

Non-verbal theatre on the stage of international theatre festivals Sofia Puppet Fair and World Theatre in Sofia

Yanita Kirova

Abstract. Non-verbal theatrical forms and non-verbal communication in theatre largely refer to those “miracles” that theatre has strived for during the years of its metamorphosis in order to reach universal conditions of understanding and communication without the need for knowledge of foreign languages or customs and providing similar historical attitudes and life views, regardless of cultural and social differences in spaces. The article focuses on the issues concerning precisely the place and role of non-verbal theatrical forms on the stage of two theatrical international festivals, which take place in Southeast Europe (since the beginning of the 21st c.): Sofia Puppet Fair (since 2002) and World Theatre in Sofia (since 2007). The issues have been addressed in terms of the sphere of non-verbal theatre and how non-verbal forms are part of contemporary theatrical trends and the aesthetic profile of the global theatre scene over the past two decades, reflected in the programme selections of festival editions over the years. Despite some differences in the profiles of the two festivals studied, the results of the analysis of the festival repertoires clearly show that non-verbal theatrical forms occupy an essential part of the festival programmes of two of the largest and most established international festivals on the territory of Southeast Europe. Non-verbal theatre is part of the world’s tendencies to search for new expressive means and non-standard forms for reading classical texts as well as for creating contemporary author’s works. The universal form of non-verbal communication is also at the heart of the theatre’s attempts to reach a wider audience.

Keywords: theatrical festivals, non-verbal theatrical forms, non-verbal communication, Sofia Puppet Fair, World Theatre in Sofia

Introduction

Performances of non-verbal theatre stand out on the stages of modern international festivals as they provide universal communication conditions, focusing, on the one hand, mainly on themes commonly valid for the whole of the modern society, and on the other, independent from the language barrier of words. In her book *The theatre on the verge of 20th and 21st century*, Prof. Kamelia Nikolova describes the theatre most of all as “a striving to a dialogue; an act towards communication and understanding” (Nikolova 2007, 14), with the communication

taking place between man and the unknown around him (fate, the gods) in the very beginning, while later it went through various metamorphoses according to the development and movement of civilization. Over time, the idea of the common values of performers and spectators would change and modern theatre would begin to strive for universal conditions of understanding, more specifically towards elimination of the need to know foreign languages and customs and need for similar historical attitudes and views (Nikolova 2007, 14-15). It could be said that modern non-verbal theatrical forms and non-verbal communication in the theatre relate to a large extent to these universal conditions.

This article aims to address issues related to the place and role of non-verbal theatrical forms on the stage of two international theatre festivals that are part of the festival map of Southeast Europe (from the beginning of the 21st century): Puppet Fair Sofia (since 2002) and World Theatre in Sofia (since 2007). These two stand among the best European festivals as they champion the quality of the theatrical product and have a significant influence at local, national and international levels. The focus is on the questions to what extent and how the non-verbal theatrical forms are present in the programmes of these two festivals and what their role at the international festival stage is.

The sources of information on this agenda are quite varied in terms of their volumes and accessibility. In a West European context, festivals enjoy an increased researchers' attention. The festival phenomenon is identified as a possible subject of studies over the last twenty years (Doncheva 2021, 4). Multiple research works have been carried out concerning the various effects caused by the festivals over cultural, social and economic life in society (Stoeva, Nazer 2017). The works belong mainly to authors who are experts in anthropology, cultural studies and history of culture, sociology and economics. Their interest focuses festivals of any nature, including musical, folklore, ballet, cinema festivals, etc. However, there is a complete absence of scientific research in the area of non-verbal theatrical forms as part of the international festival network in the region of Southeast Europe. In some of her works, Prof. Kamelia Nikolova (Nikolova 2007; Nikolova 2013) pays attention to theatre festivals, but the focus is on the theatre in general, as well as on the system of management at the Edinburgh Festival. Her text for the first edition of the Balkan Dance Platform, 2001 (Nikolova 2001), touches on the issues concerning the dance in the Balkans, but there are no other publications on the subject since. Festivals are the main focus of scientific interests of Desislava Stoycheva, PhD (Stoycheva 2013), Prof. Nikolay Jordanov (Jordanov 2013, 35-41), Lyubomir Kutin, PhD (Kutin 2004; Kutin 2014; Kutin 2018), etc., however the issues they research have no direct bearing to the agenda of this article.

