

BALTIC LINES

Estonian Theatre Festival
DRAAMA 2018:
Baltic Forum

International Conference on Baltic drama
September 8, 2018
Tartu



Publisher: **Estonian Theatre Agency**

Translation editor: **Tiia Falk**

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The international conference BALTIC LINES embraced contemporary drama from the Baltic states. Speakers introduced the most exciting contemporary theatre texts from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, concentrating on three topics: national identity, export potential and the secret of comedies.

The conference was organised by the Estonian Theatre Agency and the University of Tartu Department of Literature and Theatre Studies. The conference moderator was Anneli Saro from the University of Tartu.

I National identity in contemporary drama

Speakers: Luule Epner (EE), Zane Radzobe (LV),
Vaidas Jauniškis (LT)

II Drama with export potential

Speakers: Madli Pesti (EE), Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča /
Vēsma Lēvalde (LV), Kristina Steiblytė (LT)

III Comedies

Speakers: Siret Campbell (EE), Ieva Rodiņa (LV),
Monika Jašinskaitė (LT)

The conference was supported by the Estonian Cultural Endowment and the Ministry of Culture.

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ANNELI SARO

The Functions of Drama in the Context of the Baltic States*

“At present dramatic and postdramatic theater coexist. In view of media and technological developments, in view of concurrent mediatized performance, and in view of our increasing distance from bourgeois conceptions of “the human” (concepts that are at the heart of the form of dramatic theater), I am convinced that a return of drama to the center of theater life — which some critics are hoping for — is not to be expected. The future will belong only to such theater whose forms and material provide an authentic response to its time — artistically, politically, socially, and philosophically.”

Hans-Thies Lehmann, Postdramatic

Despite Lehmann’s scepticism, I am convinced that drama will remain an important pillar of theatre. At this point, with the word ‘drama’ I mark all written texts meant (implicitly or explicitly) for performing in theatre that also possess artistic autonomy and value and because of that belong to the interim position between literature and performing arts. Within this definition, the term ‘drama’ denotes a wider body of texts than just classical plays but, nevertheless, stresses the supremacy or at least the anteriority of text in relation to the performance based on it. I have three arguments to support my conviction and op-

pose Lehmann. First, drama texts maintain connections with the past cultural heritage; historical topics and styles can be considered as an encyclopaedia of theatrical situations, motives, tools and forms. Second, drama text is a convenient vehicle of cultural exchange, in addition to guest performances, performers and directors. Third, some of the most popular forms of theatre, like realistic theatre or musicals, are tightly related to drama and to certain dramatic conventions, thus, the desuetude of dramatic theatre would lead to disappearance of these and other forms.

Cultural exchange in the form of drama has not been very intense between the Baltic countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 1991, only four Latvian plays have been staged in Estonian theatres: Inga Ābele’s *Dark Deer* (*Tumšie brieži*, 2004, Endla), Māra Zālīte’s *All cats are human* (*Zemes nodoklis*, in Estonia under title *The Cats of Lilac* 2007, Ugala), Ansels Kaugers’ *Sunrise at Volli’s* (*Saullēkts pie Voldiņa*, 2007, Endla Youth Drama Studio) and Jānis Balodis’ *Like in Finland, just better* (*Tāpat kā Somijā, tikai daudz labāk*, 2017, Ugala). Conditionally, Māra Zālīte’s dramatisation of Hugh Lofting’s *Doctor Dolittle’s*

* This research has been supported by the European Regional Development Fund (Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies – CEES, TK145) and is related to research projects PUT1481 (Estonian Research Council).

Caravan (*Putnu opera*, in Estonia Under the title *Doctor Dolittle and Opera of Birds*, 2003, Vanemuine) and Galina Polischuk's play in Russian *Circumcision* (Russian Theatre, 2012) can also be counted among Latvian dramaturgy. Lithuanian drama has not been represented more extensively on Estonian stages. During the period of independence, only three Lithuanian plays have been staged: Antanas Gudelis' "Story of Doll Game" (1999, Puppet Theatre), Sigita Parulskis' *Wild Woman* (*Laukinė moteris*, 2007, night club Papillon) and Marius Ivaškevičius' *Expulsion* (*Išvarymas*, 2016, Estonian Drama Theatre). The latter, depicting the life of Eastern European immigrants in London, caused

the most lively reception in Estonia. Expulsion can be categorised in the group of existential plays that form the majority of Lithuanian drama in Estonian language through history. (Saro 2017: 240) Since the majority of productions in Estonian theatre rely on translated texts, the marginality of Latvian and Lithuanian drama among them makes one wonder about the reasons behind the languidness. The most common explanation is related to the official languages of the Baltic states that impede the mobility of cultural texts from one country to another, since Latvian and Lithuanian, both the Baltic languages, bear only few similarities between each other and have even less in common with Es-

tonian, which belongs to the group of Finno-Ugric languages.

The Baltic Theatre Festival, with its accompanying conferences and meetings, was established exactly with the aim of diminishing communicative and mental obstacles between theatre makers and audiences of the Baltics and to bring the countries closer to each other. During the last festivals, new trends in drama and theatre of the three states were also introduced. This year we decided to break the line of broad overviews and generalisations and instead of that concentrate on particular prognathous plays in three categories: explorations of national identity, plays with export potential and comedies.

Explorations of national identity in drama

Representation of national identity has been one of the most important functions of theatre throughout history, especially in young and small countries. Risking accusations of nationalism, the arts of the Baltic States sometimes still tackle issues related to national or local identities. However, these representations raise many metatheoretical questions. How have tools of representation and artists' perception changed in the historical perspective and in different socio-political contexts? Is national identity represented as a homogenous or heterogeneous, a linear or layered entity? What kind of motifs, symbols and stories are used in the construction process? How could personal, local or multicultural identities be included in the canon of national identity? How is national identity constructed and interpreted, when something national or in the frame of national is placed on display? Etc.

"History is in the air. Daresay, it is always like that in Estonia because the collective identity is brittle and needs continuous redefining, but history is an important part of identity, maybe even backbone. As for every person and family as for society." (Paaver 2014: 67) Thus writes Ene Paaver in the opening of her article about the depiction and exploration of Estonian cultural history in theatre, a booming topic in the 21st century, represented by more than ten productions per year. Among others, many productions are based on biographical material of artists or other culturally relevant persons. Paaver also accentuates one narrative of historical dramaturgy, where through everyday life, intimate relations and personal experiences of narrow life circle, i.e. through a small history the so-called grand history with influential political events is reflected. (Paaver 2014) The personal is political but the

personal also deflects or crumbles grand national narratives.

The tradition of documentary drama has been viable in Estonia since 1980, when stage director Merle Karusoo started to produce theatre based on sociological research and documents, predominantly on interviews with persons representing marginalised and silenced social groups. Several theatre makers (Paavo Piik, Mari-Liis Lill, Andra Teede, Maria Lee Liivak) from the younger generation have decided to carry this tradition forward and have staged verbatim productions about people suffering from depression, Estonian emigrants, people lacking tolerance to accept otherness, etc. Documentary theatre definitely also broadens the canon of national identity, highlighting, for example, Estonian diasporas or underrepresented social groups.

Drama with export potential

In the 21st century, the most popular Estonian dramatists abroad are Jaan Tätte and Andrus Kivirähk. Surprisingly, they practice rather different styles of writing. Tätte is a former actor, who knows precisely how to keep a spectator's attention on stage and how a surprising twist must take place every 4-5 pages. Nevertheless, his plays do not belong among classical well-made plays, representing a rather moderate modernist experimentation by form. The topics Tätte deals with in his plays are universal and can be summarised as the search for personal happiness, ideally in harmony with society/family and environment. Thus, by forms and topics, Tätte can be called a universalist and the statement is also supported by the international reception of his works (spectacular success in German-speaking countries, for example). Kivirähk, on the other hand, often writes about local cultural heroes, literary characters or folklore. Despite that, he also defamiliarises everyday life

and makes jokes and parodies about populist mentalities. His works are sometimes considered too hermetic for outsiders because of this local flavour. The structure of Kivirähk's plays tends to be rather loose, influenced more by joy of speech than dramatic action. Kivirähk is a very productive author and has ensured himself a firm position in the Estonian literary and theatre canon with his fanciful reconstructions of national myths and identities, with his rich arsenal of comic devices and immense popularity among readers and spectators. Reception of his drama in abroad has not been homogeneously affirmative, but in the neighbouring countries that have shared a similar history with Estonia, his humorous approach to the reconstruction of repressed identities has been very warmly received.

The dramas of Tätte and Kivirähk are good examples of two different premises for international success: universal and local poetics. In addition, both playwrights demon-

strate a good sense of humour in their plays. (As was pointed out in the conference Baltic Lines, a good translator of the source culture could be listed as the fourth premise of export potential.) The most popular foreign dramatists of the last twenty years in Estonia have been Tom Stoppard (16 productions), Ray Cooney (14 productions), Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt (14 productions), Martin McDonagh (12 productions), etc. Their oeuvres also balance along the axis, where on the one end are universally relevant topics with accustomed forms and, on the other end, specific (local) topics with the exotic potential for outsiders and moderate modernist experimentations with dramatic form. There are hardly any postdramatic scripts among the texts that are spreading internationally and often the reason behind the feature is that postdramatic scripts are tightly interwoven into particular production and lose their magic when detached from that context.

Irresistible comedies

The comedy genre has a controversial reputation: loved by audiences and often derogated or ignored by critics or researchers.

