v prihodnosti glej Mike Davis, *The Monster Enters: COVID-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism* (New York: OR Books, 2020).

³⁰³ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas – izvor in usoda skupnosti*. (Ljubljana: Maska, 2017), 49.

³⁰⁴ Koncept postajanja na tem mestu razumem na način opredelitve, ki jo ponujata Giles Deleuze in Félix Guattari v knjigi *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

³⁰⁵ André Lepecki, "Introduction: Presence and Body in Dance and Performance Theory," v *Of the Presence of the Body. Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ur. André Lepecki (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 6.

³⁰⁶ Prav tam, 7.

³⁰⁷ André Lepecki, "From (choreo)policed circulation to (choreo)political intensification: dance as critique of freedom (or: the task of the dances) (*Weaving politics, international interdisciplinary symposium on choreography, Human Rights and violence*," Dansens Hus, CCC in Norra Latin v Stokholmu, 14.–16. 12. 2012).

³⁰⁸ S pojmom politizacije (po Jacquesu Rancièrju) merim na moč političnega v umetniškem delu ali umetniških praksah, s pomočjo katerih lahko obravnavamo njihove načine delovanja in poseganja v javno sfero: nastopajoče subjekte in predmete; ureditev položajev in pooblastil med njimi; *distribucijo čutnosti* in ideološke diskurze, ki oblikujejo skupni simboli in senzorični red družbe ter vplivajo na njeno materialno strukturo in ločnice.

Promise of Politics, v katerem zapiše: »/.../ znašli smo se v situaciji, kjer ne vemo – vsaj ne še – kako se gibati politično.«³⁰⁹

To pomembno vprašanje, ki govori o gibanju, opredeljeno prostorsko in časovno, postane še pomembnejše v trenutku, ko se našim telesom v pospešeni realnosti poskuša zreducirati časovnost in omejiti prostor, kot sem pokazala zgoraj. Arendtova nas z omenjenim spoznanjem namreč opozarja, da s kratenjem svobode gibanja nastopi grožnja izginotja tega, kar naj bi predpostavljajo politično.³¹⁰

»Politična stvar (to je svoboda) [namreč] ni nekaj, česar se lahko držimo ali kar lahko popravimo, temveč težka, nenehno razvijajoča se, vselej gibajoča se zaveza; manj je predmet in subjekt kot gibanje v raznolikosti, definiranem v multitudni inter-subjektivnosti – takšna, ki se jo je šele treba naučiti, jo negovati in predvsem z njo nenehno eksperimentirati, jo vaditi in doživljati.«³¹¹

Sodobni plesalci dobro vedo, da je riziko gibanja padec, in tako še bolj kot ostali člani družbe razumejo, da je ples s svojo nikdar končno razvidnostjo enak življenju samemu. Kot lucidno izpeljuje in opredeljuje sodobni ples, plesni teoretik Rendy Martin je ples:

»/.../ umetniška praksa, pri kateri se čas in prostor izrecno ustvarjata med izvedbo, in ne le dejavnost, ki gre skozi že dani prostorsko-časovni medij. Plesna telesa se sklicujejo na družbeno kinestetiko, čuteče zavedanje gibanja in občutek možnosti, kam nas gibanje lahko pripelje, kar pomeni materialno združitev mišljenja in dela kot dejavnosti ustvarjanja sveta.«³¹²

Sodobni ples se namreč dogaja v izmenjavi. Razvidno naredi postajanje samo, saj »ni nič drugega kot tisto, kar počne in kar postaja, kamor je namenjen in v kar se spreminja.«³¹³ Koreografijo in ples je prav zato mogoče ugledati in dojeti kot politični proces, ki ne ustvarja zgolj samega sebe, ampak ustvarja tudi že družbo.

»/.../ politični govor in politično zaslišanje aktualizirata odprto, negotovo, nepredvidljivo in obenem nujno gibanje izmenjav – ne ukazov in njihovega izvajanja (kot v politikah), temveč izmenjave političnih stvari, ki prečkajo množice z namenom spodbujanja pogovorov in ustvarjanja načrtov – z drugimi besedami, konvergenčnih razlik, katerih edini namen, smer in pomen je spet tisto gibanje, znano kot svoboda.«

Ohranitev določenega zaupanja v koreografiji pa

»/.../ izhaja iz ideje, da politika ni locirana v subjektu, ampak je stvar, ki

³⁰⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2006), 25.

³¹⁰ Lepecki se pri tem nasloni na Michela Foucaulta in Gillesa Deleuza, ki opozarjata, da nam v družbi nadzora, v kateri živimo, grozijo antipolitični afekti in antipolitični odnosi, kar sem v prispevku že izpostavila.

³¹¹ André Lepecki, "From (Choreo)Policed Circulation to (Choreo)Political Intensification," 2–3.

³¹² Rendy Martin, "Dance and Its Others: Theory, State, Nation and Socialism," v *Of the Presence of the Body. Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ur. André Lepecki (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 48.

³¹³ Rok Vevar, Iz otvoritvenega govora na CoFestivalu (rokopis), 28. 5. 2021.

prečka subjekte (morda celo v svojih gibih desubjektivirajoče subjekte). Da bi se uresničila kot politična stvar, zahteva kompozicijski načrt za distribucijo singularnosti. Tako je treba sistem izmenjave, prenosa in dialoške interakcije vsaj načrtovati, da bo politična stvar vstopila v svet kot sila, ki s svojimi dejanji in kroženjem vzpostavlja sam načrt, ki se nanjo sklicuje.«³¹⁴

Koreografijo in ples/gibanje je treba intenzivirati in politizirati, saj koreopolitika zahteva prerazporeditev teles, afektov in čutil, s pomočjo katerih bi se lahko naučili političnega gibanja, tj. gibanja za svobodo.

JAVNI PROSTOR, JAVNA SFERA IN JAVNI ČAS

Javni prostor in javna sfera sta kljub podobnosti različni kategoriji, za katero Ana Vujanović in Bojana Cvejić v knjigi *Public Sphere by Performance* predlagata, da ju je treba obravnavati kot ločena koncepta, saj njune posledice niso simetrične.³¹⁵ Medtem ko javni prostor predstavlja fizično, prostorsko kategorijo, je javna sfera diskurzivna. Da bi dobila moč, potrebuje javna sfera javni prostor, a kot nas opozarjata avtorici, javni prostor ni nujno vselej tudi prostor javne sfere, še posebej okrnjen je pod kapitalističnimi apetiti postal v zadnjih letih, kar je razvidno na primerih turizma in zabave. Javni prostor se že od osemdesetih let naprej postopoma spreminja v privatni prostor, s procesi krčenja pa vse bolj ogroža tudi javno sfero.

Za javno sfero je bistvenega pomena stopnja vključenosti, saj razkriva načine in tudi mere vključevanja predmetov obravnave, oblikovanja vprašanj in njihove prepoznavnosti v širši javnosti ter njihov pomen. Avtorici navajata tudi, da javni sektor (kamor sodijo tudi javni zavodi s področja kulture in umetnosti), kot je postalo še posebej razvidno v zadnjem letu v Sloveniji, a tudi marsikod drugod, prej spada v polje države, in ne javnosti. Takšen pogled razkriva, kot ugotavlja Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, pogoste zlorabe kulturnih in umetniških ustanov za potrebe političnih elit.³¹⁶ S širitvijo privatizacije javnih prostorov namreč sornozmerno izginjajo javne vsebine in kritičnost. Po mnenju Cvejićeve in Vujanovićeve krize javne sfere in javnega prostora niso povezane zgolj s privatizacijo, temveč jih širše obravnavamo tudi kot krizo zastopanja v predstavniški demokraciji.³¹⁷

Zato ne preseneča, da je eno izmed prednostnih vprašanj civilne družbe in z njo tudi umetnosti in kulture ohranjanje in razvoj javnih prostorov in javne sfere, skupni in skupnostni prostori; v zadnjem času pa bi jim lahko po analogiji dodali tudi premislek o javnem času. S pojmom javnega časa mislim predvsem na investirani čas v javno dobro, torej čas, ki ga ne vlagam v golo preživetje ali individualne apetite, temveč ga vložim v skupnost in borbo za ohranjanje skupnega (ang. *common*). V pospešeni realnosti tega vse očitneje bistveno primanjkuje. Z uresničevanjem predloga alternativne ekonomije z uvedbo univerzalnega temeljnega dohodka bi lahko množično uporabili čas za javno dobro, kar pomeni seveda zavezo iskanju *(kore)politične intenzifikacije* ter vadbo gibanja za svobodo.

³¹⁴ André Lepecki, "From (choreo)policed circulation to (choreo)political intensification," 4.

³¹⁵ Bojana Cvejić in Ana Vujanović, *Public Sphere by Performance* (Beograd, Berlin: B_Books, 2012).

³¹⁶ Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, *Modeling Cultural and Art Institution* (rokopis neobjavljene knjige), 25.

³¹⁷ Bojana Cvejić in Ana Vujanović.

HETEROHRONIJA ALI PRILAŠČENI ČAS OBUJANJA KOLEKTIVNEGA TELESA

Naša imunizirana telesa so po letu omejitev toga, hladna, izmučena in prestrašena. Zdravilo vnovičnega, efikasnega prebujenja živahnega družabnega brbotanja bi bila heterohronija, začasna prekinitev z vsakdanjostjo, na kar poskušajo opozoriti tudi alternativna globalna gibanja po vsem svetu, ki so kot možno formo politizacije svojega delovanja posvojila karnevalske³¹⁸ oblike. Četudi je verjetno navivno pričakovati, da bi karnevalska forma dejansko uvedla postpandemično stanje, bi transgresija – ki jo izpostavlja že Georgesu Bataillu v svojem pisanju o karnevalu – učinkovito ustvarila ventil neizživetim strastem, pa tudi prepotrebni »sprevrženih družbenih razmerij in norčevanja iz vladajočih ideologij«,³¹⁹ ter omehčala opustošeno družbeno telo.³²⁰

Kot izpostavlja Mihail M. Bakhtin, v karnevalski igri z obračanjem uradnih vrednot vidimo pričakovanja drugačnega, utopičnega sveta, slonečega na bolj horizontalnih odnosih. V svoji odprtosti in radostni anarhiji postane razvidno mnoštvo soobstoječih perspektiv.³²¹ Telesna drama v karnevalu, kot ugotavlja Renate Lachman, ta »ni aplikabilna na privatno, individualno telo, temveč se nanaša na kolektivno telo ljudstva«. ³²² Kot ugotavlja avtorica, se kriza »v karnevalu manifestira hkrati kot negacija in afirmacija, kot posmeh in zmaga«, ³²³ a žal zgolj in samo v času njegovega trajanja. A četudi je karneval od nekdanj percipiran kot nekaj začasnega, je njegovo obuditev v domeni aktivizma mogoče razumeti prav v iskanju in obujanju zalog potencialnosti.

Presekati z obstoječo krizo in obuditi ludističnega duha ob koncu pandemije se ponuja kot možni izhod in *sprava*, kar pa ne pomeni nujno navideznega povratka v predkrizni čas, temveč neposredno naselitev v potencialnosti sami. Pri tem mislim predvsem na obuditev in politizacijo že dodobra imobiliziranega kolektivnega telesa, ki ga ni uničila zgolj kriza pandemije, ampak ga je že več desetletij postopoma razjedal objestni nekrokapitalizem.

³¹⁸ Po izročilu karneval, kot ugotavlja Maja Breznik, izhaja iz latinske besedne zveze *carnem levare* (v slovenskem jeziku *meso snesti*), »kot obdobje v katoliškem koledarskem letu nasproti 40-dnevemu postu po pepelnični sredi, ko naj bi se ljudje *mesa vzdržali*«. Z uživanjem ali vzdržnostjo pa katoliški koledar določa tudi obnašanje – v obdobju karnevala si ljudje lahko dajo duška s prehrano, z veseljem in celo s promiskuiteto, v obdobju posta pa naj bi se posvetili duhovnosti, kontemplaciji in pokori.« Maja Breznik, "Družbeni histrionizem in karnevalski politični protesti," *Amfiteater. Revija za teorijo scenskih umetnosti* 1, 1 (2008): 60.

³¹⁹ Prav tam, 60.

