

Doctoral School of the University of Theatre and Film

How to write a fairy-play?

Thesis of Dissertation

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THESIS

The major theme of my doctoral dissertation is the methodology of child and youth play writing – while I must claim that I am rather skeptical when it comes to art methodology writing. Though at the meantime I do accept the existence of some even describable rules, moreover, I make an attempt to find these rules in my work and do not ignore them. This fertile contradiction led to my decision to analyze and to rely on the genre itself and to use it as a helping tool when thinking and dwelling on the art of composing a play.

As a matter of fact, drama as such is an unbound and vivid genre, in which characters allow it to serve different justice, in other words it is quite subjective and has many nuances. Drama rather asks important questions than makes claims. Additionally, it invokes several issues, but for sure: it does not fix exemplary rules.

I had actually assumed that I will find the truth, or at least I may get close to it, in case the main object of my investigation and its device coincide with each other. Or to put it differently, illustrating art with art might be more apparent and easier.

The dissertation is articulated in two different sections. Part one approaches more general matters. However, besides the dramaturgic, drama theoretical, and the child psychological basic claim, it also forms significant structural and dialogue-compositional problems. Then it offers practical solutions for these.

Being loyal to my original decision, in chapter I.1. the entrée would be a small piece of dramatic satire: a fictitious children play, an average performance of *Sleeping Beauty*. Or an general adaptation of the classic, with the ardent work of our imagination.

I tried to reach my aim by emphasizing crucial (local) and contemporary children-theatrical phenomena-: tendency, failure and main characteristics.

In the upcoming chapter (I.2.) I make an attempt to draw a conclusion after this exciting experiment. Furthermore, I try to find moral teachings of the experiment and most importantly

I take the main characteristics of today's children's plays or fairy plays into consideration and analyze them.

Frankly, I managed to find an interesting "diagnosis" after reviewing a list provided by a 2017 child-theater council that contained all the children performances that are actually running today in Hungarian theaters. This eye-catching diagnosis was the following: literally whether it is absurd or not, we cannot speak about contemporary Hungarian child drama literature, simply because of the pure and bitter fact that it does not exist at all.

The truth is that major well-functioning theaters rather play the game safe and in their repertoire we could mainly find well-known fairy tale adaptations. Or another case scenario is when they add advanced (in a theatrical sense) plays on the lists. These are many times interactive plays or new, regarding their forms, but this latter are not built on new and original Hungarian plays. In my dissertation my desire is to offer an explanation for this significant matter and phenomenon.

This will be accompanied by chapter three (I.3.) or we can name it as a psychological bypass: "how we should write to children?" I even made an interview with the celebrated psychologist, Tamás Vekerdy. Since no comprehensive work has been written about this problem that is quite elusive and flamboyant. It can be approached from a psychological and from a literary side as well.

In the additionally passages I (from an authorial perspective) make an effort to express and summarize the inevitable phases of writing a piece of art. Firstly, it could be entitled as the *birth of the basic idea* (chapter I.4.) or in other words: how does the basic idea of the play work as a trigger in the author's mind, second of all how does the playwright selects that particular "theme"- let us put it this way. Even when this expression might be so inaccurate why does she choose that topic he or she finally chooses?

I continue speaking about the method of character-writing that would actually cover more sub-chapters. Concerning this section, here I do state that the characters can be called as the inevitable engines of the play itself (chapter I.5.1). Truly, when a character, his personality and his inner function does not direct the play it will be fake and mimic. I try to protect my idea by shedding light on a section chosen from a play (I.5.2.). In a surreal scene from one of my published plays, namely *The Whole Tenth Season*, the "character-surgeons" operate the main character, the heroine and make her be in a sitcom series.

After this, I write a new children's play, but this is a fictional and imaginative game of mine only, in the next sections of my thesis. Moreover, I jot down an equation and a formula that contains the major correlations between plot and character (I.5.3.). Not to speak about the emblematic meeting with Henrik Ibsen, who gifts me with beneficial advices (I.5.4.). The fictitious play also contains a casting, where I choose potential protagonists for the given play. As an illustration or a tour in the author's brain, when he creates new characters (I.5.4). Additionally, it also shows the reader that there are factors that do not depend on the authors' decision when writing a play or working on a play. Or we can position this in a more mysterious way: how heroes are born, and what creates them?