The most prominent feature in Estonian theatre over the last ten years is the upspring of stand-up and mono comedies. As Anna-Liisa Purtsak has noted, these two genres are intertwined with each other and traditional mono comedies are often labelled as trendy stand-up in Estonia. (Purtsak 2015: 23) Contrary to stand-up, where text is usually created by a performer, mono comedies are based on drama texts written usually by a playwright. In mixed cases, a playwright or director might write the text together with the performer or the text is produced during rehearsals. This means that even

when the main source of textual material is the performer, the performance is carefully designed and rehearsed with the help of another author, thus, improvisation only has little space in the fixed structure. The majority of Estonian (mixed) stand-up comedies are performed by actors like Jan Uuspõld, Peeter Oja, Ott Sepp, Andrus Vaarik, Henrik Normann, Henrik Kalmet, Jürgen Liik, Tõnis Niinemets, etc. The immense popularity of stand-up comedies has encouraged playwrights to compose mono comedies or comedies, which consist of comic monologues. Unfortunately, these texts and stand-up performances mostly tackle everyday issues like relations between the sexes and the different social roles a contemporary man

must play. Rarely are any social or political issues tackled, with Oja as an exception. The narrow scope and quantity of productions leads to exhausting the genre quite quickly.

Meelis Oidsalu, who in his article *Comedy as a Tool of Social Criticism* has analysed the Estonian critical comedies of the last twenty years, acknowledges the work of the Theatre NO99 in taking a critical stance towards politics and in activating audiences to take a critical stance. Nevertheless, he is rather pessimistic when evaluating the possibilities of a parody to influence the political field because in politics itself the democratic political circumstance has become more absurd than any parody. As a cure, he recommends intellectual political criticism. (Oid-

salu 2014: 99-100) Political culture has changed in the Western world after Oidsalu wrote his article, and nowadays more than ever one can observe the increased performativity of political life and politics that are often either performed or mediated as slapstick comedies. Thus, politics has been slowly but unre-

strainedly taking over the entertainment domain.

All together, we can state that Estonian drama – either in the form of comedy, drama or tragedy – does not have strong involvement with the local political and social life, even when particular expectations

are clearly in the air. And often the same names (Kivirähk, for example) pop up when one thinks about either explorations of identity, the export potential of drama or good comedies. Seems like a recipe for successful playwriting.

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LUULE EPNER

Tokerjad (2013)

Most national identity texts are neither likely to be good export articles, nor are they fully understandable to other nationalities. As regards the text I chose to introduce, already the title seems to be untranslatable. What does it mean – *Tokerjad*? As a matter of fact, this word is rare and hard to understand even in the Estonian language. One meaning can be *takjanupp* (a burr). Burrs are noted for easily catching on to clothing, they have „clinging properties”. In the drama text in question, burrs (*tokerjad*) function as metaphor for Estonians, perhaps referring to our persistence. More specifically, *tokerjad* refers to a work of Estonian writer Eduard Vilde – his parody directed against *Noor-Eesti* (Young Estonia). So, this text, *Tokerjad*, must be related to Estonianness and to Vilde.

Allow me to briefly introduce Eduard Vilde (1865–1933) – a less-known and less popular classic in Estonian present-day theatre than his contemporaries A.H. Tammsaare and Oskar Luts. Vilde is known primarily for his historical novels *Mahtra sõda* (*The Mahtra War*, 1902), *Kui Anija mehed Tallinnas käisid* (*When the Anija Men Went to Tallinn*, 1903), and *Prohvet Maltsvet* (*The Prophet Maltsvet*, 1908). Literary researcher Toomas Haug has characterised Eduard Vilde’s work as follows: *A considerable part of his output depicts - sometimes using documentary materials - the life of the peasantry*

under the rule of German landlords in 19th-century Estonia. [—] Vilde was a humanist, yet his novels are often full of blood and violence; he whipped the landlords with his method of ‘critical realism’ just as fiercely as they had whipped his compatriots during the years of corvée labour. [—] Vilde’s texts contain a perpetual glow of moralising resistance and an ever-lashing whip – whether it be striking the lacerated back of a peasant, or in the dashing hand of a coachman speeding towards Europe. And it sometimes seems that this kind of bitter settling of accounts with one’s past and present, alongside the rush towards an enlightened Europe, constitutes one of the most characteristic features of Estonian mentality over the last hundred years. (<http://www.estlit.ee/elis/?cmd=writer&id=83171>)

Tokerjad makes use of the first and second novel of Vilde’s trilogy, but the text is definitely not a mere adaptation, but rather a post-dramatic collage of different textual strata, including Vilde’s novels. *Tokerjad* was directed by female stage directors Anne Törnpu and Eva Klemets and performed in the summers of 2013 and 2014 as an open air performance, in the Anija manor park. This playground can be regarded as *le lieu de memoire*, *site of memory* (a concept of Pierre Nora, meaning a place vested with historical significance in the national collective memory) that preserves memories

of manor life and of the peasants’ resistance. However, the main reference point to the text *Tokerjad* is actually not punishment of the peasants of Anija, but the so-called Mahtra War: a peasant revolt at the Mahtra estate (another *lieu de memoire*) in 1858 that was suppressed using the regular army, with many rebels later sentenced to corporal punishment and to exile in Siberia.

These events in the 19th century are an important part of Estonian national narrative called ‘the Great Battle for Freedom’ by Estonian historian Marek Tamm. According to Tamm, this narrative is *constructed with the aim of binding different battles and uprisings into one great struggle – a narrative template, where Estonian history is characterised by centuries of struggle for liberty and against the Germans* (Tamm 2009). This narrative has been largely constructed by writers, including Vilde: his novels are partly documentary, but also very ideological, as he puts a lot of emphasis on the opposition of Estonian peasants and German landlords, and confirms the myth of seven hundred years of slavery.

How does *Tokerjad* deal with the familiar historical narrative and identity model, based on the above-mentioned opposition? What are the main textual strategies?

First, *Tokerjad* is an example of collective creation, compiled by the di-

rector Anne Törnpu (she is known especially for her productions based on Finno-Ugric folklore). Besides Vilde's novels, the texts used in *Tokerjad* include authentic historical documents from archives, monologues and sketches written by the director and by Eero Epner, a text of the Estonian religious philosopher Uku Masing, and a poem by Grigori Narekatshi, an Armenian Monk from the 10th century. There were also a number of songs in the production (mostly well-known popular songs), performed by the choir Vox Populi in Estonian, German or Russian languages. The songs exemplified well the combination of languages and cultures in the 19th century Estonia. Among the characters there were also Estonians, Germans, and Russians (for instance, an Orthodox priest).

The text (as well as its performance in Anija) begins seemingly in a traditional vein: with a classic quote from the first chapter of *The Mahtra War* that represents threshing and opposes hardworking peasants and the evil overseer. But the style of this scene is definitely not realistic. The novel's authorial speech is performed by the choir and the activity on stage is defined and presented in a playful key – as playing. The actors do not imitate threshing, but push a small rotating stage round and round; this real effort is an image of threshing. Such an artistic strategy, introduced in the very beginning, also legitimates textual strategies: combining various texts and, as a consequence, different historical periods.

The composition is rather fragmentary. *Tokerjad* is composed of a number of scenes that use different texts (historical and fictional) and largely differ in style and emotional atmosphere. Therefore, the language style varies greatly: from old Estonian language with distinct features of the dialect in archive documents to contemporary, modern usage in monologues. As mentioned above, the main reference point is the Mahtra War. Events of the „war” are mediated primarily by citing authentic historical documents like court protocols and a memoir in the manuscript of Hans Tertsius, one of the leaders of the peasants, written while in exile in Siberia. Eduard Vilde also used the latter document in his work *The Mahtra War*, but only as base material for creating some dialogues.



Tokerjad. Photo by Artti Kasemets

In *Tokerjad*, the document is quoted massively, verbatim and, consequently, presented as first-person narrative. Here, it is important that Tertsius actually did not participate in the battles at the Mahtra manor. So, the battle for freedom shifts more to the background and emphasis is laid on how Tertsius sought justice and justness in court, and also on the punishment of peasants. The memoir of Tertsius and its rough but figurative style mediates the peasants' perception of the world and of their situation, in the first place. We can see de-heroisation here, an abandonment of the historical scheme (great battle for freedom) in favour of authenticity.

Tokerjad includes also a number of monologues. The monologues poetically and playfully discuss more abstract topics. There we can see play with language, with words and meanings, which is difficult to translate. For instance, a peasant delivers a monologue about theft (stealing), a landlord about law and numbers, another peasant about soil. In addition to language, discourses and historical ages are mixed up too, to an extent. At times, the characters refer to objects and phenomena of modern times, mentioning, for instance, mobile phone, highway, spaceship, referring to Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*, Elmo Nüganen's film *Names in Marble*, etc. More importantly, when in the scene of punishment the list of convicted peasants of Mahtra is read aloud, the names of the victims of Soviet repressions are called as well: actors Ants Eskola, Heino Mandri, dissidents Arvo Pesti, Lagle Parek, etc.

Tokerjad also includes the main fictional storyline of Vilde's novel *When the Anija Men Went to Tallinn*: the miserable life and love story of a landlord's illegitimate son, i.e. of an Estonian. But this sad story is presented as a brief summary, which is illustrated by comical pantomime and performed for amusement – with the aim of entertaining the Russian emperor and his family. The short and funny parody of Vilde's novel clearly brings out the core of the story: it turns out to be a rather banal melodrama that imitates German examples like most of early Estonian novels. So, in many ways *Tokerjad* demonstrates the historical paradox: in the 19th century, Estonian national culture and identity were created through opposition to Baltic German dominance, but traditions, myths, cultural forms for legitimating and expressing national self-awareness (like song festival, theatre), as well as artistic styles and devices were largely borrowed from the same Baltic German culture.

