

Cultural Managers on Cultural Management Practices in Romania

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Abstract: This article proposes a synthetic analysis of the cultural management practices in Romanian theaters, as mentioned in interviews by managers of state or independent theaters. The focus is on main topics of interviews and on the managers' acknowledged concerns: space management, management of human resources and "success" management. The managers' discourse analysis points to important aspects of the cultural management practices in Romania and it supports a better understanding of the Romanian theater landscape.

Keywords: cultural management, theater managers, Romanian State Theater, cultural practices, post-communist Romanian theater.

Introduction

The starting point of this article is a series of interviews conducted in 2014-2017 with managers of Romanian state theaters and managers of independent companies, about homegrown cultural management. The interviewees' discourses are varied, with different rhetoric, but they converge, perhaps surprisingly, to the same topics and they raise vastly similar problems occurring in institutions whose organization and cultural specificity are different.

Beyond the precise answers received in the interviews, we believe that the analysis of the managers' discourse reveals important aspects of the Romanian cultural management practices and contributes to a better

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understanding of the Romanian theater landscape. Our research has sought to collect a set of information required for the completion of the case studies included in a fuller work. The nature of the work did not allow an analysis of the managers' discourses, but, in our opinion, the material obtained from the interviews is valuable and it deserves our attention in the attempt to gain better understanding of the specifics of the Romanian cultural management environment. Ever since the interviews, changes have occurred in the organizational charts of the theaters; thus, Alina Nelega, who was the artistic manager of the Liviu Rebreanu Company (Târgu Mureș National Theater) at the time of the interview, has been replaced by the actor Nicu Mihoc, while Liviu Timus, manager of Teatrul Tineretului of Piatra Neamț has been replaced by the stage director Geanina Cărbunariu. Despite the fact that the two no longer occupy management positions, we believe that the interviews continue to be valid and valuable as regards the information offer; therefore, they will be used in this material. The interviewed managers are: Dorina Lazăr (Bucharest Odeon Theater), Gavril Cadariu (Târgu Mureș Ariel Theater), Alina Nelega (Liviu Rebreanu Company, Târgu Mureș National Theater), Ștefana Pop-Curșeu (Lucian Blaga National Theater, Cluj-Napoca), Liviu Timus (Teatrul Tineretului of Piatra Neamț), David Schwartz (artist and independent contractor), Mihai Pintilei (Teatrul Fix of Iași). The semi-structured interviews had several key-questions regarding the manager's responsibilities, the theater's condition upon the occupation of the position, the management models implemented in theaters during their headship, the institution's organizational culture, the relationship with the funding institutions. The full interview transcripts can be found in the annexes to my doctoral thesis and they are available for consultation.

Who are the cultural managers in Romania?

The highest position in all the organizational charts of Romania's national theaters is occupied by the general manager/managing director. With very few exceptions (Teatrul de Nord of Satu Mare and, starting from 2016, "Marin Sorescu" National Theater of Craiova), those in charge of the said institutions are primarily artistic professionals. For this reason, the concept of manager-artist acquires a major importance in the understanding of the

Romanian administrative system, and it outlines one first aspect of the cultural managers' discourse. Were we to use a stereotype, the professional "artist" training dominates the discourse used by theater managers, leaving little room, for example, to the economic or administrative language, which, in fact, is not surprising.

Following the talks on management, several general guiding points stood out and, in our opinion, seem to make up the frame of the Romanian management practices. Translated into operational systems, they could be called as follows:

