

**UNIVERSITATEA DE ARTE DIN TÂRGU-MUREȘ
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TEZĂ DE ABILITARE

**APLICAȚIILE SISTEMULUI DE REGIE AL LUI VSEVOLOD MEYERHOLD ÎN
REGIE, MANAGEMENT ȘI CERCETARE TEATRALĂ**

AUTOR: MARIA-ADRIANA HAUSVATER

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Summary

The starting point of the following paper is a personal cultural undertaking, within the conceptual terms of constructivism, a theatrical theory devised at the beginning of the previous century by Russian theoretician Vsevolod Meyerhold, one of the most revolutionary theatre creators of the XXth Century, an artist who brought about the evolution of modern European performing arts, though his own personal history was crushed by the harsh encounter with the history of his time, thus throwing his entire work into oblivion.

The thesis provides a threefold perspective of this approach. The theories of Vsevolod Meyerhold regarding approaches to directorial art, their practical applications in working on a theatre production, as well as with the actors, the involvement - for the first time - of the public as an integral part in the evolution of the stage play, open a very comprehensive universe in my evolution as a theatre director. A second perspective relates to theater management, conceived as a specific construct adapted to the theatrical field and applied in all aspects of the institution's activity.

Finally, the central part of the thesis focuses on researching and recovering the work of this highly controversial theater maker - from a political point of view, in an atrocious political

period, not yet completely uncovered, and especially not forgiven by the families of the victims of that regime; from a religious point of view, in an age where belonging to one religion or other was reason enough for blame – and religious conversion, all the more; from a moral point of view - because of subordinating the principles of an artistic utopia to a political program.

From the director's point of view, I spoke on the topic of relating oneself to present times, of the independence and responsibility of the actor, on the one hand, and on the other we analyzed the approach of the theatrical project in a unitary and exhaustive way as a structure (construction), exemplifying it with three of its basic elements: dramatization, lighting and rhythm.

Next, the thesis presents a systemic approach to theater management, which I have been practicing for 12 years as manager of the Timisoara National Theater and creates a connection with those directions devised by (and put to practice as long as it was possible) by Vsevolod Meyerhold for the organic evolution and the social utility of the theater.

Finally, an important part of the thesis is dedicated to the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold and his influence on contemporary theatrical art, while trying at the same time to determine the connection between Romanian theater and the conceptual and practical directions elaborated by the Russian director. Finally, a sub-chapter is dedicated to the application of Meyerholdian theories in a contemporary Romanian theatre production.

In the elaboration of this paper I was concerned with the scientific dimensions of this theatrical myth that revolutionized the world of Russian and European art, pouring the foundations of a new theater, the convention theater.

The following sub-chapter starts from the premise that the work and life of Vsevolod Meyerhold cannot be analyzed outside the historical, social, political and cultural context. Thus, once the disturbed monograph of Russia in the beginning of the twentieth century is drawn, the personal and artistic biography emerges, beginning with his early years in a Lutheran family in Penza, the abandonments of his law studies in favor of the theater, continuing with the abandonment of a promising career as an actor for that of director, by virtue of assuming theatrical practice as a whole.

The research follows Vsevolod Meyerhold as founder of a theater company promoting symbolic theater, as director of the Theater Studio at the Art Theater Studio led by his former mentor, K.S. Stanislavski, as the first director of Vera Komissarjevskaia's theater company and

beyond, throughout a thirty-seven-year career, marking his positions against naturalism, as well as his approach on symbolic theater. An important part of this chapter is devoted to Meyerholdian theories about the new theater - the theater of convention: it is all about dynamics and rhythm in the actor's work, about modern techniques, new stylistics, new methods of artistic expression both at the level of stage direction and of interpretation.

Vsevolod Meyerhold creates a relation between the four basic elements of theater (the playwright, the actor, the director and the spectator) into two distinct schemes: the triangle theater, where the director's work is similar to that of the conductor and line theater, where the four fundamental elements of the theater are linked with equal importance and relationship. Also, the Russian director changes forever the traditional structure of the performing space and the relationship between the stage and the hall. Last but not least, the research establishes that Meyerhold's theories on dramatizing the text, on the role of the director and his tasks in constructing the stage performance evolve in a seemingly paradoxical rapport with the assumption of the social and political mission that Vsevolod Meyerhold attributes to the art creator.

Theatrical revolution brings about innovations in stage art, innovations that will later determine the evolution of the theater in the 20th century.

Thus, constructivism and biomechanics define the scientific foundations of the theater. Vsevolod Meyerhold is the prototype of the contemporary director for whom the show represents a thorough transcription of the text on stage. The writer passes through the subtle configuration of the actor who, through his physical data, his reaction speed and especially his artistic imagination, is equally an instrument and motor for the entire action.