The main sources of information on the studied festivals are their websites. These sites are well structured and accessible in terms of the information that can be retrieved from them, except for some publications that are not present in the archives or are not sufficiently full and comprehensive. A primary source of information is the available brochures and catalogues from the individual issues of the festivals over the years as well as some articles in the media, some guest appearances on the air, some documentaries and video materials, field research (visiting several titles from the festival programmes from 2011 to 2021) and personal professional experience in the field of non-verbal theatre. While



Fig. 1. *Swan Lake*, Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, World Theatre in Sofia, 2020, digital edition (Svetoven teatar v Sofia 2020)

the research base provided by the sources is good, much of the information about the individual artists, formations and productions participating in the festivals cannot be found in information portals other than those of the festivals. There is no analysis of the empirical material or highlighting of the key trends. For the purpose of this study, all available programmes in the archives of the festivals were used, starting from their establishment and through to 2019, it should be taken into account that the Puppet Fair Sofia Festival is biannual and is celebrated every second year. The editions from 2017, 2018 and 2019 are analysed in more detail due to the larger amount of information that can be found about them. The 2020 editions have not been reviewed, as due to the epidemic situation in the country and the world Puppet Fair Sofia did not take place, and the World Theatre in Sofia was digitalized (Fig. 1).

Profile and characteristics of the festivals studied

After the 1990s, festivals became one of the fastest developing segments in the culture of the countries, with increasingly active communication and exchange of experience. By the end of the second decade of 21st c., several international theatre festivals were already successfully active in the region of Southeast Europe, with their agendas including both non-verbal and verbal performances. These are: The Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF) (since 1967), the Puppet Fair Sofia (since 2002), World Theatre in Sofia (since 2007), the “Varna Summer” International Theatre Festival in Varna (since 1993), the “Small Season” launched by the Sfumato Theatre Laboratory, Sofia (since 2000), the International Puppet & Mime Festival of Kilkis, Greece (since 1998), Thesspuppet International Puppet & Pantomime Festival of Thessaloniki, Greece (since 2016), etc.

On the other hand, the festival stage was conquered by some fully non-verbal theatrical forums. PANFIZ in Skopje (since 2007), the Dance and Non-Verbal Theatre Festival San Vincenti in Istria, Croatia (since 2000), the ACT Festival - Festival for Independent Theatre in Sofia (since 2011), the Antistatic International Festival for Contemporary Dance and Performance (since 2008), 180° Laboratory for Innovative Art, Sofia (since 2014), the Black Box International Theatre and Dance Festival, Plovdiv (since 2007), and One Dance Week, Plovdiv (since 2008). This second group of festivals fall out of the subject of this article as all productions participating in the editions are forms of non-verbal theatre. Mentioning thereof only aims to help build an overall picture describing the place of the non-verbal theatre as a selected form of international presentation. It should only be pointed out that in this case, the non-verbal forms occupy a substantial part of the international festival stage as they organize their own independent festivals of art without words.

The two festivals covered in this study were founded during the first decade of the 21st c., which is a common feature of most theatrical festivals across the regions of Southeast Europe in the context of the European funding programmes.

As most part of theatre festivals, the Puppet Fair Sofia, in particular (Fig. 2), and World Theatre in Sofia are of key importance to the development of alternative forms of theatre that are not part of the commercial demand of the audience, including non-verbal forms as an alternative to traditional theatre. The selections of the festivals are to some extent determined by the modern theatrical tendencies and the aesthetic profile of the world theatrical stage during the last two decades. However, due to financial problems and the complex political and socio-economic situation in the countries of Southeast Europe, the best theatrical troupes and productions or representative for the respective forms may not always take part or come into the focus of the selectors and festival juries. Of course, the mechanisms of theatres' participation are a very broad and comprehensive topic.

As early as by the end of the 1980s, the cultural situation worldwide and the theatrical, in particular, went through significant changes. It can be said that the main features of post-modernism are gradually spilling over into the hyper-modernism as it was called by some researchers. The cultural situation of the new time is determined by the rapid development of communications and information technology. A hybrid stage aesthetics is being formed, with



Fig. 2. Tenth edition of the Puppet Fair Sofia, 2018, poster (Panair na kuklite 2018)

