Puppeteering Shakespeare

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by Bence Sarkadi, of the Bence Sarkadi Theatre of Marionettes

Photo: Bence Sarkadi Facebook page

The 9th annual Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival has just ended in Almonte, and it has been a real honor to be invited again. This was the second time I had the pleasure of performing for the amazing audiences in what can now truly be called one of the puppetry capitals of North America, and I was amazed again at how such a small town has managed to produce so many connoisseurs of puppetry. In a town where one can walk into a restaurant or café and discuss the finer points of marionette manipulation with the waitress, any puppeteer would feel at home.

I have been lucky enough to have the chance to present my shows to the citizens of Almonte at two festivals, but what only very few people know about me is that there is a Mr. Hyde to my Dr. Jekyll. Although I hope neither of my personalities is a monster, I do seem to lead two quite different but simultaneous lives. One life is that of a busker, a traveller, a fully practical minded person who creates shows and is preoccupied with the mechanics of marionettes and perfecting his skills as a performer. The other is that of a theoretician, a kind of aspiring scholar who spends days on end in libraries and still believes that writing about the theory and practice of adaptations to the puppet stage may be of interest to anyone other than himself.

When scholars publish their papers they may never be sure whether their writing will inspire or even reach those who are even mildly interested in their ideas. Publishing a paper is nothing like performing on stage or in the street where one can expect to receive instant feedback. But writing about puppetry in the newspaper of the community that hosts one of the finest puppetry related events in the world is as close as one can get to finding the right audience. It is with this in mind that I would like to present to the readers of *The Millstone* a piece about adapting Shakespeare to the puppet stage. The paper first attempts to summarize those characteristics of the puppet theater that differentiate it from the live stage and consequently allow for unique ways of presenting Shakespearean plays. Then it looks at the ways two European productions of *Romeo and Juliet* manage to harmonize the worlds of Shakespeare and puppetry, discussing styles that may be foreign but that will hopefully be of interest to readers in North America.

Puppeteering Shakespeare

William Shakespeare's plays have been experiencing unbroken success for the last four centuries on stages all over the world. In the 20th century Shakespeare conquered the movie screen, and in the recent decades he has become the indisputable king of the puppet stage in Europe. Productions of *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear* or *The Tempest* are taking the grand prize at major international puppet festivals, with newer and newer productions appearing with each and every coming year. Despite the multitude of adaptations, however, the works of the bard of Stratford-upon-Avon seem to retain their popularity and continue to entertain audiences of the puppet stage as well.

The purpose of this paper is to show the workings of the puppet theater in adaptations of Shakespeare. Trough the analysis of two adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*, one to the dramatic stage and one to the puppet stage, I aim at explaining the fundamental differences, as well as the common points between the genres of the live theater and puppetry. While identifying the specific tools of puppetry, I will also point out how the live theater can make use of the methodology of the puppet theater when presenting a Shakespearean play.

Exemplifying the vast popularity of Shakespearean adaptations to the puppet stage, the International Adult Puppet Festivals in Pécs, Hungary have all been about Shakespeare lately: in 2010 an adaptation of *Othello* by Hungarian company Stúdió-K received a prize, the grand prize in 2004 was taken by *Macbeth*, performed by the Puppet Theater of Grodno, Belarus, while at the previous festival three years before, two performances of *Hamlet* and Divadlo Drak's *Romeo and Juliet* were the most celebrated pieces. A *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet*, however, cannot function in the puppet theater by simply substituting the actors with puppets. The puppet theater requires a different theatrical idiom, with unique techniques. To be able to talk about puppetry and analyze puppet theater productions of Shakespeare's plays, it is necessary to understand the basic tools, methods and techniques of puppetry, many of which are quite different from the methodology of the live stage.

