

THE PERFORMATIVE NATURE OF MODERN THEATER (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE PERFORMANCES OF THE 'RIMINI PROTOKOLL' GROUP AND THE PROJECTS OF CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF)

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Abstract: The authors of the present article appeal to the phenomenon of performative nature in modern German theatre, which, according to many scholars, is its conceptual feature today. The article analyzes the theatrical projects of Christoph Schlingensiefel and "Rimini Protokoll" group. They are the indicative phenomena of the European stage of the first ten years of the 20th century. Schlingensiefel's creative activity is earlier than Rimini Protokoll's, but their projects have fundamental affinity. Their works have syncretic nature. The scene of action is not only classical stage but also different sites of urban environment (museum, street, park, container, the body of the truck). Alongside with the professional actors, Schlingensiefel and than Rimini Protokoll will have invited the amateurs, "the experts of everyday life", into their stage performances. This enables to enforce a provocative effect of the performance and to make a participant spectator look at a raised problem from within. Political and social events are often the theme of Schlingensiefel's and Rimini Protokoll's staging. They aim not at moralizing or enlightening but arousing a critical thought in the spectator through his active involvement into theatrical performance. At the same time Schlingensiefel's theatre is more politicalized, Rimini Protokoll is interested mainly in the role of "an insignificant man" in the world events.

Keywords: German literature, theatre, modern German drama, Schlingensiefel, Rimini Protokoll, performance, post-dramatic theatre, post-modernism, political theatre.

1 Introduction

Theatre experts and aisle-sitters note with one accord that a modern theatre is becoming more performative. Thus, the investigators M. Lipovetsky and B. Boimers, the authors of the book «The Performances of Violence: the literary and theatrical experiments of "a new drama"», discussing a young drama and theatre, see their most important feature in «their not depicting and reflecting the life, but their creating (trying to create) a magic and/or ritual space of the performative living of a special communication with the audience» (1, p. 27). Speaking of the meaning of the (post) modernist performance, at a new level of reviving of ritual-magic component of theatre, the authors refer to Jaques Derrida and his article about "theatre of violence" of Antonin Artaud: "According to Derrida, performance deteriorates the very idea of mimesis and abolishes the principle of imitation: the signifier is here as the signified, the stage is equal to the metaphysical nucleus of life" (Lipovetsky, 2012, p.27).

The term "performative" was introduced by John Austin, concerning the utterances where the plan of discourse coincided with the plan of action, the utterances which were at the same time both the discourse and the action. Roland Barthes, following German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who extended the principle of performativeness from a single utterance to the text as a whole and saw "an interested self-presentation" in the performative, affirms: "The term performativeness denotes, that the text rather shows something, accompanies the spoken with its performance proving in that way the originality of the spoken than suggests something" (Barthes, 1989, p. 34).

M. Lipovetsky and B. Boimers believe that there is a change of focus: the relationship between the actor and the role are subordinate, giving way to the relationship between the actor and the text: "... a character is made up not of the emotions being experienced but of the words being uttered and perceived. A word goes through the actor like through the conductor, and it is the acting with the text that determines the actor's relations with the role and dramaturgic/theatrical whole" (Lipovetsky, 2012, p. 90). For that reason, it is the language that becomes a central object of the performance (Shevchenko, 2016).

An outstanding theorist of modern theatre, German scholar H.Th.Lehmann in his book "Post-Dramatic Theatre" also writes about a performative character of modern theatre as its conceptual nature (Lehmann, 1999).

A telling illustration of performative theatre is the performances of the theatrical group "Rimini Protokoll" and productions by Christoph Schlingensiefel (1960-2010). The present article pioneers the consideration of the performances of "Rimini Protokoll" group and stage director Christoph Schlingensiefel in one coordinate system as the vivid examples of performative theatre which reflects a character of perceiving a modern man on the one hand, and a reference vector of the development of European theatre of today on the other hand.

2 Methods

A complex descriptive analysis of the theatrical text was used as a basic method of the study. The object of investigation determined interdisciplinary approach using the elements of culturological analysis and the theatricology analysis. The peculiarity of the authors' approach is the use of hermeneutical method when interpreting the correlation of literary language of Christoph Schlingensiefel and "Rimini Protokoll" group with the aim to fully reveal a type of cultural context, that produced them, to the maximum.

3 Results and Discussion

C. Schlingensiefel is one of the most original, disputable and provocative figures of German cultural stage of the end of 20th – the beginning of the 21st century, one of the most important experimentalist of his time. He began his way as a cinema director, since 1993 he has produced in Berlin theatre «Volksbühne» - the then stronghold of radical free-thinking and theatrical radicalism. Besides, Schlingensiefel is famous as a stage director of numerous performances, actions, projects and talk-shows all over the world.