mixing of themes, images, means of expression and techniques from the long history of the performing arts in Europe. A new hybrid theatrical language and new hybrid genres such as theatre versus place, visual drama, theatrical installation, visual performance, cyber-performance, etc. are emerging (Nikolova 2007, 92-94). Many of these new hybrid genres rely solely on non-verbal communication. This situation predetermines to some extent the theatrical festival picture, as the trend affects to varying degrees the specific theatre festivals. There is an expansion of the boundaries of the theatre and the accession of other arts to it, as well as the active participation of non-verbal forms such as dance theatre, visual theatre, shadow theatre and others in the productions presented on the festival stages. The multi-layered festival model, which involves the inclusion of diverse in nature events, theatrical forms, styles, genres and themes, as well as going beyond genre models, is typical of the studied festivals and allows attracting both mass and elite audiences. This is how the boundaries between “high” and mass art are erased and theatrical forums become a kind of hybrids, providing the largest possible audience. This tendency may be seen mainly at the festival Puppet Fair Sofia, but it may also be found at the World Theatre in Sofia. Moreover, public is attracted by some additional events targeting both theatre-lovers and professionals and students studying arts: discussion meetings, workshops with the audience, training programmes for students and professionals from the theatrical circles, conversations with the teams of the performances, screenings, etc. Critics, writers, journalists and researchers are also attracted, which gives room for development in the field of research, which, however, is still weakly affected, especially as regards non-verbal theatre.

The symbiosis between the different traditions is also characteristic of the two forums. The concepts of the performances from the different editions are based both on modern reading, innovative forms and approaches to classical works, as well as on entirely original theatrical products. The expansion of the boundaries of theatricality in contemporary dance and ballet, as well as in contemporary circus, is also present in the models of festivals. The methods follow, on the one hand, the traditional work with drama and on the other - new spectacular and virtuoso approaches, which lead mainly to emotional and sensory experiences and free interpretation, characteristic mainly of non-verbal theatrical forms.

Festivals similar to traditional fairs are a modern platform for demonstration, strengthening of identity and inclusion in the community. In recent decades, they have also been a universal tool for promoting the regions (Kutin 2018). The selection of non-verbal productions as part of the trends of festival theatre programmes in the region could show to some extent the attitude of festival representatives in the region to this type of contemporary theatre, as well as determine the identity and preferences of theatre and the theatre community itself regarding the style, genre and new forms of theatre.

Puppet Fair Sofia

Puppet Fair Sofia is a biennial and is held every two years. The eleventh edition due in 2020 did not take place because of the epidemic situation worldwide. The festival was awarded by the International Jury of the platform

EFFE (Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe) taking the EFFE LABEL 2017-2018. It was an acknowledgement that the Puppet Fair Sofia was ranked amongst the best European festivals (Mezhdunaroden festival 2018).

The first edition of the Puppet Fair Sofia, which started in 2002 as a national festival, featured participation of only Bulgarian state, municipal or private troupes. Non-verbal theatre had a poor participation, mainly in the form of street theatre, such as e.g. the show of the *Zhar* [Embers] Theatre - Sofia *Pantomime/animation*, directed by Elena Pap and Plamen Georgiev. In addition, the productions used to target children and young people, which has changed since 2006, when performances for adults started, along with family performances suitable for all ages.

The second and the third editions aimed at stimulating, some closer contacts with colleagues from Southeast Europe *inter alia*, and this was why the agenda was complemented by troupes from Macedonia, Turkey, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro. After 2004 appeared a tendency to include more and more international participants from Western Europe, Japan, China, Russia, South Korea, Uruguay, Israel, etc., aiming to develop some closer contacts with professional communities from various countries. Agendas can feature some titles of non-verbal productions and here is a list of a small part of them: *The Emperor of the Monkeys*, directed by Milcho Milchev, Sofia Mime Theatre, Bulgaria (2004); *Mime Animation and Nail Art, Zhar* [Embers] Theatre and Theatre *Tsvete* [Flower], Bulgaria (2004); *The Music in My Hands*, produced by Prof. Dora Ruskova, Puppet Theatre NATFA (National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts), Bulgaria (2004) (Fig. 3); *Aya and Jirokishi, The Wolf*, Traditional Japanese



Fig. 3. *The Music in My Hands*, produced by Prof. Dora Ruskova, Puppet Theatre NATFA (National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts), Puppet Fair Sofia, 2004 (Muzikata v moite ratse 2004)