Let's take a closer look at two key monologues from the play that follow each other. The first part of *Tokerjad* ends with a powerfully poetical monologue about soil (*muld*). Here we need to know that in the Estonian language *muld* and *maa* (also: country or land) are synonyms, and in the 19th century Estonians called themselves *maarahvas* (country or land's people). Some fragments from the monologue: soil is *my identity narrative and my lost paradise*; soil should be mine, and *together with soil the sky, because black and blue are the colours of our flag; now our men rise up from inside the soil*, says the actor, and he de-

clares ecstatic love for his country: *My soil. My soil. [—] I kiss you. My soil. My soil. My country. I'll come to your bed*. But this emotional speech is followed by another monologue delivered by the half-drunk baron, maybe a ghost of Konstantin August von Ungern-Sternberg, the landlord of Anija estate from 1840. He is very patronising and positions himself as both a master and a guardian, even a father figure, putting a lot of emphasis on how Germans have civilised their peasants. *I beat you so that my hands hurt. [—] I taught you how to plant apple trees, how to shave and use the toilet, I taught you choral song and computing [—] I taught you like my own children, and actually you are all my children*.

These two monologues, put together, remind the readers and spectators of the ambivalent scene from the first part of the play: the peasant and the landlord dance together, they stumble and are about to fall, but they are not able to let go of each other. The figure of the Baltic landlord will haunt the collective subconscious of Estonians forever.

In sum, *Tokerjad* does not offer a clear identity model that spectators/readers could adopt. Instead, the play undermines rigid oppositions such as Estonians – Germans (and Russians), peasants – landlords, and brings out ambivalence, paradoxes, i.e. patterns that can be interpreted in the frame of postcolonial theory, through concepts of hybridity and mimicry. *Tokerjad* asks questions that are not easy to answer: what is our own and what's foreign, to what extent can we distinguish them in Estonian history and culture.

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VAIDAS JAUNIŠKIS

To go for ID

*We come from the land of the ice and snow
From the midnight sun, where the hot springs flow
The hammer of the gods
We'll drive our ships to new lands
To fight the horde, and sing and cry (...)
Our only goal will be the western shore*

The above is a well-known song by Led Zeppelin, created after their visit to Iceland. This is the first song among numerous examples of British rock performed in the Lithuanian performance of *Išvarymas (Expulsion)* by Marius Ivaškevičius, staged by Oskars Koršunovas in 2011. I don't know if the song was played in the Latvian version *Izraidītie*, staged by Koršunovas in Dailes teātris, Riga, or in *Väljaheitmine*, directed by Hendrik Toompere Jr. in Eesti Draamateater in Tallinn. But it is a good start for discussion about national identities. So what does it have in common with *Expulsion*?

Expulsion is already a success story of a play and performance. But it is a story of a lost people, of people searching for their own identity – or people trying to build up a new one. Somewhere far away, in London, in the United Kingdom, where two Lithuanians go to check whether the “Kingdom is correctly united”.

The play is also a kind of *bildungsroman* from the end of XXth century, a panorama of *Oliver Twist*-ian adventures. That genre is not so

characteristic to Lithuanian literature and, especially, to theatre. But we can trace some national features in it.

The Latvian verb *izraidīt* means “to be expelled, deported”. I don't know about the Estonian etymology of *väljaheitmine*, but Lithuanian word suggest strong – and not last one – meaning as *to get out, just to do it. Varom!* means *Let's do it, let's move our asses, let's go for it!*

That adventurous aspect is connected with *conquering*, i.e. with identification of oneself *via* others. One Lithuanian philosopher and folklorist Gintaras Beresnevičius saw this feature as one of the essential ones for Lithuanians: the echo of the Boreas people, as Greeks named the inhabitants in the North. It can be seen among the traders of old cars in Utrecht, in German markets, in traders of second hand goods, in a lot of immigrants – the soul of adventurers. At the same time, it is the soul of a warriors. In *Expulsion*, the main character Benas says, “*I'm the entire Battle of Grunwald. Ben, who's Russian, Polish, Mongolian ... Everyone who fought there against*

the Teutonic Order had settled within me.”

Far away and long after Grunwald, in London he meets other people and is beaten by them – just under the bridge of Waterloo, in another great battle.

This aspect of adventurer undoubtedly comes from weakness, from poverty in his own homeland. Benas is even afraid of the city; he tries to live in London, but more in the outskirts or under bridges, in the basement of a huge ship. As a child from XIX century literature, he has to conquer this city as well, like Rastignac from Balsac's novel. That means – Benas has to become *the Other*, to break down all his conventions and beliefs, to accept the colourfulness of a human being, the differences of the human horde. His adored singer Freddie Mercury appears to be not only a gay, but even a *babay*, which means – not Christian, more Mongolian. His world collapses.

Eddie, who came to London together with Benas and disappeared in the jungles of the megalopolis, represents opposite and one of the

most popular features of Lithuanians – compliance. “That damned compliance” is a title of a Lithuanian film from 1970 about XIX century serfdom. Eddie found a new good job – to hunt ducks, but he says,

Eddy: Others hunt. I gather them.

Benas. What do you hunt?

Eddy: Ducks. Ben, I’m living. Like a human being. Of great value. I’m living my dream...

Benas: But your status...

Eddy: What status?

Benas: Well, your bloody position. You’re a dog.

Eddy: It’s just a job.

So there is a huge space between those two oppositions – of warrior and of men without any ambitions, a space for a battle. It is one of the best dialogues in Lithuanian dramaturgy, when Benas meets Vandalas near the River Thames – an allusion to two angels from Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*. They remember the Christ statue in Palanga park, similar to that of Rio de Janeiro. Vandalas (what a nickname!) asks if there is one like it near the Buckingham Palace:

Vandalas: Maybe there was one too but you haven’t seen it? Perhaps it’s there?

Benas: No.

Vandalas: Not there for sure or you haven’t seen it?

Benas: Fuck, I haven’t seen. It wasn’t there.

Vandalas: Maybe you haven’t noticed?

Benas: I would notice, Vandalas. This I would notice for sure... If there

is anything he protects against, it’s against us. I have noticed that.

Vandalas: What do you mean – against us?

Benas: Mongolians.

Vandalas: What the fuck are you on about?

Benas: Vandalas, every third of us is carrying a Ghengis Khan.

Vandalas: What do you mean – ‘carrying’?

Benas: His gene. And not to mention the ordinary ones... All the Tokhtamyshes and Timors... We were united by Ghengis Khan, and they were united by Christ.

Vandalas: Can you fucking speak clearer?...

Benas: That’s the whole point. ‘Cause we are post-Mongolians. The Soviets have only applied the model. (...)

If you have a Mongolian in you, then Christ doesn’t love you.

They used to share in the past. But now – no way. (...) Christ wants us for himself, but Ghengis Khan won’t let him.

Vandalas: Us – you mean Lithuanians?

Benas: Mongolians. All his descendants.

Vandalas: Fuck, where do you get all this stuff from? Is it written in the books?

Benas: It’s all in the air. Can’t you feel them fight?

The great battle in Lithuanian history, essential for Lithuanians, is battle of Grunwald in 1410. A famous Lithuanian tactic was used in that battle: to make a false movement, to retreat, to keep silent, and then all of a sudden return back with

great force and win, like during the times of the singing revolution. We had waited for our moment. That’s why in a performance old Benas is shown with the national flag from Sajūdis times, from the Singing revolution times.

But here I have to pause and confess – I can’t bet that every feature I mentioned is typically Lithuanian. Just like Benas and Vandalas in London near the river (an entrance to another world) produce their delirium about Christ and Ghengis Khan, Latvian mushroompicker in Laima Muktupavela’s *Mushroom’s testament* somewhere on an island off Ireland (also near the water), contemplates Christianity and Latvian Pagan roots. This novel is the Latvian *Expulsion* with a lot of wonderful details and human characteristics that we can read as typically Lithuanian ones too. And here I have to stop speaking about specific national identities.

I’m not brave enough to speak about Estonians too, I can just present some stereotypes, but they will be false ones. I prefer to quote some of them from the magazine *Direction*, which is an on-board magazine of Lux Express and which I’ve read on the way to Tartu (<https://luxexpress.eu/en/on-board-magazine-direction>):

What is this “complex creature known as The Estonian”? We know Skype, Transfer Wise, 4G internet. “Estonians love to describe themselves as passive and sarcastic people. (...) Tourists (*sounds like Henry the Latvian – VJ.*) usually say that Estonians are very friendly and helpful. They also say Estonian girls are very beautiful (...), like supermodel-beautiful”. They are also “very protective about our nationality and suspicious towards any incomers” (p. 21-24)...



Expulsion. Photo by Dmitrij Matvejev / Lithuanian National Drama Theatre

And which sentence had I not heard about Lithuanians? It is the same Benas, the same Muktupavela's Laima or others. I can quote thousands of such sentences written and told us about Lithuanians. Those would be stereotypes too, but they speak more of small and not only post-Soviet nations, which today take part in everyday battles big and small. Thanks to any of their gods, they no longer fight for meals and freedom. However, they sometimes do fight for a better place compared to that

of their neighbours. And most of the time they keep on working to be 'normal', paying attention to 'what people would say'. That's why Benas constantly compares his own face, glance and chin with a 'British' one – has he already turned out to be normal? He's unsatisfied, because he is not self-sufficient, and that's one of the biggest complexes of our society (societies) and its heroes. They recreate their own IDs and tell their own public success stories for possible investments or to be adopted by

"other people" (There is a glamour magazine in Lithuania named "People"). They are new Oliver Twists. They don't think they are self-sufficient enough to exist with their own uniqueness. I suppose it's our common national feature too, and such comparisons with the others kill us as well. But I strongly doubt that it is a Lithuanian attribute. Like all the others.