The paper also draws a parallel between Vsevolod Meyerhold's course as an exponent of the theater movement in Russia and Romanian theater, seen in the context and through the influences that determine the evolution of Romanian stage art between the two World Wars. State and independent theatrical institutions, publications of the time, avant-garde groups are being analyzed.

Thus, interwar theatrical life can be outlined in its basic data such as the subordination to the text, the director's place in the construction of the show, directions in stage design, the thematic preoccupations of the time and others. It also investigates the presence of Meyerholdian innovations in the theoretical and practical directions of the art of directing and acting,

respectively. The conclusion of this chapter is that the perception of Vsevolod Meyerhold's directing system in the Romanian theater was relatively truncated at that time, being received in its real data and all its uniqueness much later, after the 1960's, when the new trend in Romanian stage direction was inspired by it and recovered him from the point of view of theatrical science through directors such as Radu Penciulescu, David Esrig, Cătălina Buzoianu, Lucian Pintilie, Liviu Ciulei, Andrei Șerban, Gina Ionescu and Alexa Visarion - in terms of the dynamics of actor and space, Alexander Hausvater, who brings, through his performances after the 1990s, determinism, political commitment, constructivism, cinematographic imagery, dramatizing of the theater text into a script, and manner of working with the actor derived from the Meyerholdian dynamics, or, in the context of the political theatricality of the early 1990s, Victor Ioan Frunză, Iulian Vișa, Silviu Purcărete, Mihai Măniuțiu, Alexandru Darie.

In support of the arguments above, the statements of three important directors on the reception of Vsevolod Meyerhold in contemporary Romanian theater are presented. David Esrig, Cătălina Buzoianu and Alexander Hausvater express their own views that point to conjectural filiation (David Esrig), the fascination for a unique biographical and artistic journey (Cătălina Buzoianu) and, last but not least, the undertaking of a complex directing system (Alexander Hausvater). The necessary conclusion is that Vsevolod Meyerhold is a role model and landmark for contemporary Romanian theater, both through his art and civic attitude. Also, the chapter brings forth the need for theater to regain its educational role and to connect with reality.

A special subchapter emphasizes that, in order to talk about the posterity of the great director, insight into his personal history is necessary. The obligatory silence laid on Vsevolod Meyerhold's name and work is hard to lift. Time passes and many of his theories bear the name of some of his former disciples who had the chance to put into practice the system created by their forbidden mentor. In the 1960s, a group of admirers and family members began recovering Vsevolod Meyerhold's work by publishing his writings, speeches, journals, as well as testimonies on his work, and with the Perestroika, the undertaking culminated with the creation of the Meyerhold Cultural Center that aims at recovering and putting to value the theatrical theories of the Russian director. Also, the chapter underlines the presence of Vsevolod Meyerhold in the flow of thinking of the European theatrical aesthetics in the 20th century.

Last but not least, the thesis follows a meyerholdian exercise, a practical application of the system designed and supervised by the Russian director. This refers to the performance

presented at the Timișoara National Theater in 2005 – *The Black Chest or The Tortoise's Manifesto*, a stage script based on the homonymous novel by G. Călinescu. Starting from the premise that *The Black Chest* is an absurd novel, not just one meant to support a thesis, the argumentation places both the author and his work in a socio-political context.

Once a theoretical canvas is determined, the paper follows the structure of the show: conception of the script, construction of the show, the plot in its lines of strength, performing space, elements of setting, costumes and props, lighting, music, etc.

Also, a subchapter is dedicated to the personal considerations regarding the construction techniques of the stage play, as well as the relation and similarities between the author and the character (G. Călinescu - Ioanide) from the perspective of a meyerholdian exercise.

It is necessary to conclude on the role of the response to Vsevolod Meyerhold theories as undertaking of the artistic paradigms that directly, and mainly indirectly, determined contemporary theater to acquire major stakes essential for the spiritual becoming of society and the individual.

The second part of the paper focuses on evolution and career development plans. Once the context has been established, the thesis takes into account the opportunity of organizing workshops in which biomechanical exercises can be practiced. Further on, the applied research of the various directions in stage directing leads to important conclusions for the evolution of the art of directing. The conclusion of this chapter postulates the collective character of art and its ability to refine the artistic individuality of the theater maker.

The last part of the paper focuses on the two research projects - one dealing with the relationship between the actor and the director and an introduction into the art of directing.

Finally, the role of the directions analyzed in this paper and its benefits for the relationship between theatrical education and stage practice is underlined.