The basic difference between the live stage and the puppet stage is in their very existence: that is, *the actor is* while the *puppet represents*. The innate distance between the two genres grew even greater in the middle of the 20th century with the advent of Stanislavski's Method, a school of realism and naturalism described in his essays *My Life in Art*[1] and *An Actor Prepares*[2]. In *My Life in Art*, for example, the Russian actor-director says "All we ask is that an actor on the stage live in accordance with natural laws".[3] Puppetry, being an inherently abstract art form on which the laws of nature work in a very different way than on us mortals, did not follow these trends. Less so, as by the first part of the 20th century puppetry had already found its real place through the Avant-garde and Dadaism into the world of abstraction and non-realism.

In order to understand what lead puppetry to move away from naturalism and how it became an ideal medium for abstraction, it is worth taking a look at a period in the history of the puppet theater, when naturalism and abstraction were present on the same stage, and puppetry came closer to the dramatic theater than ever before. Almost two hundred years before Stanislavski wrote the above lines, puppetry came very close to the ideal of the "*Method*". 18th and early 19th century records seem to suggest that puppets, and especially string marionettes were favored because of their ability to mimic human movement and gestures. The high point in Hungarian marionette theater, for example, was in the second half of the 18th century, when the cream of society enjoyed the marionette performances of Haydn's operas in the Esterhazy Castle where even Maria Theresa, the queen of Hungary (and most of Central Europe at the time) paid occasional visits to see the plays. It was this genre, the marionette opera, which first demanded that puppets imitate humans, not by distorting or mocking, but by precisely mirroring human actions. The marionettes copying the singers were required to do nothing else but that: to copy. Their function was to mimic the gestures of the live singers as precisely as possible. But it was this same genre, the opera, which gave birth to a style of puppetry that helped to liberate the puppets from the burden of having to act human. The core idea of this new style, which grew out of ballet, an art form closely linked to the opera, was to brake free of the bonds that keep humans on the ground. While puppets, without facial expressions and without a voice can never be as good at acting as live actors, they can achieve a perfection in dance that humans would never be capable of. It was through dance that marionettes, as well as other types of puppets, moved into the realm of the symbolic, the abstract, the magical, the unreal, and later the absurd.

The qualities of the puppet theater to represent the symbolic and the surreal rather than the natural, are now taken for granted. Such an understanding of the properties of puppetry, however, is the result of centuries of experimentation with puppet adaptations of Miracles, Misteries, Comedia dell'Arte pieces, operas and classical drama. One of the earliest records of such a modernistic view of puppetry (that is, not expecting the inanimate object to substitute for live actors, but rather to explore the possibilities of braking away from realism) is to be found in an essay by Heinrich Von Kleist, entitled *On a Theater of Marionettes*[4]. The approach Kleist applies in his dialogue written in the early years of the 19th century is one that is very close to the postmodern aesthetic of the puppet taught today at some of the most progressive schools of puppetry in the world. In a simulated dialogue about dancers and marionettes, Kleist has one of the interlocutors comment that marionettes possess a grace humans do not, and then goes on to say that marionettes

"…haven't discovered the law of gravity. They know nothing about the inertia of matter. In other words they know nothing of those qualities most opposed to the dance. The force that pulls them into the air is more powerful than that which shackles them to the earth. … These marionettes, like fairies, use the earth only as a point of departure; they return to it only to renew the flight of their limbs with a momentary pause. We, on the other hand, need the earth: for rest, for repose from the effort of the dance; but this rest of ours is, in itself, obviously not dance; and we can do no better than disguise our moments of rest as much as possible.[5]"

In Kleist's example it is quite obvious that the author does not expect the puppets to perfectly mimic the movements of the live dancers. On the contrary, he goes on to suggest that the dance of the marionette is in some way superior to the dance of a human:

"It is simply impossible for a human being to reach the grace of the jointed doll. Only a god can duel with matter on this level.[6]"

