

Romania's contemporary stage - a continuous transition or a kind of green piglet?

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(by Alexandru Petrovici) Performers and the producers whose plays were presented during the 18th edition of the National Festival of Theater 2008 seemed to surpass the complex of provinciality typical for the art movement from the 60's and 70's: „Agammemnon is killed by his wife with a hair dryer, Macbeth and Benko are kissing on the stage, while modern plays like Sickness of Family M by Paravardino were played on the stage of a very respectable festival”

The transition to modernity seemed to be the main theme of the contemporary Romanian theater; after years when the repertoires of the Bucharest and countryside theaters were full with classics played as the old school taught, in the recent years more and more new playwrights were approached. Lagarce, Gifford or Mc Donnagh to mention just a few of the new wave in international theater; not to forget also Romanian playwrights who are struggling for a name in front of the Romanian public like Lia Bugnar, Ioan Peter or not to forget the already veteran Andrei Serban are becoming more and more appreciated by the Romanian audience.

Unfortunately one of the sins of Romanian public is the lack of appetite for modern production; the promotion of a modern play as much as it is done it will not attract the expected reaction from the audience. Either old people used with a certain type of play writers (generally classics) either young people extremely interested in seeing the show without comprehension towards the refinement of the text. Under this modern pressure exerted by the audience -and yes indeed the great master of the actor is the public- the Romanian directors thought of a trick: playing classic, well known texts in a new manner. In this way the antique choir is replaced by dancers in Electra, the role of the witches from Macbeth is to take the deaths from the scene or an extremely young and fragile Scipio is used in Caligula. Maybe these „tricks” are not new for the international scene, but don't forget that the Romanian public is still reacting violent when seeing two boys kissing on the scene.

The transition to modern ways of expressions seems to be more difficult than awaited; however the crop of new actors and directors will not deceive the expectations of the European public. A first step was made by the National Theater Festival which took place in Bucharest at the beginning of this month. The 18th edition brought a special section dedicated to young debutant directors, among whom we could name Alexandru Lustig with the shakespearean Storm or Elena Morar with the more modern play of Wajdi Mouwad ,The Thirsty’.

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