


*THE SCENOGRAPHER AT A CROSSROADS OF ARTS*

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*'When I consider everything that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment,  
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows  
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;  
When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
Cheered and check'd even by the selfsame sky,  
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
And wear their brave state out of memory;  
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay  
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,  
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay  
To change your day of youth to sullied night;  
And all in war with Time for love of you,  
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.'*

Sonnet XV, William Shakespeare

In this sonnet, Shakespeare refers to what I think stands at the basis of theatre: transience. Theatre is not eternal. It can be preserved, for a limited time, through photography, models, video materials. Yet, even so, once it stops 'happening', it can no longer exist as such in any format, for the magical core of a theatre performance cannot be encompassed by means outside the human conscience and spirit. A miracle takes place at a given time, then vanishes. This is its state of grace. This is magic and is connected to the moon, the sky, God, and man.



*'Let nothing be done rashly, and at random, but all things according to the most exact and perfect rules of the art (of living).'<sup>1</sup>*

The artistic career of a scenographer, like any other theatre creator's, includes providential meetings, meetings that leave a mark, a footprint, that change, and transform it, both positively, and negatively. To me, theatre is a road, a journey, in which beauty sometimes meets ugliness, art sometimes meets routine, the poise of the incipit, the naivety of the uncreated sometimes reaches a terminus, a dead end, in which the crucial moments give rise to fundamental crossroads. I have had the chance to meet the right people at the right time, people who distinguished themselves through their capacity to give, to build, to leave a mark on both people, and places. These are the theatre people who train theatre people, people who live through art and who have the capacity to develop theatre places and spaces, through art.

As a theatre person, one of my most essential meetings was that with Constantin Chiriac, which happened in the mid-1990s, when he was creating the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. Constantin had surrounded himself with highly enthusiastic people, alongside whom he managed to light up the flame of the Festival, which over the years, grew organically, in accordance and in harmony with the cultural space of the city of Sibiu. The city and the Festival completed each other and developed at the same time. This meeting happened under the sign of the need for theatre, the need to express ourselves, to know, to discover. At the beginning of the 90s, when I was starting to understand the world in which I had entered, Constantin invited me to the festival, where I was to hold a student workshop, quite a daring thing to do at that time. We were to go in a factory and invent oversized costumes and objects made of unconventional materials, which were then to be exhibited at the end of the festival. The theme, the space, as well as the duration of this experience made it so important. We all learnt, among others, an essential thing: team work. By this day, I

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<sup>1</sup> Aurelius, Marcus, *Gânduri către sine însuși. Cartea a patra. (Meditations. Book IV.)* Translated (into Romanian) by Cristian Bejan, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018, p. 115.

haven't discovered why I was given this chance. At that time, leading a team of people at the best age of searching, being able to experiment in such a space, as well as in such a context, was dictated by Chance. It was probably a vision of his, which included me, was directed at me and which meant a lot for me at that moment in my life and in my artistic searches. The theatre creators participating at that festival, who saw the final result of that workshop that I had conducted with the students, invested me with the trust necessary for any young creator to kickstart their career.

Over the years, things have evolved - I was involved in the creation of several performances and had the chance to meet important theatre people. My meeting the festival director Constantin Chiriac happened at the same time as the beginning of my collaboration with two very valuable directors, Alexandru Dabija and Cătălina Buzoianu. In the mid 90s, together with them, I was part of the creative team of performances that went down in the history of Romanian theatre and outlined the lines of force of my job, of my artistic career. I am referring to the shows *Zhao the Orphan*, which won the 1996 UNITER Best Show Prize, and *Chira Chiralina*, the Best Show of 1997. In the case of both these shows, my work was rewarded with UNITER Prizes for Best Scenography, in 1996 and 1997. Besides receiving these two distinctions, I had the chance to be part of Alexandru Dabija's team and stand by him as he created other relevant shows at that time: *The Brothers*, which won a prize for scenography in 1997 and was staged at the "Sică Alexandrescu" Dramatic Theatre in Braşov, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *De la chair au throne*, staged at Teatrul Tineretului in Piatra Neamţ. In fact, these performances were invited at the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. All these meetings had a meaning, strengthened teams, as I lived and learned about theatre.

