

International Memory of the World Register

Documentary film on Correspondence theatre (Serbia)

2012-79

1.0 SUMMARY

Correspondence theatre is a specific form of theatre play and organization, founded in Novi Sad, Serbia in 1974. That year was a turning point in ex-Yugoslavia. The year when one cultural concept, financed and ruled by the state and governing communist party, started to fade in front of a decentralized, so called self-governing, financed by Funds. Theoretically and practically, it was implemented by a group of theatre enthusiasts under the guidance of Mladen Dražetin, as an original model of theatre culture, an extension among the masses. In the beginning, theatre performances were created in the villages and towns of ex-Yugoslavia according to manuals delivered, to the organizers from Novi Sad, from all across the world, via letters, the telephone, the radio and fax machines.

The actors in the performances were both amateurs, taking their first steps and professionals opting to taste a new playing and cooperative approach, more frank and informal.

The new acting stage was interactive, the protagonists attained to the audience, direct communication with the audience was established, to mutual satisfaction. Within this model, different branches of theatre were established: dramatic, comical, ecological, invitations to peacekeeping and humanitarian actions, puppet/play and live plays in children's hospitals and institutions. Each individual spectator was provided with the opportunity to make suggestion and remarks which the writers and the acting group would later incorporate to make a new play, one which would always have a humanistic sense.

The method was to join two main principles: that each person had common ideals and needs and specific ones. Every experience was valuable to add to an already acting performance. Each person in the audience was able to share their loneliness and lack of communication. The scenarios used were varied, from the classical world and from native literature, adapted to the participants in the play. The performances were followed by a questionnaire in order to find out the interests, problems and dilemmas of that particular audience. As the visitors got involved in the play, the traditional theatre buffer was removed.

Correspondence Theatre was performed on squares, streets, railway stations, factories, hospitals, but also on professional stages in the cities. At the beginning, because it was compulsion, afterwards, it came to be the best way to reach the audience. The group of enthusiasts consisted of various professions and ethnicities living in multiethnic Novi Sad and Vojvodina. Apart from actors, there were also students, mechanics, clerks, economists, locksmiths, photographers and many others. The main radio amateur of and coordinator of Correspondence Theatre

Media Center for the world_was, Slovak, the actors were Hungarians, Romanians, Croats ... essentially, Yugoslavia mirror.

The originality of this model got much attention and its successor in Novi Sad is the "Stage of Drama Arts" (Pozorište dramskih umetnosti).

The SDA is the first association for culture and art, which cherishes theatre amateurism, and has a standing professional stage and Correspondence Theatre. Collaborating with the SNP (Serbian National Theatre Novi Sad) and other theatres both in Serbia and abroad. Out of Comedy theatre, one of the three stages of the SDA, instigated the Tournament of Ingenuity, inspired by Mladen Dražetin's CT idea and method, which ran from 1977 to 1998, and was organized by Politika Ekspres Daily. It was a competition of villages and cities under the motto: Laugh on your own account! It was a competition of texts and stage performances. Thus far, over 150 performances have been played out. On occasion, since 1975, the Association has published a journal titled: „Pozornica“(the Stage) and published books. The most important of which is the university textbook by Petar Ljubojev „ Mass communication“.

The Humanistic and Educational Fund of TV Novi Sad was founded in 1991 and operated until the year 2000. The idea came from the viewers of TV Novi Sad and was implemented by its managers, Mladen Dražetin and Petar Ljubojev (also a member of CT) and two others, joined by three priests. The Fund connected endangered citizens with benefactors, which distributed aid directly, foregoing intermediaries and possible corruption.

Through support and practical help from CT, the Roma theatre was formed which evolved into the Roma Union. It started in the village of Novo Miloševo in Vojvodina. A peculiar fact being that entire families have taken part in it.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

RUV RTV Public Broadcasting Service Radio Television Vojvodina

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

Owner and Custody

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Mrs. Jolan Stefanović

2.4 Contact details

RTV archive – film archive

Ignjata Pavlasa 1, 21000 Novi Sad, Vojvodina, Serbia

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3. 0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Series "From sociology of theatre"

Documentary film on "Correspondence theatre of Mladen Dražetin"

Production: TV Novi Sad 1985

Broadcast: 17.06.1985

Starring: sociologist of culture Mladen Dražetin PhD, actor Vladimir Stojanov, Prof Alojz Ujez PhD, theatre director Vida Ognjenović, and writer Raša Popov

Content: (manual file)

Workers in a factory, Theatre performance takes place in front of the workers, next to a furnace, Mladen Dražetin, founder of CT, walks across the frozen field accompanied by his group holding instruments.