1. Space management
2. HR management
3. "Success" management.

The first and perhaps widest of these items relates to the theater space, premises. Without exception, whether we talk about state theater managers or about representatives of independent companies, they related continuously to this aspect. It is constant in their speech, regardless of the nature of the question. The second major indicator is given by the human resources. Mainly, we deal with the managers' constant focus on the degree of satisfaction, professionalism and continuous training of the artistic staff and of the technical one. As to the third category, things are much more ambiguous. Although it is not always an overtly undertaken matter, the pressure of "success" rests on the shoulders of theater managers, mainly, precisely because of their somewhat duplicitous position of double representation. Ultimately, there will always be an attempt to lay down the coordinates of success. Any talk about cultural management in Romania starts from the same issues, which, undoubtedly, is the root of the current management practices, i.e. the institutional form. The "management model" found in state institutions is completely different from the one applied by the independent companies. Nevertheless, following the interviews conducted in the research period, we could see several items constantly present in the discourses of those engaged in the management act, whether we are talking about state theaters or about independent ones. Despite this fact, in our discussions with the theater managers, we were seldom able to "find out" about the type of management implemented in their corresponding institution. The reasons of such failure

may only be guesses or read between the lines of the interviews. In our opinion, the core reason is the lack of grasp of the theoretical terms that are relatively new in the Romanian administrative language. The manager-artist does not manage, yet, to overcome a certain complex of “artist” in the business sector, an artist who acts on instinct or based on empirical experience acquired during the exercise of their job, rather than on set management and economics knowledge.

Theater as a family

To the question “Is there a management model in your theater different from other theaters? How would you define it?”, we got the following answers:

<p>Liviu Timuș Manager of Teatrul Tineretului of Piatra Neamț</p>	<p>Loyalty and a lot of love.²</p>
<p>Dorina Lazăr Manager of Bucharest <i>Odeon</i> Theater</p>	<p>Well, I don’t know about management elsewhere, it’s very important that, beyond these frictions and I don’t know what else, there’s a team actually working well together. I mean, I’m on very good terms with P.R., Tamara and Cristina, with the accounting service, with the legal advisor, with the technical department, we are like a... family, and, it’s true, that how I’ve raised them.³</p>
<p>Alina Nelega Artistic Manager of Târgu Mureș National Theater</p>	<p>Yes, there is. Because we care about the city’s specific nature, on the one hand; no, there isn’t, on the other hand, because there are some management-related things we need to consider, the last effective management courses I took were in 1996, I think, courses I took abroad and</p>

2. Liviu Timuș (General Manager of Teatrul Tineretului, Piatra Neamț) in discussion with the author, January 2014, online interview.

3. Dorina Lazăr (General Manager, Odeon Theater, Bucharest) in discussion with the author, Aprin 2014, Bucharest.

	<p>which were actually thorough, but the case of Romania looked nothing like what we learned during the courses. Now I strive to remember some things I knew back then but could not apply, because there was nowhere to apply them. So, there are some matters to be learned in management, too, and they are learned because most often than not you act on instinct. I regret it, because what happens now, after 20 years, should have happened back then. I was much better trained, younger and had more energy than I have now; but this is the country, that's the train speed.⁴</p>
<p>Gavril Cadariu Manager of <i>Ariel</i> Theater of Târgu Mureș</p>	<p>In my view, theater is like a family. The relationships among us are very important, given that we stay here more than we stay at home. Especially during the season, we are here most of the time. For this reason, Ariel Theater has this very friendly bearing. (...) If you don't pay them really well, you have to give them something else. You have to love all of them. This is one of the very important things when you are a manager. Because you bear the responsibility. The opportunity of some things. Give them purpose.⁵</p>
<p>David Schwartz</p>	<p>The management strategy has been built throughout time, rather intuitively, because none of us is trained in this sector. Basically, we operate in two ways: with some projects supported by public funds and other projects conducted on a volunteer base and by various crowdfunding methods.⁶</p>

4. Alina Nelega (Artistic Manager, National Theater, Târgu Mureș) in discussion with the author, February 2014, Târgu Mureș.

5. Gavril Cadariu (General Manager, Ariel Theater, Târgu Mureș), in discussion with the author, February 2014, Târgu Mureș.

6. David Schwartz (Theatre director and cultural entrepreneur) in discussion with the author, May 2014, online interview.