Variety, original story by Shiro Yadama, directed by Machiko Watanabe, Puppet Theatre Puk, Japan (2004); *Ugly Duckling*, directed by Biljana Vujovic, Poszoriste Lutaka Nis, Serbia and Montenegro (2004); *Fasoulis*, one man show by Stathis Markopoulos, Ayusaya! Puppet Company, Greece (2004); *The Adventures of Mr. Punch*, Konrad Fredericks, England (2006); *Poetical Circus*, directed by Marco Griniani and Frederica Rucola, Girovago & Rondella Family Theatre, Italy (2006); *The Metal Max*, directed by Bojan Baric, "Pinocchio" Puppet Theatre, Serbia (2006); *Poemes Visuals*, directed by Jordi Bertran, Companyia Jordi Bertran, Spain (2006); *The Great Sage Equalling Heaven*, directed by Zhou Di, China National Theatre, China (2006); *The Round People - One Torn Off Piece of Philosophy*, directed by Jorg Baesecke, The Paper Theatre, Nurnberg, Germany (2006); *Samodiv Motives* - folklore street moulds show, Theatre Tsvete [Flower], Bulgaria (2008); *Dance Drum(s)*, directed by Christian Kobulka and Mariola Ordak-Kaszorovska, Theatre of Puppet and Actor, Poland (2008); *Mozart Preposteroso*, directed by John Movat, Nola Rae - Mime Theatre, England (2008); *Street March*, Flag bearers-acrobats, Italy (2008); *The Madness of the Day*, Helix Street Theatre, Greece (2008); *Morning Star*, directed by Paul Norton, Duda Paiva Company, Netherlands (2008); *Have Fun, You Can*, directed by Alvaro Ramirez, Circus Enti, Uruguay (2010); *NON+*, directed by Christos Kaukis and Marion Renard, Eekuipoiz, France, Greece (2010); *The Insect*, Theatre of Fire and Shadows "Faerter", Bulgaria (2010); *Puppet Town*, directed by Yong Suk Cho, Puppet Theatre Hyundai, South Korea (2010); *Snow White*, directed by Eva Viktoria Nagy and Janko Schneider, Puppet Theatre Bobita, Hungary (2010); *On the Edge*, author's performance of Stefania Georgieva, Hristo Takov and Kamen Marin, Atom Theatre, Bulgaria (2012); *Laila*, author's project by Martina Maurič Lazar and Grigor Lorenzi, Puppet Theatre Ljubljana, Slovenia (2012); *Holy*, directed by Duda Paiva, Sofia Puppet Theatre, Bulgaria (2012); *The Strongman*, directed by Fabrice Bison, Bash Street Theatre, England (2012); *Anima Alegra, Zhar* [Embers] Theatre, Bulgaria (2012); *Endless Dreams*, directed by Bonyo Lungov, Maya Encheva and Konstantin Karakostov, *Krastyo Sarafov* National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, Bulgaria (2012); *Tabula Rosa*, directed by Evgenia Tichlia, "Hop Signor Puppet" Theatre, Greece (2014); *Talita Kum*, directed by Marco Ferro, "Riserva Canini" Theatre, Italy (2014); *Georges Melies' Last Trick*, directed by Jiri Havelka, Theatre "Drak", Czech Republic (2014); *Deployment*, directed by Margarita Blush, N/A Connecticut, USA (2016); *Departure*, Cie Tac O Tac, France (2016); *Gran panico al bazaar* - a circus variety show, directed by Giovanni Dispensa, Circo Paniko, Italy (2016); *Feel the Fire, Zhar* [Embers] Theatre, Bulgaria (2016); *The Little Blue and the Little Yellow*, directed by Miha Golob, Maribor Puppet Theatre, Slovenia (2016); *Plastic Heroes*, authored by Ariel Doron, Israel (2016); *Allegro ma non troppo*, directed by José Antonio Puchades and Julieta Gascón, Zero en Conducta, Spain (2016); *Smile!* - a visual show for babies aged under 3, directed by Maria Banova, Sofia Puppet Theatre, Bulgaria (2016), etc. (Arhiv na panair na kuklite).

The tendency toward an increase of international participation in the programmes of the editions remained until the last edition in 2018, where the most international troupes took part in comparison with previous years. Non-verbal performances would make the basis of the festival's agenda.

September 2018 saw the tenth anniversary edition of the International Festival of Street and Puppet Theatre, the Puppet Fair Sofia, involving theatre troupes from Japan, Italy, Spain, Israel, Great Britain, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Croatia, Russia and Bulgaria. The programme included over 40 events, including theatre performances for children and adults, street theatre, street show, clowning, acrobatics, pantomime, street musicians and a number of side events - exhibition, professionals' meetings and workshops, master classes, seminars and more.