Amateurs from "ŽTO" (Railway-Transport Organization), performance in the Museum of Revolution in Novi Sad. Speeches by Alojz Ujez and Vida Ognjenović.

Esperantists, songs, statements, actors – amateurs of CT acting; short performances in ŽTO; the Museum, the village of Krušedol, Railway station in Indjija and Putinci, walking through the snow, in front of a wooden cabin, porter house at the factory "Pobeda", Petrovaradin. Statement by Raša Popov on the improvised stage. Mladen Dražetin comments every statement; CT Group walking through the frozen field; Dražetin speaks, surrounded by sheep.

* *Mladen Dražetin, PhD of Sociology of culture, economists, theater author, poet and literate. (CV in addition)*

** *Vladimir Stojanov, actor, founder and executive manager of Correspondence Theater*

*** *Prof on Faculty of Drama Belgrade and director Alojz Ujez*

**** *Vida Ognjenovic, born 1941 in Dubočke village, [Nikšić](#) municipality) is a famous [Serbian](#) theater director, playwright, writer, drama professor and diplomat. In 2012 she was given the International Humanist Award by the International Humanist and Ethical Union ([IHEU](#)).*

***** *Rasa Popov, graduated Philosophy, long standing journalist, master of ceremonies, also a lecturer for Serbian language in London, Birmingham and Nottingham from [1975](#) to [1977](#); editor in chief of [Matica Srpska](#) from [1983](#). to [1985](#). godine; awarded by Radio Belgrade for series" The shapes of fascism"*

3.2 Catalogue or registration details

Technical details:

Kind of a tape: P+pt (sh), work copy N-a/b, Pt-effects, Pt Mus, Pt-dialog

Colour film

Sound: Sep mag

Duration: 30.12'

Length: 346m

Production: TV Novi Sad 1985

Signature: 214/85

Producer: Vesna Ivošević

Director and editor: Petar Ljubojev

Screenplay: Vlado Mićunović, reporter for “Politika” daily

Cameraman: Slavuj Hadžić

Awards: Armand Lanaux, Monte Carlo TV Film Festival, 1986

3.4 History/provenance

Professor Petar Ljubojev PhD, editor in chief of the Education and Scientific Program, broadcast on TV Novi Sad, being a sociologist of culture, had been intrigued by the idea and practical work of Correspondence theatre for some time before thinking about directing this film. He and the screenplay writer Vladimir Mićunović, a journalist of Politika daily (the most prominent daily in Yugoslavia and Serbia of all time), had been following the work of CT for an entire year before the idea about a film began to emerge. Meanwhile, Petar Ljubojev observed the functioning of CT Media Center, learning more and more about new theatre phenomena. At just about the same time, the founder of Correspondence Theatre, Mladen Dražetin, had been accepted into the postgraduate studies program at the Faculty of Drama, Belgrade University. His Master’s topic: “Form and performance of Correspondence Theatre in Novi Sad” met with much resistance, little understanding and many discussions from Professors who could not get a grasp of this new concept. However, two of them, were his fervent supporters. His Professor and Mentor Alojz Ujez, head of the Department for Theatre Organization and Production and Professor Miroslav Belović both embraced Correspondence Theatre from the start. Vladimir Mićunović, wrote about Correspondence Theatre in three issues of “Politika”, and received enormous positive feedback by writers, everyday people and experts. The Correspondence Theatre Centre was flooded by letters and applications from all over the world. One professional Canadian actor even wrote to Dražetin saying that he wanted to quit his job and devote himself to Correspondence Theatre. Esperantists saw in it a fresh chance to market the idea and use the “their borderless language”. Mutual plays, which took place between countries, were organized. A German theatre delegation showed great interest in Correspondence Theatre as a possibility for healing small tongue-tied children. In an interview with “Politika” daily Petar Ljubojev says:

“Before the final version of the documentary, I had two different scenarios: the first was a short documentary about the people - enthusiasts in action (“Pictures from the life of one Mladen”) which I couldn’t implement. After that I wrote a new one, together with Neoplanta film Production (“The night of human goodness”) which was funded by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Shooting had been delayed numerous times due to lack of finance. Finally, I had decided to speak with “the architect” of the Correspondence Theatre idea, Mladen Dražetin, at the TV Novi Sad

studio. I wished the actors to play their own lives. I assume that the broadcast “Correspondence Theatre of Mladen Dražetin” is one television essay which uses a film language to import in TV something in enticing manner”

After studying public opinion, and moved by the huge interest of the readers, Petar Ljubojev, directed a documentary in 1985. The screenplay was written by Vlado Mićunović, the cameraman was Slavuj Hađžić, recognized for his work both locally and abroad. The documentary was broadcasted within the series “Sociology of culture” and after Monte Carlo, shown in 105 countries worldwide.