Mihai Pintilei Teatrul Fix, Iași	The management strategy is to develop theater-associated economic activities (consumer activities, meals, accommodation), which should ensure a stable budget, covering or replacing the theater administrative and utility expenses. ⁷
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The “Family” or “Theater as family” motif is constant in the discourse of state theater managers. As long as, in most of the cases, before taking over the administrative position, theater managers were members of the artistic staff of the theater, of course the current position “confuses” or perhaps even “disturbs” the artist who has become a manager. The confusion is all the more significant when we analyze the theater manager’s status regulated by the applicable legislation. The manager is not the representative of the artistic/technical staff in front of the funding authorities; instead, he/she is the authorities’ representative in the team he/she leads. In other words, the artist who, before taking over the job, was part of an artistic team that he/she now steers, does not represent the team, but the authorizing officers in front of the team. The incongruity is obvious, but beyond, let’s say, the overt absurdity, a major degree of confusion lingers, and it will act, undeniably, both on the manager’s activity *de facto* and on his/her speech. The need to always emphasize the familiar, intimate nature of the colleagues’ relationship is closely linked with this confusing aspect of his/her position. In the interviewees, we can see clearly that, despite their management position, the director or the manager believes that he/she is a team member, a family member or, at best, “the head of the family”. Undoubtedly, any manager, regardless of the sector of activity, needs to be part of a team, but in the case of creative industries, teamwork somehow seems idealized and lifted to a level of familiarity different from the other sectors of activity.

Things look different in the case of managers of independent theaters or theatrical initiatives. The definite focus is on the drawing of funds and on the acute need of financial stability. While state theater funding is stable, independent theaters inhabit a much more unstable and unpredictable

7. Mihai Pintilei (General Manager, Teatru Fix, Iași) in discussion with the author, May 2014, online interview.

reality. When asked about the management strategy of Teatrul Fix, Mihai Pintilei talks about the established artistic objectives, but clearly separates them from “management” – which he links exclusively to “related economic activities”.

Gavril Cadariu confirms the aspects we were already fathoming and speaks about the cultural manager’s necessary “charisma” – which is first of all useful in the relationship with the funding institution’s representatives, most often people unrelated to the artistic environment, political representatives. Cadariu recalls an interesting episode in relation to the new building of Ariel Theater. He says:

We had support, respect, consideration. We asked for money in a down-to-earth fashion. I got support, proof that this transition from one building to another has occurred. It’s a great opportunity for me, to make such a building, together with them. Money was not all it took, it also took willpower. Because you know how to do it, you want to do it and you prove it and you deserve to receive it; it’s a theater that works, enjoys recognition, etc. That’s how I tackled things and I got support; while I was outside the political. I do have my likings for some people, but publicly I do not have political opinions. If you do not have your finger into someone else’s pie, you might get a share... Once we go past the political, a man’s charisma is also important. This is a small theater, there is not too much scramble over it. If you struggle to become a manager in a theater for children and the young, you must be really hungry, politically speaking. From the very beginning, this position is not such a great asset, from a political viewpoint.⁸

We can see clearly, from the fragment above, how discourse, intent and willpower can change radically the fate of a theater, perhaps much more than long-term strategies and forecasts. This paves the way to the unavoidable discussion on a definition of the cultural manager and on how he/she should be, in the politicized and often unstable local landscape.

8. Gavril Cadariu (General Manager, Ariel Theater, Târgu Mureș), in discussion with the author, February 2014, Târgu Mureș.

The literature on cultural management talks unanimously about the mediating manager. Perhaps more than in any other sector, this phrase defines the essential trait to be owned by the individual aiming for such a position. The said *mediation* is not necessarily linked with the quality of ambassador or of representative, but it is linked with the intercession, at large, between two adversaries, in theory, but complementary parties, in practice, *i.e.* the economic dimension associated with any market enterprise and the artistic dimension specific to our sector of activity⁹. In Romania, several analysts approached our topic. For example, in her book *Cultura ca piață [Culture as Market]*, Oltița Cîntec tries to paint a sketch portrait of the ideal cultural manager. In her opinion, three categories of qualities are necessary: professional, temperamental, and moral qualities. However, we believe that the traits listed by the author are necessary to any kind of manager, regardless of the sector of his/her activity. Since hers is not a scientific treatise and is somehow relieved from the rigor required by such a format, the author inserts a surprising mention that to be a manager is not a privilege – as considered by some of those who see a sinecure in a public office. Cultural management, she says, entails huge responsibility in relation to the institutional resources and to the community¹⁰.

