

The University of Arts "George Enescu" Iasi
Faculty of Composition, Musicology, Musical Pedagogy and Theatre

**Psychological springs and humane
typologies in theatre**

*Patterns in Shakespeare, similarities with commedia
dell'arte*

Abstract of the Doctorial Thesis

Maria-Ruxandra Bălăiță

Thesis Advisor:

Prof. dr. Florin Faifer

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Psychological springs and humane typologies in theatre

Patterns in Shakespeare, similarities with commedia dell'arte

Chapter I

Argument

To mediate the proximity and understanding of the theatrical phenomenon in its whole complexity, it is necessary to clarify the main axes (horizontal and vertical coordinates) of the theatrical existence area. All the fundamental and applied science researchers agreed with a definition of the theatrical phenomenon as „a transfiguration and quintessence of life”, „mirror of epoch”, reflection of life compressed as time and space” etc. Being a re-creation of life, theatre is definitely linked by life. And to be able to understand the laws that direct theatre we definitely have to understand the laws of life. MAN is the link between theatre and life. The decodation of the fundamental humane being reaction mechanisms directs to the understanding of typologies and of the whole psychological system of manifestation of any character, through the undertake of the sensitive inner route of the character. The correlation of these factors with the theatrical styles specific to the historical epochs constitutes a large, firm and complex vision over the professional performing progress.

In order to clarify the human being living mechanisms we have to notice that the dynamic man, the active one is represented in theatre not the motionless, inactive one. We deal with the research of the inner dynamic within the route of the human being action through the decodation of the human psychological resources, of the emotional intelligence operating mechanisms, starting from individual (personal) to universal aspects (valid to all people). We direct our studying towards some important notions in theatre – in life as well – such as: the self looking for, the researching process, breakout – attitude, creation, being (as a disappearance of attitude), what differences are between these ones and what meanings they have in theatre these differences. The unblocking

movement factor (psychological as well) is the defence instinct which might be either biological – of species perpetuation – or psychological defence instinct. How does it work? How do we decipher and embody all these into the scenic character?

The art can be a breakout of a conditioning through another one, or a knowledge creative act (through live research). What way do we choose as performers of the scenic art? The emotional intelligence – is the ability of own conscious emotional control of help in theatre? The characters live through emotions, the actor embody them with emotions, theatre being an assemblance of emotions. Without emotions theatre would disappear. How could we make of such an extraordinary emotional load – in the process of scenic creation bring transfiguration and catharsis and not be toxic.

Chapter II

The psychological dimension in tragedy and the Shakespearean drama

Many times, while approaching a dramatic text for the direction of one of Shakespeare's play they strongly underly „the simplicity of the putting into scenes”, „the modernity of putting into scenes”(which, unfortunately, many times hides lack of cultural information with real artistic marks), „classicism of putting into scenes”, etc., neglecting the dimension of the living, dynamic, eternal humane values, the esthetic, literary, poetical ones and even the value of the cultural senses of this dramaturgy. This very aspect of losing Shakespearean value, is one of the deep dangers of our epoch.

As concerning the characters' psychology, we meet with different aspects of melancholy, will, obsession, ego, inhibiting complexes etc. This presence of the damaged psychological process of the Shakespearean characters inspired many psychologists and psychiatrists to make a specific analysis, with diagnoses on characters brought, sometimes to the realm of morbid zone.

In Shakespeare's plays we find out both about people's humiliations and sufferings, their joys and cruelties, stupidity and wisdom, the way of thinking and the behaviour of strong personalities, their attitude towards living complex situations. Theatre means, in fact, a presentation of real life. For the process of dramatic rebuilding, the playwright chooses the facts from reality and develops them in the advantage of the

work of art, following their effects over the audience's sensitivity, and the possibilities of the future developing. The tragedies of Shakespeare show this thing.

Any option presented to Shakespeare's heroes is, in essence, very actual, contemporary: we can be anytime the victims of jealousy, we can renounce at important social responsibilities for the beloved person, we can have an excess of dignity that destroys our career, we can love not taking in consideration our parents or family's opinions. We can look for answers in family life, or violently interfere in society, having the conviction that we work for community, we can understand our family and the denouement of a decision change entirely our life; that is way the performances with Shakespeare's plays are so alive and contemporary.

To give birth to such characters in theatre, the mixture of the cultural horizon with the sensitive attention and the emotional wave starts always with the beginning in each meeting with Shakespeare's text. Another landmark on an upper level of the spire. As a child, we begin to work awkwardly at the first touchings of the Shakespearean character, and later on, step by step, we learn how to know to make the process of creation.

Chapter III

The psychological dimension in comedy and the Shakespearean fairy tales.

For the actor that performs the parts in Shakespeare's comedies it is of outmost importance to take into account two distinct aspects: the cultural dimension in approaching these texts, through knowing the artistic, literal, historical, social, economical, etc. conditionings of Shakespeare's epoch and the psychological dimension of the human structures decodation – to avoid the trap of the technical clichés of the theatral comic – so called „gags” whom the actor can use when he feels he is uncovered concerning the understanding and undertaking the character. Another important landmark is the value of the written word transformed into uttered word. We have to take into account, another important fact, that through translation a certain part of the significance and richness of the word diminish, and sometimes alter.