Kleist addresses one of the central issues of the puppet theater here: puppetry's relation to realism. Even today, there are two distinctively different views of the function and aesthetics of puppets: one that tries to clearly distinguish between the properties of the animate and the inanimate; the other attempting to replicate life with the lifeless. It would be the subject of another paper, as it is indeed the subject of a number of books and articles, to justify one or the other approach. In short, however it can be stated that on the very simple question "what are puppets for?" the author of this paper holds common ground with a line of theoreticians, starting with Kleist, and continuing with Vsevelod Meyerhold[7], Nina Efimova[8], John Bell[9], Scott Cutler Shershow[10], and ending with Steve Tillis[11] in that puppets are not suitable for replacing actors, that is, the aesthetic of the puppet cannot be based on imitating life but should be based on the qualities that distinguish the puppet from the actor. The basic premise of the aesthetic the above authors seem to accept is that just as "it is simply impossible for a human being to reach the grace of the jointed doll"[12], it is impossible, and therefore meaningless for a puppet to try to reach the grace of the human. In a collection of his late 1910s observations about the theater, Russian theater director Vsevelod Meyerhold goes into detailed analysis about the difference between the puppet theater and live acting. He imagines the possibility of having puppets "look and behave like real men"[13] and comes to the conclusion that there is little sense in doing so. As he says,

"In his attempts to reproduce reality " as it really is," he [the director] improves the puppets further and further until he arrives at a far simpler solution to the problem: replace the puppets with real men."[14]

In her 1935 book *Adventures of a Russian Puppet Theater*, Russian puppeteer Nina Efimova takes Kleist's observations of the puppet being essentially different from live actors and Meyerhold's remarks about the senselessness of trying to perfectly imitate life with puppets, and states that

"The puppet theater must not ever, ever be a miniature reproduction of the big theater, having its own laws made by its own conditions."[15]

This statement, this demand, seems to transform previous observations and suggestions of the nature of puppets into something that is almost a *commandment* and which has given ground to many of the greatest creations of the puppet theater in the 20th Century, and ultimately to the abstract and symbolic use of puppetry needed when attempting the staging of a Shakespeare play. Most puppet artists today (and not only those working with Shakespearean plays) have realized that puppetry can achieve its real heights in allowing the puppet, a symbolic representation of life to do what it can do best: to express that which is symbolic. This is why Tillis suggests a "conceptual approach" to puppetry where the puppet theater "uses abstracted signs of life of varied quality and limited quantity, realizing that true simulation is impossible" as opposed to "an imitative approach" which "uses abstracted signs of life in such quality and quantity as to simulate life as closely as possible".[16] This seems to be not only the generally observed rule in today's puppet art but also the only logical approach, since, as Bill Braid very aptly points out, "when puppets try to copy the human animal, they fail".[17]

We have seen then, that although classical texts, such as Shakespeare's plays hold sway over puppeteers all around the world, these plays cannot be staged simply by substituting actors with puppets. Puppetry observes different laws than the live theater does because puppets are inherently abstract and symbolic while live actors are concrete and literal. Because of these differences a puppet theater adaptation will inevitably have to follow a different path than any adaptation for the live stage. In view of these basic properties of the puppet theater let us now look at two adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, both of which understand, and although in very different ways, quite rigorously apply the basic properties of the puppet theater discussed above, creating unique and very enjoyable performances. One adaptation is for the puppet stage, the other for the live stage, but as we shall see, the common ground between the two approaches to the play will be none other than the tools and methods of puppetry.

After World War II, with its abandonment of realism the *Theater of the Absurd* took many theater theoreticians and practitioners away from the Stanislavskian ideal discussed in the introduction of this paper. As a result of this shift, the live theater today breaks a number of rules that, even a few decades ago, would have seemed unbreakable. The dramatic stage is no longer necessarily "in accordance with natural laws", and as such, it is sometimes very close in its approach to the modern aesthetics of the puppet theater, inspired by Kleist's paper on marionettes. In the works of a younger generation of Hungarian theater directors, such as Árpád Schilling, Róbert Alföldi, Ádám Horgas, István Tasnádi or Zoltán Balázs, there is a tendency towards a non-realistic, abstract theater, and it is by no accident that some of these directors have already tried their hand at directing puppet theater performances. After more than half a century of going their separate ways, of defining themselves against one another as that which is "alive" and that which is "inanimate", the live theater has come closer to the world of puppetry than ever before. By giving more and more room to symbolism and abstraction, theater directors have recognized the need for incorporating novel tools of representation. New ideas call for new solutions, and many of these solutions were, and still are, borrowed from the world of puppetry.