³²⁰ Za podrobnejšo razdelavo Bataillovega pogleda glej njegovo knjigo *Erotizem* (Ljubljana: *cf., 2001). Izpostaviti velja, da Breznikova posplošeno Bataillovo teorijo v svoji raziskavi, ki jo izpelje z uvedeno genealoško metodo, zavrne. Pokaže, da so bili karnevali v srednjem veku, in tudi kasneje, razredno strukturirani ter celo ponekod prepovedani, a so karnevalske oblike tudi revnejši sloji prebivalstva kljub vsemu izvajali. Glej Maja Breznik, "Družbeni histrionizem in artivizem," *Maska, časopis za scenske umetnosti*, XXI, 6–7 (2006): 5–19.

³²¹ Poudariti velja, da spektakel uprizoritve karnevalskega rituala po Bakhtinu ni usmerjen proti institucijam, katerih funkcije in oblike začasno zasede, temveč zoper izgubo utopičnega potenciala z nastopom dogmatizmov in avtoritete. V tem duhu so izpeljane tudi osrednje Bakhtinove teze o postponi transformaciji karnevala v srednjem veku, preko renesanse v apropiacijo karnevala ter izgubo njegove vloge v sedemnajstem stoletju. Glej Renata Lachmann, "Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture," *Cultural Critique* 11 (1988–1989): 115–152.

³²² Prav tam, 124.

³²³ Prav tam.

Vzpostavitev kolektivnega telesa kot živega, raznolikega in neunitarnega organizma je ključna za nadaljnji boj in politizacijo stvarnosti. Obdobje tik po pandemiji se zdi zato odločilno, saj se bodo odprle možnosti vnovičnega povezovanja in rahljanja raznovrstnih banalnih razkolov že tako razklane družbe. Karnevalska transgresija bi brez dvoma olajšala prve korake *(koreo)intenzifikacije*.

Spremeniti mesto v množstvo med seboj prepletajočih se odrov, na katerih bi se odvil triumf življenja in predramil našo domišljijo utopičnih idealov, je lahko pomemben doprinos k tkanju stikov in vezi izven ozkih in bolj ali manj zaprtih socialnih balončkov, znotraj katerih smo (pre)živelimi zadnje leto dni. Prav ti nakuljučni, ne-povsem-namerni stiki, ki vznikajo iz radoživosti ob vesplošnem praznovanju, so pomembni stebri za transformativne procese skupnega in skupnosti. Umetniki bi morali v teh procesih odigrati ključno vlogo. Kot eksperti kaosa, poznavalci telesa, raziskovalci odnosov in moči prisotnosti bi lahko vodili posameznike in skupine na poti vnovičnega približevanja, slavljenja medsebojnih razlik kot vrednot, ki bogatijo življenje. S svojim znanjem, afektiranim in čuječim vedenjem lahko usmerjajo ljudi, jih nevsiljivo vodijo in postopno transformirajo. Z mehčanjem naših udov bi mehčali tudi naše mentalne kalupe. Poti nazaj namreč ni in nostalgija tako kot prepovedane substance ne bo rešila problema, naučimo se lahko le bivanja onkraj zapovedanega.

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(CHOREO)POLITICAL INTENSIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

The propaganda of progress, stock market chaos, economic and natural disasters, violence, wars, climate change run wild, pandemic threats and increased precarity are just some of the many reasons for the growing and all-pervasive anxiety, fear and existential horror. The SARS-COV-2 pandemic has only furthered this existential state. The negative consequences of globalism combined with turbo/necrocapitalism,³²⁴ characterised by the reduction of the multidimensionality of life and its transformation to mere survival, have become more apparent than ever.³²⁵ Art and culture, as well as one of their segments – the performing arts, which the author addresses in this paper – undoubtedly give diversity to life. Since the performing arts are always linked to the time and space in which they arise, develop and are offered to the public, this paper will first briefly outline some of the key changes in living and their impact on the ephemeral art form. Furthermore, this paper will depict some fragmented thoughts on the potency of stage practices (with an emphasis on the art of dance) to further politicise life as a counterpoint to their elitisation and flattening.

THE RESILIENCE OF THE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC FIELDS

A year has passed since the celebration of the reopening of venues,³²⁶ which had, almost overnight, closed three months earlier. Even though events have been held under restrictive, changing and often even impractical conditions and rules, the creative sector has (relatively) successfully coped with them.³²⁷ Planning with established alternative scenarios to the principle of a, b or c has become the so-called *new reality* – an increasingly addressed and internalised phrase, an empty signifier. However, it is worth pointing out that this demonstrated resilience should not be understood as a positive value, as this infinite flexibility is inherent in neoliberal ideology and is, as such, merely a confirmation of an unreflected acceptance.³²⁸

³²⁴ For a precise definition of the concept of necropolitics, see Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Wesleyan University Press, 2019).

³²⁵ On the topicality of Agamben's theorisations of mere life and the permanent state of emergency in modern society, which make it easier to understand his position on the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic soon after raising the pandemic alert, see Giorgio Agamben, *Where Are We Now? The Epidemic as Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

³²⁶ The text was written in May 2021.

³²⁷ It should be noted that the work of the sector suddenly tripled, as it required a reactive response of producers to the changing government regulations, their implementation, response to possible outbreaks of infections at all levels (performers, organisers, participants), possible flight cancellations in international air traffic and other obstacles related to the measures taken to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

³²⁸ See the lecture by Julian Reid at the online symposium *About Dance – forming futures*,

A mere few months of operation after reopening, the cultural venues once again ignominiously closed their doors to the public in most European countries, despite the positive results of international analyses showing that cultural institutions and events are not among high-risk environments for the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus.³²⁹ However, venues have not been closed everywhere.

While in some countries (Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, etc.), they continued with live performances, in others, the political elites judged the risk too high. The risk of infection? Or perhaps, even more, the risk of the value of experience that distances a person from the digital machinery and thus challenges the temporary community, its community experiences and (co)reflections? Or perhaps the reason for the snail-like opening and the disproportionate conditions is simply an unsophisticated lobbying system?

Before proceeding with the distinction between transmitted and direct experience, let us at least briefly mention the sudden difference between countries with closed and those with open public cultural infrastructure as a possible factor for restructuring relations and values in the field of the performing arts. It is thus worth exploring the work methodologies, ways of performing, tactics and strategies of addressing the community and the collective that artists have developed during the pandemic in countries where public life was interrupted only for a short time. We can also look at the (choreo)political conclusions the artists have drawn through their research in the performing arts and possibly the sphere of activism. These conclusions are crucial for the further politicisation of the (performing) arts. They are also in stark contrast to the observed transformations to which artists broadly resorted in countries where the gathering of people and, thus, live events were banned. With this, we primarily mean the transfer of content into the virtual sphere, which has resulted in abandoning its primary medium and essential components. Indeed, artists did so out of fear, under pressure from funders and to survive. And even if this was meant only for a temporary period, the question arises of how and if this will really be only temporary? *La vita è bella!*

THE PROPAGANDA OF PROGRESS: ACCELERATION, SPEED AND DIGITALISATION

The questionable crossing to the virtual world will be more evident from the key parameters of the ideology of speed in the (post)modernist era, as has been noted by Paul Virilio and Peter Sloterdijk.³³⁰ The *acceleration of reality* is a “significant mutation in history”.³³¹ Among other things, Hannah Arendt, in her iconic book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, reminds us that “terror means the realisation

hosted by Mårten Spångberg and Alex Viteri, LAKE Studio Berlin, 2 May 2021. Available at <https://vimeo.com/544244432>, 20. 5. 2021.

³²⁹ Here is just one of the many analyses that were performed last year: Stefan Moritz, Cornelia Gottschick, Johannes Horn, Mario Popp, Susan Langer, Bianca Klee, Oliver Purschke, Michael Gekle, Angelika Ihling, Rafael Mikolajczyk, “The Risk of Indoor Sports and Culture Events for the Transmission of COVID-19 (Restart-19),” published on 10 March 2020. Available at <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.10.28.20221580v1.full.pdf>, 20. 5. 2021.

³³⁰ See Peter Sloterdijk, *Evrotaoizem: h kritiki politične kinetike* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva Založba, 2000); Paul Virilio, *Hitrost osvoboditve* (Ljubljana: Študentska organizacija Univerze v Ljubljani, 1996); Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1977); Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb* (London: Verso, 2000); Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear* (Los Angeles: semitext(e), 2012).

³³¹ Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear*, 33.

of the law of movement; its objective is to enable the force of nature or history to whirl freely through humanity, without being hindered by any spontaneous human act".³³² With this finding, we must also consider acceleration and observe the speed that dictates the flow of our being.

Through continuous acceleration, we have, in the digital world, achieved a staggering speed comparable to the speed of light. With immediate interactivity in the *accelerated reality*,³³³ we still move the "boundaries of the present, the boundaries of the human thought and time".³³⁴ Society should be aware of the limits of such acceleration, stop it or consciously step out of it, as the only possibility of preserving the multidimensionality and richness of life is co-dependent on the connection and interplay of our lives with different temporalities – work and leisure time, day and night, the seasons, etc. have been replaced by the linear law of 24/7 – and chronopolitics. The logic of synchronisation, in which we are trapped through attachment and dependence on the digitised world, has already radically devastated multi-rhythmicity and levelled it into arrhythmicity. Thus, further struggle is possible only in the politicisation of life as a complex, multi-faceted and dynamic interplay of different temporalities.

The propaganda policy of speed has entered not only mental and emotional social consciousness but also our kinaesthetic sense. Our immobile bodies are attached to fragmented virtual communication networks, which, at the same time, impose a feeling of constant lagging behind (unanswered e-mails, (non-)upgraded virtual profiles, the inability to stay in contact with a spectrum of colleagues, acquaintances and partners). The attachment to digital networks and virtual worlds has not only produced the inability to catch up with up-to-date information but also flattened our perception of reality. Screens are like "windshields in a car: with increased speed, we lose the sense of lateralization, which is an infirmity in our being in the world, its richness, its relief, its depth of field. [...] There is a loss of the visual field and the anticipation of what really surrounds us".³³⁵

All of this reveals that the pandemic has only made an apparent cut in the continuum of accelerated reality. We have alleviated the restriction of movement to which we have been subject by our presence on digital networks. The activities that contributed to the heterogeneity and multifaceted nature of social life – including live artistic practices – have been replaced by flattened approximations transmitted to virtual worlds. By transforming parts of social life that had been alien to transmission, we abandoned them – for an (in)definite time. In this way, we disabled dialogue as a means of a spontaneous, evolving form of mutual enrichment, learning and personal and collective growth that extends beyond language and representation.³³⁶

Since necrocapitalism favours shallowness and an isolated and alienated physicality, the tendency to extend the technology to the fields that have been alien to it must not and cannot surprise us. Moreover, to achieve the objective of the accelerated and shallow reality, it was necessary to truncate exactly the artistic and cultural field and transform it into its otherness.

³³² Hannah Arendt, *Izvori totalitarizma* (Ljubljana: Študentska založba, 2003), 560.

³³³ The concept of *accelerated reality* has in recent years occupied an important place in the humanities. Benjamin Noys, Mark Fisher and Paul Virilio, among others, have developed different, often even contradictory views on this concept.

³³⁴ Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear*, 43.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

³³⁶ On the importance of live communication and the negative impact of technology on the individual and therefore the collective body, see Nina Power's lecture at the *Forming Futures Symposium*, 1 May 2021. Available at <https://vimeo.com/543944074>, 20. 5. 2021.

Ephemeral art, which also includes the performing arts, has become fertile ground for already-established experimentation. Unfortunately, as many have been trying to convince us, this is not only temporary. For instance, the European Union is also pushing towards digitalisation through its financial mechanisms (see the new guidelines of the Creative Europe programme).³³⁷ Digitalisation covers a wide range of possibilities, but we can conclude that in the race for funds, many applicants and networks will also decide to expand their activities to the parallel, i.e., digital performance spaces. It can be assumed that live performances will be transferred to other media on a larger scale (video, film, performances on social networks, etc.) and thus continue with practices that have been universally applied in recent times.

SKETCHES FOR THE FUTURE

The future is uncertain and, as such, open. It is waiting for us to reinvent it with our own community engagement, as only together can we create a more sustainable tomorrow. We need a community and, with it, the collective body. We need to detach ourselves from typified and standardised understandings of the world and rethink the place an individual could occupy in society, for which we need strength and imagination.³³⁸ Let us try to imagine some places that the performing arts will inhabit in the future.