In chapter I.6.1. I scrutinize the smallest structural unit of drama, the scene through different literary and dramatic examples.

I analyze the inner necessities and laws of the first scene (I.6.2.) then a rather boring interlude (I.6.3.) , then the climax or turning point (I.6.4.) and finally the last scene and one after the last scene (I.6.5. by writing one example in each category.

This is my methodology due to the fact that I am weigh more smart when I am in my creative mode and when I am writing, in comparison to my abstract way of thinking without writing.

So, in these previously mentioned chapters I try to stress my experience. According to that, the author's talent is only partly conscious and rarely can be learned. It is a power that can be obtained from literary handbooks. In addition to this and at first, it also contains lot of features that are applied unconsciously and only were recognized during my writing process.

The first chapter is closed by a section on the dramatic language: how shall we choose the proper language of the work that is about to be written (or do we select it at all or it actually elect us? or the characters bring it with themselves?). Besides, what might occur if we do not make this decision consciously and just leave the play form itself and if we leave the field for contingency? I hereby in my paper demonstrate some emerging significant opportunities through many examples. Here I illustrate possibilities like: archaizing, a vernacular tone, contemporary spoken language, professional jargons and so on. I also call attention to some avoidable loopholes that might occur during the authorial path.

The second part of my paper approaches the very fragile issue of fairy- play writing through a practical example that is based on a true story. More particularly right from the birth of the play till the final development and work out of the actual play.

I had started to plan my fairy fairy-play, namely *The Funny Princess* in 2010. Truly speaking, as the main idea, and the text of the play emerged in me, the same time the text was being written. This was an efficient way because I had always jotted down my thoughts on the birth of the play, on further occurring issues and finally the possible solutions I could find. I started my writing diary, in 2011 and it last till 2015 when the play itself was finished, prior to the announced premier.

As it was discussed at the first section of my doctoral dissertation, I check out all viewpoints that I mentioned: the birth of the basic idea, the choice of the most appropriate form, the casting of the perfect characters and their development right till the working out of the synopsis. So I keep track plus I check the crucial points and all phases till the writing of the play.

Honestly speaking, the performance based on the play failed in 2015. Dumaszínház only played it seldom, whereas Váci Dunakanyar Színház even called off the third planned show because the previous two performances turned out to be downfalls. Failure is always pretty painful for the author and for the participants too. Then the rightful question arises: what had happened, who should shoulder responsibility for the downfall of the performance? The playwright, the director, the actors or the audience? Or should we only blame the circumstances?

Later with time it is easier to me to see the big picture, with a clear head, and to analyze my responsibility as an author and this dissertation helped me to find this revelation that is related to my paper's major theme. Especially in the light of Péter Kárpáti's (opponent) review, which had already adumbrated the future happenings.

Part two eventually and inevitably has become a story of the birth and a downfall of a play, and I must claim that this has become absolutely exciting and edifying. In addition, I even risk to state that it is more exciting than a flourishing success story. Why is that so? Due to the fact that usually success as such is not easy to be explained and analyzed, whereas failure is. To demonstrate this idea, Péter Kárpáti in his critical review had claimed: "this part of the dissertation is the most dramatic". A story of a failure. This will be analyzed in a later chapter written in 2017.

Here, let me offer a draft that summarizes the major points of my thesis:

- in order to complete my dissertation I used the dramatic form because this genre is able to represent more truth, it is subjective and has nuances
- essentially, there is no such a thing as contemporary children-play literature, instead of it there are adaptations or innovative plays are running in theaters
- the different phases of a literary piece that is to be born, are not strictly the products of conscious planning
- a writer is confirmed and feels that he or she does not creates the characters, she or he rather makes a casting, as if that characters always existed
- scenes are the basic units of a dramatic structure, but all scenes are different and have different functions, therefore they require special way of thinking regarding they play's circumstances and situations
- the choice of the play's language is also a very fragile issue, it is at the edge of intuition and awareness, but it cannot be linked with eventuality
- the study of failure: the success of the literary piece cannot be in relation with the invested energy , nor with the will that breeds it, however many frustrating red flags, failures and mistake accompany it during the writing process