Here are listed some of the non-verbal performances, including street theatre and street show, that took part in the tenth edition of the festival: *Dinosaurs* - a street show directed by Tonny Aerts and Hesther Melief, Close-Act Theatre (Netherlands); *Giraffe*, directed by Evgenia Tsihlia and Thanos Sioris, Hop Signor Puppet Theatre (Greece) (Fig. 4); *The Piece*, directed by Vesselin Boydev, State Puppet Theatre Burgas (Bulgaria); *Luminous Drummers* - street show, Moz Drums (France); *A Game of Imagination*, directed by Bonyo Lungov and Konstantin Karakostov, Sofia Puppet Theatre (Bulgaria); *Clowns at Large*, author's show of Leonardo Adorni, Jacopo Maria Bianchini and Alessandro Mori, Teatro Necessario (Italy); *Monsters*, directed by Duda Paiva, Duda Paiva Company (Netherlands); *The Night of the White Horses* - a street performance, authored by Elena Pap and Plamen Georgiev, Zhar [Embers] Theatre (Bulgaria); *Equilibrio*, a street show, Riccardo Rosato (Italy); *Bellevue Hotel*, directed by Bec Applebee, Bash Street Theatre (England); *Snail Shell*, directed by Agnes Kiszely, Ciroka Puppet Theatre (Hungary); *Tiny Ocean*, authored by Liat Shabtai and Maayan Resnick, The Train Theatre (Israel); *Visual Poems*, authored by Jordi Bertan, Jordi Bertan Company (Spain) (X Mezhdunaroden festival za ulichen i kuklen teatar 2018).



Fig. 4 *Giraffe*, directed by Evgenia Tsihlia and Thanos Sioris, Hop Signor Puppet Theatre (Greece), Puppet Fair Sofia, 2018 (Zhiraf 2018)

The troupes that took part in the Puppet Fair Sofia would hardly ever prefer to use subtitles and looked for solutions to overcome the language barrier in non-verbal performances, because the Puppet Fair Sofia has a predominantly children's audience, including audiences under 6 years of age. Another reason for the priority presentation of non-verbal performances would be that a large part of the festival programme is presented on the street and square, which are suitable mainly for non-verbal performances. Most of them would be precisely street-and-square performances and shows. In the documentary of the Bulgarian National Television, dedicated to the sixth edition of the Puppet Fair Sofia, the director of *Invisible Cities* Antonis Koutroumpis from the Plefsis Theatre, Greece, said about his troupe that they would stage their performances both at the theatre and in the streets. He also added that his performance was created to a text after the idea of the Italian writer Italo Calvino; nevertheless, that was a theatre without words: "This is a theatre of the body. Without words. That is how it is understandable to everyone, who walks down the street" (Panair na kuklite 2010). Nonetheless, non-verbal performances at the theatrical stage would also predominate over the verbal ones. The festival is a good example of syncretism of a number of different forms of theatre where the predominant combination would be of forms of puppet and non-verbal theatre (including the shadow theatre, theatre of objects, pantomime, dance theatre, physical theatre), as well as forms of some other arts such as the art of the circus, acrobatics, juggling, visual effects, fire show, etc., leading to some better options both for the artists and from a perspective of perception by and accessibility to the public.

World Theatre in Sofia

World Theatre in Sofia is a platform for the presentation of international theatre and dance productions, which the Via Fest Foundation has been organizing together with the Sofia Municipality since 2007. It strives to show the Sofia audience leading names and trends in theatre around the world. This platform's selection includes events from the programme of the *Varna Summer International Theatre Festival*, but sometimes performances invited specifically for the World Theatre in Sofia. While its schedule is programmed each June, some individual projects may also be performed out of this time framework. Since 2011, this platform has made part of City of Sofia's cultural events calendar (Svetoven teatar v Sofia za platformata).

The editions of this platform would advance shows with quite varied theatrical aesthetics, with an emphasis on dance theatre, among many. Classical plays would be staged based on a modern reading, as the latter could be both verbal and non-verbal.

The archives of the festival (Svetoven teatar v Sofia arhiv) may reveal a number of productions based on non-verbal theatrical forms: *In the Dust*, choreography by Tamsin Fitzgerald, Tom Dale and Freddie Opoku-Addaie, 2 Faced Dance Company, England (2011) (Fig. 5); *Grasping the Floor with the Back of my Head*, Mute Company, Denmark (2011); *L'Après*, directed by Raimund Hoghe, Germany (2012); *Return*, choreography by Chevi Muraday, Losdedae, Spain (2013); *Abstand*,

choreography by Luis Marrafa, Marrafa VZW, Belgium (2015); *Lebensraum*, Stichting Pels/Jakop Ahlbom, Netherlands (2015) (Fig. 6); *Home*, choreography by Luis Marrafa, Marrafa VZW, Belgium (2016); *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, choreography by Marie Chouinard, Compagnie Marie Chouinard, Canada (2016); *Desplante*, a flamenco show by Eduardo Guerrero, Spain (2017); *Autarcie (...)*, choreography by Anne Nguyen, par Terre / Anne Nguyen Dance Company, France (2017); *The Loser(s)*, Losers Cirque Company, Czech Republic (2018); *Circeo*, choreography by Fabrizio Favale, Le Supplici, Italy (2018); *Dandelion*, directed by Hannes Langolf and Ermira Goro, Onassis Cultural Centre, Greece (2019); *The Generosity of Dorcas*, directed and choreographed by Jan Febre, Troubleyn/Jan Febre Company, Belgium (2019) and others. The archives at the festival's website from 2007 through to 2010 are in a process of updating.