SALON ART VERSUS UNDERGROUND ART

Considering capitalist interests, we can conclude that the era of mass spectacles as profitable commercial content is in decline. As early as the end of March 2020, the famous *Cirque du Soleil* dismissed as many as 95% of its workforce.³³⁹ Of course, they were not the only ones. Commercial content providers, in particular, have instantly identified the measures introduced to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus infection as an indicator of the threat of closure or immediate restructuring. With their focus on profits, they have been aware that sky-high investments of several million would be too risky in such uncertain conditions.³⁴⁰ Moreover, they have also considered how to cover the already funded projects and save their investments as much as possible. Even if this sector or at least its most vital parts (performers, technicians, administration, etc.) have been relatively well covered by existing and new financial initiatives at the state or municipal level and through private funding, donations and other forms of support, investors have strived to revive the shut-down machinery.

After a year of closure, Broadway, one of the largest providers of spectacular stage content, optimistically announced the opening of its venues at full capacity

³³⁷ See “2021 Annual Work Programme for the Implementation of the Creative Europe Programme.” Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/document/2021-annual-work-programme-implementation-creative-europe-programme>, 20. 5. 2021.

³³⁸ See Franco Berardi Bifo, *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility* (London: Verso books, 2017).

³³⁹ “V slovitnem Cirque du Soleil odpustili skoraj vse zaposlene.” Available at <https://siol.net/trendi/kultura/v-slovitem-cirque-du-soleil-odpustili-skoraj-vse-zaposlene-video-521381>, 20. 5. 2021.

³⁴⁰ “Broadway Investing Basics.” Available at <https://www.investingbroadway.com/broadway-investing-basics>, 20. 5. 2021.

for the new season.³⁴¹ Even if musical tickets are already on sale, it is hard to believe that the system will return to its previous state. We can assume that in the future, to avoid risky and financially damaging productions, investors will opt for more sustainable forms, i.e., smaller or boutique productions, and focus their energy on the representatives of the elites. With the latter, they will once again consolidate their increasingly popular salonism.

Even though salon events have never really faded into oblivion, we can expect them to flourish in the future. Thus, the world's elite will underline class differences even further and strengthen their status by participating in events designed only for the chosen ones. However, it should be noted that salons will not fulfil their former educational function. Their purpose will be to reinforce privileges and entertainment. In the past, many salons tried to radicalise thought, consolidate or demolish aesthetic guidelines, build ideas and generate new perspectives of general intellect in smaller collectives and multiple dialogues.³⁴²

For a better understanding, I will briefly explain two separate domains and forms of salon culture. The first is linked to the aristocracy of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. As an informal form of education and socialising (literary society) of the Parisian intelligentsia, salons as a special form gained recognition with Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet (1588–1665). Over the century, they even further enhanced their emphasis on purpose and, to this end, became more and more structured: either focusing on literary or other cultural events and entertainment or becoming the anchor of hot-tempered political or other theoretical debates on selected topics.³⁴³ Mixed media exhibitions, which had taken place in the *salon carré* in the Louvre since 1725 and, due to the conservative views of its organisers (academics) and the exclusion of progressive artists from the prepared exhibitions, got their antipode in the so-called *salon des refusés* (1874, 1875 and 1886) which indicates the second type of salons as a special manifestation form.³⁴⁴

It would be hard to assume that salons in the 21st century would preserve their original focus. As already mentioned, they might lose the radicalisation of intellect and replace it with the consumption of empty representations and hedonism. In contemporary salons, cultural and artistic content would not be excluded, as this would help artificially uphold social status.

In line with increasingly conservative views and the celebration of traditionalism, we could assume that no progressive artistic forces would gravitate towards contemporary salons. Instead, such venues would feature more conventional art forms emphasising beauty and empty decorativeness. We can undoubtedly expect the flourishing of forms and content that elicit laughter or admiring applause from the chosen ones. Innovative approaches might be replaced by the artisanal knowledge of figurality, the designing of compositions from refined and recognised dance, movement, performative and musical styles, where the audience could admire the flexibility and virtuosity of performing body-shells with no life, skilfully executed rhythmic compositions and laugh at stereotypical stories. Such salon art programmes would not require much reflection from the audience. Artistic performances would not generate cracks and, therefore, would not sink into the

³⁴¹ “We Look Forward to Welcoming You Back to Broadway.” Available at <https://www.broadway.com/announcement/covid-19-update/>, 20. 5. 2021.

³⁴² For the one of the most notorious studies on the subject, see Paul Virilio, *Slovnica množstva. K analizi oblik sodobnega življenja* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2003).

³⁴³ Antoine Lilti, *The World of the Salons: Sociability and Worldliness in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁴⁴ See the lexicographical term “Salon.” Available at <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/salon>, 20. 5. 2021.

bodies of the audience. These environments might be dominated by shorter performances and musical pieces selected for entertainment, relaxation and, above all, withdrawal from real life behind the walls of the infrastructure of the elite.

The counterpoint to this could be the boom of underground art forms in abandoned and other public and private spaces. In their instability and uncertainty, their organisers might try to think of ways to make a difference to the elitist game rules. It would reawaken the practice of different temporalities. The focus might be on open works, sketches, questions and explorations, which would reinvent the bodies of those present. Such art would not necessarily be beautiful but rather brutal, genuinely uncertain and thus witty. It might look for answers to the practice of common being, acting and thinking, building a stronger mass. Unburdened, it may discover hidden potentials and create stunning art forms.

The author speculates on the emergence of nomadic forms of being on the periphery, where artists of different disciplines, theorists and their loyal followers might meet, similar to underground art. As we have seen during the pandemic, the rural environments were the ones that bypassed the restriction of movement and maintained the physically connected group bodies with greater ease. As the current pandemic is assumed to be only the beginning of an accelerated spread of new diseases and pandemic outbreaks, a reorganisation in the arts sector and the establishment of transitional and temporary communities can be expected.³⁴⁵ Instead of the immunising “barriers”, these communities might be able to experience the opening and exposure that “turns individuals outward and frees them from their outside”.³⁴⁶ Such a community would always be experienced as a change since, in its heterogeneity, it would be oriented towards breaking down the rigid boundaries that protect the individual’s identity. Instead of identity politics, such communities would be driven towards building a collective body open to unknown becoming.³⁴⁷

The theory and practices of (contemporary) dance and choreography will also find their place in this field, as they have always sought and proposed “a material, socially inscribed agent, a non-univocal body, an open potentiality, a force-field constantly negotiating its position in the powerful struggle for its appropriation and control”.³⁴⁸ Today in this search, it is especially pertinent to invent bodies of resistance “to choreograph anew the body’s potential for energetic social action, for engaging in discursive counterattacks under the form and force of movement”.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and speculative assumptions about the spread of pandemic outbreaks in the future, see Mike Davis, *The Monster Enters: COVID-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism* (New York: OR books, 2020).

³⁴⁶ Roberto Esposito, *Communitas – izvor in usoda skupnosti* (Ljubljana: Maska, 2017), 49.

³⁴⁷ The author understands the concept of becoming as defined by Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the book *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

³⁴⁸ André Lepecki, “Introduction: Presence and Body in Dance and Performance Theory,” in *Of the Presence of the Body. Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 6.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

(CHOREO)POLITICAL INTENSIFICATION

This mentioned place could be thought of as the conceptualisation of (choreo)political intensification as has been established by André Lepecki in his article “From (Choreo)Policed Circulation to (Choreo)Political Intensification: Dance as Critique of Freedom (Or: The Task of the Dancers)”.³⁵⁰ As a dance theorist, he attributes the central place for further politicisation³⁵¹ to dancers and choreographers precisely because of an astonishing knowledge of the body, deriving his thesis from Hannah Arendt’s posthumously published work *The Promise of Politics*, in which she writes: “... we have arrived in a situation where we do not know – at least *not yet* – how to move politically”.³⁵²

This important question that speaks of motion and is defined by space and time becomes even more important the moment our bodies are reduced to their temporality and space in the accelerated reality, as the author has shown above. With this realisation, Arendt warns that limiting the freedom of movement threatens the disappearance of what is presumed to be political.³⁵³

The political thing (that is, freedom) is not something one can hold or fix but a difficult, ever-evolving, always-moving commitment; it is less an object and a subject than a movement in multiplicity, defined by multitudinal inter-subjective action – one that, moreover, must be learned, rehearsed, nurtured and, above all, experimented with, practised and experienced.³⁵⁴

Contemporary dancers are aware that movement entails the risk of falling, so they understand even better than the rest of society that dancing, with its never-ending clarity, is equivalent to life itself. As theorist Rendy Martin lucidly defines contemporary dance, dance is an artistic practice where time and space are expressly generated in the course of performance and not simply an activity that passes through an already given spatiotemporal medium. Dancing bodies reference a social kinaesthetic, a sentient apprehension of movement and a sense of possibility as to where motion can lead us, that amounts to a material amalgamation of thinking and doing as world-making activity.³⁵⁵

Contemporary dance takes place in exchange. It makes evident the becoming as “it is nothing else but what it does and what it becomes, where it is intended

³⁵⁰ André Lepecki, “From (Choreo)Policed Circulation to (Choreo)Political Intensification: Dance as Critique of Freedom (or: The Task of the Dancers),” *Weaving Politics*, International Interdisciplinary Symposium on Choreography, Human Rights and Violence, 14–16 December 2012, Dansens Hus, CCC and Norra Latin in Stockholm.

³⁵¹ With the notion of politicisation (according to Jacques Rancière), the author refers to the power of the political in the work of art or artistic practice, through which we can address their ways of operating and interfering in the public sphere: emerging subjects and objects; regulation of positions and powers between them; “distribution of sensuality”; and ideological discourses that shape the common symbolic and sensory order of society and influence its material structure and dividing lines.

³⁵² Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 25.

³⁵³ Lepecki relies on Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, who point out that in the society of control in which we live, we are threatened by anti-political feelings and relations, threats which have already been underlined in this paper.

³⁵⁴ André Lepecki, “From (Choreo)Policed Circulation to (Choreo)Political Intensification,” 2–3.

³⁵⁵ Rendy Martin, “Dance and Its Others: Theory, State, Nation and Socialism,” in *Of the Presence of the Body. Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 48.

and into which it changes".³⁵⁶ For this very reason, choreography and dance can be seen and perceived as a political process that creates not only itself but also society.

Political speech and political hearing actualise an open, precarious, unpredictable and yet necessary and eventful movement of exchanges – not of commands and their implementation (as in policies) but exchanges of political things crisscrossing the multitude to promote conversations and the creation of plans. In other words, converging divergences whose sole purpose, direction and meaning are, once again, that movement known as freedom.

Maintaining a certain trust in choreography derives from the notion that politics is not located in the subject but is a thing that traverses subjects (perhaps even, in its motions, de-objectifying subjects), thus requiring a plan of composition for the distribution of singularities to actualise itself as a political thing. Therefore, a system of exchange, transmission and dialogical interaction must at least be planned (or written) for the political thing to enter the world as a force establishing through its actions and circulations the very plan that invokes it.³⁵⁷

Choreography and dance/movement need to be intensified and politicised, as choreopolitics requires a redistribution of bodies, feelings and senses through which one could learn political movement, i.e., the movement for freedom.

PUBLIC SPACE, PUBLIC SPHERE AND PUBLIC TIME

Despite their similarity, public space and the public sphere are different categories, for which Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić, in the book *Public Sphere by Performance*, suggest that they should be regarded as separate concepts, as their consequences are not symmetrical.³⁵⁸ While public space represents a physical, spatial category, the public sphere is discursive. To gain power, the public sphere needs public space, but as the two authors note, public space is not necessarily always the space of the public sphere. It has, in recent years, become especially curtailed under capitalist greed, as seen in tourism and entertainment. Since the 1980s, public space has gradually changed into private space, and with the reduction processes, it is increasingly threatening the public sphere.

For the public sphere, the level of involvement is essential, as it reveals the ways and measures of including the subjects of discussion, the formulation of questions and their visibility and importance in the general public. The authors also state that the public sector (which includes public institutions in culture and art) belongs to the state rather than the public. This notion has become evident in the last year in Slovenia and many other countries. As Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski notes, such a view reveals the frequent abuse of cultural and artistic institutions for the needs of political elites.³⁵⁹ Public content and criticism are disappearing with the expansion of the privatisation of public spaces. According to Cvejić and Vujanović, the crises of the public sphere and public space are not only related to privatisation but are treated more broadly as a crisis of

³⁵⁶ Rok Vevar, from the opening speech at the CoFestival, 28 May 2021. Typescript.