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MADLI PESTI

Plays for Export: Sulfur Magnolias and Beatrice

Sulfur Magnolias by Martin Algus

Martin Algus is the most award-winning playwright in Estonia. His plays have won prizes at the play competition organised by the Estonian Theatre Agency, he has won awards from the juries of the Estonian Theatre Union and the Estonian Cultural Endowment, and has also won internationally – the international competition New Baltic Drama in 2011. In terms of his background, Martin Algus has been an actor, a translator and a screenwriter for TV.

The play *Sulfur Magnolias* was written in 2013, it won 2nd prize at the play competition of the Estonian Theatre Agency and received the award for the best play of the year from the Theatre Union Annual Theatre Awards.

The play has three characters: a man, a woman and the woman's father. The man and the woman, who are living together, both represent typical career oriented people, rushing superficially through life. The career woman is currently running for an even higher working position, when her disabled father comes back into her life. She has only traumatic memories of her father – he used

to hit her when she was a child, and she doesn't want to hear anything about this guy. But then – as it is laid down in law – you have to take care of your parents when they get old. The man, the partner gets pissed off and leaves the woman. And something happens in the relationship between the woman and the once violent father. The memories start pouring in.

So the plot of the play is anchored in today's social life, but that is only one aspect of the play. What really catches the reader is the language of the play. Martin Algus has experimented with very minimal and poetic language. He uses mostly one to three words in a line. The dialog between the man and the woman (since the father is disabled and not able to speak) is exclusionary. That means the dialog tells us some words, but we have to figure out what lies behind the lines. The atmosphere really comes through – it is somewhat dark, threatening, sinister. The sparse words that the characters drop appear almost as ice crystals in a cold winter night.

The themes the play touches upon are as follows. It looks at family relationships in today's hectic world. Whom do you consider a close person? Does it automatically mean that a person who is genetically related to you is also close to you? What does one have to do to become close to somebody? What does closeness mean anyway?

The woman's partner, the man explains the complicated issue to the father. The character of the man is very straightforward, his opinions are clear. For example, "a man who conceived a child is not a father. / a father is who cares for and devotes himself to a child; who guarantees a safe home. / it's as simple as that." (p 39)

To understand the position of the woman, there is another citation. When talking about her father, the woman says, "that jackass reappeared in my life and crushed all of those walls that I built up over the years all at once." (p 27)

So, one event – the reappearance of the father – changed everything for the woman, both outside and inside.

She could not concentrate on her career anymore, once again she felt like a small frightened girl.

Here another theme that runs through the play becomes evident – questioning the defining events in our lives. How is our identity formed? What are the important events we carry with us throughout

our lives? If we live through traumatic experiences, how do we deal with that? Can we get rid of something negative we experienced or are we determined to live our life with it?

To conclude, the play is not simply about the woman, who has to take care of her disabled father, but about

a cold and harsh world pushing in. Whom do we let close to us? Whom do we push away? It is enjoyable and really surprising to read because of the virtuosic language and moving issues. To set the play on the stage is also easy: it only needs three actors. The play has been translated into English, Finnish, German and Swedish.



Beatrice. Photo by Karoliina Kase / Vanemuine

Beatrice by Siret Campbell

Beatrice received the Cultural Endowment award in spring 2018 for the best new play of the year. It was written in 2017 and premiered at the Vanemuine theatre in autumn 2017. The author is Siret Campbell, who obtained her theatre and dramaturgy education in London. In 2008, she founded the first playwriting school in Estonia, so she has been teaching how to write plays for a long time. *Beatrice* is her debut as a playwright herself.

The play is set in the near future, and it plays out in a family setting, as does *Sulfur Magnolias*. The play *Beatrice* is described as a sci-fi romance. It is a provocative story that makes us think about who we are. The main provocation here is mind uploading or mind transfer. If someone dies and the mind is saved and transferred to another body, is he or she still the same person? Questions arise, such as: what makes up a personality? What is more important,

your looks or your mind? Can you separate them?

Also, issues of future work arise – one character of the play is working while sleeping. His brain is rented out and its potential is used. So the play raises questions such as how far should we go with modern technology? Should the technology spy on our every step? How and when should we leave control to the technology?

On this discussion: “We think it’s so great to put technology in everything and there’s always a backup plan and the backup plan has several copies on different locations on two planets. But there was a pretty long time where humanity was able to function without any of that. If we’re switching to autopilot to such an extent, then soon we lose our free will and capacity for independent thinking.” (p 7)

The play is quite intense, has a lot of action and is easy and exciting

to read, but in between it also lets us contemplate philosophically. It shows the encounter or even battle of oppositional viewpoints. The play is not didactical, those different viewpoints are presented and questions raised, but the reader-audience has the opportunity to create their own opinion.

One of the positions in the play is articulated as follows, “Being with real people is uncomfortable, real people are difficult. They have opinions, they fight, they argue. Real people

sometimes behave the way you’d imagine, but sometimes they’re completely unpredictable. But it’s all real. We’ve designed everything around us to be so comfortable and convenient and aesthetically pleasing. We avoid randomness, disorder. We avoid life.” (p 42)

To conclude, the topic of the play is universal, it has original thoughts that in the Estonian context, as well as in the world, are not put on stage very often.

The play is translated into English.

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VĒSMA LĒVALDE

LAUMA MELLĒNA-BARTKEVIČA

Exportability and original dramaturgy: LV 2018



***Even Whales are afraid.* Photo by Kristaps Kalns / Latvian National Theatre**

Exportability is a term of economics; therefore, original dramaturgy in this perspective has to be dealt with in the framework of culture economics. This implies treating the plays and productions as cultural goods or culture products. According to culture economist Arjo Klamer, “Goods are those tangibles and intangibles that have value for

people and for which the possession and enjoyment of them, they would be willing to sacrifice resources.” (Klamer, 2003). Cultural goods are the cultural values that the audience is ready to pay for, provided that people are aware of the added value that the consumption of cultural goods brings to the society. Moreover, Klamer claims that the complex

of valuing becomes a process of valorisation of something and converts personal attitudes of individuals and cultural values growth into the preferences of people. (Klamer, 2004). Promoting theatre means always thinking of what makes this particular play exportable, namely, understandable, immersive and adaptable to make the foreign au-

dience identify with it. Our aim is to introduce two new Latvian theatre texts and productions, analysing them through the perspective of culture economics.

In economics, several groups of exportable goods are distinguished: 1) brands, 2) commodities, and 3) locally or regionally valuable exportable items with insufficient marketing. In theatre, there are several types of exportable items – names (stage directors, actors etc.), plays, scripts, productions (co-productions), ideas, etc. The most popular of these types is probably the **brand** – something desired, longed for and demanded for by name, which means quality and/or innovation. Today in the theatre world, the brands are usually the stage directors and hardly ever playwrights. In the Baltic context, we could mention Alvis Hermanis (LV), Eimuntas Nekrošius (LT) and Elmo Nüganen (EE). From the younger generation, some stage directors have already built somewhat of a brand, for instance, Vladislavs Nastavševs (LV) or Tiit Ojasoo (EE). However, in Lithuania, there is a good example of a contemporary playwright, who has managed to achieve regional and international fame – Marius Ivaškevičius. Today, the boundaries between playwriting, directing and performing merge more and more often. Sometimes the author of the text, the stage director and even the performer are all wrapped up in the same person. Probably, because it is easier to achieve brand status on an individual level being a director, playwright and performer than elevate a theatre house or company to the status of a brand.

The second group of exportable goods is **commodities** or products that are competitive due to their adaptability to the target market. Adaptability means the flexibility of the material to transform in order to increase the competitiveness and immersion of the potential audience. For instance, jokes and subtexts

must be recognisable to the target audience, sometimes the accents differ, and last, but not least, the charisma and background of the actors involved play a very important part. Unfortunately, not all plays, texts, scripts and even ideas are exportable. Mostly, the problems arise with material containing many references to local historical contexts and subtexts, culture codes, symbols and signs of different types. However, it does not necessarily mean that none of the culture-specific topics is worth trying in a foreign audience. As for recent Latvian products, we can here mention the film script “Svingers” (script by Rasa Bugavičiute-Pēce), already shot in Latvia, Estonia and Ukraine; and franchises are already signed with Norway, Finland and Lithuania. “Svingers” is marketed as “a light comedy about building relationships with passion and funny misunderstandings”. The scriptwriter explains the commercial success of the script with the fact that “materials” that are able to live their own life outside their native country are always very focused dramas about relationships in any genre (drama, comedy, tragi-comedy or tragedy, etc.), where the main connecting tissue is universally understandable interpersonal communication topics. The experience of “Svingers” shows that even the same word-by-word text in another cultural and linguistic space provides different effects.

In this group, we can present the play written by Latvian actor **Artūrs Dīcis** *Even Whales are Afraid*, which was produced by the Latvian National theatre in 2018, directed by Elmārs Seņkovs. The central character is the plastic surgeon Jānis Bērziņš (a very typical Latvian name and surname) in his thirties, who has a relatively well-managed life: a beloved wife, who is a popular lifestyle blogger, two kids, a satisfying salary, a healthy zero-waste and vegetarian lifestyle, and new module house, where the family has just

moved. However, he is in a way lost and confused, and his metaphorical obsession is to cut out the window in the wall of his new house – am I able to cut out the window or not? He has a mother, who is a teacher, and a father, who is an unemployed welder with a drinking problem. One of the quotes, which became folklore already after the first performances is the conversation between the son and the father:

Son: “What have you achieved in your life?”

Father: “A considerable age and the summit of Gaiziņš. (The highest point above the sea level in Latvia – authors note).”