* Professor Miroslav Belović, (1927 -2005) director, writer and actor, studied in Russia, director of Jugoslav Drama theatre in Belgrade and professor of FDU Belgrade (Faculty of Drama Arts)

At the same time, Dobrik Josip, who ran a radio station in Novi Sad (an expert in radio amateurism with friends throughout the world) coordinated the CT radio network, he asked the Director, Ljubojev, not to record his documentary in the CT Media Center out of conspiracy reasons saying: „It’s best not to film the work of amateur radio stations out of security reasons – counter espionage!”

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

RADIODIFUZNA USTANOVA VOJVODINE,, RADIO TELEVIZIJA VOJVODINE“
Broadcasting Institution of Voivodina, Radio Television Vojvodina, Radio Novi Sad and television Novi Sad
21000 Novi Sad, Serbia,
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4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Head of film and TV archive
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TV Archive, Ignjata Pavlasa 3
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E-mail: jolan.stefanovic@rtv.rs

4.4 Accessibility

Accessibility is regulated by the Law on Archives of the Republic of Serbia, adopted in December 2011, and Regulation on the Preparation and Broadcasting of TV programs on RUV RTV from November 2009 (abstract)

The RTV employees (journalist, editors and producers) can get access any work days between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. at TV archive. A third party must submit a written enquiry – the request then gets authorized by the General Manager of RTV, with prior verification of author's rights conducted by the legal department. Dubbing is done according to the present price.

For us, more access would mean promotion on the UNESCO MoW web site on RTV official web site (trailer) and Links to the specialized purchase on line web sites for archives and film.

The original film is a 16mm located in the museum depot.

All restrictions in access may ensue exclusively out of copyright status of the documentary heritage.

4.5 Copyright status

Copyright holders of the nominated film are known and they are:

1. Vladimir Mićunović – screenplay
2. Legal successor of Director, Petar Ljubojev, daughter Nadezda Ljubojev
3. Legal successor of cameraman, Slavuj Hadžić, wife Mirjana Hadžić

RUV RTV is copyright holder of the video gram-producer and has the rights upon the film as well, limited in accordance of all copyright holders. The interrelationship is regulated by separate contracts.

5.1 Authenticity

Being an audio and visual document (originally a film) it expresses the energy directly, the participants (as they looked and acted), the audience (as they were, their actual expressions and reactions to Correspondence Theatre in its original environment), and thoughts of theatre experts on the subject.

Most of the participants-testifiers are still alive today and there is enough valid data, in addition to the film, to ascertain its origin and identity.

5.2 World significance

The documentary movie “Correspondence theatre of Mladen Dražetin” is the only movie documenting this unique theatre phenomenon which was born in Novi Sad in 1974 as a cultural and rebel movement of a group of enthusiasts. In those times,

amateurism was practiced in folklore and music, not as a tendency in theatre. Correspondence Theatre could not have been registered as an NGO being a new and “suspicious” idea to the politicians, but the Stage for Drama Arts, as Cultural and Art Fellowship (KUD) which was the standard organizational form of amateurs in smaller environments of culture. As a group of stage fans, guided by Mladen Dražetin, they faced increasing problems, administrative obstacles and communist ideology misunderstandings, their determination to play anywhere, to anyone, at any time, grew greater and more resolute.

After being recognized in Monte Carlo the movie was broadcast in more than 100 countries.

The jury statement, read by Frederique Rosef, state that the “Novi Sad coverage speak upon “a non-everyday cultural movement and a plea of a completely new theatre form, in which communication and intercourse between people is of essential importance. The authors of this film are referring to the subject with a right dose of irony and humor, but with a proper measure of genuine interest for culture and art. The jury specially pointed out innovation of character and spontaneity which brings out this film. Here are a few remarks from the participants of the Festival:

Jose Maria Bersosa, director (Spain): “There is freshness and youth enthusiasm, which nowadays seldom could be found”.

Edgardo Kozarinski, director (Argentina): “This program is getting more and more quality by every next scene, by every passed minute, because it contains great living optimism and imagination.”