From the point of view of performer, of Shakespeare's comedies and fairy tales, the fundamental question is: how do I decipher the comic in the character of the written text and how and through what means do I transmit it to the audience? In nature, which is detached or neutral, almost nothing is comic. Comparison makes us sometimes to laugh, giving us the contrast that represents the main source of comic. We notice that finally the characters' moods give birth to comic effects through the total assumption with their own emotions, in a strong contrast with the dimensions of the real conditionings (see the craftsmen's performance in *A Midnight Summer* or Malvolio's euphoric falling in love in *The Twelve's Night*). Another important aspect is the worlds interference - those seen and unseen ones, opportunity of misunderstandings and unexpected resolutions, and which give special flavor and a different dimension to the perception and artistic creation in theatre.

Chapter IV

Archetypes in *comedia dell'arte*

Comedia dell'arte represents, as cultural phenomenon, a „turning” to the classical comedy archetypes, embodied by figures of contemporary daily life, with strong lines of great vivacity; in particular *comedia dell'arte* is an ostentatious mixture of conventional of characters, going even to the parody of classical types, of social „realism”, with popularity in routine, of scrupulosity in keeping theatrical tradition concerning the development of the script; and on the other side even the more or less spontaneous movement of the art of improvisation, that turns to account the unique inner resources of each actor. The *comedia dell'arte*'s characters express, symbolically, the social classes as well.

Theoretically, the improvisation called archetypal has as a starting point the archetypes of *comedia dell'arte*. We talk about the well known characters: Arlecchino, Colombina, Dottore, Pantalone, Capitano, Zanni to which we can add the later versions. Starting from the very strict profiled possibilities from the point of view of structure, motivations, reactive mechanisms and reaching the fixed representation forms of theatrical suggestiveness, the characters follow a very clear, minutely determined route

within the framework of the free scenic performance and as space of development, so improvised.

The archetypes in *comedia dell'arte*, in the scenic route of a performance, have no psychological evolution – in the sense of the psychological-realist theatre, and have nothing in common with the spontaneous, natural and artistic reaction and manifestation of the characters in the modern and contemporary theatre. Making a comparison, the characters of *comedia dell'arte* are more or less – as reaction – spontaneous children who do not keep the secret of censorship and continuous self control of adults – the characters in the classical theatre or modern. That is why their behaviour has a shade of spontaneous and childish freshness, being completely different of the adults' behaviour – that manifest with refined, controlled disguises, and very easy can mimic the play without being really identified with it. The real identification with the play, at all the characters of *comedia dell'arte* is supported and put into evidence, within the play, by the presence of the duplicated way of acting of the actors in such a style of theatre. It is about a clear cut decupare of the *apartees*, which illustrate the so called psychological underground of the character. It is as if while playing the physician and the patient, among two cues of the dialogue between patient and physician both interpreted by the same child – the protagonist, having a juice straw in his hand turns to his mother – audience that admire, and tells her, clear and direct: "that is the syringe, you know!" About the same there go the *apartees* of the characters in *comedia dell'arte*.

At the base of the scenic action in the archetypal improvisation lies just the improvised accident consciously done by the actor that respects rigorously the fixed data of the type of the character performed by him. This kind of acting improvisation can – at a larger scale – be used in the modern and contemporary theatre with the condition of a rigorous observation of the archetypal data of the character by the actor and from which he has not the permission to get out. The surpassing of the character's type creates confusion and discontinuity in the scenic route, encouraging the actor's self exposure facing unexpected situations. The use of this technique of improvisation in theatre has value only if the performer understands clearly the fundamental data of the hero – regardless of the style of theatre in which the application is done.

In Italy, I took part at a three weeks' workshop with the best internationally appreciated specialist in Comedia dell'arte – as the French Academy Encyclopedia certifies – Ferruccio Soleri from Piccolo Teatro of Milan. Our three weeks of theoretical and applied work in a group of 24 professional actors of different countries of Europe came to the end with a performance materialized at the Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza, having as guest of honour Dario Fo. The performance was registered and cast on the three Italian main national channels : RAIUNO,RAIDUE, RAITRE. I learned, with this occasion, that improvisation in comedia dell'arte is totally different than that one I practiced in the actor's art class in Bucharest. There is a sum of very strict rules that make of Comedia dell'arte a theatre essentially different of all the other genres of theatre, from the actor point of view. It was a unique experience and extremely valuable, because we regained the sense of the scenic improvisation value and it offered us the chance of practicing on stage, at high professional standards, the theoretical notions, abstract up to then, of archetype as theatrical character.