Jānis Bērziņš also has a half-brother, who calls him only when he needs to borrow some money. There are colourful female characters in the play: the maximalist Anna (wife of Jānis Bērziņš), whose life needs to be perfect and when it's not, she's in a panic; Vita – a sarcastic single lady in her late thirties/early forties, flirting with her future prospects of becoming a “cat lady” and at the same time carrying on an affair with an obviously sadomasochistic man; Angela – a mature woman with recently discovered cancer heading to India; and the mother of the main character – a teacher at school, the driving force of the family. All the characters are epitomised and typified, therefore, they are easy to relate to, which increases the engagement of the audience. The play is easy to read and flexible to adapt, and in the case of this production the dramaturg and stage director have been on the same wave. There is no tension at all, and at the same time it is not a shallow comedy – it is actually a drama disguised in comedy, although to certain groups of spectators some aspects can seem pseudo-problematic or cliché. However, no one would deny the topicality of the consumer and anti-consumer lifestyle, problems of today's ecological scene, social media and

its impact on our lives, difficulties of direct communication between generations, and relatives that are recognisable social constructions to identify with on a level of typified generalisations (every character can be perceived as one of us). The core metaphor is included in the title – the whale is not only the species that the Bērziņi family aims to save through their zero-waste lifestyle; the whale also stands for the protagonist Jānis Bērziņš – he represents the responsibilities and confusions of mid-generation people, who often have no time to reflect on anything due to the high intensity of their daily obligations.

In economics, **valuable items with insufficient marketing** means the group of goods that are important, but not in mass demand due to a lack of information or insufficient or unsuccessful promotion. It is about increasing the demand. In arts, it means that an internationally important theme must be commercialised, in the positive sense of the word. Due to such a strategy, everybody in the world is aware of the Holocaust, it is hard to deny the successful commercialisation of the subject in literature, film industry and so on. The theme of Stalin's mass deportations Baltic and also Russian people to concentration camps in Siberia is of similar importance in the history of Europe, and

even the world, but probably not of the same level of public awareness. For more than a half-century, the reflections on this subject in arts were rather impossible. The regained independence formally allowed opening this Pandora's box, but the process is very complicated due to the social scenery, which includes still living witnesses, different ideological interpretations, current political contexts, and so on. During the last 10 years, there are several examples of literature, theatre and films in Latvia covering the stories of Siberia from today's perspective. Mostly, these tend to be experience-based personal stories revealing the tragedy of the subject, but avoiding the mourning.



My Magadan. Photo by Egons Ziverts

An example is the mono-play **My Magadan**, written and performed by actor **Ēriks Vilsons**. It is an autobiographic story written by the actor himself. He was born in Magadan in 1956, in the GULAG of Kolima. The material contains childhood

memories, letters and poetry of his mother, and a diary from 2013, when the actor participated in a trip to Magadan with the team of Dzintra Geka, the director of the documentary series *Children of Siberia*. The form of the production is a stand-

up storytelling performance, which makes it potentially exportable due to the theme and the compact format of the performance. The high quality text is flexible for interpretation on stage. The message is multilayered and through irony reveals

the contradictions and paradoxes of the history without any didactics or intention to make the audience weep – simple, direct and precise expression.

He starts the performance by taking a bow in front of Stalin's portrait and saying, "If he didn't exist, my parents would have never met". Gradually, the personal story of the actor's parents grows into the story of the little boy born in Siberia, whose first word was "dam" (I will beat) accompanied by making a fist, which transforms into a story of several generations and nations, millions of people. One of the few props is a metronome put on a rhythm, where every beat is one second. Every second signifies the death of one victim of Stalin's regime. The actor tells us that if we would like to hear all the

deaths, we would have to sit in the venue of the performance for 241.5 days. The personal story in the performance mixes with documentary facts – for instance, the actor shows the portrait of Eduards Bērziņš, a former student of the Academy of Arts of Berlin, who became the red rifleman and then the first head of the Kolima GULAG, later accused and executed despite being an official of Stalin's regime.

In the second part, Stalin's portrait is replaced by a portrait of the actor's mother. He reads her letters and poems and talks about conversations with her before she passed away. In terms of form, the performance contains autobiographical and documentary aspects that break down the border between the performer and the audience, increasing the

credibility due to the personalised story, while at the same time raising awareness about a historically important subject, reminding and warning today's society about what effects totalitarianism can bring. It is social memory put onto a stage (even if there is no stage), as individual and collective therapy, auto-reflecting on the painful history and as a potential "brand" in performing arts. *My Magadan* shows several important stages of the production on the historically sensitive subject: understanding and positioning the theme, marketing and sales (raising public awareness on the topic) and humanistic goals, which include recalling historical experiences and warning about the consequences totalitarianism can bring.

Conclusions

The exportability of original dramaturgy depends on the correct evaluation of the material and setting the goals, which should include at least three main aspects: 1) **"who we want to engage?"** In the case of *Even Whales Are Afraid*, the targeted audience is economically active people between 30 and 40, and the aim of the theatre is evidently to expand the audience to younger people. In

case of *My Magadan*, according to Ēriks Vilsons, the main target audience is also mainly young people or people with only very approximate or no idea of what the exile to Siberia meant, and this automatically makes the story adaptable to any unprepared audience. The second aspect to take into consideration is: **"how do we engage?"** This is a question of theatre techniques. In this

particular production, the stand-up storytelling mixes with other acting styles, for instance, psychological theatre, object theatre, etc. And, last but not least, the third aspect: it is important to **think critically** about stepping out of one's shoes – **why** this play, script, production, idea or theme should move the audience, especially an unprepared audience.

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KRISTINA STEIBLYTĖ

Lithuanian drama export – a project for the future

In recent decades, the majority of the drama in Lithuanian theatre was imported. Classical and contemporary plays, plots, as well as people, social and historical dramas on stages in Lithuania came from abroad. We had a Polish play about Polish factory workers staged, but not a Lithuanian story written and staged. Lithuanian dramaturgy used to and still happens sporadically. Until recently, it was mainly created by writers and poets. It wasn't until 2010 that the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre started a course for film dramaturgy. These dramaturgs were supposed to be able to write screenplays as well as plays for theatre, and some of them do. So now we have a handful of people writing texts for the stage. The last few theatre seasons saw the amount of staged texts by Lithuanian authors growing steadily, although this is not really the result of any implemented cultural policies. It is more because of the laborious effort of a few devoted people and active institutions. Continuous organisation of new drama contests (*Versmė*, *Dramokratija*), new emerging initiatives, if sometimes short lasting, stage readings, collaborations between dramaturgs and directors gave birth to a lively, albeit fragile, contemporary Lithuanian drama world.

That is the situation at home. What about Lithuanian drama abroad? We have only one Lithuanian drama export success story. If you do not live in Lithuania, I suppose there's a significant chance that you have only heard about one Lithuanian dramaturg – Marius Ivaškevičius. His success abroad is based on success in Lithuania, participation in international workshops, support by some institutions, (self-)management skills, and coincidence. His plays travelled to Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Poland, England, Italy, France, USA, New Zealand... One of his most popular plays is *Town nearby* (2005), which is based on true story about a woman who lived a double life in two towns in Denmark. Recently, *Expulsion. Chronicles of One Apple* (2011) is also becoming more popular and making its way around Baltic States. Ivaškevičius's text for the performance *The Great Evil* (2015) is also already abroad – it was staged in Poland this year.

However, contemporary Lithuanian drama is not only Ivaškevičius, so there might be more success stories waiting to happen. I will mention some authors, whose texts are more popular and recognised in Lithuania and sometimes abroad.

Recently, more work has been put forth by the middle-generation author and poet Gintaras Grajauskas. His earlier play *Reservate* (2004) travelled a little bit. The most recent staged text titled *No entry* (2016) is more local and tells stories of his hometown, showing how it changed during his lifetime. His plays usually combine poetry and irony, and lately they are more or less nostalgic. His latest work is the play *Who Is Against Us*, staged by director Jonas Vaitkus and premiered on the 29th of September. This play is less local – it is inspired by the Free state of Fiume and deals with fascism and the artist's vision and responsibility.

One of the younger authors Gabrielė Labanauskaitė-Diena is also writing a lot. Some of her latest works include an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (2017) to a contemporary opera libretto, a couple of original librettos for the contemporary operas *α* and *Honey, Moon!* (2018). Besides being a poet, writer, and teacher of future playwrights and screenwriters, one of the main organisers of new drama festival "Dramocracy", she is also one of the few authors whose plays are continuously staged abroad. One of her most translated plays is the tragicomedy *Red Laces* (2011) about two brothers. One of them is

gay and the other – an extreme nationalist. Her plays usually try and include marginalised people into the cultural narrative.

Course mates Teklė Kataradzė and Birutė Kapustinskaitė studied film dramaturgy. Both are also visible in

the contemporary Lithuanian theatre and continuously work on new projects. Kavtaradzė wrote a couple of memorable plays, such as *Homebird* (2011), *Several Conversations About (Christ)* (2014), and currently is working on new theatre projects. This year Kapustinskaitė's play

Therapies (2016-2017) about women in a cancer ward won the award for the best national drama at the annual Lithuanian theatre awards ceremony. The play is already translated into English, though has not started its journey abroad yet.



***Therapies*. Photo by Dmitrij Matvejev / Lithuanian National Drama Theatre**

Poet Mindaugas Nastaravičius is also well-known in Lithuania as a playwright. He stated working with the Klaipėda Youth Theatre and wrote a couple of plays for them. He is now working independently, writing plays and scripts. His play *Democracy* (2014), staged at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, gained some attention abroad. The play portrays people living in an apartment building and facing the problem of damaged electrical wires. It was translated and had a stage reading in China, although there the text was cleared of any political connotations and the title was changed to *Power Loss at an Apartment Building*. *Democracy* rep-

resents Nastaravičius's skills in creating dialogs and characters, as well as his sense of humour.