The need to make such a mention tells, in itself, of a severe issue in the internal system of office appointments and of naming a cultural administrator. In the educational economy of the book, the statement acquires tones of reprimand as regard the great distance between practice and theory. In his doctoral thesis, the stage director Theodor-Cristian Popescu speaks about the excessive politicization of the cultural sector in the 1990s, claiming that the party, or the party alliance making up the government pushes its loyal people or allies down to the minor positions in the Ministry of Culture and local cultural directorates, and sometimes even to the level of theater manager, generating a lack of continuity¹¹.

9. Milena Dragičević Šešić and Sanjin Dragojević, *Arts Management in Turbulent Times. Adaptable Quality Management* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation Boekmanstudies, 2005), 24.

10. Oltița Cîntec, *Cultura ca piață: elemente teoretice și practice de management și marketing cultural [Culture as Market: Theoretical and Practical Elements of Cultural Management and Marketing]* (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2012), 27.

11. Theodor-Cristian Popescu, *Surplus de oameni sau surplus de Idei [Too Many People or Too Many Ideas]* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2012), 36.

Unfortunately, in 2014, *i.e.* two decades after the installation of democracy, Alina Nelega likewise mentions and disapproves the strongly politicized system of naming the theater managers. At the end of the interview, she denounces the current Romanian practice and says that the manager positions are “political currencies”.

Therefore, the fact that theater managers speak about their teams as if they spoke about a family starts to appear adequate and, perhaps, to shield some kind of fellowship, a closing of the ranks in front of the political instability and of the lack of long-term vision emanating from the funding authorities. In fact, this shows us the facts on site. The artistic teams remain, while the management and the political influences are constantly shifting. On the other hand, of course, such an approach cannot replace the management *per se*. At best, it tells of a failure to master the theoretical concepts of management or of the avoidance to use them in an official environment. Certainly, however, the theater managers’ discourse gives away, without necessarily seeking to do it, a fissure in the system, a puzzle piece failing to fit perfectly in the overall picture.

To the question “How is the relationship with the funding institution?”, most of the interviewees answered, “very good”. The following table shows the answers offered by the state theater managers.

<p>Dorina Lazăr</p>	<p>I don't have any complaint about the mayor's office, except for this wretched period of January, February, March, when they cannot come to an agreement on the budget and can only give you a fraction of what you ask. And then, for years and years, January, February and March strike hard the theater, when you do production and I ensure the production money from the amounts I cash in. Odeon Theater is the Bucharest theater recovering 70% of the costume and setting costs from what it puts in the shows.¹²</p>
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12. Dorina Lazăr (General Manager, Odeon Theater, Bucharest) in discussion with the author, April 2014, Bucharest.

<p>Ștefana Pop-Curșeu</p>	<p>The relationship with the ministry is very good. We have seen positive assessments of the results, from the point of view of the audience, of the receipts. However, the budget allocated to what we are doing is very small. And there have been enormous cuts. More than 40%. There is autonomy. The ministry does not seek to enforce any point of view. Except for the financial level. It is money coming in with a precise final destination and it has to be complied with. Thereafter, money coming in for productions is at the discretion of each manager for the right productions. The ministry can control or, better said, can verify and assess the compliance with the minimal plan drafted at the beginning of each season. Until now, it has always been observed. So, there is a permanent dialogue, an evaluation. There is also support from the Ministry for events such as the Cluj International Meetings. We must request sponsorship constantly, because we are not allowed to discount the accommodation, cocktails, etc., which, from a legislative point of view, is anomalous. But for this reason, there are related associations or others that may help the theater to conduct its activity normally.¹³</p>
<p>Alina Nelega</p>	<p>Ministerius. Non-dialogue. It's an administrative, cold, soulless relationship. I do not talk directly with the ministry, I propose solely the minimal plan, I do the budgets for the minimal plan, the financial manager takes the minimal plan to them and the general manager support it (...) The ministry approves the minimal plan and the budget we propose. Aside from this minimal plan and its budget, there is also a budget called goods and</p>