³⁵⁷ André Lepecki, "From (choreo)policed circulation to (Choreo)Political Intensification," 4.

³⁵⁸ Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović, *Public Sphere by Performance* (Beograd, Berlin: B_Books, 2012).

³⁵⁹ Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, *Modeling Cultural and Art Institution*, typescript of an unpublished book, 25.

representation in a representative democracy.³⁶⁰

Therefore, unsurprisingly, one of the priority issues of civil society, and with it also art and culture, is the preservation and development of public spaces and the public sphere, common and community spaces. And more recently, consideration of public time could also be added by analogy. With the term public time, we mean primarily the time invested in the public good, i.e., time that one does not invest in mere survival or the greed of individuals but in the community and the struggle to maintain the common. In the accelerated reality, there is an increasing lack of such time. By implementing the proposal of an alternative economy with the introduction of a universal basic income, we could use our time for the public good, which means committing ourselves to seek the *(choreo)political intensification* and practising the movement for freedom.

HETEROCHRONY OR THE APPROPRIATED TIME OF AWAKENING THE COLLECTIVE BODY

After a year of restrictions, our immunised bodies are stiff, cold, exhausted and frightened. The cure for a renewed, effective awakening of a bustling social life would be heterochrony, a temporary break with everyday life, for which alternative global movements that have adopted carnival³⁶¹ forms as a possible form of politicisation are calling. While it is probably naïve to expect a carnival form to be the actual introduction of a post-pandemic state, transgression – which has already been highlighted by Georges Bataille in his writing on carnival – would effectively create a valve for the suppressed passions as well as the much-needed “perverted social relations and ridicule of the ruling ideologies”³⁶² and soften the devastated social body.³⁶³

As Mikhail M. Bakhtin notes, by reversing the formal values in carnival play, we see the expectations of a different, utopian world based on more horizontal relations. In its openness and joyous anarchy, many coexisting perspectives become apparent.³⁶⁴ The corporeal drama in the carnival, as Renate Lachman notes,

³⁶⁰ Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović.

³⁶¹ Traditionally, carnival, as Maja Breznik notes, derives from the Latin “carnem levare” [to eliminate meat], “as a period in the Catholic calendar as opposed to a 40-day fast beginning on Ash Wednesday, when people are supposed to “abstain from meat”. Through enjoyment or abstinence, the Catholic calendar also determines behaviour – during the carnival period, people can enjoy food, joy and even promiscuity to their hearts’ content whereas during the fasting they should dedicate themselves to spirituality, contemplation and penitence.” Maja Breznik, “Družbeni histrionizem in karnevalski politični protesti,” *Amfiteater. Revija za teorijo scenskih umetnosti* 1, 1 (2008): 60.

³⁶² Ibid., 60.

³⁶³ For a detailed elaboration of Bataille’s view, see his book *Erotism* (Ljubljana: *cf., 2001). It should be noted that Breznik in her research rejects Bataille’s generalised theory, which he derives from the introduced genealogical method. It shows that, in the Middle Ages and later, carnivals were class-structured and were even banned in some places. However, carnival forms were nevertheless performed by the poorer sections of the population. See Maja Breznik, “Družbeni histrionizem in artivizem,” *Maska, časopis za scenske umetnosti*, XXI, 6–7 (2006): 5–19.

³⁶⁴ It should be highlighted that the spectacle of staging a carnival ritual according to Bakhtin is not directed against institutions the functions and forms of which it temporarily occupies, but against the loss of the utopian potential which comes with the advent of dogmatisms and authority. In the same spirit, Bakhtin derives his central theses on the gradual transformation of carnival in the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance into the appropriation of carnival and the loss of its role in the seventeenth century. See Renata

“applies not to the private, individual body, but rather to the larger collective one of the folk.”³⁶⁵ As the author notes, the crisis “in carnival manifests itself as negation and affirmation, as ridicule and triumph,”³⁶⁶ but unfortunately, only for the duration of it. However, although carnival has always been perceived as something temporary, its revival in activism can be understood in the search for and the reawakening of the reserves of potentiality.

Breaking the current crisis and reviving the ludicrous spirit at the end of the pandemic is offered as a possible way out and the “reconciliation”, which does not necessarily mean an apparent return to pre-crisis times but rather a direct settling in the potentiality itself. With this, the author refers in particular to the revival and politicisation of an already well-immobilised collective body, which has not only been destroyed by the pandemic crisis but has been gradually corroded by reckless necrocapitalism for decades.

Establishing a collective body as a living, diverse and non-unitary organism is vital for further struggle and the politicisation of reality. Therefore, the period following the pandemic seems decisive, as it might open the possibility of reconnecting the members and easing various banal divisions of an already heavily divided society. Carnival transgression would, without a doubt, facilitate the first steps of *(choreo)intensification*.

Changing the place into a multitude of intertwined stages on which the triumph of life would take place and awaken our imagination of utopian ideals can be a significant contribution towards establishing contacts and connections outside the restricted and more or less closed social bubbles within which we have been living (and surviving) for the last year. These coincidental, not-quite-intentional contacts that arise from the joy of celebration are essential pillars for the transformative processes of the common and the community. Artists should play a vital role in these processes. As experts of chaos, connoisseurs of the body, researchers of relationships and the power of presence, they could guide individuals and groups on their path of re-approaching and celebrating mutual differences as life-enriching values. With their knowledge and affected and alert behaviour, they can direct people, guide them unobtrusively and thus gradually transform them. By softening our limbs, we would thus soften our mental moulds. There is no way back, and neither nostalgia nor forbidden substances will be able to solve the problem; we can only learn to live beyond what is imposed on us by the social order.

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Lachmann, “Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture,” *Cultural Critique*, 11 (1988–1989), 115–152.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 124.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

Antagonistična nalezljivost uprizoritvenega telesa v času pandemije covid-19

Gledališče je umazano. V gledališču si delimo isti zrak, dihamo sapo igralcev, vonjamo njihov znoj in znoj vseh, ki smo tam prisotni. Drenjamo se, ker za nas same ne bi bilo gledališča. Gledališče nastane, ko nastane telo skupine, telo družbe vseh, ki smo zbrani na kupu, da v tej kolektivnosti skušamo čutiti in misliti svoje. Nedvomno čutimo, kaj je skupnost in kako je tej skupnosti, kaj misli, kaj doživlja, in hkrati vemo, kako je nam.

Tomi Janežič³⁶⁷

UVOD

Uprizoritveno telo obstaja. Kljub temu da gledališki raziskovalci in učenjaki nismo primorani doseči konsenz glede njegove definicije – saj se radi o njem ves čas vneto *pogajamo* –, je naše prepričanje o njegovem obstoju vseeno globoko in trdno. Uprizoritveno telo, ki se kaže v številnih oblikah, je po našem prepričanju vesplošno in nenehno prisotno. Tovrstno videnje je lahko ideološko, naivno in morda preveč optimistično, vendar je kot takšno izjemno človeško in utemeljeno v ontološkem statusu uprizoritvenega telesa. Čeprav je precej težko opredeliti, iz česa izhaja narava uprizoritvenega telesa, je tesna povezava med uprizoritvenim telesom in obstojem človeške vrste, kot pravi Lehmann,³⁶⁸ očitna. Obstajamo, ker imamo telesa in skozi njih delujemo, skoznje pokažemo, da smo živi in v upanju, da ne bomo pozabljeni.

Čeprav verjamem, tako kot mnogi drugi raziskovalci družbe in gledališki učenjaki,³⁶⁹ da uprizoritveno telo presega meje gledališkega sveta, obseg tega poglavja tega ne more preseči. Ostajam znotraj gledaliških in uprizoritvenih študij. Osredotočil se bom na gledališko nalezljivost, ki človeško telo jemlje kot izvor, pa naj bo to telo igralca, performerja ali gledalca. Razlogi za mojo odločitev izhajajo iz trenutnih epidemioloških razmer, kjer se mora gledališče znova soočati in boriti s kvarno naravo človeškega telesa, tokrat prvič tudi na mednarodni ravni. V tem članku sem tako namenoma omejil svojo sicer širšo perspektivo na točno določeno, kjer uprizoritveno telo v trenutni pandemični situaciji dojemam, kot konstrukt dveh

³⁶⁷ Tomi Janežič, *Zapisi iz brloga* (SIGLEDAL Portal slovenskega gledališča, 2020). Dostopno na <https://veza.sigledal.org/prispevki/zapisi-iz-brloga-tomi-janezic?fbclid=IwAR2h5O3uP-DiwUEWBUjyqProBywNYY8aUFuoQJkKpQd9LR576g7hTu3rJjoM>, 1. 12. 2020.

³⁶⁸ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic theatre* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 241.

³⁶⁹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin Books, 1990); Maria Shevtsova, "The Sociology of the Theatre, Part Three: Performance," *New Theatre Quarterly* 5, 3 (1989): 282–300; Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002).

antagonističnih nalezljivosti, ki pa obe izhajata iz edinstvene materialne snovnosti človeškega telesa.

Prva nalezljivost izvira iz trenutne zdravstvene krize, druga pa je stara vsaj toliko kot gledališče samo. Slednjo sproža kognitivna sposobnost človeškega telesa, ko gledalci pridejo v stik s predstavami ali performansi v gledališču. Nalezljivost vidim kot dinamičen proces, kjer se element bodisi v materialni bodisi v simbolni obliki prenaša z enega subjekta na drugega in posledično pomembno vpliva na preobrazbo, ki jo doživlja drugi subjekt v relaciji s prvim. Nalezljivost je lahko škodljiva, neškodljiva ali koristna.

MATERIALNA SNOVNOST UPRIZORITVENEGA TELESA

Uprizoritveno telo je izmuzljiv element gledališča in performansa. Da bi ga razumeli in razložili, ga gledališki raziskovalci in učenjaki oblikujejo in se pogajajo o njegovem konceptu glede na njegovo zgodovinsko pojavnost v gledališču.³⁷⁰ Koncept uprizoritvenega telesa je zgrajen iz različnih elementov, kot so subjektivnost, psihosomatski procesi, prostor in čas, diskurzivnost, spoznavanje, semiotika, kultura, estetika, družba, politika in tako dalje.³⁷¹ Eden od elementov, ki jih lahko najdemo znotraj definicije uprizoritvenega telesa, je tudi njegova materialna snovnost. Obravnavamo jo lahko z različnimi izrazi: fizična, materialna, mesena, telesna, biološka, medicinska, somatska ali fenomenalna osnova telesa in podobno. Njena bistvena značilnost je, da jo jemljemo za samoumevno. Največkrat se tega niti ne zavedamo.³⁷² Materialna snovnost uprizoritvenega telesa domuje v vsakdanjem življenju, kjer ga posameznik večinoma nezavedno sprejema po principu fenomenološkega načela »naravnega odnosa«. ³⁷³ Človeško telo je namreč »*videti tako tam, tako biološko, anatomsko, fiziološko, nesporno ...*«. ³⁷⁴

Vprašanje materialne snovnosti uprizoritvenega telesa v gledališču in performansu je predmet številnih umetniških strategij: od tega, da je nosilec dramske osebe na odru v tradicionalnem dramskem gledališču, do tega, da zaobsega prostor, kjer pride pri posameznem gledališkem ustvarjalcu ali gledalcu do *stika* notranjega psihološkega in zunanjega fizičnega gledališkega sveta. Pobuda za ustvarjalno vplivanje na materialno snovnost uprizoritvenega telesa je na strani umetnika, kajti igralec ali performer mora za oblikovanje predstave ali performansa na odru bistveno preoblikovati svoje fizično telo,³⁷⁵ medtem ko je gledalcem to dovoljeno storiti le miselno, kadar njihovo uprizoritveno telo sme le pasivno slediti tihemu premišljevanju v avditoriju. Ne glede na obravnavo materialne snovnosti uprizoritvenega telesa, in kako velik pomen ji pripisujemo, slednjega ni mogoče zreducirati na zgolj fizični predmet, saj je živo.