Also this year the theatre critic and dramaturg Dovilė Statkevičienė, with colleague and playwright Virginija Rimkaitė, won second and third prizes at a contemporary drama contest in Germany called Talking About Borders and proved that their texts are interesting not only at home but also abroad. Statkevičienė writes dramas about painful familial or personal moments, commenting on how coincidence and usually unfortunate circumstance condition individuals' life and choices. Her texts are usually dramatic and have a directorial stance.

Rimkaitė was noticed after the reading of one of her first plays *Boiling Temperature 5425* at the Vesmė festival couple of years back. Through irony and the absurd, she tackles criticism of contemporary consumer society by rewriting the myth of Tantalus. The absurd in contemporary Lithuanian dramaturgy is rare, so she represents quite a unique perspective.

But besides the ever-stronger contemporary plays written and staged, we also have devised collaborative drama. This year it was also recognised by the jury of the annual Lithuanian theatre awards, when the dramaturgy of the devised performance *Green Meadow* was nominat-

ed in the best national dramaturgy category. Devised theatre might not seem to be something to export, however, Ivaškevičius's proves that it is. His play *The Great Evil*, which was at least in part devised with the whole cast and director, already travelled abroad this year and can be seen in Krakow, directed by Stanislav Moiseev, where it is called *Masara*.

On the other hand, devised theatre is also an opportunity to export not only texts, but also theatre makers with their methods and topics. In Lithuania, we imported Latvians

Valters Sīlis and Jānis Balodis to devise performances in our national theatres about our national history. Thus, I believe that there are some young Lithuanian theatre directors, whose work, methods, and approaches to topics can also be interesting abroad. For example, Gildas Aleksa, who works with social topics; Jonas Tertelis, who does documentary theatre; Paulius Markevičius, who explores performance art and relations between science and art; Karolina Žernytė, who creates a theatre of senses; Olga Lapina, who devises performances for children;

and Gintarė Radvilavičiūtė in puppet theatre.

In Lithuania, we still do not have an organisation that would work to represent Lithuanian playwrights. Some effort is made by the ministry of culture, the Lithuanian culture institute, national and state theatres, playwrights and theatre makers themselves. This slows down all the attempts to export Lithuanian dramas. But at least it does not prevent theatre makers of all generations from traveling outside Lithuania, and Lithuanian dramas from being shared on stages around the world.



Democracy. Photo Dmitrij Matvejev

Kristina Steiblytė (Lithuania) has a BA in Art history and criticism (graduated 2011), MA in Theatre studies and management (graduated 2013), and she is a PhD candidate in theatre studies since 2015. She is interested mainly in how theatre reflects social life and its changes. This is also her main focus when writing theatre criticism.

SIRET CAMPBELL

Mother's Day by Liis Aedmaa – an Estonian comedy

Estonian authors write quite a wide range of comedy – there is critique about social issues; comedy that works on wordplay or concepts; comedies of error and misunderstandings; comedies at the crossing of mono-plays and stand-up. We have comedies for children and adult audiences. In addition to original Estonian comedies, contemporary and classical translated texts are being staged.

When choosing a play to present here today, however, I faced some difficulties. I wanted to make a presentation about a fairly new text. I had to stay away from plays which are specifically about Estonia or Estonian issues, yet where the plot would be original enough for you, our international colleagues, to gain interest in it (i.e. avoiding stock plot comedies). In my reading and theatre going experiences, I have also come across instances where the play is not classified as a comedy, but to my mind it fits the parameters of being a comedy. Hence, I took the liberty of broadening my search not only to how authors classify their work, but to my personal experiences with texts.

I thought of instances where I've encountered a text and reacted with laughter. I realised that I had laughed when I found something ridiculous, when something surprised me, or when I recognised something as being painful but true. I then realised that there is one play which fills all of my criteria, and which should be of interest to anyone who has a mother. This play is Liis Aedmaa's *Mother's Day*. The author has not considered her play as a comedy herself, but I have asked permission from her to classify it in this way, and she did not oppose my approach.

Mother's Day was written in 2016, and it was directed by its author at Ugala Theatre (premiere took place on February 17, 2017). It is still very successfully performed on its home stage in Viljandi, and it also tours many other places in Estonia. It has a cast of four actresses, who are all also mothers.

Parenting is a very fruitful material for comedy. The parent's identity goes through a major transformation, as well as the relationship between those who formerly were partners and now find themselves

in the role of parents. Our children, the joys of our lives, are full of contradictory ideas and needs, they are open, opinionated and insistent, and they don't have the politeness barriers that adults have. *Mother's Day* is a sketch comedy about what it's like becoming a parent and growing as one.

To quote the description from the website of the production*, "The average mother replies to up to 300 questions from her children each day. This means about 18 questions an hour. The most questions are asked during mealtime, with an average of 11 questions per child. These are followed by questions asked during shopping (10 questions) and bedtime (9 questions). Also, even if the father is nearby, a child still first turns to their mother in 82% of the cases.

But when do mothers get to ask questions? Who do they have to turn to? Google, internet forums, parenting books, friends, their own mothers? We decided to turn to the audience and to talk about things as they are. In all honesty.

* All quotations in this presentation are translated by S. Campbell.



***Mother's Day*. Photo by Gabriela Liivamägi / Ugala**

Mother's Day is a turbulent production that occasionally makes you laugh and sometimes makes you mad. It is full of fighting, toys, worn-out lullabies, and failed birthday cakes.*

I think that one of the things this play is saying is that each family is unique, nobody can teach or even guide anyone else in how to be a parent. Yet there are all kinds of standards, opinions and understandings imposed on parents by other people and the society. But really, all that mothers try to do is to cope and do their best. There is also an important disclaimer at the start of the play. In one of the first scenes of the play, the actresses make a statement: we each have so and so many children, we love them dearly and they are the best things that have ever happened to us. This is said with no subtext or humour, this is clearly an honest statement.

After this, they proceed to show a myriad of emotions, actions, inner and outer conflicts that come with being a mother, while trying to remain a person.

Why do I consider *Mother's Day* a comedy? The simplest answer is – it made me laugh really hard, both in its written as well as its performed version. A better justified answer in the presence of theatre theoreticians is that it uses a variety of comic devices, such as comic analogy, irony, exaggeration, contradiction, and replacement. However, these devices not only contribute to the funniness of the situation, but there is a clear build-up also in terms of the arc of the story (despite it being sketch-based), and inherently the madness from one situation carrying over into another simply builds a comic story as such. The comic devices and scenes are very carefully balanced with bringing across a wide array of

emotions – among them gentle and moving moments that can bring the audience to tears. I, therefore, consider it a very well-composed entity with strong dramaturgy.

Now a few examples of comic devices. First, a comic comparison. One of the characters compares pregnancy to the film "Alien" saying, "Another creature implants itself into your body and begins to grow there. In the beginning it is politely discreet and unnoticeable. But day by day it starts taking over all of the functions of your body, your wishes, your thoughts, your will. And by the sixth month there is no question who is the master and who the slave. You want to have a drink – the master denies, you want to do sports – the master disagrees, you want to sleep on your right side – the master kicks you in the ribs**". This may come across as quite a dire and dark analogy, but in the context of the scene, it is hilarious.

* <https://www.ugala.ee/lavastus/emadepaev/>

** „Mother's Day“, p. 20.

There is a lot of irony in the play. Comedy comes across, for example, in the gap between the idealism about being a parent and what it's really like.

"B: If I ever have a child, I will never leave her for anyone else to be taken care of.

A: If I ever have a child, I will never let her eat fries.

C: If I ever have a child, I will do everything right.

B: If I ever have a child, I will never let her cry.

C: If I ever have a child, I will speak English to her.

A: If I ever have a child, I will speak Estonian to her."*

And some time later we see how in real life and in the everyday context there is no space for such ideals. When you realise that you haven't slept properly for the past

seven years, and you know that soon you're facing another morning of mayhem trying to get the children ready to leave the house, then no, you don't even remember the person who had all of these ideals. You have simply done well when you have survived the day.

Another comic device used is that of substitution. In the scene "Workday", the characters are employees of a company but their communication dynamics is the same of a mother (boss) and children (employees) nagging at each other. The boss is trying to have a meeting, but the employees have forgotten the password to their laptop (they only changed it to see whether it was possible to change it), they're telling on their co-workers who have stolen their stapler, they suddenly need to go to the toilet and much more. To me, personally, these kinds of comparisons speak of the fact that often it seems to mothers that

going to work, like to an office job, feels like a walk in a park compared to everything that they have to do at home. While before children going to work was tiresome, then after having children it is a blessing to be able to go to work, to have normal adult interactions and to finish a cup of hot coffee.

There are some references in the text which are relevant only to Estonia. For example, some local statistics, an interview with our minister of education who has six children, and a column condemning women who do not produce more than two children. But all in all, I believe that the play is easy to transpose to any other cultural context with local motherhood references added (with the permission of the author). *Mother's Day* is a funny, serious, moving and versatile text, and I highly recommend it to be translated into other languages.

Siret Campbell is the founder of the creative writing school Drakadeemia (Estonia). She has taught playwriting courses to professional and amateur writers. Recently, she defended her master's thesis *How to Develop a Comedy Writing Course?* at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. Siret also writes plays herself and works as a production dramaturg.

* Ibid., p. 13.

IEVA RODIŅA

Latvian Comedy (2008–2018)

Latvians and comedy

Since Ancient Greece, comedy has been a theatre genre that is connected with certain standards of collectiveness – in order for comedy to work, the spectators must have a joint sense of values, knowledge and humour. Latvians are generally said to have a good sense of humour, which manifests itself through the use of irony or sarcasm in almost every possible life situation. An average Latvian is mostly an introvert, but opens up with the help of alcohol or when his/her rights or personal property is being threatened. Therefore, almost every Latvian comedy consists of a direct conflict around someone's materialistic or romantic interests, and contains a scene where all or most of the characters get drunk to finally release their true feelings and thoughts.