13. Ștefana Pop-Curșeu (Artistic Manager, National Theater, Cluj-Napoca) in discussion with the author, April 2014, Cluj-Napoca.

services involving the building management, the guest shows, the business calls, etc. That's our relationship with the ministry through the general manager who, generally, goes to the minister when there's no money. Our relationship is somehow defined by money. We have also won an international project, called FabulaMundi, where, according to the European protocols, the Ministry of Culture should bring the matching funds, i.e. half of them, aside from the budget allocated to the theater. Last year, there was a commission to which you could apply, but we did not apply, because the maximum amount we could request was 5000 euros and we said that, for the 2500 balance, we would apply now. In the meantime, in January we found out that the commission has been dissolved and no one known anything. So... we have a minimal plan, I have also budgeted these things in other projects, I'll do them differently, I'll try to rework them... But what will the NGOs do? They don't have this kind of money we could, nonetheless, have. What happens to them? That's the relationship with the ministry... so, where's the dialogue when they dissolve a commission to which I was entitled to apply... regardless of whether it's a public institution or not, they will dissolve it and not even bother to notify this to me; so I call to see about the deadline and they tell me: "Oh, don't bother, there's nowhere to apply to." And what do you do? You manage...¹⁴

The answers point clearly to the fact that the authorizing credit officers are not involved in the artistic strategy of state theaters. The relationship is based strictly on budget items and its object is the cooperation on this financial

14. Alina Nelega (Artistic Manager, National Theater, Târgu Mureş) in discussion with the author, February 2014, Târgu Mureş.

component. Certainly, the financial backer is not consulted as regards the theaters' artistic objectives, which, apparently, is satisfactory for the theater managers. The theaters' high degree of artistic freedom is natural and prevalent in Western Europe and beyond it and, in fact, it led to the "arm's length" model. The managers' dissatisfaction seems to be linked with money; they are either underfinanced or they complain about delays or difficult communication with the authorities. Once again, the managers' reactions show that the facts are different from what is put on paper. However, such freedom has a price. The lack of vision and mission of the Ministry of Culture or of the relevant institutions across the territory leads to the transfer of strategic responsibilities to state theaters and, thus, cultural policies become lottery; they become artificial, simply overlapping the immediate reality in theaters and they fail their reason of existence or their objective of becoming the guidelines in matters of repertoires, teams, etc.

The Theater and the Building

In the first chapter of this book *Resetting the stage*, Dragan Klaic notes that the importance of the theater "venue" is owed especially to the new cultural consumer practices, most of the times falling in the category of recreational/social experiences¹⁵. Moreover, Klaic draws the attention to the low popularity of theatergoing (as social activity) in Europe. The author does not sigh necessarily over the theater's loss of popularity, but he does try to show that, in the 21st century, we can no longer talk about cultural activities without considering the place occupied by this segment on the market of recreational activities and about the new forms of development of the economic sector on leisure time.

A view on the theater buildings in Romania can reveal the same basic elements, regardless of the building's venue or its size. It is the space where the audience is received/where they relax; most of the times, this space is a lounge, the main auditorium (frequently called Sala Mare [the Main Hall]) and a smaller hall usually operating as a studio.

15. Dragan Klaic, *Resetting the Stage. Public Theatre between the Market and Democracy* (Amsterdam: Intellect.Ltd, 2012).

In Romania, nowadays, the discussion about the importance of the theater building is barely present in the public space or in the media, and when it is, it is often linked with the lack of funds allocated to the buildings' maintenance and renovation, since these are old building classified (most often) as historic heritage buildings. The most frequent problem is the modernizations and/or fit-out of new spaces.