Exemplifying the use of these shared tools of puppetry and the live theater are two internationally acclaimed adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*: a puppet theater co-production of Czech theater Divadlo Drak and Japanese puppet artist Noriyuky Sawa and the Hungarian *És Rómeó és Júlia (And Romeo And Juliet)*, directed by Ádám Horgas. What do these two entirely different productions have in common, other than their literary source? At first glance it seems that the only common point would be the impression that, while taking very different, and very unconventional approaches in their adaptation of the play, both performances manage to be faithful to Shakespeare's original piece. Faithful not in the sense of leaving the text or the dramaturgy intact, but in the sense of giving the drama a form and context that makes it just as contemporary today, as it would have been to Shakespeare's own audience in his own age. Both performances put serious effort into moving away from the original drama in order to bring today's audience closer to its spirit, and both managed to do so with seemingly very different tools and techniques. On a closer inspection, however, one can find a number of common points in their method of adaptation.

The Czech-Japanese interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*, entitled *A Plague O´Both Your Houses!!!* is the story of two defenseless, manipulated people. Their identity, their personality is secondary to their roles in a predestined story. Everything and everybody is merely a part of the mechanism that moves the story towards the final outcome. It does not matter who is who; it only matters that things happen as they are supposed to happen. Thus, the characters are faceless; all they have is their unavoidable fate. And they seem to accept this to the extent that it is the young lovers themselves who move the chain of events forward. This is something novel in Divadlo Drak's *Romeo and Juliet*. We are used to interpretations where two innocent children are driven to perdition by the outside world. This is also present in the Czech production, but as their destiny is engraved into the depths of their souls, the lovers themselves become a part of the external circumstances that push them towards the final outcome. Everything and everybody promoting this outcome is also within Romeo and Juliet and this concept, as we shall see, appears as a physical reality in this production. In the performance the players put on masks: the mask of a Friend, a Friar, a Nurse, a Mother. The play begins with the scene where Romeo, Mercutio and their company put on masks when entering the Capulets' house.

The opening lines are Mercutio's: "Give me a case to put my visage in: A visor for a visor!" (I/4). The performance is about changing faces and hiding. The art of puppetry is inherently about hiding, but here it is not only the manipulators who are concealed but also the puppets. They hide behind the conventions of a Japanese rite performed in masks. This identity with a mask is well known in Japanese literature and mythology: there are stories in which the mask becomes the face itself, and when it is torn away, the bare flesh is revealed. Without the mask one loses his face as well. What is the significance of the lack of identity in the Czech performance? Everyone in the play, be it a Capulet or a Montague, always does what he or she believes is best. They fight when they feel it is fair to fight; they help their friends when a friend needs help; they love their loved ones and hate their enemies. No one ever does anything that is morally questionable, and thus, no one ever has to take responsibility for their actions, or for the lack of their actions. Everybody is part of a homogeneous mass that pushes the lovers towards their fate. It does not matter who is a Capulet and who is a Montague; they are interchangeable. Would Sampson and Gregory not hate Tybalt if they happened to *be* servants to Montague? Would Abraham and Balthasar not love Tybalt, were they *not* servants to Montague? These are decent, honest people; some of them a bit rash, true, but each and every one of them loyal and acting in all good faith.