Gabriel de Bray: president of Organization Committee and International TV University.” The program Correspondence Theatre stands for a humanitarian concept of culture what is exactly the aim and the mission of UNESCO International Radio and Television University.

When Mladen Dražetin grasped the impact he decided to get scientific proof for his obsession. He applied for a Master’s studies at the Faculty of Drama in Belgrade. His thesis was: “The specificity of Correspondence Theatre from Novi sad, with the projection of further development” in 1989. His application was followed by many discussions between his supporters and his opponents, but the first group won and Dražetin succeeded in acquiring an M.A. in Correspondence Theatre. The next step was a PhD on Faculty of compuserve services Novi Sad with thesis: “Amateurism as the kind of human self-realization, by local radio and TV stations in Vojvodina” in 2004.

The echo of CT was especially effective among “Yugoslav worker’s clubs abroad”. They were wishing for instructions, any education, for dramatization of different plays. The Croat reporter Slavko Šimunić from “Večernji list” Zagreb, was the first to spread out the idea which happen to be agreed with CT – how to skip over the language and cultural barriers and boundaries in culture? International cooperation had begun and mutual plays were being prepared.

There were dozens of RTV broadcasts on the subject of Correspondence

Theatre in those times, in the 70s, 80s and 90s, sent out through different media both domestic and foreign, but only one movie. Were it to disappear, there would be

no audio and visual evidence of that genuine and original theatre form and its enthusiasts.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

1. Time

The movie is most certainly evocative of its time, the golden age of cultural blossoming in amateurism underneath a unique form of socialism in Yugoslavia called self-government. The year when the movie was produced was also the turning point of finance and cultural direction in the former Yugoslavia, a passage from a centralized to a decentralized government. Emancipation from a centralized state and one party regime gave rise to new models and movements of self-proving and creation.

2. Place

The first practical experience gained by Correspondence Theatre was in Novi Sad. The rehearsals were staged almost anywhere: parks, private apartments, basements, streets, hospitals, railway stations, factories, prisons, rented spaces were only for premieres. The places were sold out every time to the last. Groups of performers have been multiplied, appearing so performances of CT stepped in high schools, student Halls, local municipality centers, rehabilitation institutions etc. It was a first class cultural event when Shisgal's "Love" was performed in Susek village; such was the Nusic's* "Ordinary People" for the citizens of these small places. Every place was perfect for acting, for a play and for joy. Conquering the location problem was the very first reason to invent Correspondence Theatre.

A lot of spaces, buildings and villages have disappeared or been altered from the time of the movie having been made.

3. People

The movie is a reflection of the time and the people living from the 70s on, especially in socialism and in smaller communities: their conception and cultural education, a mirror of their needs, relationships, wishes, joys and problems, their perception of the economy, politics, bureaucracy...their desire to travel, communicate with foreigners, feel like a citizen of the world, form friendship, to express themselves in creative ways, search out new paths, to forget the war, states, iron rulers and directives: To taste the freedom at a higher level.

It also reflects the dissatisfaction with professional theatre and cultural trends at those times.

It is proof of truly enthusiastic creators and Don Kihotes, it is a monument of human persistency and proves that energy, belief and goodwill will overcome all barriers. Correspondence Theatre represents, in some way, a precursor of the Internet; because it tried and succeeded in connect people from all over the world

4. Subject and theme

The appearance of Correspondence Theatre in the movie represents a new phenomenon in cultural life, especially amateurism, a new organization and form of human connectivity, education and human activity by written communication and the media present at that time.

5. Form and style

The film satisfied the professional criteria of its time. The Jury of Prix Armagn Lanoux in Monte Carlo, in the words of Vlado Mićunović, found the movies overcoming the old forms of artistic expressions and approaching the concept of "Total Theatre".

The documentary is in 16mm which is by all means disappearing and has been out of use for a long time.

* Nusic: most dramatized Serbian writer, popular by his comedies

6.0 Social/ spiritual/ community significance

This documentary has significance not only for its authors and audience but also today. It is valuable scientific material for the students of cultural sociology, RTV and drama (Brane Djordjević is doing his PhD on it at the moment) and is a contribution to research in cultural amateurism.

6.1 Rarity

The unique theme and subject brought a unique content to this Documentary film.

6.2 Integrity

The 16mm film is seldom to be found. However, the same content on the same format could not be produced ever again. The film contains every needful segment (Kind of a tape: P+pt (sh), work copy N-a/b, Pt-effects, Pt Mus, Pt-dialog) to be complete, and it is of solid quality, considering when it was produced. From the original, film, it was transferred to VHS and finally, to DVD.