However, the managers' discourse is shaped by this problem. In absolutely all the cases we have interviewed, the space, the fit-out of the halls or of the related spaces, the shortages or the difficulties encountered by the "recently" appointed managers have made the key aspect of the discussions. For example, Dorina Lazăr offers a long series of thorough details regarding the condition of the theater building, the immediate renovation she coordinated after she took over the management of Odeon Theater. Gavril Cadariu, also, for a significant part of our meeting, talked about the process of changing the theater venue. Obviously, the interest in the building, renovation, extension is a significant part of the theater's resources and it is a top priority for the managers. Anecdotally, Dorina Lazăr recalls how, during a meeting, when she announced that the theater budget had decreased so some changes were needed, a dissatisfied colleague said: "Stop it with the renovations already, artists need money, too".

Ștefana Pop Curșeu proposes a different approach of the building. In this case, too, the discussion about the rehabilitation and modernization of the building was unavoidable, but it also offered another perspective which we called an "integrated" one. Since 2008 and until now, TNCluj has been organizing, usually on the International Theater Day, the event *Ziua Porților Deschise* [*Open Doors Day*]. The organizers' intuition is very good, the main aim being the general audience's familiarization with the theater areas to which, usually, they do not have access. This type of event first appeared in France, in 1984, and then it was borrowed by many other institutions across the world. The initial event's philosophy is backed by the promotion of the European architectural heritage and the general audience's access to spaces to which, usually and in the current activity, they would not have access. The type of event spread significantly in Romania; such events occur in many state cultural institutions (and not only), such as art, history, ethnographic museums, universities, the Palace of the Parliament, etc.

There is also another type of familiarization of the audience with the building... A whole strategy of reintegration of the National Theater building has begun ever since the office was held by Mr. Măniuțiu; this reintegration was not an institutional reintegration, but an artistic one. This makes the most of the space, in connection with the representation, with what actually happens. This is why the *Open Day* was organized; we are already at its 6th edition. These things have been extremely useful, because people come and no longer show that hesitancy in relation to an old, crumbling, unfriendly building. On the contrary, they can now come, see the backstage, the settings, they can enter the control room, they have access to places they usually cannot visit. On the other hand, the venue as such, the lounge becomes full of life when small music recitals, various activities for children, adults, and the young are organized. The theater opens and becomes a public space, as it should be at all times. An intimate, we may say, connection with the National Theater building has been created.¹⁶

The same philosophy is also suggested by the discussion with Gavril Cadariu who, several times during the interview, felt the need to state that the theater (including the building) belongs to the audience and this should be undertaken by it. The theater manager explains at length the meaning of the venue modernization and the opening to the audience by other means than the contact with the theatrical shows as such.

For example, the coffee house. You have the coffee house, because you bring the spectator, a child or a young man or a teenager, or an adult, near the theater show. (...). These kinds of projects, which, first of all, put us face to face with the audience. And we could talk directly to each other, know each other. And without aiming too high, you may get ideas from them, because they know you and thus come to visit your theater. (...) To see how alive it is, how it is. It is very important for the audience to assume this space. It's not mine! It's theirs. It should be open at all times. Not only during the season. What happens here in the summer? An exhibition, we managed to have a bookshop, there are also shows for the summer season. The theater needs to stay open.¹⁷

16. Ștefana Pop-Curșeu (Artistic Manager, National Theater, Cluj-Napoca) in discussion with the author, April 2014, Cluj-Napoca.

17. Gavril Cadariu (General Manager, Ariel Theater, Târgu Mureș), in discussion with the author, February 2014, Târgu Mureș.

