YORIK – A PERCEPTION OF DEATH AND A STRONG REPRESENTATION IN THE EDUCATION OF HAMLET. THE VISION OF THEATRE DIRECTOR IN AN EDUCATIONAL SPEECH

Liviu PANCU[*]

Abstract: *The rich world of characters in Shakespeare's writings are defining for the evolution of the collective mental in the whole world. The analyses and the introspections realized on the identity of the universal human being, faced with the unbelieve evolution and many times to the inconsistency with one's own rules imposed by religions, morals, society, ethnicity, education and geographical position, lead to an incredible conjunction between the destiny and the imposed stereotype in the characters defined by the psychanalysis of the present centuries. The education received from the good and beloved friend, Yorik, in the absence of a harmonious family relationship, places us in a new mystic and alchemic perspective towards several ways to register and perceive the surrounding realities. In the case of the characters from Hamlet, Hamlet – the father, Hamlet – the son, there is a mystic and initiator journey between life and death, where the different faces of this uncontrollable dimension of the world from behind are successively introduced in the everyday life. A more dedicated analysis of the educational space where Hamlet – the son grew up, but also the methods to get informed later by the resources of the time when the action was placed and the social condition imposed by Shakespeare to the characters in discussion, are keys to doors that open new horizons of the human interior, looked through the eyes of the theatre people as practitioners and directly involved in transposing the analyses in the theatre creative act. All these create premises of analyses between the myth of the death, the analysis of life through education and justifying the facts thrown in the big ocean of the human stereotype.*

Key-words: *destiny, faces of death, mystic, art of the performance, initiation*

Context in texts and pretexts

Beginning, not at all by mistake, an incursion towards one of Shakespeare's characters, Yorik, in the moment when 400 years are celebrated from the death of the big drama writer, a set of questions and analyses have come up. They deserve the fine attention of the research, directed towards the vast and unlimited world of the human interior, analyzed from the point of view of the practitioners in the arts of the performance.

The skull of Yorik is used in a stereotyped formula, as a prop element with roots in the mind of the collective mental, from the point of view of the high dimension of the universal drama, but also from the point of view of an actor/character leaned towards his interior world, involved in an undecipherable reflection upon the existence and accomplishing a journey between the two worlds of the present and past time.

The history of these moments of reflection can be found in a *recent history* of some projects realized in the Medieval Citadel of Tirgu-Mures, through the "*Scena Summer Camp*", projects belonging to The Scena Theatre. I would remind here the titles that have

[*] University of Arts Tîrgu-Mureș, liviupancu@yahoo.com

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developed in time a mechanism of social involvement as a continuation and a support for the performances in themselves.

Each summer camp summed up a metaphor, but also an engine of analysis as it follows:

2002 *Romeo and Julia* after William Shakespeare, developed an important theme and of huge interest after the sad events of the dark "March '90" in Tirgu-Mures. Under the title of the big drama writer, questions concerning the problems of a mixed family in a unitary national state came up.

2003 *F 451* presented a theatre scenario after *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, as a desperate S.O.S. for culture and arts.

2004 *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare brought up the problems of a destroyed family and of a morally infected society.

2005 *The three musketeers* after Al. Dumas, determined, in a city consumed by interethnic conflictual resentments, through a literary writing and then through the theatre artistic act, for everybody to shout through the voices of the actors *All for one and one for all*.

2006 *Me*, a theatre scenario after *The History of Religions* by Mircea Eliade – the Big question in a misleading and maybe future impossibility to report yourself directly to a piece of earth, that bears a certain specificity of a culture and of a religion. This Big question is powerless in front of the globalization and pushes us towards another fatidic question addressed this time to an Oracle: *How small can the Earth become in the context of the incredible supra dimensioning of knowledge through the new synapses at the level of the public cortex?* The truth, in a global dimension given by the social networks and the desperate need *to show yourself to the world*, is that the voice and your inner word are the final keys of the safe box that contains the supreme truth of knowledge and human enlightenment.

2007 *Zamolxe* by Lucian Blaga showed how strong dormant spirits of the Romanian people can bring back a light in the dark tunnel of the present. And, how they can solve the modern emancipation and the wakening up to reality, by an Alexandrian cut, through a journey to the past.

2008 *Oedipus King* by Sofocle – the universality of the repeated history and the lack of power to resist to destiny.

The list can continue with the titles and the themes transferred to the Medieval Sighisoara Festival: 2011 „Merlin – The Wizard of the medieval world" after Tankred Dorst, 2012 „Joan of Arc – 600 years of Fight and Faith", 2013 „Vlad – The Knight of Justice", 2014 „Jacques de Molay - 700 years of chivalry" and 2016 „The Storm" by William Shakespeare.

Constantly, the key mechanisms of directing the whole event designed the necessary platform for the future questions but also for an answer I dare to say initiating: *People resent a huge need of journeys* that can define their existence. They also need links that can certify their beliefs and the mistakes of the others so that can hide behind a possible personal failure.

