

Foreword

*Life was meant to be lived,
and curiosity must be kept alive.
One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life.*

Eleanor Roosevelt

Attributed to the cognitive theories the reception of art has overcome the dangers of a virtual world. Although it seems that the present times of levelling, loss, distortion and misunderstanding, when communication takes place in a flat-plane surface, and we can only dream about feedback, will never end. The longing for such simple and timeless things as understanding, evaluation, appreciation, sensitive knowledge, meaningful adoration, discovering and preservation becomes equal to the feeling of infinity.

Predestined salvation does not come to us. Modern “networked” communities create the plans of supposed freedom of expression, losing personal priorities in publicity. “Imagined communities” have become some sort of tool to produce Other as “enemy” – a parody of the *deus ex machina* device. The “interpretive communities” as defined by Stanley Fishers, the American literary theorist of the twentieth century, used to promote a reader-response criticism, argumentation and debate, while in today’s era users are leaving anonymous and emotional comments; similarly, the most characteristic feature of *critical reading* was the chosen strategy of interpretation and perspective, rather than ontological, cognitive or valuable subjects. Interpretation theories, “rigorous” methodological assumptions and poststructuralist critique, affirming the dimension of unconsciousness, we might say, determine the imperfection of articulation and reception. Can we prove the legitimacy of interpretations, penetrating into our experience, knowledge and language? Or we are just waiting for “the death of the author”? Roland Barthes argues that once the author is *removed*, the reader enters the scene, opening up the texts to multiple interpretations and restoring the relevance of reception. Can it be seen as “the effect of reality” or the power of plausibility?

Current challenges have many faces. Discussion about theater and its added values seems like a measurement of toxic volcanic gases released into the atmosphere, where the New Cold War tensions rise. Cross-cultural communication, which has emerged during the years of the Cold War, today, raises new questions about value priorities, moral authorities and *pro bono publico*. In the publication *Cross Cultural Communication and Priorities: The Mission of Theatre par excellence* Rita Repšienė is

looking for the answers, confronting the dilemmas and discussing about the “intercultural” heroes of contemporary theater – Eimuntas Nekrošius, Jonas Jurašas, Oskaras Koršunovas and Jonas Vaitkus.

New art processes that are revealed by Odeta Žukauskienė in the study *The Biennialization of Contemporary Art: Interpretation, Criticism, Reception* disclose the development of a global biennials network, closely related to the effects of globalization and the dissemination of cultural industry. Consolidating its authority, this widespread system of international exhibition transforms art into the field of innovation, actuality and curiosity, creating a conditional value added to the culture and a real value to the economy. The principles of global economy, market, different ideologies, curatorial cult, competitiveness and innovation are managing the spirit of biennials. Another negative effect of biennialization is the disappearance of the real art criticism. Intellectual manipulations and publicity strategies obscure the essence of art and critical reflection. Is it possible that creative, artistic and critical potential falls into the grip of “soft” totalitarianism?

Continuing the theme, Kęstutis Šapoka delves into complicated relationship between the curator and the artist in the global network of biennials, which he treats like a reflection of neoliberal exploitation and post capitalist company. The system allows flourishing curators – the specific educated caste of bureaucrats, on whom eventually artists depend, becoming some sort of hybrids that are losing their identity and imitating “authenticity”. On the other hand, the driving force of biennial is “smart ideas” that are supposed to be innovative, but are rather superficial. In general, biennialization is linked to the bureaucratization and commercialization of contemporary art system, in other words, to a deep moral crisis.

In the article *The Declining Role of Public Critics? National Contexts and International Intellectual Exchange* about the current situation of public intellectuals, Skaidra Trilupaitytė aims to show that not only the role of social and public critics, but also their position in the intellectual field is changing. The emergence of the multiple areas of values and meanings she connects to the social networks and explores the phenomenon of public speaking. Actually, the authoritative statements depend both on various local interests and international intellectual exchanges that are correspondent to more universal (Western) political “right” and “left” categories. The dynamics of reputation has encouraged the author of the article to analyze the volatile (and intertwining) positions of intellectual, academic and expert, who explains government’s decision-making results, and whose position will rise even more questions in the future.

The documentary film also receives a lot of attention. Giedrė Beinoriūtė, a doctoral student at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, addresses the issues of ethics, arising when filming children, and discusses the potential solutions, analyzing documentary film *Alone* (2001) by filmmaker Audrius Stonys. Trough deconstructive

and comparative analysis she reveals the potential interpretational models of the documentary film and assesses the reception of film in Lithuania and abroad.

A theoretical framework is crucial for interpretive research. A conversation *La théorie – entre pratique et philosophie* between teatrologist Rasa Vasinauskaitė and a famous French researcher, expert in the theory of theatre Patrice Pavis attempts to find answers to the relevant questions about theatrical research. Below is published a passage “The Spectator” from Patrice Pavis’ book *Dictionnaire de la performance et du théâtre contemporain* (Paris: Armand Colin 2014).

The next section is dedicated to the cultural history. Published here the part of a printed book *The Nation and National Loyalty* (1961) by Juozas Girnius reflects on the national fidelity abroad. Juozas Girnius, who has experienced many challenges in exile, remained faithful to national ideals, native Lithuania and obligations to the Homeland. Claiming that *the homeland is a treasure*, he reminds us of the times when living in your country was treated as the most valuable thing. Comprehending that *in a foreign country it’s almost impossible not to lose nationality*, he deals with the dilemma of national fidelity. *Is it possible not to lose nationality being abroad and to foster the obligation for the national loyalty?* He relates the moral possibility of survival to the appreciation of identity. Propagating the program of national loyalty, Juozas Girnius has been guided by the essential prerogatives of nationality: *Regardless worldview, religious, political and social beliefs, Lithuanians always will be brothers. The Lithuanian fraternity must bridge all the differences, and the Lithuanian consciousness must elucidate that the basic connectivity – the Lithuanianness – cannot be forgotten in any fight.* These ideas, insights and motivations, beyond doubt, remain important to us today in terms of meaningful existence in Lithuania and abroad.

An engaging interview with the editor-in-chief of *Kultūros barai* (prepared by LRT radio programme *Week of Culture*) Laima Kanopkienė on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of magazine continues the reflections about core values, urgent challenges and needs of Lithuanian culture, the courage to express your opinions, and the role of media today. The importance of culture lies in precisely that “it can transform a country into something knowable and recognizable slowly but permanently. It’s usually continuous and permanent work, and not some blinding sparks as, let’s say, a golden achievement in sports or such an object of massive interest as a one-day Eurovision noise.”

A relevant art reception is still closely linked to the concepts of the aesthetic of reception – the horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*) and the differentiation of horizons (*Horizontabhebung*) enacted by a German academic Hans Robert Jauss, who defined the *comprehensive consciousness as the subject of aesthetic experience*.