The examples may go on, the more that, at present, we may talk about a trend regarding the redefining of theater halls. Most of the state theaters also have a studio hall (or sometimes more than one) or a venue as an alternative to the main hall. Without a doubt, the methods for the management of alternative venues are different from one theater to another. Without downplaying the positive effects of studio venue inaugurations, we need to note the national tendency of extending the theater areas and of launching as many new play venues as possible. This, at first, may seem extremely beneficial. However, problems may arise when such an approach swallows up all the energies and resources of a theater. The attempts to imitate the cultural “hub” model, especially for publicly subsidized theaters, become frequently a mere diversification of the repertoire and a greater amount of shows on the market. Or, we cannot ignore the (at least intuitive) model toward which the theater institution goes, in such cases, namely the one of film multiplexes (which have been present in Romania for some years and have changed significantly the film consumer experience) where many films are screened at the same time, attracting an extremely diversified and numerous audience. Or, in the case of the multiplexes, artistic values blend less with the economic reasons, the latter being the defining factors in each case, while the former are only sometimes a guarantee of quality. Of course, the complexity of the model is vaster, but the philosophy does not change substantially.

What is success now?

The definition of success in theater is very challenging. Can it be quantified? Which are its variables? How can one obtain success? We do not believe there are homogeneous answers in Romania or, while they may be expressed in a particular manner, the statements risk being extremely general or would borrow the form of recipes. Because of the volatility of the concept, we chose to narrow down its meaning and to focus on the big picture including the precise comprehension of the interviewees’ reasons.

For example, Dorina Lazăr associates the word “success” with harmony in theater, with a well-being that should include the whole team of the theater, regardless of their position in the institution. The same opinion is shared by Alina Nelega and Liviu Timuș; they all say that a theater’s success

stems from within and that good staff management spells “success”. Alina Nelega and Liviu Timuș focus more on teamwork and on the preservation of constant feedback from them to the management, but also the reverse, from the management to the employees.

Alina Nelega	Success is the outcome of working with people. You need to be an inspirational leader. I do not believe in dictatorship, I do not believe in hierarchy, I believe in modular work.
Liviu Timuș	Motivation and coherence. The company’s and the audience’s feedback.

Ștefana Pop Curșeu’s position is much more concerned with the relationship with the audience and she looks at things from the viewpoint of the repertoire offer and of its success with the audience. In the end, the audience’s involvement allows the “success” of theater.

The offer in our repertoire is very diverse. If we were not subsidized, we could not keep such a big company in which all members are extremely busy. In the end, the audience may choose from dozens of shows. At some point, we calculated, we could not even play all our shows in a single month. It would be impossible to perform them all, to perform the whole repertoire.¹⁸

While Ștefana Pop-Curșeu talks about repertoire diversity, Alina Nelega supports programmes with a higher extent of involvement in the local community’s life. The measures implemented by the artistic manager of Târgu Mureș also involve another type of success. The first project about which she talked to us is dedicated to the young people of Mureș and it aims to draw teenagers to theater, not by marketing and sales methods, but by the development of educational projects for their commitment to the artistic act. Then, in the same line of thought, the project *Teatrul de Risc*

18. Ștefana Pop-Curșeu (Artistic Manager, National Theater, Cluj-Napoca) in discussion with the author, April 2014, Cluj-Napoca.

[Theater of Risk] was developed in Târgu Mureş, for recently graduate young directors, operating as a potential launching platform for them, but also for their real support in the labor sector. Nelega recalls how the show *Stardust*, made with young amateurs under the direction of the Scottish collaborator, professor and director Scott Johnston, was a success with the audience and, thus, was included in the company's permanent repertoire. To a very large extent, these extra-repertoire programmes aim at the continuous training of the audience; they do not have a solely commercial purpose, they also try to supply the acute absence of educational theater syllabi from the school curricula. Another measure for the cultural institution's strengthening in the Mureş local community (characterized, of course, by interculturality) was the adoption of a policy of reciprocal subtitling, so that shows in Romanian have Hungarian subtitles, and the reverse.