The fact that Schlingensiefel has come into theatre from cinema becomes decisive for forming his individual style. Camera, projection, video-installation are integral to his projects. Thereby, he falls on the nerve of time, as video is an integral part of our today's life. It has become a part of theatre as an opportunity to approach the spectator being educated on the endless use of the succeeding pictures (Shevchenko, 2017). Schlingensiefel's performances have an exaggeratedly visual character, reflecting the most important tendency of our time: the shift of emphasis to the theatre as a performance, the theatre as a show. Thus, the performance «Atta Atta», produced by the director in the theatre «Volksbühne» in 2003, the theme of which is "modern art and terrorism", uses video-installations, scenic line, Wagner's music, etc. The spectacle has a conspicuously performative character, when "an artefact" emerges before spectators' eyes.

This feature of art of Schlingensiefel is especially vivid in his projects «animation graphics», on which he was working since 2004 till 2007. Being produced in Austria, Germany, Iceland, Namibia, they combined the performance, theatre and installation, having reflected thereby a syncretic character of modern art – its tendency to genre and specific blurring, the synthesis of music, painting, literature, various practices of art and media. Animatograph is a stage with revolving carousel, onto the walls of which the fragments from Schlingensiefel's films and spectacles, the words and pictures are projected, besides the music is performed, the actors, clothed in theatrical costumes of different epochs, do not act but "show" the stories, actualizing myths, symbols, sagas, collected by the stage director from all round the world. The spectator penetrating into the space of

animatograph is immersed into fantastical surrealistic flow of images. The action has a character of improvisation in many respects, as it depends on the reaction of the spectator, his viewing and experience. Schlingensiefel will have extended this principle to theatre, forming a kind of animatograph on stage, the spectator is given not a passive role but an active one. The stage director will have carried out these projects in Reykjavik theatre, the Viennese theatre "Burgtheater", the Berlin theatre «Volksbühne», the State Opera "Unter den Linden", in museums, etc.

A particular page of the director's works is occupied by his political projects: action art at the exhibition of modern art «Documenta 10» (1997), criticizing the policy of the then chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl; «Chance Party 2000» (1998) – the project against unemployment in the country; «container show» - «Foreigners, get out of here! Please, love Austria» (2000) – the project that discloses xenophobia of the Austrian society, «African Twin-Towers» (2005), «Via Intoleranza» (2005-2009), etc. These projects involved the participants – artists, disabled people, unemployed people, Schlingensiefel's personal fans and others – who were in the state «between» - between fixed attitude, rules, cues. This radical formulation «betwixt and between» opened new playing areas. In difficult time, when the European world was being remade, Schlingensiefel's became a kind of art laboratory, where one artificially created a crisis situation similar to the one that arose in the society. It permitted the participants and spectators in a play form to fit themselves into the new reality and learn to live under circumstances of instability. Criticizing racism, xenophobia, violence, terrorism, indifference, the artist was as though he himself took a shady side, "staging" violence. At the same time, he broke generally accepted rules, violated taboos, but it was not a provocation for the sake of provocation. He was guided by the desire to reveal, concentrate attention on and visualize social and political problems. Thus, the theatre of Schlingensiefel can be determined to the full extent as a political theatre. But it is essentially distinguished from Brecht's or Müller's theatre. It does not enlighten, teach, inform, but stages the policy, sharpens the situation in a provocative way, mystifies, knocks the bottom out of an argument and combs out the present-day reality thoroughly. The other but typologically related examples of interactive "acting-in" of crisis situations in the moments to be crucial for the country are also observed in the Russian theatre of the 90th (Prokhorova and Shamina, 2014 ; Zavyalova and Shamina ,2015). They were often based on classical material (Zueva et al, 2016).

C. Schlingensiefel died in 2010 in his fifties year from lung cancer. Флюксус-ораторио «The Church of Fear before the Strange in Me» and the Book «There will not exactly so good in the sky like here » were the last projects of the stage director who told and staged the story of his fatal illness.

Approximately at the same time, at the end of the ninetieth, on German and European stages there appeared the artists who later founded the theatrical group "Rimini Protokoll". A distinctive feature of Rimini Protokoll theatre is the fact that not professional actors act in many performances but ordinary people. Not the events and phenomena but the characters of these events, acting the parts of themselves are the subject of the drama of Rimini Protokoll. Their projects have documentary character (Lisenko, 2016).

The members of the group called such drama «Experten-Theater», as the main characters of this theatre become "experts of the everyday". At the same time, according to M. Dreyse, the notion of «experts», but not "dilettanti" is the key one for Rimini Protokoll conception, as the judgment of the participants is important rather than amateurism in the field of acting technique (Dreyse,2015, p.213). In this respect Rimini Protokoll follows in some measure the projects of Schlingensiefel. He also used unprofessional actors in his performances: «With his amateur Players acting out their real problems, Schlingensiefel anticipated something about theatrical innovation that was better

understood when, only a few years later, the theatre group Rimini Protokoll drew on 'experts' as protagonists from various professional and social fields to produce a new form of documentary theatre» (Irmer,2001, p.350).