És Rómeó és Júlia (And Romeo And Juliet), performed by actor Péter Rudolf and actress Eszter Nagy-Kálózy, also makes use of the interchangeable quality of the characters. The fact that two actors are playing a minimum of twelve roles calls for the necessity of giving two, three, four roles to each player. But here not only do the players take on multiple roles, but the roles themselves are also doubled, i.e. some roles, like that of Mercutio, Benvolio, Friar Laurence and a number of others are played alternately by the actors. In most cases, the changing of roles evolves from situations where three or more people should be on stage at the same time. There are, however, moments when it is not merely a technical necessity to jump in and out of roles. Such a scene is the one where Friar Laurence weds the lovers. When the Friar addresses Romeo, he is played by Eszter Nagy-Kálózy, and when he speaks to Juliet, Péter Rudolf becomes the monk. But when he speaks to both children, he is echoed by both actors, giving a common voice to the common thoughts of boy, girl and priest.

Scenes where two actors are playing three-four roles simultaneously call for innovative solutions. It is a convention of the puppet world that a character can be represented by a prop, an object. Spectators might not realize it, but when a pair of glasses start to function as Benvolio without anyone wearing them, they are entering the world of object animation. And this unconscious acceptance of the tools of puppetry is exactly the point: if one decides to mix techniques, the audience should not have to 'trip over the threshold' between the genres. Once one of the actors takes over a role, the audience accepts the abstraction of figures. The actor will become a character when using a certain stage property, and as a next step, the props themselves will start to represent characters. It does not matter who is in the given costume because we accept that the costume itself is the character. Pushing the limits of accepting conventions to the extremes is characteristic of the puppet theater, and even if we are not aware of it, we are witnessing the workings of puppet conventions on the stage of the live theater. Thus, a pair of glasses will become Benvolio; thumb and index finger rounded in front of an eye like a monocle will always mean Tybalt, and a bonnet, regardless of the person wearing it or whether anyone is wearing it at all, will be the Nurse.

It would be a feeble argument to propose that these moments are mere by-products of necessity. It is a concept of the performance to demonstrate that there is no need for a third, fourth, fifth player. Everyone else but Romeo and Juliet can be replaced, substituted. Everything revolves around the lovers, and it is only *their* personality that is not interchangeable.

The Czech performance also raises the fundamental questions of loss of personality and the delicate quality of character, with the addition of another ingredient always present in the puppet theater: manipulation (in both the sense of actors manipulating the puppets and characters manipulating each other). It is not by accident that Jozef Krofta, director of Divadlo Drak turned his attention from traditional Czech puppetry to Japanese theater when working on *Romeo and Juliet*. European puppet theater has always emphasized the importance of character. Traditional European techniques, such as glove puppets, rod puppets or string marionettes are generally animated/manipulated by a single actor, which means that each puppet obtains its personality, and its intentions from its one and only animator. Personality is inviolable; characters are not interchangeable. In oriental traditions, on the other hand, individual acting and characterization are less central than aspects such as group work and harmony. In the production of Divadlo Drak, puppet master Noriyuky Sawa choreographed the animators' movements according to the best traditions of *Bunraku,* a Japanese theatrical style that combines puppetry with mime, dance and music. The art of Bunraku has its roots in the 17th century, when Japanese theatre enjoyed deep prosperity and popularity, and is based on the perfect cooperation of a group of actors animating a single figure. In order to achieve this harmony, the players have to sacrifice their own personalities and create a united persona for the puppet. In traditional Bunraku theater there used to be a strict hierarchy amongst the players. The master puppeteer would move the head and the right hand, his oldest apprentice (or son) the left hand, and a younger student the feet. Recent trends, however, tend to loosen these ancient traditions. This way the individuals cooperating and collaborating towards the animation of a figure become interchangeable. This is exactly what the performance plays with: the animators constantly change places and roles, and because of this, the characters of the puppets become less conceivable. If the soul of a puppet is the actor behind it, then these puppets have multiple and transposable souls, and consequently they themselves come to be transposable and are *free* to become anyone and everyone else. At the same time, however, if the intention of the puppet is granted by the intention of the manipulator behind it, then multiple and transposable intentions are forced upon these figures, and consequently they are *compelled* to become anyone and everyone else.

