

University of Theatre and Film Arts Doctoral School

DRAMATURGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TIE PERFORMANCE

Thesis of Doctoral Dissertation

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2018

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The genre of TIE (Theatre in Education), using closed theatre scenes and interactive sections using theatrical or dramapedagogy tools, was born in Great Britain in 1964, and exists in Hungary since 1992. In its past 26 years here, it has gone through many theoretical and practical changes, but it is still a debated question what name would be appropriate for this genre, and also that on the theatre palette, where should it be categorized: is it a type of theater pedagogy, or a form of participatory theater? But what has become a certainty up to today is that this genre is a theatrical one - this dissertation is willing to analyse and strengthen this statement from a dramaturgical perspective.

My personal drive is based on the fact that I have been working with theaterpedagogy in a broader sense since 2004, and I started to work as a writer and dramaturge of TIE performances in 2013. Since then I have contributed to the creation of fifteen performances.

In my thesis, the already mentioned definition and identity-questions come up, which are all about the genre's journey of searching for its place and path. I consider the differences between the terms and fields of Theater in Education - here meaning not just the performance, but a specific area of theater pedagogy in a broader sense - and Theaterpedagogy (based on the German term Teaterpedagogik). Above that, I analyse the question what kind of effect does it have, if the TIE performance is under (one of) these fields.

In my opinion, the words education and pedagogy often have negative connotations in Hungary and one expects them to also be didactic, and also because participation appearing in TIE performances is way more important to me than the educational function of TIE, I suggest in my thesis that TIE genre should be thought of one of the forms of participatory theater. (However, I would consider it important and forward-thinking if the exact meaning of the terms education, teaching and pedagogic would become more clear for the mainstream.)

It is important to underline that in the case of a TIE performance, we talk about a kind of theater performance that is not willing to teach a specific knowledge, but rather invites the participants to think together based on a problem put in focus of general

humanness, ethics and many times also society. Therefore it brings back the forum nature of theater, and moreover it reflects in a sensitive way on the challenge, how is it possible to make people, nowadays living separately and not in communities, to become members of a community for one occasion, thinking, taking action and taking responsibility together.

The most significant specialty about these performances are the following: engagement of the audience; making spectators into participants and open-ended interaction, through which the participants can either have a real effect on the actions (their words and/or actions have an effect on how the characters take action or how the story is going on), or they are able to react to what is happening in the performance, to think about the problem in focus in a meaningful way.

It is worth it to analyse the TIE performances through “closed” theater scenes and interactive sections especially because of these specialties of the genre. According to my statement, from the aspect of dramaturgy and structure, this genre can be divided to four generations, and in each of these the relationship between theater scenes and interaction are different. The first two generations think about these as separate parts, in these cases the actor/teachers are interacting with the participants and invite them to create together out of character, as dramateachers. The second two generations are more and more trying to unify, in these cases the interaction is done from character.

This is why I separately analyse in these two cases how it is possible to create a dramaturgical unity between the theater scenes and interactive scenes, just as it is part of the definition of TIE performance. This seems more obvious when the interaction is carried out when the actor/teacher is in character, but it is possible for the first two generations, too, in case there is a comprehensive purpose of the creators, or if during the so-called dramapedagogy parts - including dramapedagogy based forms - such a co-creation happens (f.e. scenes or still image, installations), that later becomes part of the performance.

In the thesis I also try to find answers for the question: what rules can be detected connected to the interaction in character: typically, thinking about classical drama

text, when in the TIE structure, and what situation in the story does the first bit of “opening” start, meaning when does the interactive period start?

Based on my observation, interaction occurs the most frequently at a conflict or at a monologue, usually when the character(s) get to a hard situation, or a decision-making situation that is hard because of dilemmas. The tension is culminating, it is impossible to continue life in the system as it was before, as dramatic time gets out of the groove. (However, during the interaction the dramatic time does not stop; if it is at a place of a monologue, than it keeps going in its original tempo; if it is at a conflict, it expands.)

Interaction in character naturally has an effect on the continuance of the performance, occasionally a behaviour or sentence suggested by the participants is built in the next scene. But if this does not happen - as in the rules of the genre this is not definitely expected -, the participants still take a look at the following bit with different eyes, with the common knowledge and experience that they got from interaction.

The script of TIE drama is specific precisely because of interaction, as it has some points that are not previously written, as a terra incognita, waiting to be discovered together with the participants. Therefore the thesis will discuss the specifics of TIE drama and its “ruindrama” nature (compared to the “fully written” drama). On one hand, this becomes apparent as it puts a question in focus that is hard to answer instead of a statement or giving opinion, and the creators and participants look for the answer together throughout the performance. On the other hand, on the level of scenes, many times especially the high point scenes are missing from the script, as the “explosion” happens during the interaction, together with the participants.

Of course, a TIE script can be written with different methods and in these, the current Hungarian and British practice is very different from each other, yet in my thesis I outline - partially based on Mary Cooper’s *The playwright in TIE*, not yet translated to Hungarian - that based on my experience and opinion, what are the four phases, that the TIE author has to go through before creating a so-called finished TIE drama.

Above that, I also write about the planning process that I think of as ideal (this is before the rehearsal period): in this process, all the creators take part on an equal

level, putting their experiences and stories to it, therefore they commonly take responsibility for the created performance. The planning of the closed theater scenes and interactive theater scenes are happening simultaneously and with the same emphasis, this is how a sufficiently open performance can be born that is able to engage the audience.

As the TIE performances' script is special, therefore the professionals who write TIE also need special knowledge. In Hungary, this is typically a dramaturge also able to write, who needs dramapedagogy background knowledge, some psychological (developmental psychology) and sociology preparedness, and openness, ability and bravery to play - as (s)he also has to be part of the personal bits of the preparatory process.

In the end, the text deals with the question of evaluation, if it is possible to define how this genre can be done well? Many tend to think that because of interaction, TIE creators have bigger responsibility than the colleagues creating performances with only closed theater scenes. As I believe that all theater creator is responsible for their audience and everyone wishes to take effect and spur change, I would rather say that being a TIE professional is a separate profession, and this needs a specific extra knowledge that needs to be learned. Based on my own practice, I list from the perspective of the writer-dramaturge, what are these extra knowledges, especially because a dissertation is being born in the Doctoral School of the University of Theatre and Film Arts about the work of the actor/teacher.

Connected to the theoretical part of the dissertation, I attach a TIE drama of my own, that I created for the Vojtina Puppet Theatre. Above the description of the closed theater scenes and interactive periods, I also describe the planning process before the creation of the script and the dramaturgy decisions coming up during the work process.