At the same time, when it comes to theatre, Latvians are more reserved – theatre is an important part of Latvian culture, therefore, it is still perceived as a form of high art. During the last hundred years, there are, of course, many examples of good Latvian comedy – starting with the joke plays of the Latvian theatre father Ādolfs Alunāns and the classic

Rūdolfs Blaumanis, continuing with the Soviet-time playwright Pauls Putniņš and the middle-generation playwright Lauris Gundars, who teaches drama students at the Latvian Academy of Culture. But quite recently, approximately in the last five years, a whole new generation of Latvian playwrights have emerged, and one of the main characteristics of these young playwrights is the use of grotesque and irony as one of their basic writing tools.

One of the leading young Latvian playwrights Justīne Kļava has stressed that there is a principal difference between the previous generations, who have experienced the Soviet times themselves, and the new generation of Latvians, born starting from the 1990s. In her opinion, the Soviet generations believe that the national unpleasantness or the absurdness of the cultural codes can be discussed only in the kitchen, behind closed doors, not on a theatre stage or in books. (This, of course, is an exaggeration, but it still shows how the young playwrights see the previous state of Latvian literature.) She continues by stating that the young generation

of Latvians is not able to perceive anything too seriously and that they are not drawing any lines between tragedy and comedy in their lives.* From a psychological point of view, this position shows a certain need to draw a line between the Soviet and post-Soviet generations. However, at the same time, the theme of the Soviet past is still an important topic in current Latvian original drama, even in the case of young playwrights.

During the last decade, some of the most important comedy productions in Latvian theatre have been based on original drama:

Artūrs Dīcis: *Even Whales are Afraid* (2018)

Justīne Kļava: *The Flee Market of the Souls* (2017), *Jubilee'98* (2017)

Rasa Bugavičute-Pēce: *Ice-fishing* (2016)

Anete Konste *Beasty Love* (with Jānis Joņevs, 2017), *Gruzona ehinocactus* (with Edmunds Frīdvalds, Mārcis Lācis, 2016)

Jānis Balodis: *Grown Ups* (2014),

* Kļava J. The False Me on the Refrigerator. Essay on contemporary Latvian original drama (translated from Latvian). 24 Aug, 2018. www.kroders.lv/runa/1148

All My Presidents (2011)

Agnese Rutkēviča: *Animal/Curs* (2013)

Danskovīte: *Latgola-LV* (2010)

Looking over the list of the most im-

portant Latvian comedies of the last decade, a certain pattern emerges. All of these plays, except for the last one *Latgola.lv*, were written by more or less young generation authors, and almost all of these plays can as easily be considered dramas

with comedic elements. It is obvious that young playwrights are not afraid of to deal with serious and complicated topics, and the two plays analysed in this paper are a clear example of this tendency.



Flea Market of the Souls. Photo by Jānis Amoliņš / Dirty Deal Teatro

Flea Market of the Souls – “war drama in the kitchen”

The first case study chosen is *Flea Market of the Souls*, a play by Justīne Kļava that was staged at the independent theatre *Dirty Deal Teatro* in 2017 by the young generation stage director Inga Tropa. The play is about five young people living in a communal flat in the centre of Riga. Nevertheless, the central conflict of the play is all about borders. Although living in a shared space, the five characters have different nationalities, lifestyles, interests, as well as religious and political views. The system of the characters is based on the principle of radical

diversity. For example, Lāsma, the leader of the group, is a typical Latvian girl, who is a keeper of national values, such as Latvian folk culture. Meanwhile Viesturs, the other Latvian in this group, represents a different position – he is constantly criticising the current social and economic situation in Latvia and wants to emigrate. Therefore, the play introduces two sides of the Latvian society – those Latvians who value the national cultural heritage and feel connected to their homeland, and those who seek better life conditions abroad.

Flea Market of the Souls is an adventurous investigation of the collective memory of Latvians. However, in the case of this play and its production, the Soviet heritage is manifested not from a nostalgic point of view, which has been depressingly dominant in recent Latvian theatre, but through the use of irony and deliberate overstatements. The text is constantly balancing on the border of political incorrectness, without prejudice and modesty employing all the possible stereotypes about the Latvian self-identity and the way Latvians perceive people from different na-

tional backgrounds. There are many exaggerations, for example, such statements as: *all the Latvian Russians are occupants, all the Romany people are thieves, the Germans are to blame for all the sins of the 20th century*, etc. These arguments are absurd, but at the same time based on real opinions that can be heard on the street or read in the internet commentaries.

The subtitle of this play is a “war drama in the kitchen”, and the tight space of the communal flat is a perfect frame not only for escalating small everyday conflicts (such as – *who put this dirty dish on my shelf?*), but also to explore the cultural traumas of the Soviet occupation among the young generation of Latvians. The main question repeatedly asked from the stage is: *Can we blame each other for the sins of our grandfathers?* This position is closely linked with the *postmemory concept*, meaning

that even the next generations are still deeply connected to the personal or collective cultural traumas of the previous generations*. In the case of this play, Justine Kļava has used the phenomenon of postmemory to reflect about the unconscious scars the Soviet heritage has left on the post-Soviet generations. Therefore, continuing the topic about plays with export potential, this text can be staged in any post-Soviet country.

Animal/Curs – from drama to comedy

Another important Latvian comedy from the last decade is *Animal/Curs* – a play also written by a young generation playwright **Agnese Rutkēviča**, and this text also in a sense deals with the topic of borders and past traumas. The play *Animal* has already been staged not only in Latvia, but also at the Lithuanian National Theatre by Rolandas Atkočiūnas in 2016. Atkočiūnas revealed that the play attracted his attention “because of its realistic nature, interesting storyline and rich characters”**.

The play tells the story of two brothers in their forties, who are brought together in their squalid country house after the death of their mother. In the portrayal of the two main characters, Agnese Rutkēviča has used the principle of contrast – while one of the brothers Kārlis is a simple country guy, the other one Jānis lives in the city and has a good career. While the first brother is shy and doesn't know how to handle

girls, the other one has a long-term boyfriend, who is his former school teacher. It is a constant collision of the characters' sexual identities and lifestyles. The constant comparison of the two brothers creates the conflict of this play, which escalates when their two love interests Inga and Askolds arrive. It is actually suggested that the different sexual orientation of the older brother has been the main cause for their mother's health problems and of the reasons for the hatred between the brothers.

Although in its original version this play is definitely not a comedy, during the staging process at the New Riga Theatre in 2013, the original text was rewritten, changing the genre of this play from a psychological drama to a comedy about four lonely people struggling with their romantic relationships. The second version the play has been given a new title – *Cers* or *Mongrels*, meaning under bred, aggressive dogs.

Formally, this title represents the name of the family country house, but symbolically this title can be associated with the troubled relationship between Kārlis and Jānis. Looking at this plot from the viewpoint of the genre of comedy, the comic conflict of this play is also based on the principle of contrast – while Kārlis tries to build a new relationship with the radio presenter Inga by inviting her to his country house, Jānis is hiding in the countryside to escape the exhausting long-term relationship with his partner. The final scene, in which all four characters get drunk, is written and staged as a mix of irony and melancholy, and this basically sums up the overall intonation of the play, where a very precise portrayal of life in the Latvian countryside is mixed with such universal themes as loneliness, alienation between the closest of people, prejudice and stereotypes about sexual identity, etc.

Conclusions

1. **Latvian theatre is becoming more serious:** theatre critics have stressed that there are fewer and fewer comedy productions in the repertoire of Latvian theatres. Meanwhile, some of the most important comedy

* Hirsch M. *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. NY, Columbia University Press, 2012, p.5.

** http://www.teatras.lt/en/productions/agnese_rutkevica_animal_coo_coo/

productions of the last decade are based on Latvian original drama or classics (for example, the humorous plays of Rūdolf Blaumanis).

2. Latvian comedy is **moving away from superiority** (laughing at the characters) **to complicity** (laughing with the characters). For example, at the end of the 19th century, almost every comedy consisted of some marginalised characters, preferably with a different national background, like the “traveling” comic Jewish characters in the plays of Blaumanis. In the 21st century, Latvian comedies have established a different viewpoint, laughing not at “the others”, but at “us”, and using self-deprecation as one of the main comic tools.
3. Therefore, in the recent decade, especially in the works of young Latvian playwrights, **comedy can be considered not as a separate genre, but as a viewpoint of life**. Irony has become not only a tool for self-reflection, but also for researching the past social and cultural traumas, therefore, merging the genres of comedy and drama.

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MONIKA JAŠINSKAITĖ

The dramaturgy of guided tours in Lithuanian theatre productions

We may notice a tendency of performances-tours in Lithuania since 2015 when *Remote Vilnius* by Stephan Kaegi of the Rimini Protokoll was created for theatre festival “Sirenos” and later became part of the repertory of the National Drama Theatre in Vilnius. In 2018, already three such performances premiered in Vilnius and Klaipėda. Mostly they were created by independent theatre groups that are project-based, that don't have their own stages and that look for ways to attract new audiences. In this article, I want to take a closer look at such interdisciplinary performances, and see how the dramaturgy of guided tours enriches the experience of theatre spectators.

I asked the geographer and travel guide Rytas Šalna for a concise consultation on the dramaturgy behind guided tours. Šalna has been a tour guide for Lithuanian travellers all over the world since 1995. He sees the tour as a “meaningful time” that is dedicated to learning and to experiencing something. “There would be no tour without learning about things,” says Šalna. However, he also adds that “senses like vision, hearing, or touch are important.” In other words, tours include factual knowledge and actual experience that involves personal senses. If we take his words as a definition, we see that “meaningful time” correlates with a common attitude within the arts. The only exception is the balance between these two compo-

nents – usually a sensuous experience precedes the informative part. However, documentaries and the creations with historical or scientific nature usually prefer the information path.