I think it is essential for a young artist-scenographer to have meetings, to meet people who can and are open to share their experience, feelings, and beliefs. These essential meetings must be acknowledged and assumed at that moment, and most especially deserved. In 2008, Constantin Chiriac invited me to work in the cultural space that was the "Radu Stanca" National Theatre in Sibiu, a point which defined the beginning of a long, fruitful theatre collaboration. It was not by chance that, almost at the same time, my existence was faced with a major meeting, that would complete my artistic experience until that point, i.e. my meeting director Silviu Purcărete. That was a defining chapter in my artistic life, especially as these meetings interweaved. The theatre producer and director Constantin Chiriac focused on uniting artists in creation. One of the great assets of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival is that it is a platform which allows for and encourages meetings and dialogues between artists. My providential meeting with Silviu Purcărete gravitated around

this space, the “Radu Stanca” National Theatre in Sibiu, resulting in several years in which we worked and lived in a unique environment. Together, we have created a plethora of performances, such as *Carnival Stuff*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Oidip*, *The Scarlet Princess*, etc.

The fruits of this artistic and human pathway have led me to the conclusion that this is the imperative moment to share my concrete experiences. These occurrences and thoughts resulted in a major idea in 2016, when I created the exhibition *TransMutations*, at the National Museum of Art of Romania, challenged by the director of the National Theatre Festival, Marina Constantinescu. Having to select and put my ideas into words for this exhibition put me in a reflective mood. I decided to exhibit objects and set pieces from 2006-2010, when I was not working excessively and when I focused on changing the means of expression and, most especially, on purging the stages that I proposed to directors. That moment coincided with another equally important one - the formation of a special connection with George Banu, who was present at and presented the opening of the exhibition. The exhibition was an opportunity to establish a close bond, based on an honest dialogue on theatre. He told me about his fabulous experiences alongside the great creators of the world, and I told him of my personal experiences, the truths and untruths that I had discovered in theatre until that point in time. The truly important thing is that this dialogue was based on honesty - related to the artistic act, to understanding theatre, to meetings with the great creators. George Banu helped me put my ideas into words and explain to myself (and others) why I chose this career, what my preoccupations were, as well as how the meetings I have had throughout my artistic pathway marked me.

I am referring to meetings with directors, actors, fellow scenographers alike, and not least, theatre technicians. Theatre is a way of life that depends on teams, whether permanent, temporary or of any other kind. One cannot make theatre on one's own, at home. At the same time, it is not only the result of the work of the main creators of the performance, but also of stage technicians (light and sound designers) and of workshop collaborators (carpentry, mechanics, crafts or tailoring). All these talks with Mr. George Banu pushed me to reflect and I thus become more responsible, more careful with my discourse and, in the end, decided I had to share my experiences. At the same time, Constantin Chiriac was the man who convinced me to write this paper. He is a dreamer, at times so credible in his quixotic poetry, that we all feel like guests in a fantasy land. But we all see that things happen according to his discourse, even miraculously. He insisted he were my guide in this endeavour, as he thought my 30-year experience would be useful to the “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu. At that

moment, I was not aware, nor did I intuit the final product, as I was scared of this world of doctors with no opera, but I accepted the challenge.

The road outlined by Constantin Chiriac and George Banu was also supported by my fellow team members, director Silviu Purcărete and composer Vasile Şirli, who imperatively suggested that, at some point, I started on this path, of sharing my experiences and knowledge, addressing aspiring young people and trying to build bridges of understanding, to reveal as much as possible the meanings of this complex occupation.

It was not by chance that I designed this structure for my research paper. It is made up of four main chapters, preceded by an introductory one, *Munca scenografului cu sine însuși* (*The Scenographer's Work with Himself*), in which I attempt to define the position of the scenographer (in theatre and, especially, inside the team), to mention and to describe the means and the skills that a scenographer needs, as well as how they could be channelled. Many people think scenography is a form of art, but the term *artist* is a very broad one, as it also includes painters, sculptors, or designers. Many of them work in a workshop, in their own ivory tower, interacting with others or not. A scenographer must be a complex figure that branches out on several levels. Like a tree with a broad system of roots, he must pick information from all over, extract its sap from the distance, from afar, from various human levels, as well as interact with and build dialogue bridges with various types of people. At the basis of this trade stand the exchange of energies and human interaction; as these people come from various backgrounds, from engineers to light designers, workshop masters, composers, video artists, traits such as adaptability and master of ceremonies skills are indispensable traits. The different competences of a scenographer are not fully discovered, revealed. That is why, at the beginning of my paper, I described the relation of the artist-scenographer with the theatre space, the teams, the producer, etc.

