

In the form of theatre, the transformed reality of poverty functioned predominantly as a sign. The prophylactic effect of the theatre production entitled *Poverty* then flowed out of the evident ability of single creators to articulate real expressions of a living world through stage illusion. These were reflected through a clearly documentary optics – researched, collected and adequately processed (by the author) into an appealing work with a resonating effect and an impact in the social sphere.

### **Research-based Creative Process of the Director and Performer Sláva Daubnerová**

Sláva Daubnerová (1980), Slovak performer, director and author, carries out an intensive documentary research within the scope of selected themes, which she subjects to her own, authorial interpretation. In her physical (kinetic) expression, she usually achieves aesthetically (formally) unique intermedia projects. When collecting creative material, she equally proceeds from predominantly research-related foundation, through which she clearly contributes to authorial reflection on numerous useful themes: general, universal, as well as marginal ones. Just like the Pôtoň Theatre tandem, Daubnerová, too, probes into the diverse raster of contemporary culture through targeted search.<sup>17</sup> She brings forth heavy and even problematic themes, which oftentimes illustrate the quality of the present world in the author's intensified interpretation. Sláva Daubnerová usually thoroughly documents and researches



Sláva Daubnerová: *Solo lamentoso*. Premiered on 10 December 2012 at the SEUK Theatre. Photo by Ctibor Bachratý.

<sup>17</sup> Here we can already take note of the earlier creative interferences of Sláva Daubnerová with the tandem Iveta Ditte Jurčová and Michal Ditte, right before her choice to gain independence in the P.A.T. theatre, particularly the production titled *Shake ShakespeaRe\_Macbeth* (2007, Pôtoň Theatre).



Sláva Daubnerová: *Solo lamentoso*. Premiered on 10 December 2012 at the SLUK Theatre. Photo by Ctibor Bachratý.

the particular themes of her authorial work. Subsequently, she transforms them in a physical and intermedia way as performer. Her domain is mostly her own authorial position in the performances of physical/intermedia theatre. She likes to combine authentic, occasionally almost civil expression with real video projection of herself during the performance. The audience witnesses the creation of a combination of the author's authentic acting and visual projection, alternatively non-verbal physical expression in combination with her reproduced voice, etc. An example of this is the highly appreciated *Solo lamentoso* (2015), which was particularly well received by the theatre and critic community.<sup>18</sup> In it, Daubnerová gives an account of "singing house" case in Štúrovo, which has been given a broad mass media coverage.<sup>19</sup> It was a story of a woman, who was a nuisance to her neighbourhood: for fourteen years, every single day, she would pester her neighbours by putting on reproduced music, an aria sung by Plácido Domingo. In this case, too, the author, director and performer Sláva Daubnerová got hold of an almost unbelievable-sounding theme, all via the documentary approach – her own targeted research of a real case. Through this case emerged a noteworthy theme with a wider reach: the human fight against society in defence of their freedom/independence. The discovery of this theme was an outcome of the author's research of the environment, of its sociology, the context of an urban location (etc.), which inspired a thorough uncovering of a the life testimony of a bizarre woman, Eva N. Sláva Daubnerová gradually tried to grasp this

<sup>18</sup> In 2016, the visual and kinetic performance *Solo lamentoso* won the Student Jury Prize at the festival New Drama 2016.

<sup>19</sup> The town is located in southern Slovakia, which is an ethnically mixed area.



Sláva Daubnerová: *Solo lamentoso*. Premiered on 10 December 2012 at the SEUK Theatre. Photo by Ctibor Bachratý.

mysterious female in multiple ways. The intent was to portray a person/a woman, seemingly simple, honest, paying her taxes, but at the same time lost in her weirdness. Monotonousness became the resulting expression of the physical performance in the rendition of Sláva Daubnerová. She constantly administered it in greater and greater doses, literally gradating it. Consequently, it was through this monstrousness that the performer achieved a certain ritual quality (everyday repeating of the same aria and so on). It was an exceptionally interesting way to even achieve the prophylactic effect of theatre in the form of an inner confession of a controversial citizen of the town of Štúrovo. Through an intensive authorial, physical manner, Daubnerová “interiorized” the peculiar citizen of Štúrovo fighting the public. She devised her own creative research from the media-covered case of the “singing house”. However, she enriched the media content with an observational probe into the actions of an individual, behaving on the one hand with aversion, and on the other, in a prophylactic reactive way towards the surroundings. The director’s approach was based on a strict avoidance of judging the controversial citizen of the town of Štúrovo. One could say that through her, she tried to effectively diagnose the whole contemporary society. In order to achieve this goal, she made use of a problematic citizen and an attempt to immerse into her moral profile. Daubnerová’s documentary research clearly resulted in generalization: from a particular struggle of an ordinary citizen, of an outsider who turned against her neighbours living in the same street, to a general struggle of an individual with the general external factors of her environment. To a great extent, she was tempted to examine the moral ambivalence of peculiar Eva N., who, in her personal conflict with the neighbouring community, opted for a non-traditional, even radical solution of her personal problem (the constant playing of the