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Yorik at "The Scena Theatre" Tîrgu-Mureș

Getting back to Yorik, we could start to define some limits within the Hamlet project from the Medieval Citadel of Tirgu-Mures, with an accent on the story of a destroyed royal family, at the top of a morally infected society trough this *skull - buffoon* that from the side of time and history is classified among the teachers and the pedagogues of his time.

The incapacity of this family - made up of a father permanently preoccupied to gather and defend his lands and his kingdom, abandoning and diminishing the importance of the family relationships, develops into a lonely woman flesh wishes finally proved completely false and not sustained by clearly defined feelings. Everything remains related to a revenge, to a lost youth and the lack of attention, supplemented by a big age difference (a sensitive topic in the life of a woman in her 35-40). The little step towards a lack of attention and education generates in the soul of the *child – Hamlet* some distances and unsolved problems, emphasized by a strong lack of affectivity.

The high schools that the royal children could attend were few and the education was to be received in the birthplace of the child. The masters, the teachers, the initiated ones were many times brought from other cultural spaces. This way, the information gathered even from antiquity till the moment when the play was written and where Shakespeare decided to place the action, comes to support the theory of the buffoon that was trained and initiated in the art of the communication, able to evaluate the human resources of the society where he was living, becoming this way a fast and critic philosopher.

The words said by Hamlet are defining ones and prove a relation between him and the *buffoon Yorik*. A relatively short time ago, Hamlet had kissed Yorik's lips as this was the one who knew to caress and to respect him, designing the essential basis of development of the personality of a child. The silent lips of Yorik, competing with the observing eyes, with the promiscuity in which Hamlet's mother was finding her happiness and her joy in the arms of another man, were proving a premonition of the negative happenings that were going to follow later in the big kingdom – *Something is rotten in the state of Denmark*. (Shakespeare, 1959, p.550).

The involuntary and uncontrolled regression to a time of an uncoordinated childhood and of some unsaid truths, implements in the soul of Young Hamlet, some frustrations that are impossible to stop. He becomes unable to direct himself to a positive relation with the society and with himself.

If we try to practice a game of imagination and we place ourselves in the castle where the only moments of relax and fun were the holidays and the moments when the warriors came back from their little crusades, we will notice that the development of the aptitudes and of the capacities of the future inheritor of the throne, resumes to the game and the importance of the family by transmitting the information, through the personal example, but also through the proved lack of attention of living your own life, without a minimal calculation and plan of education and self-education.

Yorik becomes this way an apology of death conciliated to himself, compared to *Hamlet – the father*, whose spirit haunts the world of the alive, trying to find his peace by requesting justice, by offering information from his own existence, by forcing death to get two defining points of view:

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A) A *father traveling between worlds* and able to show to the alive what makes us understand the world from behind. This world from behind is practically a continuation of the world from here, by the fact that, from there, you can judge and even act in requesting justice.
B) A *father of the holy and also earthly prayers*, instinctually perceived by a child who does not get the harmony of the family anymore, when the strongest man in state that everybody was listening to, is cheated by the close ones, reversing this way all the values. Him, the *King – Father* is powerless in front of such a cruel reality.

The counter party offered by the silence of Yorik – The Shadow, that does not haunt, does not request his justice and has no regrets towards his own existence in the world of the alive, leads us to an understanding of the fact that he left in peace with himself and with the ones around him.

The final touch is casted at the moment of the death of Hamlet, whose message can be compressed to a philosophical conclusion, when Horatio informs the public and clearly addresses to the history, placing this unfortunate event as an example of teaching and leading to an initiatory status: of the one forced to accept his own existence, his own mistakes and his own *passing by*.

The skull, the bones able to lead to an emotional state of fear towards death, can be found in any culture of the Earth.

The capacity of each individual to report to his own actions and to accept his membership even his genetic relations, can generate new answers and questions in the unlimited sea of explanations and indications that can be given to an actor during preparing a role as Hamlet.

The vision of the performance *Hamlet*, directed by Liviu Pancu in the medieval citadel of Tirgu-Mures, started, as we luckily could not find in any other performance - neither in theater nor in cinema - with a living Yorik.

Yorik is alive! Like our memories that start from our intrauterine life until the last breath in this dimension and are our guidelines, rules and realities of the present lives, explaining and motivating our gestures and actions.

There transfer in time has a premonitory character, when the buffoon, for the everyday fun of the boys at the court, was asking them to fight with sticks – a between *Hamlet and Laertes when children*. To this fight, the beautiful Ofelia was also assisting, not being able to choose the winner between a brother and a friend of games to whom she was feeling an attraction, which later proved to be real. The faith of this woman proved that she would never find out what the carnal joy is, dying young as a result of her madness caused by sentimental issues and because of the unsolved relationships among *The Father Polonius, the step father Claudius and the unshared love for Hamlet – the son.*

Shakespeare manages to define for the public a strong feminine relationship between the mother of Hamlet – the carnal woman, that is looking for ecstasy and able to resist in front of the danger and the young Ofelia – the young woman sacrificed by the lack of power and the vanity of the adults. *The Woman Ofelia* becomes a symbol of a dual passion and of a journey between the physical love and the platonic love, between the love

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for a father and the obligations of a young woman at court and the real passion that she feels for the man – Hamlet.