³⁷⁰ Marco De Marinis, "From Semiotics to Neuroscience. A Small-Multi Disciplinary Glossary," v *Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience*, ur. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia in Victor Jacono (London, Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2016) 61-74, 61.

³⁷¹ Več o različnih vidikih uprizoritvenega telesa glej Colette Conroy, *Theatre & the Body* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4-6; Sandra Reeve (ur.), *Body and Performance* (Devon: Triarchy Press, 2013).

³⁷² Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³⁷³ Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory* (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 208-209; Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers V. Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (New York: Springer, 2011), 170-174, 192-194.

³⁷⁴ Sandra Reeve, *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body* (Devon: Triarchy Press, 2011), v; Nick J. Fox, *The Body* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2012), 14.

³⁷⁵ Igralec govori, plesalec pleše, pevec poje in mimik ustvarja geste.

Ima svojo voljo, ki se neposredno izraža v obliki našega zasebnega notranjega življenja ali posredno v obliki empatičnega prepoznavanja mentalnih svetov drugih.³⁷⁶

Razlog za govor o fizični osnovi uprizoritvenega telesa je očitno. Gledališče ni samo kraj, kjer igralci in performerji občinstvu sporočajo svoj ustvarjalni proces in njegove učinke, temveč je tudi kraj, kjer si lahko gledališki ustvarjalci in gledalci med seboj v epidemioloških časih predajajo virus. Materialna snovnost uprizoritvenega telesa je lahko zaradi svojega biološkega statusa izpostavljena različnim nalezljivim boleznim. Klice ali virus lahko resno vplivajo na naše zdravje ali nas celo ubijejo. To postane še posebej očitno v času trenutne globalne pandemije, ko je postalo telo, tudi na splošno, ne samo v gledališču, tarča covid-19. Toda uprizoritveno telo je dvojno ogroženo. Prvič, kot fenomenalno ali medicinsko telo se lahko naleze virusa SARS-CoV-2. Drugič, kot semantično telo zaradi zdravstvenih omejitev in začasnega zaprtja gledališč.³⁷⁷ Prizadeto uprizoritveno telo se ne bori samo za lastno preživetje; glede na interpretacije zdravstvenih avtoritet predstavlja tudi hipotetični vir smrtonosne nalezljivosti za druga uprizoritvenega telesa preko fizičnega dotika ali že zgolj s svojo fizično prisotnostjo v gledališču.³⁷⁸

Ni čudno torej, da je bil gledališki poklic prva in doslej ena najbolj prizadetih žrtev virusa SARS-CoV-2. V večini držav so zaprli gledališke inštitucije skoraj takoj po izbruhu pandemije, v mnogih državah pa so še vedno zaprte. Na tisoče gledaliških ustvarjalcev je moralo zapustiti varnost svojega vsakdanjega delovnega ustvarjalnega okolja, zaradi česar je njihova socialna varnost resno ogrožena, če ne celo popolnoma izbrisana. Le v peščici držav gledališča počasi in previdno (ponovno) odpirajo avditorije pod novimi zdravstvenimi pogoji nošenja mask in razkuževanja rok ter ob upoštevanju strogega vzdrževanja medsebojne varnostne razdalje gledalcev, ki je bila večkrat napačno obravnavana kot *socialno distanciranje*.

PRISOTNOST V GLEDALIŠČU KOT DRUŽABNO SREČANJE

Zakaj je uporaba izraza *socialna distanciranost* v gledališču v mnogih pogledih napačna in škodljiva? Odgovor je v pomembnosti telesne prisotnosti. Vincent Miller v svoji knjigi o krizi prisotnosti v sodobni družbi piše, da se za invazivnim uvajanjem interneta in medijske tehnologije v naše vsakdanje življenje skriva ideologija telesnega eskapizma.³⁷⁹ Brez dvoma je povprečni član sodobne družbe še vedno kartezijanski in neutemeljeno ločuje in podreja telo od uma. Poleg tega uporaba sodobnih medijev bistveno zmanjša osebne stike med ljudmi. Kljub najnovjšemu pojavu kulture raztelešenja pa telo na nekaterih področjih človeškega življenja še vedno dokazuje svoj pomen in nujnost na dnevni ravni. Prav gledališče in performer sta prostor, kjer telesna prisotnost še vedno premaga tisto, ki jo posreduje tehnologija³⁸⁰ in kjer je hrepenenje po radikalnem konceptu telesne prisotnosti

³⁷⁶ Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (London: SAGE, 1996), 37.

³⁷⁷ O dihonomiji fenomenalnega/semantičnega telesa glej Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*. (Frankfurt na Maini: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004).

³⁷⁸ Uprizoritveno telo je le hipotetično postalo prenašalec novega virusa, saj ni poročil, da bi kakšen gledališki dogodek povzročil lokalne izbruhe ali pospešil širjenje virusa. Visoka stopnja nalezljivosti je posledica fizične bližine uprizoritvenih teles na gledaliških prizoriščih najprej med vajami in nato med samim gledališkim dogodkom.

³⁷⁹ Vincent Miller, *The Crisis of Presence in Contemporary Culture* (London: SAGE, 2016).

³⁸⁰ Kljub nekaterim opozorilom o metodoloških ovirah pri raziskovanju gledališča in performerja, če so omejene le na prisotnost v gledališču. Glej na primer: Amelia Jones, "Temporal Anxiety/Presence. Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," v

(Fischer-Lichte 2008, str. 98–101) vrednota in norma gledališke skupnosti.³⁸¹

Gledališče je stara oblika umetnosti. Uprizoritveno telo je bilo *izumljeno*, ko tehnična sredstva ali mediji, s katerimi so lahko premostili široke prostorske in časovne razdalje med ljudmi, še niso bili razviti. Fizična prisotnost uprizoritvenega telesa igralcev in performerjev na odru in gledalcev v *avditoriju* je bila vse do razvoja sodobne medijske tehnologije obvezna. Kljub nekaterim kritičnim ali domnevno preroškim glasom, ki svarijo pred tehnološko poplavo ali celo uničevanjem pristnosti gledališča in predstave, pa se to ni zgodilo. Dokazi iz preteklosti govorijo o tem, da ima gledališče lahko veliko korist od uporabe sodobne tehnologije, vendar je bilo tudi dokazano, da ne more nadomestiti ali izriniti fizične prisotnosti uprizoritvenega telesa iz gledališča. Obisk gledališča, da bi si ogledali predstavo ali performans, še vedno v prevladujoči meri velja kot prednost pred ogledom na spletu. Ali se bo to spremenilo zaradi izkušenj s covidom-19, pa je stvar prihodnosti.

Bistvo gledališke prakse torej zahteva ravno nasprotovanje družbene distanciranosti, kajti gledališče je prav nasprotno – družabno srečanje. In družabno srečanje v gledališču je predvsem telesno druženje. Gledalci pridejo in sedijo v avditoriju ali občasno celo sodelujejo na odru. Fizična prisotnost jim omogoča, da zdrsnejo v senzorični odnos z igralci in performerji na odru.

V tradicionalnem gledališču se lahko senzorična izkušnja razteza od zgolj vizualne do slušne, v senzoričnem gledališču pa celo do celostne izkušnje vseh čutov.

SENZORIČNA KONSTRUKCIJA GLEDALIŠKE SKUPNOSTI

Obstajajo trije razlogi, zakaj je zaznavanje telesa v gledališču in v predstavi pomembno. Prvič, kljub temu da prisotnost uprizoritvenih teles v gledališču sproži različno obliko zaznavanj, je pomembno tudi izpostaviti, da kakovost zaznavanja vpliva na kakovost prisotnosti in obratno. Po teoriji materialne kulture Tima Danta lahko ločimo dva vidika fizične prisotnosti v gledališču.³⁸² Prvi je materialen. Fizična snovnost uprizoritvenega telesa skupaj s scenografijo in lastnostmi odra ustvarja občutek prisotnosti med odrom in avditorijem. Drugi je simboličen. Fizična snovnost uprizoritvenega telesa omogoča prenos simbolne komunikacije med

Archeologies of Presence, Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being, ur. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye in Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 197–221; Tomaž Krpič, "On the Researcher's/Reviewer's Bodily Presence in Theatre," *New Theatre Quarterly* 35, 3 (2019): 238–250; Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do. Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

³⁸¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008). Fischer-Lichte opredeljuje radikalni koncept prisotnosti kot situacijo, »v kateri gledalci v prisotnosti igralca doživljajo sebe in druge kot utelešeni um. Energijo, ki kroži razumemo kot transformativno moč in v tem smislu kot življenjsko silo«. Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Appearing as Embodied Mind – Defining a Weak, a Strong and a Radical Concept of Presence," v *Archeologies of Presence. Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, ur. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye in Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 34.

³⁸² Pomembno je izpostaviti, da v tem primeru Dant nima v mislih gledališča, temveč slike, skulpture in instalacije. Vendar se mi zdi njegov model materialne kulture vseeno uporaben tudi za gledališče in performans. Tim Dant, *Material Culture in the Social World* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 151–155, 158.

vsemi, ki sodelujejo v gledališču, in ustvarja poseben in simboličen svet, domnevno ločen od svojega nosilca. Zaradi te dvojne prepletene večplastne kakovosti prisotnosti gledalca je gledališka izkušnja še posebej močna in globoka v primerjavi z drugimi umetniškimi oblikami.

Ta razlaga učinka prisotnosti v gledališču delno sovпада z modelom dihoto- mije telesa Erike Fischer Lichte. Slednja razlikuje med fenomenalnim in semiotič- nim telesom.³⁸³ Prvo je telo, s katerim se igralec ali performer zasebno poistoveti. Drugo je telo, ki ga na odru ustvari karakterni igralec ali performer in omogoča komunikacijo z gledalci. V tradicionalnem gledališču je fenomenalno telo *pokrito* s semiotičnim telesom, medtem ko je v nekaterih drugih vrstah gledališča feno- menalno telo lahko začasno vidno. Toda za razpravo o gledališki nalezljivosti Fi- scher Lichte ponuja celo pomembnejše izhodišče. Nudi razlog, zakaj gledalci radi obiskujejo gledališče; prisotnost v gledališču poruši dihoto mijo telesa in duha in povzroča utelešenje uma. V vsakdanjem življenju je to nekaj, kar je za povprečnega gledalca nedosegljivo, saj sta telo in um na silo ločena s pomočjo tehničnih in elektronskih medijev, ki lahko simulirajo učinek prisotnosti, ne morejo pa sami ustvariti avtentične prisotnosti. Poenotenje telesa in duha posamezniku omogoči redke trenutke globoke sreče, od katerih gledalci sčasoma postanejo odvisni.³⁸⁴

Drugič, element zaznavanja je pomemben za idejo dveh različnih uprizoritve- nih teles. Tega vidika uprizoritvenega telesa sem se že dotaknil drugje,³⁸⁵ ampak bolj z namenom pojasniti, zakaj je gledalec tako pomemben subjekt v gledališču; enako kot igralec ali performer. Bralčevo pozornost bi raje usmeril na Erin Hurley,³⁸⁶ ki v delu *Gledališče in občutki (Theatre & Feeling)* povezuje občutenja v gledališču tako z gledalčevim telesom kot s performerjevo percepcijo. V gledališču in performansu najdemo dve čuteči telesi; igralčevo oziroma performerjevo in gle- dalčevo. Hurley naslavlja obe različici uprizoritvenega telesa kot »zaznavajoči te- lesi«. Usmerjenost k zaznavanju izhaja iz njenega razumevanja, da je gledališče »super dražljajsko« okolje, kjer se s tehnologijo čutenja usmerja in krepi gledalčeva čutila, s tem pa tudi njegovo zaznavanje.

Končno je tu še tretji element, ki izhaja iz zaznavanja v gledališču in perfor- mansu: konstruiranje gledališke skupnosti.³⁸⁷ Eviatar Zerubavel v svojem delu *Kog- nitivni horizont pomenov: povabilo h kognitivni sociologiji (Cognitive Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology)* preučuje celovitost sociologije dojemanja.³⁸⁸ Po njegovem mnenju je tako kot mnogi drugi elementi družbe tudi percepcija dru- žbeno konstruirana. Vsaka skupnost, in gledališka skupnost ni izjema, ustvarja svoj prepoznavni vzorec dojemanja resničnosti. Gradnja gledališke skupnosti je po- membna iz posebnega razloga. V uvodu svoje knjige o skupnosti Zygmunt Bauman primerja skupnost z ognjiščem, kjer si lahko metaforično ogrejemo roke³⁸⁹ (in ver- jetno tudi preostale dele telesa). Ker v zunanjem svetu na nas preži nevarnost, se

³⁸³ Fischer-Lichte, Ästhetik des Performativen.