In the following chapter, titled *Scenograful care interoghează momentul* (*The Scenographer Questioning the Moment*), I discuss the scenographer's work methods and tools. Moreover, I delineate the meaning of a set or a stage, the role of objects in a show and how they transform, the relation to light. Starting with the definition of the tools, my efforts snowballed, as I sheathed, branched out and added concepts, pieces of information, beliefs, like I do with my work on stage and the objects I bring to life on stage. Underlying this research were my own theatre experiences at different points in time and space, from the transition period in the mid-1990s, a favourable and all the while cruel moment of the start of my career, to the end of 2020, when I reached a sort of artistic maturity, though doubled by more and more doubts.

The beginning of the 90s brought a change of regime, which was very much reflected in thought, in society, in the country's economic development and so on. Those were tumultuous years, that gave rise to major events from all standpoints. At the same time, it was a beneficial period, as enthusiasm was high. As a young scenographer, I was faced with many obstacles. Following the regime change, the Romanian cultural space experienced gaps. Street events were stronger and more attractive than the acts of culture inside the theatres. At the beginning of the 90s, interest for theatre diminished. Thus, these were difficult times, adverse to our art. On the other hand, technology was changing, and scenographers started discovering new things, perhaps losing bits of tradition. It was the beginning of the end. As the regime changed, theatre occupations and people disappeared, creating gaps that were not filled. That led to the emergence of theatre workshops and craftsmen that made hats, shoes, wigs, model flowers. I deemed important to discuss the experiences during those times, which were especially intense in both their positive, and negative meanings. Some of these favoured my art work and pathway. I decided I shall remain on the good side of history. I am certain that the angels of theatre stood by and protected me, for a reason I do not know. My pathway was going up, as my experiences were more and more interesting, strong. I developed organically, for I had the chance to work on ever more complex theatre productions, starting from very basic experiences to a point when I started working abroad. This pathway led me to believe that it was important to mention these aspects in my paper and to end the chapter *Scenografică care interoghează momentul* with a subchapter on working in Romania compared to abroad.

Going back to the topic of my major meetings that left a mark on me: all these left traces and helped me, in turn, do so, too: first of all, in life, on my own development, and secondly on the cultural spaces where I have worked. As suggested by the same producer, Constantin Chiriac, and being part of Mr. Silviu Purcărete's team, alongside composer Vasile Șirli, we had the chance to create a performance based on a kabuki text and which required the construction of a venue. For a scenographer, such an endeavour is a huge chance. Any scenographer would like to build their own venue according to their own standards and fulfilling all the necessary essential technical requirements. At the same time, one must not forget the importance of a major experience, accumulated during meetings with great artists and through one's participation to the creation of important shows. All these add to the basis of a creator's personality. Therefore, I felt it was important to dedicate a third chapter, entitled *Un spațiu nou, un teatru nou – Fabrica de Cultură, Sala Kabuki (A New Space, a New Theatre - Factory of Culture, Kabuki Hall)*, to this new gesture – which adds to the two

already existing venues within Fabrica de Cultură, “Eugenio Barba” Hall. I felt it was mandatory to include this experience, as it is directly connected to my artistic road. More than that, I believe it is extremely important for future scenographers to be able to receive the accumulated experience, the favourable and less favourable occurrence that we have been through. It is important to understand that this new space was born out of a double need: on the one hand, the producer’s need to have alternative spaces for the performances of the “Radu Stanca” National Theatre in Sibiu and for the guest shows of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, and on the other hand, the director’s need to complete his show. It is perfectly valid that, as a major cultural event such as the Sibiu International Theatre Festival develops, the need for new, not only outdoor, but also indoor spaces arises; besides, the staging of *The Scarlet Princess*, directed by Silviu Purcărete, gave rise to new technical needs. We must take into account that this was a performance designed and based on an original kabuki text. However, it was not announced as a kabuki show, but as a performance by Silviu Purcărete – a very personal experience, translated as a European take on a tradition kabuki text. Thus, the producer’s, the director’s, and the scenographer’s needs coincided. On the other hand, it was imperative for us to reflect on certain aspects regarding the future, i.e. the moment when *The Scarlet Princess* would reach the end of its life, leaving behind a space that had to fulfil other directing and producing needs.

I thought this chapter simply had to be included in my paper, especially considering that building such a performance hall includes not only artistic aspects, but a multitude of technical aspects, too. This can also be regarded as a kind of a guideline for future scenographers, providing them access to specific information. Although other directors and scenographers built theatre halls or converted spaces, they left no documents behind documenting their work process and principles.