Sláva Daubnerová: *Solo lamentoso*. Premiered on 10 December 2012 at the SEUK Theatre. Photo by Ctibor Bachratý.

same aria). According to Slovak theatre historian Dagmar Podmaková, “Sláva Daubnerová’s productions do not pose the question of the borderline between documentary theatre and performance within the meaning of the theatre of visual arts (Patrice Pavis). Against their backdrop, the spectator waits in suspense for the development of the story, ... Her project *Solo lamentoso* (2015) is a response to the so-called singing house in the town of Štúrovo which has been given a broad mass-media coverage. For fourteen years, a female citizen of Štúrovo used to annoy her neighbours, who lived in the same street, by playing excessively loud music. This was her reaction to the barking of the dogs in the neighbourhood. Daubnerová unfolds the sad and tragic story of neighbourly relations, as narrated by the owner of the “singing house”, Eva N. The desperate discontentment and suffering of Eva N. outgrows into anger and hatred which is also reflected in her Internet blogs. By combining music, movement, accompanying words of the protagonist, excerpts of authentic television shots, Sláva Daubnerová expresses man’s solitude. A dearth of understanding of her neighbours in their lowness is portrayed metaphorically, through small mock-ups of houses encircling the real and isolated world of Eva N., hidden inside her house. The aria of revenge of the Queen of the Night from Mozart’s *Čarovná flauta* [The Magic Flute], in the finale replacing the aria of Manrico from Verdi’s *Trubadúr* [The Troubadour] rendered by Plácido Domingo, which she repeatedly played for many years (deliberately in low-quality recording), is a painful allusion to human life.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> PODMAKOVÁ, Dagmar. In Quest of a New (Slovak) Dramaturgy. In *Slovenské divadlo*, 2016, Vol. 64, No. 3, p. 257. Excerpt translated from Slovak.

Daubnerová's research was linked to shedding light on a mysterious character of Štúrovo, excluded from the society/the majority due to her apparent weirdness. Through her own examination, but especially through the kinetic and overall intermedia expression, the director and author (the performer) strictly established an appellative, exceptionally reception impact of a personal authorial narrative. Through the aforementioned monotonousness of her performance, she stimulated the predominantly ethical and appellative impact of the work. Here we need to further categorize Daubnerová's specific physical expression combined with the intermedia one. In the words of the theatrologist Elena Knopová: "As director and performer, Sláva Daubnerová also focuses on a simple repetitive action, generally minimalistic expression (both lexically and expressively). She boils down her character to a basic set of signs dominated by physicality and image (...) There is an absence of imitation or pretence of emotional states (...)." <sup>21</sup> In certain places in *Solo lamentoso*, she expressed rituality through stereotypic movement. Through rituality she made present the figuratively escalated conflict of society and the defence of a peculiar individual belonging to it. <sup>22</sup>

### Between Various Art Forms

Andrej Kalinka (1978) is a musical composer, author, librettist and director. In his authorial creative work (mostly in the Bratislava artist grouping *Med a prach* [Honey and Dust] and alternatively other theatre and artist groupings), he consistently applies research focusing on varied, mostly musical and art (sacral) material, which serves him to establish several reception influences of his meditative, contemplative works. Kalinka likes using them to immerse into spiritual themes. In his case, research consists of a broad-spectrum search – a selection of particular musical works, usually from the sacral sphere, which he then subjects to his own authorial interpretation, at least in a thorough scenic grasp.

The experimental language of the authorial creative work of Andrej Kalinka mainly lies in an intensive combining (synthesizing) of several art forms (for example, in the works entitled *Bartimejove pašie* ([Bartimaeus's Passion] 2012), *Domov Eros Viera* ([Home Eros Faith] 2014), *Krása a hnus* ([Beauty and Disgust] 2016) and others). It results in works situated in between theatre, concert, art installation, performance, etc. A clear thematisation of the sacral subject and musical citations lead to a primarily spiritual influence in the poetics of the *Med a prach* grouping. Andrej Kalinka consistently focuses on an intensive uncovering (as if through an archaeological scrutiny) of primarily spiritual beauty. That is why his authorial (textual, directorial and musical) creative work possesses a religious dimension, for example, thanks to frequent, apparent paraphrases and citations from musical works and chants or textual fragments from the liturgical works in Old Slavonic and individual fragments from the Gospel texts in Latin, etc. In this case, Kalinka's works could be compared to at least a scenic

<sup>21</sup> KNOPOVÁ, Elena. Postdramatické divadlo minimalistickej réžie v tvorbe Slávy Daubnerovej a Eduarda Kudláča. In PODMAKOVÁ, Dagmar (ed.). *Proces rozvoja divadelnej réžie po roku 1989*. Bratislava : Ústav divadelnej a filmovej vedy SAV, 2012, p. 112. ISBN 978-80-967283-9-8.

<sup>22</sup> In 2017, the Slovak National Theatre ordered an authorial production of *Spievajúci dom* [The Singing House] under the direction of Sláva Daubnerová, brought about due to the earlier well-received performance *Solo lamentoso* (2015).