It is arguable which is more tragic: to die in consequence of one's own decisions, or to be driven towards one's end by unavoidable circumstances. The two performances of *Romeo and Juliet* have taken different views in this respect; however, their approach toward the treatment of the genre of tragedy shows some important similarities. Both productions understand that today it is extremely difficult to stage a tragedy because, as George Steiner argues in *The Death of Tragedy*,[18] "the triumph of rationalism and a secular worldview has removed the metaphysical grounds for tragedy in the modern world".[19] In other words, accepting the existence of tragedy would mean that we allow for the possibility of some inexplicable power in the world that is beyond our control. "Modern man […] with his sciences and skeptical reason has conquered his superstitious belief in the unseen realm."[20] Modern man will have no such notions as *unavoidable end* or *uncontrollable circumstances*. Or if he will, they must be presented to him in some digestible form, like that of irony or grotesque. It is interesting to note that we prefer to see something turned upside-down and inside-out to anything that is plain and simply tragic. In today's theater, it is a frequent phenomenon that tragic effect on stage turns against the best intentions of the unsuspecting director and becomes comical. If too much is shown, the effect becomes ridiculous, as it often does in productions of *Titus Andronicus*, *King Lear* or even of *Hamlet*. The audience starts laughing as a counter reaction because so much harsh, realistic cruelty, blood, spilled entrails and pain cannot be taken seriously.

Consequently, both adaptations realize the need to elevate the play to something that is still viable after the death of tragedy; however, there is a significant difference in the way the two performances relate to the *tragic*. The Czech performance emphasizes the senselessness in tragedy by turning it into its own parody. The main characteristics of many good Shakespeare puppet adaptations are the qualities of irony, grotesque and nonsense exactly because these traits elevate the dramatic material to a level where tragedy and comedy both turn nonsensical. Moments that have moved audiences to tears for hundreds of years may become comical. After all, we are not watching a nineteenth-century melodrama, and we are too proud and cynical, and at the same time often too ashamed to feel sorry lest we reveal our real emotions. This kind of alienation, distaste and cynicism towards the melodramatic is especially prevalent among theater audiences in Central and Eastern Europe, and this may be one of the reasons why the Czech production has taken the route of moving away from the straight forward tragic ending towards a kind of satire where we are given the chance to hide our sorrow behind some light-hearted laughter. In this performance we laugh at the jests of the players, who sometimes perform incredible shows of acrobatic skills. We laugh at the puppet Romeo, who is literally taken apart and reconstructed after his 'eternal' love with Rosa. We laugh, although we know we are witnessing the death and resurrection of a boy who is reborn a man only to die again. He grows up, but even this growth is comic as he fumbles on stilts to reach Juliet on the balcony. This is the most grotesque moment of the performance: overhead the most famous love scene in world literature is taking place while underneath four people are desperately trying to harmonize their movements while balancing a puppet on six foot-long poles. Finally everything is in place, Romeo reaches the balcony, faces Juliet – and has to realize that Juliet is only a silhouette against a screen. Romeo is a puppet and so is Juliet, but being in different dimensions (Romeo a three dimensional rod puppet and Juliet a two dimensional shadow) they can never actually come into physical contact with each other. The audience is left with the choice whether to laugh at the irony or cry over their tragic fate. Both options are open.

While twisting the tragedy into a grotesque, bitterly humorous parody, Divadlo Drak manages to maintain a feeling of uneasy anxiety in spectators. We are laughing and having a good time, but somewhere deep down we feel the weight of what we are witnessing. How does the production achieve this effect? With extremely strong stage tension. In traditional interpretations of *Romeo and Juliet*, all the time we are hoping that Balthasar will not hurry so much with his message; that Romeo will arrive a minute later; that Juliet will wake a minute earlier. On the stage we find characters desperately trying to go against the unavoidable end: this is one of the main sources of stage tension. Quite shockingly then, in Divadlo Drak's performance we are thrown back by the frustrating coolness with which all the players seem to know and accept that there is no other end than what we all fear: murder, banishment, misunderstanding, miscalculation, suicide and finally sorrow. This cynical acceptance of the inevitable outcome is the source of a different, less comfortable, but equally strong stage tension.