I also thought it was necessary to dedicate a chapter to theatre costumes - *Costume create – costume încrucișate (Costumes Created - Cross-costumes)*. Creating theatre costumes is almost an entirely different occupation. I feel I have a duty to say that many scenographers (in the Romanian cultural space, but especially in the West) specialize either in set design, or in costume design. Very few scenographers wish or manage to hold the entire performance in their hands. I fit this category. Ever since the beginning, I wanted to be able to control the entire visual dimension, the aesthetics of a performance. I thought it was important to also develop the theme of the costumes in relation to the stage design, the light, the proportion of the stage. I support the idea of a single creator-scenographer in a theatre production. This also stands in relation to the team, whether it’s the technical, or the artistic

sector. That is why, I have included a chapter dedicated to costumes created (cross-, hybrid costumes), based on the text and designed during the rehearsals up until the premiere, taking into account the relation between the costumes and the stage, how they interact with the actors, etc. It is beneficial and highly important to approach the topic of costumes, because in a way, this is a different occupation, and calls for a whole different set of technical knowledge. A scenographer must have not only vast knowledge about the evolution of costumes in time, but also technical knowledge (the evolution of patterns and stiches, the reasons behind a certain work method at a given point in time, etc.). The answers to these questions can bring great benefits to the aesthetics of a show. Going beyond this, I also tackle technology – a scenographer must be able to perfect their costumes by using modern tools that open many possibilities.

The last chapter, *TransMutații (TransMutations)* – suggested by Constantin Chiriac – was another important stop in this endeavour, as I aimed at sharing my experience with the exhibition at the National Museum of Art. As per Mr. George Banu's suggestion, the above-mentioned exhibition, *TransMutations*, was revised and grouped around a different theme – *Theatre Ruins*, and made up the Romanian pavilion at the 2019 Prague Quadrennial. These were two relevant, important experiences, fulfilling a scenographer's career. Beyond this, there are aspects that have preoccupied me from the beginning of my career and that gave rise to and developed artistic gestures mentioned under this chapter. I was concerned with *life after death*, i.e. costume's and object's life after a show. I reached the conclusion that objects and costumes deserve a second life, deserve to be exhibited and looked at in a different context. Basically, I gave another chance to all those objects. On the other hand, an exhibition is a moment of reflection in the life of an artist. It is an artistic gesture in which one exhibits things that represent oneself and which have stayed in one's affective memory.

I believe that, in their journey, creators reach a point of introspection, a moment of evaluation and self-evaluation. This paper is an honest self-evaluation of my activity in my last 30 years in theatre.





*'The two of us, her and myself, are connected through a double, mutual relationship and, not necessarily benefitting from a parity status, we are indispensable to each other, inseparable.'*<sup>2</sup>

The art of scenography, connected to both the reform of visual arts, and to the most important moments in directing (theatre, opera, choreography, etc.), is a field in perpetual change, always accumulating information and techniques, challenges of *materialized* imagination – in the end – an infinity of visual possibilities. This paper proposes several topics for analysis, starting from the journey of designing scenography in a post-modern era, seen through the filter of the visual artist's mature sensitivity, to the hijacking of classical venues or the transformation of alternative spaces out of a necessity (or as escape) of directors or imposed by a text.

Scenography is shaping and materializing a series of differences, of artistic proposals coming from diverse fields or mechanisms, of human experiences and spatial visions. Thus, it becomes the art of adapting to conditions and circumstances that are sometimes contradictory, a formula of negotiation, of adapting to different visions (a different artist, a different space) or to another human behaviour. It is also about adapting to substances and fabrics, to their technical applicability, which allows for a certain type of handling. All these are a sum of influences on the end artistic product. Scenography is a way of living materially or spatially, of projecting the artist's inner world and mental complex into colour, shape, quotes, through picture or painting references. Equally, it is a technical measure and an art, dependent on research, change, avoiding blocks, variation, as well as continuous experiment, both artistic, cultural, and human. The theoretical approach to scenography, designed as a perfect balance between art and technique, is supported by arguments based on the research conducted mainly in the aesthetics in visual art. Various visual styles (of painting first and foremost) are compared and developed, oriented to approaches to space and references to

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<sup>2</sup> Banu, George, *Iubire și ne iubire de teatru*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2013, p. 57.

post-modern directing and scenography. The process of changing directing strategies based on the transformations in spatial design is highlighted and exemplified.