Here I will focus on three performances: *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel* by PadiDapi Fish (they already had similar working experience with the interactive dance tour *Klaipėda Transit Memel* in 2015 in Klaipėda, the specific promenade performance *Lucky Lucy* in 2016 in Vilnius, the dance tour *Border Signs* in 2017 in Kaunas), the *Excursion with B & B* by Agnietė Lisičkinaitė and Greta Grinevičiūtė created for Street Theater Festival SPOT and *Signals* by the Art and Science Laboratory.

Factual information

As mentioned above, factual knowledge is the most important component of a guided tour. According to Šalna, “in a tour, one should be thinking and concentrating. <...> If a person chooses a tour, he pays for

it, and therefore understands that something will be explained and showed. If I buy this service, I am willing to find things out.” Usually, guided tours follow certain places people may be interested in visiting

or cover topics they wish to learn more about.

In the case of *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel*, the spectator is using headphones to follow a pre-recorded story of the Prussian queen Luise



***Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel.* Photo by Vytautas Petrikas**

Auguste Wilhelmine Amalie (1776–1810) who, together with her husband King Frederick William III, fled from Napoleon’s occupied Berlin to Klaipėda (then called Memel) in 1807 to live there for one year. The performance *Excursion with B & B* offers to take a walk in the beautiful parts of Vilnius old town and enjoy certain objects (a fountain or ventilation tubes) that are usually ignored by passers-by. The Art and Science Laboratory invites people to look at the sky and learn about the constellations by listening to a pre-recorded radio play.

According to Šalna, on a tour the guide acts as a source of information. He is the one who tells interesting stories and helps to understand the value of any object shown. All three performances follow this rule in their own different ways.

Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel offers a full year’s story of Klaipėda, when it was a residency of the King’s court. The excerpts from various

letters, travellers’ notes, and other documents display a broader context of the queen’s life, they reveal contextual details about the Napoleon-Alexander war in Europe, and offer a glimpse into the town in 1807, more specifically, into how people lived, what they ate, how they spoke and how they spent their time. The audience passes by the different houses where the queen and her children lived, walks through the main street used for promenades at the time, walks to other buildings connected to the people from the story. The walk is not long and it is well adapted to the story itself, since the objects visited and the story told intertwine with each other.

The *Excursion with B & B* offers a completely different experience. Here the places are chosen without any remarkable links between them. The factual information content ranges from a legend about Flora and Fauna (namely, a fantasy that relates botanical terms and folk elements) to a kind of art manifesto

(that encompasses art industry vocabulary together with visions and popular clichés of what art could be). Even though there are some historical facts that B & B mention during this walk, they offer no links between each object visited and the spectator may hardly get any meaningful insights from this trip.

Signals takes place in an open air venue and is presented as a radio play. The artists take their audience on an imaginary tour to an observatory. Here the guide welcomes the audience and gives a step-by-step explanation of six constellations and their main stars. Scientific explanations are usually followed by key information about related myths and legends; however, this information is very fragmented and resembles purely factual statements, rather than proposing more poetic images.

Even though a guided tour with a large dose of entertainment and without any factual knowledge seems like a marginal situation, Šal-

na notes that people are very sensitive to the amount of information they receive. Therefore, the guide must adapt and, if necessary, remove some parts according to the listeners' ability to focus. As *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel* and *Signals* are pre-recorded and simply replayed during the performance, their course can have little influence from the audience or any other circumstances. The *Excursion with B & B* is guided live, therefore, it creates a completely different atmosphere.

Šalna draws attention to the travel guides' ability to keep the listeners interested. At certain points during the tour, the guide should invest more energy in keeping their attention. Attention is also related to the listeners' capacity of remembering things. According to the travel guide, people forget almost everything they hear during the tour and that is very human. Nonetheless, people do remember the most important things, which depend on the highlights a guide chooses to emphasise during his talk. He also notes the tendency of giving too many

dates (especially in tours guided by historians), family names, names of plants and animals, or specific terms. However, he admits that they strengthen the informative aspect of the excursion in specific tours. Even if not asked, people often like to apply the knowledge they get for the rest of the tour.

In *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel*, the information was consistently developed into a story, which is why after an hour performance I was able to remember distinct facts about the life of the queen, about the town itself, and about European history, all of which stimulated my own thoughts even further. Even though I admit that there were way too many dates and names in the story, they added a certain value to those places I might have visited many times, but didn't know anything about. On the contrary, in *Signals* spectators could focus on quite a limited number of objects – only six constellations selected by the artistic team. However, after the performance I could only remember four constellation names (two were new to me),

I could only find three of them in the sky (one was new), and I could not remember any other facts that were mentioned. This outcome brings back the question of a meaningful time and the purpose of the performance-tours.

Šalna marks that personal opinion adds value to standard factual information and reveals a guide's personality. He also notes that a guide is a representative of a certain place or field, so his task is to respect it, "The guide is not a critic. He is a source of information. He must love the place and respect the context he is in." The creators of *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel* and *Signals* made no attempts to disregard this recommendation and did their best to reveal their respective topics. *Excursion with B & B*, on the contrary, showed no respect for the places they were at and the people they were with, by giving criticising remarks towards the state, its citizens and the people attending the guided tour, always keeping a provoking atmosphere, where provocations sounded like bad jokes once in a while.

Entertainment

According to Šalna, the majority of Lithuanian guides make no attempts at entertainment because they focus on following standards and delivering all the facts. However, adding elements of entertainment is always an advantage.

All three selected tours are produced as works of art, which is why the sensory part is more developed than in the usual guided tours. In *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel*, a cello quartet (a favourite instrument of queen Louise) creates a bright atmosphere and makes more than 200 years of time disappear, while dolphin, street or market noises are also included in the soundscape. The performance sounds accompany the story together with the dancers (five female adults and five little girls),

whose movements physically guide the audience through the streets of Klaipėda. *B & B* in the *Excursion with B & B* used choreographed scenes at certain stops, but they followed other entertainment strategies as well. In *Signals* the star-watching-tour is complemented by a fragmented story of a young couple and the talks are followed by sounds of space.

The entertainment part goes hand in hand with emotions. As the geographer points out, emotion is created through communication with people, which is why the contact between a guide and his listeners is very important. He may ask them how they feel, inquire about their impressions about the tour, ask about any ideas of what they saw recently in the area. Among the three

performances, *B & B* follow this recommendation extraordinarily well – even though the performance was attended by more than 50 spectators, they had small chats during the walks between the stops, they asked people for help, they provoked the listeners to tell what they think, or just to give straight forward answers of "yes" or "no" to any questions that came to their minds.

Another kind of entertainment, according to Šalna, may be a change in the form of audience activity. Sometimes a series of objects in town may be marked by "climb to bell tower", "stop at a visual artist's shop" or similar activities, where the people may do something else instead of watching and listening. Whereas in *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel*,



Tour with B and B. Photo by Dainius Pu / Glasses'n beard

the audience kept on walking-watching-listening and in *Signals* listening and watching (a little), in *Excursion with B & B* people could try out various forms of sun glasses,

carry protest banners, and perform some dance moves.

An additional suggestion by the travel guide is to have some gifts

that may be related to the topic of the trip. As if they had known this before, after the performance B & B invited people to join the party of baguette leftovers.

Extras

Besides factual information and entertainment components, the geographer pointed out some extra tips that are important for the quality of the tours. Some of them are worth mentioning in the context of the three excursions-performances.

While speaking about tours, Šalna noted that a travel guide must see all the listeners standing in front of him and make sure they can hear and see him. Besides, the guide shouldn't start speaking before the group is fully present. The dancers of *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel* managed to avoid this problem and it wasn't a challenge for the creators of *Signals* either, because the audience did not move. However, in the case of the *Excursion with B & B*, the ladies were not able to manage their large audience, and many spectators missed the beginning of almost all scenes of the second half. This mistake contributed to the viewers' inability to find the connecting thread across all the scenes that pulled it together into one full performance.

While giving the information, according to the travel guide, one may show that things talked about are not local, but may have connections with other places or fields. This is

how the listeners may identify with the topic easier and find their own connections. This advice is well followed in *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel* because the story of a Lithuanian port is placed within a European context – it's a town full of English merchants, the residency of the Prussian king's court during Napoleonic wars. Even though it may seem that the playwright of *Signals* tried to combine the life of celestial bodies with human behaviour, or space theories with everyday common sense, these connections are vague, and the proposed ideas do not extend beyond usual conversations on these subjects. As there was a lack of concentration in one or few particular topics but rather many links to many places and fields, *Excursion with B & B* also failed in helping their audience to find their own connections to the information given.

Finally, according to Šalna, every systematic guide makes a summary of the tour and gives 3-5 highlights because it helps the audience to assess what happened. Neither the creators of *Shah for Prussia. Louise in Memel*, nor the artists of *Signals* made use of this possibility and finished their performances in a

standard theatre performance way. However, B & B used this suggestion for finishing the *Excursion with B & B*, and even though the information component seemed to be weak, their summary helped to highlight the entertaining aspects of the tour and reinforced the idea that the audience had their own "meaningful time".

After an overview of tour dramaturgy in the interdisciplinary performances and its impact on the spectators' experience, we may notice that the main principles of the tours are being followed in the performances. However, the artists find their individual ways to deliver factual information and to complement it with the sensory or artistic elements according to the topic or idea they explore. We might additionally remark that because of the technical solutions (like pre-recorded stories) the interactivity between the spectators and the performers may be lost, thus decreasing the sensory or entertaining component of the performance. On the contrary, higher interactivity between the artists and the audience of the performance-tours may increase their satisfaction with the "meaningful time" of the latter.

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