³⁸⁴ Fischer-Lichte, The Transformative Power of Performance, 94–101.

³⁸⁵ Tomaž Krpič, "Spectator's Performing Body: The Case of the Theatre Project Via Negativa," *New Theatre Quarterly* 27, 2 (2011): 167–175.

³⁸⁶ Erin Hurley, *Theatre & Feeling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 23–36.

³⁸⁷ Tomaž Krpič, "Building a Temporal Theatre Community in the Production of the ATLAS – LJUBLJANA," *Theatralia* 20, 2 (2017): 96–108; Tomaž Krpič, "On the Elements of the Thea- tre Community of the Škofja Loka Passion Play," *Pasijonski doneski* 15 (2020): 81–93; Tomaž Krpič, "The Passion Play Has a Healing Power! The Controversies of the Škofja Loka Passion Play," *Amfiteater* 8, 1 (2020): 223–235.

³⁸⁸ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (London: Har- vard University Press, 1997), 23–34.

³⁸⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 1.

človek počuti varnega, kadar je član skupnosti. In čeprav ima koncept (gledališke) skupnosti zagotovo tudi številne druge vidike,³⁹⁰ ta metafora elegantno prikazuje glavni razlog, zakaj ljudje gradijo in vzdržujejo gledališke skupnosti. To je zato, ker gledališče in uprizoritev metaforično grejeta naša uprizoritvena telesa.

Odnos uprizoritvenega telesa in gledališke skupnosti je elegantno zajet v citatu »En dotik narave v sorodstvo poveže ves svet« (*One touch of nature makes the whole world kin*), povzeto iz Shakespearove drame *Troilus in Cressida*.³⁹¹ Kljub temu da je upodabljal človeško navado neupravičenega zanemarjanja starega, avtentičnega in je skušal vključiti domnevno boljše in globlje telesno razumevanje sveta,³⁹² pa njegova metafora *dotik narave* pravilno nakazuje, kaj se zgodi, ko gledalci v proces konstrukcije opazovanja v gledališču in performansu uvedejo sposobnost zaznavanja. Prav lahko spoznajo, da jim to pomaga pri konstrukciji tesnejših in intenzivnejših odnosov, ne le z igralci in nastopajočimi na odru, ampak tudi med sabo. Pomaga jim zgraditi pravo, četudi začasno gledališko skupnost.

KOGNITIVNA NALEZLJIVOST GLEDALIŠKE SKUPNOSTI

V delu *Gledališče in njegov dvojnik (Theatre and its Double)* Antonin Artaud pravi, da je gledališče nalezljivo. Idejo si je sposodil pri svetem Avguštinu, ki se »pritožuje nad podobnostjo med delovanjem kuge, ki ubija, ne da bi uničila organe, in gledališčem, ki brez ubijanja izzove najbolj skrivnostne spremembe v mislih ne samo posameznika, temveč celotnega prebivalstva«. ³⁹³ Vendar je Artaudova razlaga nalezljivosti gledališča žal precej površna. Ne pove, kakšen mehanizem povzroča tovrstno nalezljivost. Poleg tega razlikuje med nalezljivostjo, ki jo povzroča virus, in nalezljivostjo, ki jo povzroča gledališče, na podlagi razlike med biološkimi in simbolnimi procesi, pri čemer imajo slednji prednost,³⁹⁴ kar izvira iz njegove ideje o telesu brez organov. Kot sem povedal na začetku prispevka, pa svojo argumentacijo kljub temu namerno usmerjam v materialno snovnost uprizoritvenega telesa. V tem pogledu se mi zdi Artaudova interpretacija nalezljivosti gledališča pravilna, a kljub temu nekoliko nezadovoljiva.

Družabno srečanje v gledališču ustvarja pogoj telesne prisotnosti. V knjigi *Transformativna moč uprizarjanja (The Transformative Power of Performance)* si Fischer-Lichte in Hans-Thies Lehmann delita definicijo prisotnosti »kot proces zavesti«. ³⁹⁵ V tej razlagi se zdi, da je telo nekaj, kar je zgolj sredstvo ali platforma za ta proces, kajti prisotnost v gledališču je »artikulirana skozi telo in jo gledalci zaznavajo skozi svoja telesa.« Torej je telo nekakšen most, preko katerega senzorične izkušnje zunanjega sveta vstopajo v um, ali pa instrument, s katerim so gledalci pridobivali znanje o prisotnosti v gledališču. In čeprav se zdi, da Fischer-Lichte in Lehman sledita ideji ločitve med telesom in umom, prav zaradi slednjega

³⁹⁰ Skupnost zagotavlja celoto socialnih odnosov, materialna sredstva za življenje, prenos znanja, religiozno delovanje, omogoča prenos kulturne tradicije na naslednjo generacijo in še mnogo več. Glej Srna Mandič in Valentina Hlebec, "Skupnost in kakovost življenja: med tradicijo in inovacijo," *Teorija in praksa* 55, 4 (2018): 715–731.

³⁹¹ William Shakespeare, "Troilus and Cressida," v *The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*, ur. John Denver Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 67.

³⁹² K. H., "One Touch of Nature," *The Path* 4, 6 (september 1889): 176–183.

³⁹³ Antonin Artaud, *Theatre and Its Double* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1958), 26.

³⁹⁴ Stanton B. Garner, "Artaud, Germ Theory, and the Theatre of Contagion," *Theatre Journal* 58, 1 (2006): 1–14.

³⁹⁵ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 98; Hans-Thies Lehmann.

njuna interpretacija v resnici izpostavlja telo kot temelj gledališke nalezljivosti. Um je namreč v telesu, predvsem v osrednjem živčevju, kjer se nahajajo zrcalni nevroni, ki igrajo glavno vlogo pri kognitivni nalezljivosti gledališča. A kot trdi Hurley, mehanizem ni celotno uprizoritveno telo, ampak samo tako imenovani gledališki možgani, saj le-ti v prvi vrsti ustvarijo gledališče.³⁹⁶

Poenostavljena interpretacija zrcalnih nevronov pravi, da gre za tiste nevrone, ki se sprožijo, ko dotična oseba opazuje telesno vedenje nekoga drugega in bi se sprožili pri tej isti osebi, če bi se vedla enako. Zrcalni nevroni so vizo-motorični nevroni.³⁹⁷ Ko gledalec opazuje igralca ali nastopajočega na odru, ki igra, pleše ali poje, mu zrcalni nevroni v glavi nudijo podobne, če ne že kar enake občutke in misli, ki bi jih morda sam imel na odru. Obstoj zrcalnih nevronov je razlog, da ljudje razvijejo empatičen odnos do drugih, na primer do nekoga, ki nastopa na odru, in obratno. Orlanova je s svojo pripovedjo *potrdila* ravno to idejo; ko je ležala na kirurški mizi in je na njenem, zaradi lokalne anestezije za bolečino neobčutljivem telesu potekala operacija, je »lahko /.../, brez da bi občutila svojo bolečino, odgovarjala ljudem, ki so čutili lastno bolečino, ob opazovanju /.../«!³⁹⁸

V knjigi *O režiji in dramaturgiji (On Directing and Dramaturgy)* Eugenio Barba na kratko govori o ideji zrcalnih nevronov na področju gledališča in performansa.³⁹⁹ Ko se igralec ali performer premika ali gestikulira na odru, je gledalec prisiljen ustrezno reagirati na takšne gibe. Komunikacija, ki teče med izvajalcem in gledalcem, je pretežno vizualna, vendar je učinek, ki ga ima na gledalca, kinestetičen. Vedenje izvajalca na odru v gledalčevih mislih vzbuja osebne spomine na podobne fizične izkušnje iz njegovega vsakdana. Barba celo natančno opredeli največjo razdaljo med igralcem in gledalcem, znotraj katere še vedno deluje princip zrcalnih nevronov. Oddaljenost od odra je približno deset metrov. Iz Barbove razlage ni razvidno, kaj bi bil v tem primeru instrument, s katerim bi to lahko izmerili, razen njegovega ali katerega koli drugega gledalčevega osebnega dožemanja pozitivne izmenjave energijskega toka z igralcem ali performerjem. Kakor koli že, njegovo opazovanje o vplivu razdalje na odnos performer-gledalec sovпада z idejo o ožjem osebnem prostoru kot o posameznikovem multisenzoričnem komunikacijskem prostoru⁴⁰⁰ oziroma bližnji razdalji (1–6,8 m).⁴⁰¹ Če pa ima Barba prav, potem zdravstvena omejitev ohranjanja šestmeterske razdalje med odrom in prvo vrsto gledalcev v slovenskih gledališčih⁴⁰² bistveno zmanjša prostor resonance in s tem tudi empatijo med igralcem ali performerjem in gledalcem.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁶ Erin Hurley.

³⁹⁷ Maria Alessandra Umiltà, "The 'Mirror Mechanism' and Motor Behaviour," v *Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience*, ur. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia in Victor Jacono (London, Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2016), 15–22.

³⁹⁸ Linda S. Kauffman, "Cutups in Beauty School," v *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, ur. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in Gail Weiss (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 46; glej tudi Tomaž Krpič, "Tvoje telo, moja bolečina: Marginalne auto-refleksivne telesne tehnike in konstruiranje občutij body art performansa," *Družboslovne razprave* 26, 63 (2010): 49–62.

³⁹⁹ Eugenio Barba, *On Directing and Dramaturgy. Burning the House* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 23.

⁴⁰⁰ Gallese Vittorio in Michele Guerra, "Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies," *Cinema* 3 (2012): 183–210.

⁴⁰¹ Otto-Joachim Grüsser, "Multimodal Structure of the Extrapersonal Space," v *Spatially Oriented Behavior*, ur. Alan Hein in Marc Jeannerod (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1983): 327–352.

⁴⁰² Zdravstvena priporočila za preprečevanje širjenja okužbe z virusom SARS-CoV-2 za kino, gledališče in glasbene umetnosti. Dostopno na https://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/uploaded/kino_gledalisca.pdf, 17. 2. 2021.

⁴⁰³ Giorgia Committeri in Chiara Fini, "Body Presence and Extra-personal Space Perception," v

Lahko trdimo, čeprav ne brez manjšega muzanja, da se zrcalni nevroni niso razvili kot odziv na pojav gledališča in performansa, saj gledališče v času njihovega nastanka še ni bilo razvito. Kljub temu naravno okolje, odgovorno za njihov obstoj, obstaja še danes, le da mu ljudje dodajamo socialno, kulturno in politično komponento. Torej razmerje med zrcalnimi nevroni in okoljem zdaj deluje tudi v obratni smeri; zrcalni nevroni v naših možganih, ki »delujejo kot majhno gledališče«, ⁴⁰⁴ pričakujejo, da se bo sprožilo posebno okolje, ki bo povzročilo empatičnost. Posameznikovi možgani (gledališkega režiserja, igralca in performerja, scenografa itd.) ustvarjajo miselne podobe zamišljenih gledaliških prizorov, zaradi česar so prisiljeni oblikovati resnične stvarne modele, ki obstajajo tudi v umu.

ANTAGONISTIČNA NALEZLJIVOST GLEDALIŠČA IN PERFORMANSA

Nalezljivost v gledališču je dvojne, antagonistične narave. Po eni strani je gledališka nalezljivost lahko neprijetno in resno zdravstveno stanje, ki se vzpostavi skozi pomanjkljiva in ranljiva telesa igralcev, performerjev in gledalcev, po drugi strani pa igra ali predstava povzroči prijetno kognitivno nalezljivost. Znanost in medicina nas učita, da se je prvi nalezljivosti bolje izogniti, medtem ko smo drugi precej radi izpostavljeni. Izkušnje kažejo, da obe različici nalezljivosti nista nujno medsebojno povezani, saj izpostavljenost gledališki nalezljivosti ne pomeni, da je kdo samodejno izpostavljen tudi medicinski nalezljivosti in obratno. Vemo pa, da sta obe obliki nalezljivosti močno odvisni od fizične prisotnosti naših uprizoritvenih teles, zato se njunemu trku ne moremo izogniti. Ljudje običajno radi delamo izračune in stavimo, kakšne so naše možnosti. Kot smo že omenili, stalna izpostavljenost gledališki nalezljivosti iz nas naredi gledališke odvisnike in vsi potrebujemo svoj dnevni odmerek gledališča in performansa, da se nam ne bi zmešalo, kljub nevarnosti, da se lahko pri tem okužimo s covidom-19.