Chapter V

Applications in the psychological realistic theatre

Which is the domain that can offer the informational fundamental support for the route of the artistic creation of a character? The character is a human being in his dynamic psychological manifestation. Whether in the Fine Arts the basic support for the knowing of man as a physical image is Anatomy, in actor's art it is logical to name as fundamental support in knowing the man – as psychological, dynamic mechanism – **Psychology, the science that deals with the studying and revealing of objective laws of the psychic activities of man.** Out of what domain can the theatre creators find out which are the fundamental landmarks of man's functioning in the psychological dynamic of his scenic existence? The specific domain of psychology, named the **emotional intelligence** defines the image about the world and man. Nowadays we know that emotions are the most important human resources and the way the human brain is built permits him first to love. The human brain functions on electric and chemical support, gets and transmits electrically and chemically, so the energetic of the human being's

thoughts and feelings – actor’s,-spectator’s,-stage manager’s,- character’s is a reality that can be translated into a non-verbal language consciously and artistically. As practice of these things The Royal National Theatrical School at London applies, since the last two decades of the last century the studying of actor’s art in **the dimension of the human energetic flux**. Not as a metaphor (radio, Tv, telephone waves are not metaphor) but as a physical invisible reality that embraces a huge quantity of emotions and information. The studying is done not scientifically but practical. Courses and specialization in applied techniques and artistic expression as LABAN – for the movement scenic expression or ALEXANDER – for the expression of the vocal emission e.s.o. have as basis exercises of adjustment and harmonization of the Qi flux in the human body, in the brain waves and muscles.

How are these knowledge translated into means of scenic expression? We turn to behavioral types, that is types of temperament applied on physical level as well through non-verbal expression. In the dramatic text there appear people, characters, with different ways of behavior, with temperaments different on all levels : from the tone and vocal intensity to the walking rhythm, to sittings and standings, to the speed of affective reaction etc. People have combined temperaments, but there is in each of us a clear dominant one defining a determined specific behavioral type and unique as well. The character has a certain dominant temperament. How do they match? Is there any interaction? Do they nullify each other? Do they complete each other? Very seldom it happens that the actor to have the same temperament with the character. What happens if the actor is melancholic and the character choleric? Or if the actor is sanguinic and the character phlegmatic? There are so many versions of combinations! If a choleric actor puts his temperament on all the characters he plays, he will repeat himself so often in different dramatic situations until finally the audience knows what are the expectations while he is on the stage. Emotionally and physically- through non-verbal language – this kind of an actor will use the same means of “artistic” expression – personal and limited, for each role. I practiced these deciphers through the research of some characters in Chekhov’s Cherry Orchard. I analyzed the differences of behavioral types and way of reaction of some of the characters to be able to exemplify the fact that, despite the actor’s own structure, the theatrical character has a specificity and consistency that have to be

respected. Thus we see that characters like Lopahin, Gaev, or Liubov Andreevna become clear and live and their embodiment can be followed with sensitivity and resonant force beside what Chekhov offers us.

They know that over 70% of communication is non-verbal. How do we use this thing in theatre? For instance, one of the symptomatic signs for lies – covering of the mouth – is manifested differently, with the character's age: at a child through a quick covering with both hands of the mouth, at adolescent through the light touch of the lips, and at adult through a smooth pat of the nose or by bringing the fist at the mouth, pretending having a sudden cough. The sight, the movements of the head, hands, legs, body posture, face mimic etc. all these non-verbal manifestation convey messages with a stronger impact than the words both in theatre and life. The conscious use of all these “tools” offer the actor a large range of means of different scenic expression and of utmost value.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

The human activity is based on thinking, behavioural and language types. What happens in our life, good or bad is the consequence of the use of these types. This thing applies to all the dramatic characters, if the actor has an open mind and is receptive and thirsty of knowledge and understanding of the ways the human being functions. At first it is applied for the first person singular and afterwards it can be used to any dramatic character. The actor of the 3rd millennium is learning during his professional evolution to avoid the implementation of the characters in his psychological dominant. To create a character from the point of view of actor's art, means to embody it in the coordination conceived by author as mental, emotional, and physic –behavioral structure. That is why despite the temperament you have, the actor can decipher and assume the character – through knowledge on the mental level and the intuitive simulation through neuro-linguistic planning. The force of the acting creation, based on balanced and clear marks, determines the break of artistic emotion through the setting up of the brain positive energetic flux . This thing stimulates creativity and directs to the discovery and use of the

most inspired, adequate artistic means of scenic expression for the sensitive embodiment and the transmission of the psychological dominants of the theatrical character. In this way, the creation of a character on stage becomes ART, and the act of creation, itself regains its knowledge significance and responsible, emotional, sensitive and esthetic transmission of the messages of the dramatic text, through the theatrical performance that brings catharsis.

The actor-being “ plays” the characters-beings. How does he/her live this dizzying living beings carousel that gets in and out of his/her life at once? And it comes back every evening, Monday or years, in the platform(scene) dust, under the searchlight? And whose inner life he – the actor is sharing with hundreds and thousands of people going around the halls? We introduce you to a version of a knowledge side of the theatrical artistic creation.