A key point in the paper is based on the research on image, how building it has changed, marking the points when optical perception changed (from linear to pictorial)<sup>3</sup> in scenography during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ideas of Walter Benjamin are mentioned, who insists on the impact of film and photography<sup>4</sup>, followed by the intervention of the idea of “scenic text”, designing the visual dimension of a show as a discourse<sup>5</sup>. Whether scenography is an occupation or an art, whether the scenographer is a craftsman or an artist – I have always been preoccupied with these ideas and I still have not reached a clear conclusion. Scenography can be regarded as a decorative art, but it should not, and what I mean is, it is not designed with a view to being contemplated. The scenographer is an artist who lives in a certain context, and scenography must be functional in relation to the entire creative act on the stage. Due to this extremely complex nature of scenography, I still place it between art and occupation. I rather like to see myself as a craftsman. It is true that it also involves an act of creation, and starting from this, a fundamental question must be discussed: is scenography itself an art? Is it an artistic form that one can present as such, outside its context?

I am not denying the possibility for a scenographer to create a set and offer it to a director or a group of actors, who may use it to make a show in that space. But I think this approach is fundamentally different from the idea of theatre creation. Scenography cannot be regarded as separate from the artistic act, in a context other than the stage or the space of creation. Scenography is not necessarily under or subordinated to all these – to resort to frivolous words, but it is certainly part of a mechanism, a team, and a collective thinking. And the scenographer often faces this aspect, which he must define for himself: ‘Not being identifiable, but especially not identifying yourself with anything [...] Heterogeneity follows homogeneity... The aesthetics of disappearance renews the action of appearance...’<sup>6</sup> To this end, I do not think it is possible to create and then present a set like one would a painting, because scenography lives as part of a show, it is the space that supports the emergence of events, one can see it, but one notices actors performing in that space, changing it through their presence and actions, sometimes using objects. Scenography is the image of a show, but it should also represent an artist’s or a creative team’s aesthetics. For, when one introduces

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, Courier Corporation, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings : 1935 – 1938*, Harvard University Press, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Concept coined by Roger Planchon, who described the Brechtian *mise-en-scène* formula used at the Berliner Ensemble.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Virilio, *Esthétique de la disparition*, Baland, Paris, 1980, p. 28 and 60.

these elements on stage, the space comes to live and transforms. It can be hit, disintegrated, compressed or dilated, depending on the *mise-en-scène*, on the director's ideas. That is why, I think it is mandatory that theatre is done as a team. It starts with a sort of trust and respect for the other participants at the creative act, an artistic respect for the preoccupation of the people one works with, their ideas, their discoveries, of which one is part and which one enjoys alongside them.

Between the lines, this research paper contains a memory exercise. It could not be otherwise. By putting my experiences and lesson down on paper, I attempt to make a minute analysis of both the scenographer, and his art (or occupation?). Everything I have discovered was the fruit of my activity and is part of the baggage I carry with me in all the spaces in which I work. I will mention my meetings with masters, especially in my first training period, then the opportunities to work with great figures. I must refer to my friends, as well as my area of research and suffering. My area of research does not only have to do with the joy of creation, but also with effort. The idea behind the scenographer at a crossroads of arts also includes the theme of the scenographer who captures the spirit of time, starting with education and information (the foundation of this art) and the relationships cultivated with artists that faith has brought on my path for so many wonderful collaborations. The questions I carry like a baggage trying to answer, alongside the doubts I have had in time, some of which are still with me, have played a very important role in the development of my personality as scenographer and artist. Sometimes, I pluck up the courage when I remember the following statement by George Banu: 'Questions have a beneficial side: they always remain unanswered'.<sup>7</sup>

Scenography is an occupation that strongly feeds on the present. If information makes up the soil of creation, the present moment plants the seeds of which creation is born. Momentary directions often stem from unsuspected aspects and may bloom from a costume or prop element, a technical solution or the lack of it, even the contemplation of an apparently banal element: light or darkness. Scenography is not a component of the show that simply delivers images, but by using specific means, it involves and attracts people's minds, looks and hearts. It must be an emotional, but at the same time concrete, sensorial, and intellectual experience. It must have the capacity to offer a language that is accessible to all audience categories. 'Scenography, which, in a succession of sequences, suggests metaphorical or symbolic fictional spaces, distinguishes itself from static set through its fluidity. It evolves in