The reviewed editions of the festival from 2011 and through to 2019 would reveal clearly that non-verbal theatrical forms have gained an equal ground at the stage of this international platform if compared with the verbal shows. The productions are part of the global trends of physical theatre, dance theatre and new alternatives to conventional theatre, such as digital theatre, contemporary circus and complex theatre, combining speech, traditional and contemporary theatre techniques, and outline the aesthetic profile of the European stage over the past



Fig. 5. *In the Dust*, choreography by Tamsin Fitzgerald, Tom Dale, Freddie Opoku-Addaie, 2 Faced Dance Company, England, World Theatre in Sofia, 2011 (Plamenov 2011)



Fig. 6. *Lebensraum*, Stichting Pels/Jakop Ahlbom, Netherlands, World Theatre in Sofia, 2015 (Holandski spektakal 2015)

two decades. Theatrical formations, as well as their choreographers and directors in particular, have won international awards and have participated in renowned international platforms. Experimental and innovative theatre, including dance theatre, which at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century was unknown to the Sofia audience, has been a priority of the festival's selection. "The idea is to highlight some artistic achievements in these programmes, while showing some trends in European and world stages. So we always make sure that the mosaic of performances is different", said theatre expert Assen Terziev, general coordinator of World Theatre in Sofia (Terziev 2014).

It is noteworthy, however, that the representatives of this type of theatrical form would be mainly from Western Europe, with the only participant from Southeast Europe being the Greek troupe. Bulgarian participants with non-verbal productions have been completely absent.

Conclusion

Despite some differences in the profiles of the two studied festivals such as thematic, artistic and aesthetic orientation, the year of first edition, the number of editions and frequency, the scale, partnerships, method of financing, criteria and regulations for shaping the programmes, age of the audience, the analysis of the festival repertoires clearly shows that the non-verbal theatrical forms would occupy a significant part of the festival programmes of two of the largest and most established international festivals across Southeast Europe: Puppet Fair Sofia and World Theatre in Sofia.

Non-verbal theatre belongs to the worldwide trends towards searching of new means of expression and non-standard forms of both reading of classical texts and creating modern authors' works. In this sense, while the forms are not leading in themselves during the selections, they are a reflection of the avant-garde in world theatrical art, the aesthetic and artistic pursuits of artists and modern forms and currents of modern times.

The universal form of non-verbal communication is at the heart of theatrical attempts to reach a wider audience. Due to their international character and foreign language audience, the participants of the festivals consciously and urgently seek universal communication models in order to overcome the language barrier and cultural differences. In this context, local participants would often rely mainly on the word, as they have an audience that understands their language, as in the Puppet Fair Sofia, and non-verbal means would be used rather by visiting foreign festival representatives.

The tendencies are towards wider inclusion of non-verbal forms in the editions of the festivals from their foundation until 2019. Participation with non-verbal productions would mainly be taken by formations and theatres from Western Europe, as far as the World Theatre in Sofia festival is concerned. However, the programme of the Puppet Fair Sofia, in addition to participants from Western Europe, Asia and America, would regularly include theatre without words from countries in Southeast Europe such as Bulgaria and Greece. While both festivals rely on innovative creative content and productions, combining different contemporary stage forms, this would not exclude the identity and traditions of the various participating countries. There is a tendency towards an increasingly widespread presentation of forms of post-modernism, including technology, multimedia and installations. Of course, classic forms as well as pure forms of non-verbal theatre such as pantomime, dance theatre, shadow theatre would also be present in the programmes. Non-verbal theatre is widely used in the editions of the Puppet Fair Sofia, and in addition to a combination of puppet theatre and pantomime, a particularly large percentage of non-verbal performances would be street-and-square oriented. Some ways were sought to eliminate the language barrier in the shows making part of the editions of the Puppet Fair Sofia and this would be prompted by the fact that the audience would be mostly children. While the World Theatre in Sofia is oriented mainly to names and new forms of theatre, which would already be established on the world stage, the Puppet Fair Sofia is searching a rich repertoire, entertainment and spectacularity, which is why, as says the head of the festival Kiryakos Argyropoulos, it has the nature of a fair.

The analysis of two festivals of different nature and characteristics, leading to similar results, shows that non-verbal theatrical forms have an important role and place on the stage of international theatre festivals as part of global trends in contemporary theatre.