The founders of the theatrical group– H. Haug, S. Kaegi and D. Wetzel – began their co-working in 2000. Since 2002 all their projects have come out under the name «Rimini Protokoll». Both C. Schlingensiefel and the members of "Rimini Protokoll" group arrived at their theatrical projects not immediately. Before their cooperation H. Haug took a great interest in documentary theatre and wrote a broadcastplay, D. Wetzel defended his thesis on performativeness of photographic survey, S. Kaegi went into journalism. Undoubtedly, such a versatility of the authors of Rimini Protokoll influenced an intermedial character of their works. More than one hundred performances have come out under their name, which are produced not only on classical stages but on «real» grounds – the streets of the cities, in the automobile van, in the board room. Some projects are performed all over the world practically unchanged, the others are the models of the spectacles on the basis of which new performances are staged.

Among the most «replicated» productions of Rimini Protokoll should be distinguished in the first place the projects «100% City» and «Remote X», where «X» – the name of the city. Like animatographs of Schlingensiefel, the performances of these projects were staged in many large cities of the world. The project «100% City» was firstly realized in 2008 in Berlin, then in other cities of Europe, North and South America, Asia and the world.

In the performance "100% Berlin" the actors became «the experts» of the reality – 100 inhabitants of Berlin. Being a representative of a social group, each of the participants told about their interests, traits, dreams, problems on stage. The scene is accompanied by video pictures on the circular screen (Haug,2005).

Following Brecht's tradition, the authors enforce «the effect of estrangement», not only breaking the boundaries between theatre hall and stage, but making the spectator a participator of an act. There erase the boundaries between the actor and the spectator. People on stage put not a written play, but take the part of themselves. In the process of the performance there appear a double reflexion: the narrator internalizes the events of the past with respect to the experience of the present, and then this event is interpreted by the spectator. In this way there emerges the distance between him and the event. The use of technical aids, constant repetitions and the inclusion of Rimini Protokoll's voices asking them the questions or giving instructions to them into the performance enforces the distance. Episation of drama text occurs. Rimini Protokoll use episation practically in all the works. They rather narrate than show in their performances, using different literary and technical means, about, for example, how politics is formed («Deutschland – 2», 2002), how radio broadcast is recorded («Wundersame Welt der Übertragung I-III», 2002), how the book «lives» («Adolf Hitler: Mein Kampf, Band 1 & 2», 2015), etc.

Many performances of theatrical group «Rimini Protokoll» are based on real economic and political events happening in the world, and also the myths related to the phenomena that have already become historical. For example, the project "Top Secret International (Staat 1)" (2016) lets the participants get to the very center of global network of intelligence service, which is of current importance in view of the scandals concerning control and eavesdropping occurring everywhere, and the spectacle "World Climate Change Conference" (2014) reproduces the conference declared in the name. The performances «Adolf Hitler: Mein Kampf, Band 1&2» (2015) and «Karl Marx: Das Kapital, Erster Band» (2006) show, how the myth related to the book that was written many years ago has effect upon the contemporary society.

It is obvious that the aim of the performances of Rimini Protokoll is to pay attention to the problems that in spite of being significant can be unnoticed or disregarded in our daily routine. In the center of their spectacles is above all man. There is no doubt that the projects of Rimini Protokoll have a provocative character, but this provocation, as distinct from Schlingensief's performances, is directed first of all towards a concrete man, not the society on the whole.

4 Summary

The creative work by C. Schlingensief and Rimini Protokoll is counted among the marked theatrical phenomena of the last two decades. It is a demonstration of «postdramatic» theatre, in which the performativeness is inherent.

Both Schlingensief and Rimini Protokoll came to theater having been experienced in other arts. Schlingensief's creative activity started with cinema, the members of Rimini Protokoll group were occupied, inter alia, with journalism and photography. It influenced the peculiarities of their style – in their performances there occur the shift to theatre as a show, a pronounced visual character is combined with the use of sound effects, music, voices, etc. It attaches a pronounced syncretic character to their art.

Common is also the authors' cooperation not only with the professional actors, but with ordinary people as well, who act in the performances just as the experts. Schlingensief's works developed in the works of Rimini Protokoll, in their «theatre of experts». It enabled not only to enforce a provocative character of the performances but to give an opportunity to each participator of the project «to live» a modeled situation.

Schlingensief's and Rimini Protokoll's projects are put on the stage in many cities all over the world. The grounds where they are presented become not only the theatrical boards but museums, parks, cemeteries, containers, and even trucks.

5 Conclusion

Schlingensief and Rimini Protokoll in their projects appeal to the actual political, social and economic world events and problems. Each project is, of course, a provocation, the aim of which is the activation of individual playgoer's and social consciousness. It is no accident that a spectator is often an actor and a participator of the performance.

However, in our opinion, Schlingensief's projects have more politicalized character as compared with Rimini Protokoll's performances. In the focus of works of Rimini Protokoll there is, above all, an ordinary man. There is an opportunity to represent the middle inhabitant's views of «massive» problem. Schlingensief's performances are «staging» of the politics, the creation of «a laboratory situation», that is analogous to the real life.

Performative experiments of Christoph Schlingensief and Rimini Protokoll have drawn an important vector of the development of modern theatre.

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