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<sup>7</sup> Boldea, Iulian, Pop-Curșeu, Ștefania (coord.), *Aproape de scenă, George Banu. Eseuri și mărturii*, Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, p. 62.

the transient unfolding of the representation, following the rhythm of the theatre drama whose spatial expression it is. [...] Scenography and set share the same vocation of the imaginary. It reveals something that is part of the stage design: scenography shows a time-space construction in which spectators are invited not to enter physically, but to mentally project themselves. It is only drama and the actors that may enter this universe.’<sup>8</sup>

*‘Theatre is a tight-knit collective, connected through common responsibilities and objectives, a team to which one dedicates one’s entire life, all one’s thoughts... Vakhtangov built his theatre on the principle of the team, which he designed as a big family, in which the creation of each member is indelibly tied to his life well beyond the theatre walls.’<sup>9</sup>*

I have always granted special attention to the private relationship with the director, the actor, the composer, the choreographer or the other people who take part in the creation of a performance. I believe that the general overview is more and more confused from this point of view and there is an idea of individuality, of a personality who believes to be making their own work. We often find this idea supported in the phrase: “Concept by”. However, theatre has always been a collective work, and regardless of the standpoint wherefrom we look at things, whether picturing the director like a conductor who harmonizes all the instruments, it is teamwork and not an artistic act that one may do on one’s own, in one’s own workshop. A theatre team is not put together at random, but it is made up of a group of artists who are preoccupied by a certain type of text, a certain way of making theatre, people focusing on finding a way to feel good so as to create something. Yet this is not a state of comfort, but a place that offers them with the possibility to develop their projects. This means a place where one can find a good stage, good technicians, an environment propitious to creation, and not least, a group of actors on the same wavelength. Especially as the grand discoveries in a show are not made around a table, but take place on stage, as everyone is there. ‘All dramatic forms

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<sup>8</sup> Semet-Haviaras, Marie-Noëlle, *La scénographie théâtrale, un art contemporain*, in *Douvelle revue d’esthétique*, Translated (into Romanian) by Diana Nechit and Andrei C Serban 2017/2 (no. 20), p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Gorchakov, Nikolai Mikhailovich, *Lecțiile de regie ale lui Vakhtangov*. Translated (into Romanian) by Raluca Rădulescu, Nemira Publishing House, București, 2017, p. 7.

are connected to the theatre form they embrace, any dramatic action must accept that first come plans and volumes, i.e., consequently, the representation system in which it takes place. And if it is true that, at its origins, the type of poem determined the type of theatre, it is equally true that the type of theatre, once shaped, determines the poet's aesthetics and shapes his inspiration.'<sup>10</sup>

It may be that, at a given time, the scenographer is faced with a choice. He may start a project extremely well from a technical and information viewpoint (with sketches, a design and costume prints), but he shall have to implement solutions and thoughts according to what happens around him at rehearsals. However, there is another variant, i.e. when he imagines a project and wishes for it to unfold as such, cancelling the discoveries that take place during rehearsals. The director agrees, so do the actors, and the show happens. I am not claiming this approach is wrong, but I do think that theatre includes an element of surprise and of chance, and that chance must be integrated and assumed. Things happen during and outside of rehearsals that the scenographer must notice and that can alter his vision. There are several ways, and the choice depends on how much one understands oneself, and the kind of decisions that make up one's artistic personality. Should one stay open throughout the creative period, one notices that, on stage, other things may happen than one imagined in front of the drawing board or the computer, one notices that the actor moves in a certain way, has a particular speaking manner, is alive; the space requires a certain type of construction; the text is understood together with the other creative members – all these must inspire one. A creator, a true artist will surely allow the situation on stage to complete him, will act with flexibility and add nuances to his thoughts, creations, project. This is the picture of a discovering artist-scenographer, who is a team player, who is alive.

A work stage consists of talks with the director: about the text, his ideas, or the musician's. The history of theatre reveals famous team models, such as Peter Brook and Jean-Guy Lecat or Richard Wagner and Adolphe Appia. Everybody talks about the theatre art of Grotowski, but it is likely equally important that he was seconded by the great Jerzy Grotowski, an amazing scenographer who built extraordinary spaces and highlighted Grotowski's fabulous art of flying. In fact, there have been debates about which one had a stronger personality. Anyway, this is not the most important aspect, but the fact that they created together. These great meetings confirm that theatre is not made on one's own. It is a kind of energy that only a (theatre) team can create and stir.