References

- Arhiv na panair na kuklite:** Архив на „Панаир на куклите“. - В: Столичен куклен театър. (Arhiv na “Panair na kuklite”. - V: Stolichen kuklen teatar.) Available from: <http://sofiapuppet.com/festival.php?P=25> [Accessed: 30 March 2021].
- Doncheva 2021:** Г. Дончева. Солунският кинофестивал: история, предизвикателства и метаморфози. София, 2021. (G. Doncheva. Solunskiyat kinofestival: istoriya, predizvikatelstva i metamorfozi. Sofia, 2021.)
- Holandski spektakal 2015:** Холандски спектакъл в Самурата. - В: Theatre.art.bg, 25.05.2015 (Holandski spektakal v Satirata. - V: Theatre.art.bg, 25.05.2015.)

- Available from: https://theatre.art.bg/novina.php?news_id=4198&city=20 [Accessed: 5 May 2021].
- Jordanov 2013:** Н. Йорданов. Фестивалите на изкуствата - между глобалния арт пазар и локалната културна идентичност. - Публични политики, 4, 2013, 1, 35-41. (N. Jordanov. Festivalite na izkustvata - mezhdub globalniya art pazar i lokalnata kulturna identichnost. - Publichni politiki, 4, 2013, 1, 35-41.)
- Kutin 2004:** Л. Кутин. Фестивалът като феномен на художествената култура. Варна, Сталкер. (L. Kutin. Festivalat kato fenomen na hudozhestvenata kultura. Varna, Stalker.)
- Kutin 2014:** Л. Кутин. Българските фестивали - категории и системи за оценка. София, Авангард Прима. (L. Kutin. Bgarskite festivali - kategorii i sistemi za otsenka. Sofia, Avangard Prima.)
- Kutin 2018:** Л. Кутин. Светът на фестивалите. Теория и практика на художествените празници. - Слъв, е-списание в областта на хуманитаристиката XX-XXI в., 6, 2018, 11. (L. Kutin. Svetat na festivalite. Teoriya i praktika na hudozhestvenite praznitsi. - Dzyalo, e-spisanie v oblastta na humanitaristikata XX-XXI v., 6, 2018, 11.) Available from: http://www.abcdar.com/magazine/XI/Kutin_1314-9067_XI.pdf [Accessed: 28 March 2021].
- Mezhdunaroden festival 2018:** X Международен фестивал за уличен и куклен театър „Панаир на куклите“ 2018. - Културни новини, 12.09.2018. (X Mezhdunaroden festival za ulichen i kuklen teatar "Panair na kuklite" 2018. - Kulturni novini, 12.09.2018.) Available from: <https://kulturni-novini.info/sections/11/news/28196-h-mezhdunaroden-festival-za-ulichen-i-kuklen-teatar-panair-na-kuklite> [Accessed: 30 March 2021].
- Muzikata v moite ratse 2004:** „Музиката в моите ръце“. Постановки. Куклен театър НАТФИЗ. Дора Рускова. - В: Theatre.art.bg ("Muzikata v moite ratse". Postanovki. Kuklen teatar NATFIZ. Dora Ruskova. - V: Theatre.art.bg) Available from: https://theatre.art.bg/музиката-в-моите-ръце_769_18_20 [Accessed: 5 May 2021].
- Nikolova 2001:** К. Николова. Тялото и пространството. Първо издание на Балканска танцова платформа. - Литературен вестник, 43, 19-31.12.2001. (K. Nikolova. Tyaloto i prostranstvoto. Parvo izdanie na Balkanska tantsova platforma. - Literaturen vestnik, 43, 19-31.12.2001.) Available from: <https://www.slovo.bg/old/litvestnik/143/lv0143022.htm> [Accessed: 29 March 2021].
- Nikolova 2007:** К. Николова. Театърът на границата на XX и XXI век. София, 2007. (K. Nikolova. Teatarat na granitsata na XX i XXI vek. Sofia, 2007.)
- Nikolova 2013:** К. Николова. Българският театър след 1989 и новата британска драма. София, 2013. (K. Nikolova. Bgarskiyat teatar sled 1989 i novata britanska drama. Sofia, 1913.)
- Panair na kuklite 2010:** Панаир на куклите 2010, режисьор Ваня Иванова, документален филм на БНТ, посветен на 6-то издание на Международен фестивал „Панаир на куклите“. (Panair na kuklite 2010, rezhisior Vanya Ivanova, dokumentalen film na BNT, posveten na 6-to izdanie na Mezhdunaroden festival "Panair na kuklite".) Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4OinBzkrYM&t=286s> [Accessed: 31 March 2021].
- Panair na kuklite 2018:** Панаир на куклите 2018 София. Куклен театър Благоевград бе избран за участие в десетия международен фестивал за уличен и куклен театър „ПАНАИР НА КУКЛИТЕ“ 2018 с представлението „Приказните разказвачи“. - В: Theatre.art.bg, 28.09.2018. (Panair na kuklite 2018 Sofia. Kuklen teatar Blagoevgrad be izbran za uchastie v desetiya mezhdunaroden festival za ulichen i kuklen teatar "PANAIR NA KUKLITE" 2018 s predstavlenieto "Prikaznite razkazvachi". - In: Theatre.art.bg, 28.09.2018.) Available from: https://theatre.art.bg/novina.php?news_id=6750&city=25# [Accessed: 5 May 2021].

