

Színház- és Filmművészeti Egyetem Doktori Iskola

A magyarországi gyerekszínház története

Doktori disszertáció tézisei (angol változat)

Cseke Péter

2011.

Témavezető: Fábri Péter DLA

In my dissertation I try to examine the theoretical, historical and practical aspects of the theater for children. My goal is to explore the Hungarian past and present efforts and introduce them.

The childhood experiences (as an audience in theater) affect the child's sense of aesthetic development; the performance of these must take into account the viewer's age, intellectual, psychological and physiological characteristics.

The children's theater is a respected part of theater arts in most countries in the world. Obviously, if a responsible cultural leadership wants to have a knowledgeable and sensitive audience in 30- 40 or even 80-100 years, than it's a vital interest to introduce the magic of theater to the children.

In virtue of my experiences and studies I researched the history of the children's theater first. The first base were the roots, so the values of the past can infiltrate to the plans of the future. Also considered important the realization of errors as well, not just because it should be avoided, but their analysis can provide useful experience for the future.

There was a demand on children's theater hundreds of years ago, although rarely and for short periods only could a children's theater come into an existence, which was able to satisfy the real needs of children.

In the 17-18. century, the performances appearing on Italian and French and later on German land had surprising diversity of genres: on the repertoire we can find pantomime as well as ballet, operetta, opera, tragedy or comedy. However, these performances are intended not to educate, entertain children, but to entertain the adults with the participation of children. Felix Brenner's troupe in 1768 was the first visitor in Hungary, at Eszterháza.

In the 19th century, with the strengthening of citizenship, the demand for children's theater (in the modern sense) started to appear. As a result of the Reform's efforts at the theatricals the National Theater opened in 1837, so the professional Hungarian theater discovered a permanent home in the capital; and in 1847 with the burn of the German theater, finally took the lead in theatrical life of Hungary.

Around the turn of the century, the National Theater has launched a series for the youth, and more children's theater company broke its way, for longer or shorter time. Because of/ Due to the changed culture policy, the main purposes of these performances were

the patriotic education of youth and also the introduction of the classic and the Hungarian drama in order to raise the audience of the future.

After the WW2, nationalization have solved financial problems, but a strong political ideology determined the repertoire at the same time. For young people, mostly Soviet plays and story pieces were presented.

I am splitting the period from 1959 to 1994, more than three decades, into six terms for examine the operation of Bartók Hall (later Bartók Stage), Budapest Children's Theatre and Arany János Theatre.

From the mid-eighties we have witnessed a dramatic change. The most essential characteristics of this change have been the increasing social demand for children's theatrical productions and through this demand the proliferation of artistic enterprises. Many places have started to play for children beside the professional Children's Theater. Amateur and alternative troupes also have made a number of presentations for children.

In the nineties, the endowment of theaters changed and this led to the weakening of the theatrical shows and the repertoire. This also affected the children's theater, as the only major children's theater was eliminated. During this period, theaters recognized that children's audience might be useful in several ways. Thus, major prosaic companies started to undertake annual presentations of children performances

Since 1992 the professional children's theater has been the Kolibri Children's and Youth Theatre in Budapest. The main building in Jókai square can accommodate 212 people, Kolibri Pince and Kolibri Fészek have 50-50 seats. I think this is not enough for a capital city of two million.

I feel the biggest problem is that there is no cultural institution in Hungary that can function beyond the children's theater any time of the day by offering a differentiated program that would provide the possibility of a complex cultural education for children and youth ages. I have outlined an ideal theater for children by creating legal, financial, organizational and artistic foundations of an idea that would not only be a theater but more of an establishment of a spiritual center for children.

By the time this complex is ready we will have had to deal with many other problems. The most important are:

- In education, including teaching of literature could be an integral part of theatrical education, preferably by using theater teachers.

- For years it seemed that very few kids play was good, but I feel the current situation is encouraging as very good children's literature has been established in Hungary in recent years.

- Alternative theaters should be involved because of their new openness, the traditional theater may be more suitable to open up the world of theater before the susceptible youth.

Finally, I am writing about the Act of promotion for performing art organizations and its unique employment rules (approved by the Parliament in 2008, modified in June, 2011) as this law gives us hope that major changes will happen in the near future concerning children theatre.

Cseke Péter