


THE DISSOLUTION AND REBUILDING OF THE IMAGE		Performing Arts Keywords: the image, theatrical language, directorial reading, comedy events, grotesque language.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>When the director comes into contact with the text of a dramatic work he “crashes” or is confronted with the image created by it. Somewhere this image attracts him, kidnaps him, likes him, and somewhere else he seeks to get away from him, to be alienated and alienated, rerising on the original image, his directorial image, which is of a different sort. That’s why the same text is viewed differently from different directors. This is a little more important when the time of putting the same text on stage also changes.</p>		

The well-known comedy *Carnival of Korça* by Spiro Çomora has had several successful performances in the Albanian theater, especially its premiere at the People's Theater (1964) with the brilliant couple Viktor Gjoka as Nikollaq Jorganxhiu and Violeta Manushi as Olimbi Jorganxhiu (the leathershoes man), directed by Pandi Stillo. It was performed on January 23, 1964 and was given 285 times gathering 88,685 spectators, one of the most watched performances in the history of Albanian theater. Typologically, it is a comedy of characters, but without excluding the agile play of the comic situation with the plight of the Jorganxhi family to marry the only daughter that was way over her marriage time, the stupid Afrovit.

According to the critics of that time¹, the *Korça Carnival* was a ruthless flogging against the provincial mentality and low morale of a wealthy merchant family, where the child was “sold” in arranged marriages of interest and where snobbery and external glaze suffocate sincerity and beautiful positive feelings of people. All the figures, unequivocally, reflected genuine human and social relations.²

“The old director Pandi Stillo, as it seems from the beautiful play he gave us, – wrote Petro Marko for “*Carnival of Korça*” (1964), – staged this comedy not only out of desire, but also out of inner need . That Pandi Stillo started his career as a stage artist at the time when the comedy events took place. He introduces us to the world and the environment created by the author... and speaks the language of today”.³

So, he speaks the language of today ...

¹ Brahimi, Razi. *Manifestimi i artit të skenës*, Ylli, nr. 6, 1964, p. 21.

² See: Pano, Andon. *Njëzet vjet në Teatrin Popullor – mbresa dhe kujtime* (manuscript), Tirana, 1977, p. 298-302.

³ Marko, Petro. *Një sukses në dramaturgjinë dhe teatrin tonë*. Drita 16. 2. 1964, p. 2.

As can be seen, the director even then intended to speak the language of the time. This trend, as we take as a point of reference this brilliant classic comedy, is also noticed in later directorial readings. In 1972, the talented director Kujtim Spahivogli staged this brilliant comedy with the troupe of the Theater of Nations in Skopje, the Republic of North Macedonia, of former Yugoslavia, according to a completely new version with a modern directorial language, where the grotesque treatment of the characters, their behaviors, with a bitter and annihilating satire, and where the scenographic and costume solutions were distinguished for their metaphors and symbolism used. Spahivogli did a remodeling of the text by adapting it to modern theater codes.

A very conventional way was used in the conception of the stage space of the comedy, where some decorative elements with symbolic impregnation were placed, bringing even the use of metaphors and allegories clearly legible; as well as the language of costumes (with buttons-locks, ie people like safes, closed and hermetic, to remind cash registers, etc.), lights, props, etc.

As far as acting was concerned, the model that did not comply to the parameters of traditional naturalist characterizations was not applied, on the contrary, in the actors' play, the elements of ridicule and alienation towards the role and the role itself were used a lot, where the acting signs of modern theater, which was noticed with the use of grotesque, buffoonery, carnival, "comedia del arte".

Expectedly, the directorial reading of Kujtim Spahivogli for the time was a great leap. This is also explained by the fact that he staged the comedy at the Theater of Nationalities in Skopje, where the freedom of creation was much greater than in isolated and highly schematic Albania. What the actors interpreted and embodied was reminiscent of something from the '30s when it comes to comedy, but even more the realized characters were reminiscent of their ubiquitous fellow-citizens at the time the show was given in the early '70s. The word was more actively accompanied by movement and figurative gesture, by ritual and mimicry, where a very visible visuality was seen and where the verbal sound with the numerous rituals used in the repetition of certain words gave the written text a new space, much more expressive and especially much more fun.⁴

"Carnivals as a frame of comedy," said Fatos Kongoli, "idiotic characters turned into puppets, set in motion by a mannequin, – this is the idea on which the whole concept of the play by the director is based." Something really beautiful and original, which should not hinder the appearance of characters, ideas and thoughts...⁵

In the other version of the comedy "Carnivals of Korça" after 30 years (in 2000) by the director Dhimitër Pecani at the National Theater, the elements of criticism of some phenomena of human perversion in certain parts of society after 1990 and mockery of people who really had

⁴ Kostani, Rozi. *Historia e teatrit shqiptar në Maqedoni në vitet 1970-1990*, doctoral thesis, 2020.

⁵ Kongoli, Fatos. "Karnavalet e Korçës" nga *Teatri i Kombësive në Shkup*, November, nr. 11, 1972.

created some wealth, but from the moral moral values were very low, appear as the main goal and the reason for staging it.