Izračun pa nam povzroča neprijetnost, ne samo zato ker je njegov izid negotov, ampak tudi zato ker odločitve, ali bomo tvegali ali ne, ne sprejemamo samo mi. Gre za upravni akt, ki so ga v imenu javnega zdravja naredili epidemiologi in vlade. Po več kot enem letu administrativnega (pol)zaprtja gledališč gledališčniki ne verjamejo več v brezpogojno nujnost takšnega zaprtja. Odločitev o zaprtju gledališča namreč izniči gledališče kot družabno srečanje in oslabi našo gledališko skupnost. In takšna tudi izbriše človeški značaj uprizoritvenega telesa.

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Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience, ur. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia in Victor Jacono (London, Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2016), 34.

⁴⁰⁴ Erin Hurley, 31.

The Antagonistic Contagiousness of the Performing Body in the COVID-19 Pandemic Context

Theatre is dirty. In theatre, we share the same air, we breathe actors' exhalations and smell their sweat and the sweat of all persons present. We throng because for us alone there is no theatre. Theatre comes into existence when a group body is created, the body of a community of everyone gathered together to try to feel and think in own collectivity. Indubitably, we feel what community is and how it exists, what it thinks and experiences, and at the same time, we know how we are.

Tomi Janežič⁴⁰⁵

INTRODUCTION

The performing body does exist. While theatre researchers and scholars are not obligated to reach a consensus over its definition – as we like to vigorously “negotiate” over it all the time – our trust in its true existence is nevertheless deep and solid. The performing body, which reveals itself in many forms, is, according to our beliefs, ubiquitously and continually present. Such understanding might be ideological, naïve and perhaps too optimistic, yet as such, it is profoundly humane and grounds in the ontological status of the performing body. Although it is indeed hard to tell what is the primordial source of the performing body's nature – the close relationship between the performing body and the existence of humankind – as Lehmann says,⁴⁰⁶ is evident. We exist because we perform, and we perform to exist. We exist because we have bodies, and we perform through our bodies to show that we are alive and in the hope of avoiding our oblivion.

Although I believe, like many other social researchers and theatre scholars, that the performing body extends beyond the borders of the theatre world, the scope of this chapter cannot. I am staying within the framework of theatre and performance studies. I will concentrate on theatre contagiousness that takes the human body as its source of origin, either that of the actor and performer or the theatregoer. The reasons for my decision derive from the current epidemiological situation in which theatre once again desperately faces and forcefully fights the corruptible nature of the human body but now, for the first time, on the international level. In this article, I thus deliberately reduce my usually broader perspective to a particular one, where, in the current pandemic situation, the performing

⁴⁰⁵ Tomi Janežič, “Zapisi iz brloga: Tomi Janežič,” *SIGLEDAL Portal slovenskega gledališča* (2020). Available at <https://veza.sigledal.org/prispevki/zapisi-iz-brloga-tomi-janezic?fbclid=IwAR2h5O3uPDiwUEWBuJqyProBywNYY8aUFuoQJkKpQd9LR576g7hTu3rJjo>, 1. 12. 2020. Translated by Tomaž Krpič.

⁴⁰⁶ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006), 241.

body is understood to be constructed from two antagonistic aspects of contagiousness, both deriving from the human body's unique material substantiality.

The first type of contagion stems from the current health crisis. In contrast, the second is at least as old as theatre itself and is triggered by the distinct cognitive faculty of the human body when theatregoers encounter plays or performances in the theatre. I regard contagiousness as a dynamic process where an element, either in material or symbolic form, is transmitted from one subject to another, the consequence of which is a significant transformation of the second subject according to the state of the first subject. Contagiousness can be harmful, inoffensive or beneficent.

THE MATERIAL SUBSTANTIALITY OF THE PERFORMING BODY

The performing body is an elusive element of theatre and performance. To grasp, understand and explain it, theatre researchers and scholars construct and negotiate the concept of the performing body in relation to its historical appearance in theatre and performance.⁴⁰⁷ The concept of the performing body is built from various elements, such as subjectivity, psychosomatic process, space and time extension, the discourse about it, cognition, semiotics, culture, aesthetics, society, politics and more.⁴⁰⁸ One of the elements that can be found within the frame of a definition of the performing body is its material substantiality. We may use several different terms to address it: the physical, material, fleshy, carnal, biological, medical, somatic or phenomenal foundation of the performing body, to name just a few. Its essential characteristic is that we take it for granted. Most of the time, we are not even aware of it.⁴⁰⁹ The material substantiality of the performing body is at home in daily life, where an individual mostly unconsciously accepts it, using the phenomenological principle of "natural attitude".⁴¹⁰ Namely, the human body "seemed so 'there', so biological, anatomical, physiological, indisputable"⁴¹¹

The issue of material substantiality of the performing body in theatre and performance is the subject of many artistic strategies: from being a vehicle for performing a character on the stage in conventional, dramatic theatre to being a place where the inner psychological and outer physical theatre worlds "come together" in a particular theatre creator or theatregoer. The initiative to creatively affect the material substantiality of the performing body is on the artist's side: to produce a play or performance, the actor or performer has to significantly physically transform their body while on the stage.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁷ Marco De Marinis, "From Semiotics to Neuroscience. A Small Multi-Disciplinary Glossary," in *Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience*, eds. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 61–74, 61.

⁴⁰⁸ More on the manifold aspect of the performing body, see Colette Conroy, *Theatre & the Body* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4–6; Sandra Reeve (ed.), *Body and Performance* (Devon: Triarchy Press, 2013).

⁴⁰⁹ On absent body see Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁴¹⁰ See Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 208–209; Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers V. Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (New York: Springer, 2011), 170–174, 192–194.

⁴¹¹ Sandra Reeve, *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body* (Devon: Triarchy Press, 2011), v; Nick J. Fox, *The Body* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2012), 14.

⁴¹² An actor speaks, a dancer dances, a singer sings and a mime creates gestures.

While on the contrary, a theatregoer is allowed to do it only mentally, when one's performing body may only passively follow one's silent contemplation in the auditorium. Yet, no matter how the performing body's material substantiality is addressed and how important we believe it is, the performing body cannot be reduced merely to a physical object, for it is alive. It has its own volition, present to us directly in the form of our private inner life or indirectly as empathic recognition of the mental worlds of others.⁴¹³

The reason for talking about the physical substance of the performing body is obvious. Theatre is a place not only where actors and performers communicate their creative process and its outcomes to the audience but also where theatre creators and theatregoers can communicate viruses to each other in epidemic times. Material substantiality of the performing body can be the subject of various contagious diseases due to its biological status. A germ or a virus can seriously affect our health or even kill us. This becomes notably apparent in the current global pandemic, when the body in general, and not only in theatre, has become the target of COVID-19. But the performing body, in particular, is in double jeopardy. First as a phenomenal or medical body due to possible COVID-19 contraction, and second as a semantic body due to sanitary restrictions and temporal closure of theatres.⁴¹⁴ The affected performing body not only struggles for its survival but also represents, according to medical authorities' interpretations, a hypothetical potential source of lethal contagion to other performing bodies through physical touch or merely its physical presence in the theatre.⁴¹⁵

Small wonder the theatre profession was the first and, up to now, one of the most stricken victims of COVID-19. In most countries, theatre buildings were closed almost immediately after the pandemic outbreak; in many, they are still inaccessible. Thousands of theatre creators had to leave the safety of their everyday work creative environment, and consequently, their social security is now seriously endangered, if not entirely wiped out. Only in a handful of countries are theatres now slowly and cautiously (re-)opening their auditoriums under the new sanitary conditions of mask-wearing and hand-sanitising and strict maintenance of physical distance of the theatregoers, many times wrongly addressed as "social distancing".

THE PRESENCE IN THEATRE AS SOCIAL GATHERING

Why is the expression "social distancing" wrong and harmful in so many ways when it comes to theatre? The answer lies in the importance of bodily presence. In his book about the crisis of presence in modern society, Vincent Miller writes that behind an invasive introduction of the internet and media technology in our everyday life lurks an ideology of bodily escapism.⁴¹⁶ No doubt, the average member of modern society is still Cartesian, unfoundedly separating and subordinating the

⁴¹³ On being, having and doing the body see Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (London: SAGE, 1996), 37.

⁴¹⁴ On dichotomy phenomenal/semantic body see work of Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004).

⁴¹⁵ The performing body only hypothetically becomes a transmitter of the new virus as there are no reports that any theatre event would have caused local outbreaks or accelerated the spread of the virus. A high level of contagiousness is ascribed on the grounds of physical closeness among the performing bodies at the theatre venues, first during rehearsals and then during the theatre event.

⁴¹⁶ Vincent Miller, *The Crisis of Presence in Contemporary Culture* (London: SAGE, 2016).

body from the mind. In addition, the use of modern media significantly reduces face-to-face relationships among people. However, despite the latest emergence of the culture of disembodiment, the body still proves its daily significance and indispensability in some areas of human life. Exactly theatre is a place where bodily presence still overcomes one that is mediated by technology⁴¹⁷ and where longing for a radical concept of bodily presence is a value and norm of the theatre community.⁴¹⁸

Theatre is an old art form. The performing body was “invented” when technical means or the media to bridge vast spatial and time distances among people had not yet been developed. The physical presence of the performing body of the actor and performer on the stage and theatregoers in the “auditorium” was thus mandatory until the development of modern media technology. Despite warnings from some critical or allegedly prophetic voices of the technological overflowing or even the destruction of the authenticity of theatre and performance, that did not happen. It was demonstrated in the past that theatre could highly benefit from the application of modern technology. Still, it was also proved that it could not replace or oust the physical presence of the performing body in theatre. There remains a general opinion that visiting a theatre to see a play or performance is an advantage over watching it online. Whether this will change due to the COVID-19 experience is a matter of the future.

So, the essence of theatre practice demands precisely the opposition to social distancing, for theatre is, on the contrary, a social gathering. And social gathering in theatre is primarily bodily gathering. The theatregoers go there and sit in the auditorium or occasionally even participate on the stage. Physical presence enables them to slip into a direct sensory relationship with the actors and performers on stage. Sensory experience in theatre can stretch from merely the visual and hearing experience of the spectator in conventional theatre to a holistic all-senses experience in sensory theatre.

THE SENSORY CONSTRUCTION OF THE THEATRE COMMUNITY

There are three reasons why bodily perception in theatre and performance is essential. First, while the presence of the performing bodies in theatre triggers a distinct form of perception, it is also crucial to acknowledge that the quality of

⁴¹⁷ Despite some warnings about methodological obstacles in researching theatre and performance, when being limited only to presence in the theatre. See Amelia Jones, “Temporal Anxiety/‘Presence’”. In *Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation*,” in *Archaeologies of Presence. Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 197–221; Tomaž Krpič, “On the Researcher’s/Reviewer’s Bodily Presence in Theatre,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 35, 3 (2019): 238–250; Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do. Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁴¹⁸ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008). Fischer-Lichte defines the radical concept of presence as the situation in which “[i]n the presence of the actor, the spectators experience both self and others as embodied mind. The circulating energy is perceived as transformative power, and in this sense as a life force”. Erika Fischer-Lichte, “Appearing as Embodied Mind – Defining a Weak, a Strong and a Radical Concept of Presence,” in *Archaeologies of Presence. Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 34.

perception affects the quality of presence and vice versa. According to Tim Dant's theory of material culture, two aspects of physical presence in theatre can be distinguished.⁴¹⁹ The first is material. The physical substantiality of the performing body, together with scenography and stage properties, causes a sense of presence between the stage and the auditorium. The second is symbolic. The physical substantiality of the performing body affords mediated symbolic communication among all involved in theatre and creates a distinct and symbolic world, allegedly separated from its carrier. This double-intertwined layered quality of presence in the theatregoer's theatrical experience is especially strong and deep compared to other art forms.