People were surprised. Even the colleagues at the Hungarian section asked why I needed subtitles for the shows in Hungarian, because all the Hungarians need to understand Romanian. And I said, yes, maybe they do know or they don't, some use the language, others don't, but I am not doing it for the Hungarians, I am doing it for the Romanian. Because, when they see the Hungarian subtitles, they remember that they are not the only ones in this city. And I am interested in that. That's the lever I want to trip. And that's beyond the fact that it's a sign of respect and that no everyone speaks Romanian so well.¹⁹

None of our interviewees discussed the form of success validated by an award or by another kind of national or international distinction. We may say this is surprising, especially because the presence in festivals and competitions is appreciated by the funding authorities and many times it is essential in the annual management evaluation.

As to the independent theater, success is frequently anchored in its ability of resistance on the market, but also in the consistency and the continuity of the artistic offers. Mihai Pintilei says: "To have a coherent artistic direction,

19. Alina Nelega (Artistic Manager, National Theater, Târgu Mureş) in discussion with the author, February 2014, Târgu Mureş.

to be known and respected as brand, and to have an economic solution for the coverage of sustenance, regardless of the artistic activity.”

In the investigation started by the cultural magazine *Observatorul Cultural*, which was published in the magazine supplement no. 764/2015 on the topic of re-runs of theatrical productions, Oltița Cîntec and Iulia Popovici signal a severe deficiency of the system, which, in our opinion, also stems from the “pursuit of success” or from this ambivalence in the definition of success. Oltița Cîntec explains the “quick success” practice by the superficiality of the backer’s assessment and by the lack of management vision. Such a system issue may reveal other defects and oversights of the Romanian managing manners, another face of the great autonomy of the management in the decision-making process.

If theaters accept it... Why do theaters accept it? One first answer: because the performance standards required by the financial backer as evaluation indicators focus especially on quick success. And the shortest way to get in the festival, to receive awards and reviews is the work with a prestigious, very busy stage director who is in high demand and has a full schedule. This whole subject may also be seen from the viewpoint of the artistic power relations in the Romanian theater, where, for the state theaters, the stage director is the tutelary authority. All the resources are made available to him/her, re-runs are allowed, and the critics easily forgive his/her potential aesthetic fractures. In some cases, some factors are also given by convenience, by the lack of managing creativity, encouraged indirectly by the authorizing officers via the annual assessment grid. For a positive assessment, the managers choose the short path: the premiere signed by top directors.²⁰

Conclusions

The Romanian theater landscape continues its period of transition. The single theatrical model, inherited from the communism, is enduring, but it is more and more challenged by the new independent theater companies, as well as by the audience. The need to train the management teams is inherent

20. Oltița Cîntec, “Radiografia unui scandal,” *Observator Cultural*, 2015.

and the state theater management teams experience this need. From this point of view, the evolution in the last 20 years is incontestable, but its definition is still in progress, as we can see from the statements of the theater managers.

In the absence of clear, operational cultural strategies well known by the subsidized theater institutions, the roles undertaken by the state theaters are widely different from one case to another. The management teams of the institutions are free to set their own artistic or economic priorities.

In the end, we are talking about the correct and efficient capitalization of the resources at hand. The venue (space) and the staff are the most important ones and they define an institution's direction of development. While in the independent theater the ownership of a space is almost a luxury, in state theaters, this aspect is not a problem in itself. They face, however, the struggle for rehabilitation and restoration funds, often to the detriment of investments in the cultural production. For the independent theater, the human resource is vital in the construction of its identity, but also the advantage it has when compared with state theater, since independent theater teams are very dynamic, ready for new experiences and own a high level of creative energy. In the state theater, the construction of a team is infinitely more complicated, and it depends on a series of multiple variables, such as the projection of the repertoire, the institutional objectives, the need of the local audience, the relationship with the financial backer, the managing objectives and, last but not least, the legislation in force.

The state supports actively the cultural production by direct funding and, thus, it is immediately involved in the creation of the conditions favoring cultural consumer practices. These practices are leftist rather than liberal, despite the fact that the European umbrella "encourages" the Romanian state toward a liberalization of the internal markets (which, in fact, no one wants here).

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