Opening the performance with such a set up - implemented in the affective memory of the spectator though some canvas that were blown by the wind in the citadel and completed with an obsessive repetitive projection of *Hamlet – the father*, would take you as a spectator to a personal introspection on the questions that had marked you from the childhood. The over dimensioned easiness of judgement and embarrassment towards the so-called childish arguments were transferred this way to the adult, putting a distance to the big answers and the revelation states that one can live in the fight with him/herself.

The jealousy towards *the breast of the mother* that is carried from *the father to the uncle* with an easiness that does not have any more justification for the child, forces to a reformulation and to an eager need for an answer. It can be found behind the actions and the facts of our present time.

I would go back to the symbol of death where the question becomes more than a math formula that defines the individual and collective concept, by *to be or not to be* (Shakespeare, 1959, p. 602): placed in a time of understanding one's own life, placed into an unpleasant situation of *not to be* happy with one's own existence and *to be* in a permanent regret when one is put in front of the accomplished and predestined facts.

The fact that Yorik was kissed on his mouth, according to the memories shared by Hamlet, transmits a very strong message about Hamlet's childhood and reveals the unconditioned love of a child that hangs to someone who gives him attention and plays with him when the parents are absent.

Conclusions

The conclusion that we can make up is that during life Hamlet and Yorik were very close. When Hamlet finds Yorik's bones, he is able to detach himself in an initiatory way and to look at the meaning of life and death with a regret of the past time. Yorik is philosophy, Yorik is teaching and way of life, Yorik is a satiric but kind spirit, Yorik is the key to *the royal art*.

I had the experience of some art-therapy studies, after the 1989s through Art school – Art ecole. It was a method developed in a project of UNITER and the Princess Margareta Foundation. I managed there to create an interaction between the actor in a child and the child in an actor. These studies made me discover a mechanism of the game that determined *the artist-researcher* to stop on the education time of each character, on the inhibitions of the known problems of the drama characters.

To be or not to be a problem, to be or not to be helpless in decoding your meanings, gestures and reactions in the present time – these are the questions addressed to the actors during the rehearsals and found in the theater act.

If the innocent fight of childhood between Hamlet and Laertes, coordinated by Yorik and always won by Hamlet, places the spectator and the art consumer in a scheme that Hamlet applies in an involuntary way and he requires his right that in the present time to be as trustful in being a winner as in the past.

This can be a new dimension with a recalibrated vision upon life and death.

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The skull and the bones – these signs of life and death, found in many Christian icons, in the Amerindian cultures, in the African cultures and in the important Egyptian culture, (and the list can continue) determines us one more time to understand the importance of the game that the humankind is doing during the history, offering either some key meanings or a blockage towards this paralyzing fear of death.

If while looking inside the human interior during the acting research, we could extract an essence, this would be that in the performance of Teatrul Scena, death appears as a supreme teaching. The human being and his/her existence must be attached to it. The bones of Yorik, the skull to which Hamlet is talking to, but also the physical presence of the one who once took care of his evolution, offering him during his childhood the so needed caressing for the harmonious development of a child, are the necessary elements for traveling in time and for the idea that life is so perennial and that during our journey on this earth, we must take care to all the symbols around us. Without doing a psychological or even psychiatric incursion, we note that all the happenings of our existence and especially the ones from childhood are deeply rooted in our subconscious and they need to be taken out, as a big source of information and answers to our multiple actions of the present.

Yorik manages in this case to transport the information of the past through actions that develop in front of the spectator, determining him to admit the personal elements by analogies to the personal experiences. The spectator is confronted during the performance with five types of death:

a) Introducing the Yorik character as a puppeteer of the whole action assures for the public those journey in time where life becomes only a perception of the present time.
b) The unrevenged death of Hamlet the Father and unable to remain in the past – *the dead with the dead - the live with the live.*
c) The direct death of the one who managed during a performance to connect worlds in between and to leave for the eternity one of those stories full of knowledge. A morally infected family cannot assure within a society a landmark and a decent and peaceful progress.
d) The death of the ones that do not matter and do not become revengeful or do not have enough force to break the barriers between the two worlds , such as Polonius, Ofelia, Ghertrude and Laertes.
e) Death in the perception of the grave-diggers, daily confronted with the bones of the dead ones who bear with them destinies, life stories, love and hate stories, traitors or heroes, now disappeared without trace in a big anonymity of the present and of the ones that will come.

As a final conclusion, the genius of Shakespeare found in a world masterpiece, the landmarks of a new directing vision, the play and the availability of the actors to travel in front of the spectators - all these performed in the Citadel of Tirgu Mures, at the Scena Theatre, have set the bases of a meditation moment for the spectators. The memories, the childhood, the vague feelings of the past, the regressions, the remembering, the known images, the situations they have been through - and the list can continue, are obviously

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certitudes to be taken into account in order to find ourselves in the dreadful bombing of the information and of the journeys without travelers in flesh and bones.

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