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Investigation of the Phenomenon of Reality in the Participation Practises of Lithuanian Theatre Audiences

In my research I concentrate in analytical structuring of the phenomenon of theatrical reality in the period of 1990-present Lithuanian theatre and analyse actor-spectator relationships, as well as audience participation practises in which different modes of reality manifest itself.

In the period between early 2000-present still inert Lithuanian theatre field started to implement various staging practises and performative concepts, which were already developed and successfully exploited in the Western theatre narrative over several decades of the second half of the 20th century. Because of the heavy cultural isolation and the censorship of Lithuanian cultural field during the period of Soviet occupation in the subsequent decades following the Second World War, conventional and predictable theatre instruments (both in production and in spectatorship) were highly perfected, thus becoming the main creative language allowed for conveying official dramaturgical content, as well as a suitable vessel of Aesopian language, which let the creators utilize it to escape the communist censorship into poetic reality using semantic juxtapositions, doublespeak and other staging strategies and tactics. This tradition - which could also be observed in the creative expression of many other post-soviet and post-socialist countries - still very much shapes Lithuanian theatrical grammar and mainstream forms of performative expression, manifesting basic principles in how the phenomenon of reality is (re)presented and experienced by the audiences. In the last decade this theatrical canon, however, became highly expanded and also contradicted by the implementation of interactive, participatory, co-creation and community based theatrical projects, which construct new forms of reality, but also requires for a new spectatorship paradigm for the audiences to fully experience and adapt these new theatrical realities. The key goal of the research is to examine how the social mechanics of the spectatorship operate in different staging conditions and develop a structural methodological model for the analysis of colliding theatrical and social realities, which could be observed in conventional and un-conventional approaches to theatre.

In the forum I would like to address the main models of the representation and (re)production of reality which occurred in Lithuanian theatre between years 2010 and 2020. The analysis of these new processes in the 21st century Lithuanian theatre demonstrates conflicting relations between the spectators and the theatre community, especially in cases when contemporary approaches are incorporated. One of the key problems is associated with interactivity and participation potentiality of the spectator

himself. Another problematic aspect is the involvement of the actor in direct participation with the spectator, which often contradicts representational aspect of acting.

Phenomenon of reality is still an abstract research field in both Lithuanian and global academic discourses, and the scope of this topic is usually limited to various ways of theatrical representations of reality but doesn't provide the analysis on how social processes themselves operate during the performance, and how a *reality effect* comes to shape the experiences of the spectators. Because of the philosophical origin of the term "reality", there is a lack of methodological tools and practical approaches in the theatre studies to analyse the performance-spectatorship processes on a micro-level. In my research I analyse different cases of (so called) *reality theatre (theatre of the real)* and apply theatre theory to build a foundation for implementation of Practise-based-Research (PbR) methodological approach, in which I execute empirical experiments with the participants to extract qualitative data for a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of reality during the act of performance.