This explication of the effect of presence in theatre goes partially along with Erika Fischer-Lichte's model of body dichotomy. She differentiates between the phenomenal and the semiotic body.⁴²⁰ The first body is the body with which the actor or performer privately identifies. The second body is the body of the character that the actor or performer produces on stage, allowing the actor or performer to communicate with the theatregoers. In conventional theatre, the phenomenal body is "covered" by the semiotic body, while in some other types of theatre, the phenomenal body can be temporarily visible. But for the discussion on theatre contagiousness, Fischer-Lichte provides an even more important element. She gives a reason why the theatregoers like to visit theatre: presence in theatre collapses the body-mind dichotomy and causes embodied mind. In daily life, this is unreachable to the average theatregoer because the body and the mind are forcefully kept apart through one's use of technological and electronic media, which can simulate the effect of presence but cannot produce authentic presence. The unification of the body and mind provides an individual with rare moments of deep happiness, to which, with time, theatregoers become addicted.⁴²¹

Second, the element of perception is important for catching the idea of two different performing bodies. I have already touched on this aspect of the performing body elsewhere,⁴²² but more to explain why the theatregoer is an essential subject in theatre as the actor or performer. So, I would instead draw the reader's attention to the work of Erin Hurley.⁴²³ In *Theatre & Feeling*, she connects feeling(s) in theatre with the body over the spectator's and the performer's perception. She finds two sentient bodies in theatre and performance; those of the actors or the performers and those of the spectators. Hurly addresses both versions of the performing body as "perceiving bodies". Orientation towards perception derives from Hurley's acknowledgement that theatre is a "super-stimuli" environment, where the technology of feeling is used to direct and intensify the spectator's senses and, thus, their perception.

And finally, there is a third element that stems from perception in theatre and performance: building up a theatre community.⁴²⁴ In *Cognitive Mindscape: An*

⁴¹⁹ Important to ascertain is that, in this, Dant does not have in mind theatre but paintings, sculptures and installations. However, I find his model of material culture applicable to theatre and performance, too. Tim Dant, *Material Culture in the Social World* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 151–155, 158.

⁴²⁰ Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*.

⁴²¹ Fischer-Lichte *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 94–101.

⁴²² See Tomaž Krpič, "Spectator's Performing Body: The Case of the Theatre Project Via Negativa," *New Theatre Quarterly* 27, 2 (2011): 167–175.

⁴²³ Erin Hurley, *Theatre & Feeling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 23–36.

⁴²⁴ See Tomaž Krpič, "Building a Temporal Theatre Community in the Production of the ATLAS – LJUBLJANA," *Theatralia* 20, 2 (2017): 96–108; Tomaž Krpič, "On the Elements of the Theatre Community of the Škofja Loka Passion Play," *Pasijonski doneski* 15 (2020): 81–93; Tomaž Krpič, "The Passion Play Has a Healing Power! The Controversies of the Škofja

Invitation to Cognitive Sociology, Eviatar Zerubavel works on a comprehensive sociology of perception.⁴²⁵ Like many other elements of society, he believes, perception is also socially constructed. Every community – and the theatre community is no exception – produces its own distinguished pattern of perception of reality. Building a theatre community is important for one particular reason. In the introduction to his book on community, Zygmunt Bauman compares community to a fireplace where one can metaphorically warm one's hands⁴²⁶ (and I suppose the rest of the body, too). Since danger lurks outside, one feels safe when being a community member. And although the concept of the (theatre) community has many other aspects,⁴²⁷ the metaphor elegantly portrays the main reason humans build and maintain theatre communities. It is because theatre and performance warm our performing bodies.

The relationship between the performing body and the theatre community is elegantly seized in the quotation, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin", from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*.⁴²⁸ Although he aimed to depict the human habit of unjustified negligence of old authentic knowledge and strove to incorporate an allegedly better and more profound new corporeal comprehension of the world,⁴²⁹ the playwright's metaphor "*touch of nature*" correctly indicates what happens when spectators introduce the faculty of perception into the process of construction of spectatorships in theatre and performance. They might as well learn that it helps them build a much closer and more intensive relationship with the actors and performers on the stage and among each other. It helps them build a proper, although usually only temporal, theatre community.

THE COGNITIVE CONTAGIOUSNESS OF THE THEATRE COMMUNITY

In *Theatre and its Double*, Antonin Artaud says theatre is contagious. He borrowed the idea from St Augustine, who "complains of this similarity between the action of the plague that kills without destroying the organs and the theatre which, without killing, provokes the most mysterious alterations in the mind of not only an individual but an entire populace".⁴³⁰ However, Artaud's explanation of theatre's contagiousness was, unfortunately, rather superficial. He did not tell what the mechanism that causes such contagiousness is. And he differentiates between the contagiousness of a virus and that of theatre on the grounds of the difference between biological and symbolic processes. He prioritises the latter⁴³¹ based on

Loka Passion Play," *Amfiteater* 8, 1 (2020): 223–235.

⁴²⁵ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes: An Invitation to Cognitive Sociology* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 23–34.

⁴²⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 1.

⁴²⁷ A community guarantees wholeness of social relationships, material means for life, the transmission of knowledge, provides religious practice, enables transmission of cultural tradition to the next generation and many more, see Srna Mandič and Valentina Hlebec, "Skupnost in kakovost življenja: med tradicijo in inovacijo," *Teorija in praksa* 55, 4 (2018): 715–731.

⁴²⁸ William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare, ed. John Denver Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957/2009), 67.

⁴²⁹ K. H. "One Touch of Nature," *The Path* 4, 6 (September 1889): 176–183.

⁴³⁰ Antonin Artaud, *Theatre and Its Double* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1958), 26.

⁴³¹ Stanton B. Garner, Artaud, "Germ Theory, and the Theatre of Contagion," *Theatre Journal* 58, 1 (2006): 1–14.

his idea of the body without organs. Yet as set forth at the beginning of my article, I deliberately focus my argument on the performing body's material substantiality. In this respect, I find Artaud's interpretation of theatre contagiousness correct, although unsatisfying.

The social gathering in theatre creates the condition of bodily presence. In *The Transformative Power of Performance*, Fischer-Lichte shares with Hans-Thies Lehmann a definition of presence "as a process of consciousness".⁴³² In this interpretation, the body seems merely a vehicle or platform for this process, for presence in theatre "is articulated through the body and sensed by the spectator through their bodies". So, the body is some kind of bridge across which sensory experiences of the outer world enter the mind or an instrument with which theatregoers gain knowledge about presence in the theatre. Although Fischer-Lichte and Lehmann seem to follow the idea of the separation between the body and the mind on behalf of the second, their interpretation leads towards the body as a foundation of theatre contagiousness. Namely, the mind is found in the body, primarily in the central nervous system, where mirror neurons, which play the major role in theatre's cognitive contagiousness, are located. Yet not the whole performing body, says Hurley, but the so-called theatrical brain is the mechanism that produces theatre in the first place.⁴³³

A plain interpretation of mirror neurons tells that they are those neurons in a person's brain that fire off when they observe the bodily behaviour of someone else and which would fire off if that person were to take part in the same behaviour. Mirror neurons are visio-motor neurons.⁴³⁴ When a spectator observes an actor or performer acting, dancing or singing on the stage, the mirror neurons in their head provide them with similar, if not the same, feelings and thoughts they might have when being on stage themselves. Mirror neurons are why humans develop empathic relationships with others, like towards someone performing on stage and vice versa. When Orlan said that, when lying on the surgical table and during an operation on her painless body due to local anaesthesia that she received, she "was able /.../ without feeling my pain, to answer people who were feeling their own pain as they were watching...!" she was "confirming" exactly this very idea.⁴³⁵

In *On Directing and Dramaturgy*, Eugenio Barba momentarily speaks about the idea of mirror neurons in theatre and performance.⁴³⁶ When an actor or performer moves or makes gestures on the stage, the spectator is forced to react to such movements accordingly. The communication that flows from the performer to the spectator is predominantly visual, but its effect on the spectator is kinaesthetic. In the spectator's mind, the performer's behaviour on the stage evokes personal memories of similar physical experiences from their own everyday life. Barba even precisely defines the maximum distance between the performer and the spectator within which the principle of mirror neurons still has an effect. The distance is approximately 10 metres from the stage. From Barba's explanation, it is unclear

⁴³² Fischer-Lichte *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 98; Lehmann, Hans-Thies.

⁴³³ Hurley.

⁴³⁴ Maria Alessandra Umiltà, "The 'Mirror Mechanism' and Motor Behaviour," in *Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience*, eds. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 15–22.

⁴³⁵ Linda S. Kauffman, "Cutups in Beauty School," in *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 31–62, 46; see also Tomaž Krpič, "Tvoje telo, moja bolečina: Marginalne auto-refleksivne telesne tehnike in konstruiranje občutij body art performansa," *Družboslovne razprave* 26, 63 (2010): 49–62.

⁴³⁶ Eugenio Barba, *On Directing and Dramaturgy. Burning the House* (London: Routledge, 2010), 23.

what could function as an instrument of measurement besides his or any other spectator's personal perception of the positive exchange of energetic flow with the actor or performer. Anyway, his observation of the impact of close distance on the performer-spectator relationship goes along with the idea of peri-personal space as an individual's multisensory space of communication⁴³⁷ or a near-distance action space (1 m to 6.8 m).⁴³⁸ However, if Barba is correct, then the sanitation restriction of keeping a 6 m distance between the stage and the first row of spectators in Slovenian theatres⁴³⁹ significantly reduces the space of resonance, and thus also empathy, between the actor or performer and the spectator.⁴⁴⁰

It could be affirmed – although not without certain amusement – that mirror neurons did not evolve as a reaction to the appearance of theatre and performance, for back in the times of their origin, the theatre had not been invented yet. Nevertheless, the natural environment responsible for their existence still exists today, except that humans add social, cultural and political components to it. So the relation between mirror neurons and the environment now also works oppositely; the mirror neurons in our brain, which “operates like a small theatre”,⁴⁴¹ “expect” a distinct environment to be triggered to gain empathy. One's (theatre director, actor and performer, stage designer and so on) brain produces mental images of imagined theatre scenes, which forces them externally to construct actual objective models of those in their own mind.

THE ANTAGONISTIC CONTAGIOUSNESS OF THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE

Contagiousness in theatre is of a double, antagonistic nature. On the one hand, theatre contagiousness can be an unpleasant and serious medical condition established through deficient and vulnerable physical bodies of the actors, performers and theatregoers. On the other hand, a play or performance produces a pleasant cognitive contagiousness. Science and medicine teach us that the first contagiousness is better to avoid, while we very much like to be exposed to the second one. Experiences tell us that both versions of contagiousness are not necessarily related. Being exposed to theatre contagiousness does not automatically mean that someone is also exposed to medical contagiousness, and vice versa. But we know that both forms of contagiousness are highly dependent on the physical presence of our performing bodies, and that is why we cannot avoid their clash. So, as is usual with humans, we like to calculate and bet what our chances are. Because as was already said above, continuous exposure to the contagiousness of the theatre makes us all highly-dependent theatre junkies, and we all need our daily dose of theatre and performance to not go insane, despite the danger of

⁴³⁷ Gallese Vittorio and Michele Guerra, “Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies,” *Cinema 3* (2012): 183–210.

⁴³⁸ Otto-Joachim Grüsser, “Multimodal Structure of the Extrapersonal Space,” in *Spatially Oriented Behavior*, eds. Alan Hein and Marc Jeannerod (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1983), 327–352.

⁴³⁹ “Higienska priporočila za preprečevanje širjenja okužbe z virusom SARS-CoV-2 za kino, gledališče in glasbene umetnosti.” Available at https://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/uploaded/kino_gledalisca.pdf, 17. 2. 2021.

⁴⁴⁰ See also Giorgia Committeri and Chiara Fini, “Body Presence and Extra-personal Space Perception,” in *Theatre and Cognitive Neuroscience*, eds. Clelia Falletti, Gabriele Sofia and Victor Jacono (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 23–34, 34.

⁴⁴¹ Hurley, 31.

possibly contracting COVID-19.

The calculation makes us uncomfortable, not only because its outcome is uncertain but also because the decision of whether or not to take the risk is not solely on us. It is an administrative act done by epidemiologists and governments on behalf of public health. After more than one year of administrative (semi)closure of theatres, theatre people no longer believe in the unconditional necessity of such closure. Namely, the decision to close theatres annihilates theatre as a social gathering and weakens our theatre community. And as such, it is also an obliteration of the humane character of the performing body.

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