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<sup>10</sup> Copeau, Jacques, *Registres/Appels*, Translated (into Romanian) by Diana Nechit and Andrei C Serban, Gallimard, Paris, 1974, p. 257.

I find it curious that the scenographer's work is protected by copyright, while the actor's work, which is definitely more important to the show (in fact, it's the only one that is essential) is not. Most of the times, the rules of creation are different than the rules of nature and of society. Performing arts unfold in a different kind of reality. I try to take this into account when making a proposal. I believe that, to the very last moment, scenography is largely connected to what we call discovery. We must discover the author, the text, the whole situation, but most especially discover our own way of conveying the story, and this can only be done in a team. It is a different kind of endeavour of which everybody is part and which is full of daily, sometimes unsuspected revelations. These are the magic moments when artists come together and wonderful things happen. It is true that the challenges faced by the scenographer are complex, but the most important thing is that he has an honest approach to himself and to space. The set is never the most important thing on stage, but third or fourth. I don't mean as a hierarchy, but that for centuries actors worked without directors, only guided by the text. Once, there were buffoons who climbed barrels or carts and told stories. Then, a coordinator of this effort emerged, and over time other artistic dimensions were added to performances. The need arose to use fabrics and sets. So, I say we should not hierarchize occupations in theatre, but simply be aware how they come together in the act of creation so as to work organically, in vivid relation with real needs.

I have said that theatre must be made in teams. These can be permanent or brought together for a singular project. Permanent teams artistically coexist for a longer period of time, artists are united by common preoccupations and many of their performances are designed together. Teams united for a single project do so for one occasion, brought together either by a text, a producer, a director, or hazard/chance. The team underlies theatre, but creation is based on the energy that has to do with the phenomenon of knowledge. How else can artists get to know each other than by starting with the basic elements of the human body, from the simplest of things that define us, supported by the nervous system connected to a sensorial system dedicated to each sense: hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste? These are the five senses with which we work and through which we interact with others. Perhaps the first contact with the artists alongside whom you are trying to set up a team is not on stage, but during a break, in a context when you have the chance to enjoy a meal or exchange impressions. Theatre meetings go beyond the stage; they can even happen in your kitchen, where the experience on stage extends and fulfils, as you keep discussing the show. By staying together, people discover things, occurrences may happen. Theatre teams cannot be formed as in a corporation, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., when the lights go out. Creation does

not care about night or day, but is perpetually searching, even when we sleep. That is why, the creators who are aware of this want to evolve and understand that performances are created as a team, they basically live together – with everything this implies. They read together, visit museums, cook together, go on trips and at parties together, etc. New ideas arise from our genetic and information baggage, from the culture we acquire. Each team member comes with their own culture, including both the genetic, and the acquired baggage: their childhood, experiences, school years, their own journeys. When more cultures come together, it matters how open, how free or how traumatized they have been over time. It is also important to observe how they manifest and how they evolved over the years. Sometimes, in a culture that was faced with restrictions for a long period, such as in Russia or China, and Romania for that matter, artists have had to develop specific tools to be able to express themselves (writers, scenographers, directors, any artists, including plastic). Even what they lacked often defined the creation of certain artists for a given period of time. Because their work means were restricted, they developed a special manner of thinking and of building. Artists have permanently adapted their means of expression, and in the hands of many of them, in 1920-1940, theatre had become a weapon – longer for those isolated behind the Iron Curtain, in 1950-1980.

As far as I am concerned, the close relationships I have consolidated with the most important artists throughout my career have been doubled in my personal life, too. The senses play a very important role and become a pretext for idea-bearing meetings. The feeling of friendship have given rise to a wish to communicate and talk to each other, and such moments of creation and mutual respect are very rare. An artist's mind and body are always open, ready to absorb information and stimuli. When one is able to celebrate the moments of the day, one can enrich one's senses. In a talk with Silviu Purcărete, I developed the idea that both cooking, and eating are a landmark in an artist's CV. To me, this has to do with one's character and availability to work with their hands and develop attention to detail. At the same time, it is a will to give as well as to learn. I have developed the discipline necessary to add colour, taste, and a concrete character. I don't think I will ever be able to create a set and deliver it to a director to create inside it, nor take it to a museum and ask people to look at it. And an artist-scenographer with such expectations should probably try to focus on painting or an individual art, not theatre!