The treatment of the figure of Nikolaq Jorganxhiu by the actor Roland Trebicka was on the verge of a burlesque and grotesque, where, as it were, irony and satire towards him no longer functioned as in the dramatic text. Although the director tried to satirize the figure of Nikollaq Jorganxhiu through the play of Roland Trebicka in terms of the greed of the new class of merchants and the rich who were born from poor Albania and in complete chaos, where every virtue and moral value was turned upside down and measured only by money, however, the directorial reading followed the traditional path with the selection of theatrical means of the classical format, consequently no convergence was achieved with the concrete phenomena of the 2000s when this comedy was staged.

This merchant drowned in money, without dignity and a certain sloppiness, did not represent in depth the character, nor the idea to ridicule, as it were, the new class of the rich in Albania during the years of transition. This wealthy class often lacked culture in the path of crime and theft, and a large part came from the lower and uneducated part of society, which was in total anarchy. As a result, they constituted an “original” phenomenon in the process of establishing new property relations. Satire and irony towards this new layer of bourgeoisie of dark and often criminal areas, did not gain the necessary sharpness and courage in the show, as everything is treated in a “classic” style, the more the character is reduced to his social danger. The lack of a negative empathy, with the presence of disgust and contempt for the young Nikollaks of the post-communist transition years in Albania, which appeared in the social and wealth hierarchy of the country between anarchy, theft and political chaos, could lead to the directorial concept of Dhimitër Pecani a much more critical and “serious” attitude towards the phenomenon represented by this character and the work as such. But that would require a different perspective, in line with the social developments of the 1990s, which the director did not have.

However, from the point of view of theatrical performance, Dhimitër Pecani gave a more or less dynamic value to the movement of the actors, the gesture, the sounds, the image, as well as the visual elements that were assumed from reading the play. The characters played by the actors were characterized by special gestures, which better displayed their character, especially the couple Roland Trebicka (Nikollaqi) and Zamira Kita (Olimbia), thus enabling the universalization of the phenomenon that they carried and represented in themselves, now more like people who reminded us of their role models in society and debauched and derailed people.

A completely new directorial reading was given to the text of the comedy by the director Elma Doresi in the stage version of the “Metropol” theater (2013). From the very beginning, the directorial metaphor that naturally includes the essence of the work and its object appears in a very legible way. An apple, red and healthy looking that is opening little by little before the eyes of the spectator. From there come the actor–characters. This selection is repeated at the end of the show, when the action ends and the actors–characters re–enter the “rotten apple” ... From the way it is

processed during the *mise-en-scène* and its treatment, the spectator quickly grasps the idea of a “rotten apple”, That is, of a sick, rotten, seemingly healthy, “clean” society, but which hides within it social and moral “worms”. The director does not deliberately stand on the one-sided and tendentious political burden of dealing with the conflict, as done by the author Spiro Çomora. Now the “rot of mentality” represented by the corrupt layer of rich merchants, with the “outer gloss of a rich trading family and the illusion that with wealth everything can be done”⁶, no longer comes in open and declared forms, where the worst and ugly must necessarily be and be seen in the rich, in the feudal bourgeois class, etc. Also, the criticism of the political regime and the administration, immersed in allusions and scams for personal gain (prefect Vehip), no longer come as realities identified in the 1930s of the monarchy. Rather phenomena and characters are universalized. This is Elma Dores’ new approach in directorial reading. According to her right and modern view, stupidity, corruption, immorality, ignorance, the sale of man and love, emptiness, glaze, snobbery, all these are no longer treated as ideological products of a certain time, ie only of the ‘30s, the monarchical state and the administration of King God I. On the contrary, they belong to all the corrupt administrations of all time, just as the characters become the types and archetypes we saw yesterday, we see today and we will see tomorrow. Evil in this case does not belong only to a concrete social and historical reality, but is generalized and exceeds the time of the subject of comedy.

The new reading of the comedy is undoubtedly related to the emphasis that the director has placed on the phenomena of the Albanian reality of the 2000s. And to realize this idea she introduces many details and implications that represent exactly the fallen and perverted part of Albanian society, of the allegedly “democratic” administration and corrupt state, but especially criticism of the degradation of human moral values. The threads of comedy are already moving more to the plight that has gripped the wealthy Jorganxhi family (Nikollaqi and Olympia) to marry the daughter left behind, Afrovit. Here the director creates even the most beautiful and agile situations. These threads certainly move further, but not necessarily to the urban bourgeoisie of Korça in the 1930s. They seem to be exactly today, so in this new class of wealthless moral scruples born after the fall of the dictatorship, where education is lacking, where there is a lot of snobbery, ignorance, boasting and idiocy. The director is not at all interested in emphasizing the “class” differences as before, but the phenomenon acquires universalizing and emancipatory dimensions, presented as the permanent contrast between good and evil, noble and banal, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, etc. Nowhere do you see the opposition between the rich and the poor, seen in the form of a scheme or ideological doctrinal instruction, but of the citizens and the nobles against the scoundrels and snobs. The end of the comedy is a hilarious carnival. A clever shift is already being made even in the treatment of the acting of actors and characters played, where more grotesque style is required. The actress Marsela Lena in the role of Afrovit or Denis Muka in the role of Nikollaq especially stood out. They are two extremes that are also plastically treated in the language of grotesque and carnival, reminiscent of the characters of *Comedia del Arte*.

⁶ Brahimi, Razi. *Manifestimi i artit të skenës*, Ylli, nr. 6, 1964, p. 21.

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