- Plamenov 2011:** П. Пламенов. Гневът като градация. В праха, гостуване на британската танцова формация 2 Faced Dance Company. - В: LAPIDARIUM. Литература, изкуство, култура, 9.12.2011. (P. Plamenov. Gnevat kao gradatsiya. V praha, gostuvane na britanskata tantsova formatsiya 2 Faced Dance Company. - V: LAPIDARIUM. Literatura, izkustvo, kultura, 9.12.2011). Available from: <http://kulturatadnes.blogspot.com/2011/12/> [Accessed: 5 May 2021].
- Stoeva, Nazer 2017:** Н. Стоева, М. Назер. Иновативните фестивали - за хората, икономиката и умните градове. - В: Move.bg, 6.11.2017. (N. Stoeva, M. Nazer. Inovativnite festivali - za horata, iekonomikata i umnite gradove. - V: Move. bg, 6.11.2017.) Available from: <https://move.bg/inovativnite-festivali-za-horata-ikonmikata-i-umnite-gradove> [Accessed: 28 March 2021].
- Stoycheva 2013:** Д. Стойчева. Управление на иновативни театрални проекти. София, 2013. (D. Stoycheva. Upravlenie na inovativni teatralni proekti. Sofia, 2013.)
- Svetoven teatar v Sofia arhiv:** Световен театър в София. Via Fest. Архив. - В: Viafest. (Svetoven teatar v Sofia. Via fest. Arhiv. - V: Viafest.) Available from: <http://viafest.org/sofia/arxuv/> [Accessed: 2 April 2021].
- Svetoven teatar v Sofia 2020:** Световен театър в София 2020 - дигитална селекция на театрални спектакли. - В: Bnr.bg, 12.11.2020. (Svetoven teatar v Sofia 2020 - digitalna selektsiya na teatralni spektakli. - V: Bnr.bg, 12.11.2020.) Available from: <https://bnr.bg/sofia/post/101372672/platformata-svetoven-teatar-v-sofia-2020-shtebade> [Accessed: 13 July 2021].
- Svetoven teatar v Sofia za platformata:** Световен театър в София. Via Fest. За платформата. - В: Viafest. (Svetoven teatar v Sofia. Via Fest. Za platformata. - V: Viafest.) Available from: [http://viafest.org/sofia/за-платформата/](http://viafest.org/sofia/za-платформата/) [Accessed: 1 April 2021].
- X Mezhdunaroden festival za ulichen i kuklen teatar 2018:** X Международен фестивал за уличен и куклен театър „Панаур на куклите“. Организатор: Столичен куклен театър, Столична община. - В: Fest-bg, 2018. (X Mezhdunaroden festival za ulichen i kuklen teatar “Panair na kuklite”. Organizator: Stolichen kuklen teatar, Stolichna obshtina. - V: Fest-bg, 2018.) Available from: <https://fest-bg.com/event/x-международен-фестивал-за-уличен-и-ку/> [Accessed: 30 March 2021].
- Terziev 2014:** А. Терзиев: Публиката е подготвена за „Световен театър в София“. - В: Въпреки. (A. Terziev: Publikata e podgotvena za “Svetoven teatar v Sofia”. - V: Vapreki.) Available from: <https://xn--blagjhxg2e.com/post/86803764601> [Accessed: 9 April 2021].
- Zhiraf 2018:** Жираф. Театрална постановка за деца. Нор Signor Puppet Theatre, Гърция. Панаур на куклите 2018. - В: Програмата, 2018. (Zhiraf. Teatralna postanovka za detsa. Nor Signor Puppet Theatre, Gartsia. Panair na kuklite 2018. - V: Programata, 2018.) Available from: <https://programata.bg/?p=39&l=1&c=1&id=98527> [Accessed: 5 May 2021].

Yanita Kirova, PhD student

Institute for Balkan Studies with Centre of Thracology
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
13 Moskovska Str.
1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
Email: kirovayanita@gmail.com