*'I could travel the world with a suitcase in my hand and lay my eggs in foreign nests, like a cuckoo bird. But I find it much more important for people to see the fruit of their work grow.'*<sup>11</sup>

This paper, now mature, fulfilled, has developed organically. I translate this organic character through the fact that it is not based on assumptions or on other people's ideas combined – a set up that may work at a first glance. This paper encompassed ideas that arose from a real experience which unfolded in real time – a journey similar to a construction, with a solid, calculated base, vertically raised in a normal time; like a building, a journey similar to a construction takes time: to dry, to mould, etc. Another strong basis for this paper was the interaction between its creators, standing under the sign of dialogue, of theatre search, of the exchange of energies. In fact, all these – dialogue, energy, attention for others and their ideas – stand at the basis of theatre.

I think this paper can act as a guide, a roadmap to an occupation, a time to travel, an example. Of course, things should not be interpreted *ad litteram*, as each artist has their own journey and personal rhythm of living their life, experiences, and theatre. To this end, I think this paper provides answers to some, perhaps even metaphysical, questions. At the same time, it includes many concrete answers, related to major themes, the tools of an artist-scenographer, his relation to the stage, the place where he developed his ideas. I also mentioned methods to develop sketches, analysed models to interact with the artistic and technical departments that make up a creative team.

I think this paper can act as a guideline for the academia, perhaps as a subtle guide for the artistic journey of future scenographers; more than that, it may raise certain issues, i.e. themes to reflect upon, to directors, regarding the meaning of a creation team and the relationship between creators. The point we are in, personally and individually can – and should – also be a reason for reflection, introspection and can raise questions about ourselves, about the physical and artistic moment in which we are, how we related to the environment and to the different cultural spaces in the world, on how we can grow and develop the places where we live as artists. An artist must leave marks in the places he travels. His creation must leave footprints in the space and time where he works, cause a change, gift that place, stage, the people who travel with him some of his own artistic, creative, ontological substance.

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<sup>11</sup> Ichim, Florica, Mocanu, Anca, *op. cit.*, p. 5.



People lift places. Theatres are but buildings, but we are The Theatre. Jesus told Caiaphas' priests that He could demolish the Temple, and raise it again in only three days. The priests accused Him of blasphemy and his journey was sealed with death. Yet, the eyes that only look into the water to see their own reflection, not diving *in the deep*, are unable to see that Jesus talked not about stones and pillars. The Temple lies within us, our soul is a logotype. We give life to places, and without artists, they don't mean much. Artists give them value, keep them alive and develop them. This happens alongside producers such as those mentioned in my paper. I am saying this for I have mentioned Fabrica de Cultură, a cultural space developed by producer Constantin Chiriac, a space which I think is major. It is almost a genesis. These gestures remain in the history of a community. Culture is a nation's affective and subjective memory. Together with education and health, these aspects of our lives push human kind to evolve, to discover. To this end, it is worth mentioning that the Sibiu International Theatre Festival has enriched a community and, in turn, the community has enriched the Festival. Theatre must be in a mutual win-win situation with society, people, and not least, artists. I hope this chapter about the development of the "Eugenio Barba" hall at Fabrica de Cultură determines other creators to build better spaces, perhaps starting from the ideas or the experiences described in this paper. The last chapter is meant to give rise to ideas or at least to include this possibility. People may ask themselves what happens to the objects that had a purpose in theatre performances. Thus, the idea of a museum may emerge or they may be donated to be used by drama students. Instead of throwing away sets, these may be given a new life in the training of students studying acting, directing, scenography, etc. In *TransMutations*, I also discussed the inner world, the chambers that make up my inner universe, painting an honest picture of my opinion on the objects and the sets that I have brought into this world. They could lead a double life, taken over by the academic environment and studied, though not like individual objects, but in relation to the students' work. This chapter aims to give rise to ideas supporting faith in a normal, beautiful, humanistic society, that promotes people, and not purposes, to draw attention on a period of an initiatic time, the *journey-period*, a time of creation, a time when one does not aim to reach a result quickly, a time when one lives, discovers oneself, learns and dedicates oneself. Humankind deserves such a period, such a transition.

With creation, everything blooms. When one keeps one's eyes not on the purpose, but on the act of creation, one gets positive results. The end purpose of an act of creation must be a win, not only for creators, but also for the audience – for society. The act of creation is like

a genesis that changes the shape of the Earth and supports the evolution of human kind –  
*l'amor che move il sole l'altre stelle.*