The irony, sarcasm and uneasy tension of the performance do not give way to genuine sorrow. True, we have just witnessed the death of two ill-fated children, but we were laughing all the way through. Besides, in this production even the definiteness of death becomes questionable. After all, we have seen Romeo literally torn apart and reconstructed, and we have seen Juliet literally become a shadow of herself and regain her original physical form. It seems, however, that once the story is over, there is no resurrection. The puppets are left on stage without anyone manipulating them, and even though it was manipulation that had led to their destruction, without their manipulators, the puppets are dead. At the end of the performance, it is hard to decide what one feels. It is some strange mixture of bitterness and shame. After all, how can we be so insensitive to have had a genuinely good time when what we have just witnessed was undoubtedly tragic?

The Hungarian *És Rómeó és Júlia* deals with tragedy in an entirely different manner: it meets tragedy head-on. The lines are spoken as they had been written, the cycle of events follows that of the script, and, although the text is abridged, the performance is faithful to the original dramaturgy. This adaptation does not choose to paraphrase, allegorize or mock tragic effect. It simply does not give a chance for tragic affect to overstep the mark and become melodramatic. In fact, it almost does not give a chance for tragic affect to be tragic, either. The story is presented at such a pace that there is no time to stop and gaze with starry-eyed romanticism. Even the most poetic scenes, such as the balcony scene played beautifully with genuine intuition, are 'killed' before they start to take effect, and we suddenly find ourselves in the next scene, played by the same two people. We are not even given a chance to be sincerely moved by the poetry because Juliet, right after saying "parting is such sweet sorrow" (II/2), will turn on her heel and say "God pardon sin! wast thou with Rosaline?" (II/3). Of course, that is not Juliet speaking any more but Friar Laurence played by the same person, without any transition. This is a very clever way to disguise tragedy: throughout we are spared the discomfort of having to feel touched too deeply. At the very end of the play, however, there is nothing that can save us from being moved. There is no sudden shift, no hint of the playful manner of turning poetic moments around. Unexpectedly, we are left in the dark with all the poetry and emotion of the past ninety minutes slowly settling in. The creators of the performance had realized that it is pointless to speak again after the final words of Romeo. Although Shakespeare had written a full 140 lines of explanations, lamentations and conclusions, the dramatic high point of the play is unquestionably when Juliet dies. In the Hungarian production Juliet kills herself without a word, and the rest is absolute and indisputable silence. The long seconds of silence in complete darkness before people start to applaud shows that tragedy may be dead, but occasionally its spirit can be summoned. We only need to find forms in which the twenty-first century spectator will not recognize it for what it really is. Forms, such as the ones puppetry can provide.

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[1] Konstantin Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950).

[2] Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967).

[3] Stanislavsky, *My life*, p. 70.

[4] Heinrich Von Kleist, *On a Theatre of Marionettes*, Trans. Michael Lebeck (Mindelheim: Three Kings press, 1970)

[5] Kleist, p. 8.

[6] Kleist, p. 9.

[7] Vsevelod Meyerhold, Meyerhold on Theatre (London, A&C Black, 1969 [1913])

[8] Nina Efimova, *Adventures of a Russian Puppet Theater* (Michigan: Puppetry Imprints, 1935)

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[12] Kleist, p. 9.

[13] Meyerhold, p. 128

[14] Meyerhold, p. 129

[15] Efimova, p. 106.

[16] Tillis, p. 44

[17] Bill Baird, *The Art of the Puppet* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1973), 16

[18] George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

[19] Steiner, p. 293.

[20] Steiner, p. 293.

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