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Reasons for Joy and Reflection: Engaging with Shakespeare at the Craiova Festival

The Craiova International Shakespeare Festival has been a major touchstone in Europe for theatre artists, theatregoers, and scholars for nearly two decades. This overview briefly situates the Festival historically, indicating the ideals and perspectives developed for it by its founder Emil Boroghina, former director of the National Theatre of Craiova. It identifies as well a number of the Festival's many highlights over the years, Romanian as well as international, and focuses on examples from the 2012 programme, including Silviu Purcarte's *The Tempest* and Robert Wilson's *Shakespeare's Sonnets* performed by the Berliner Ensemble. Attention is drawn to the presence at the successive editions of the Festival of productions directed by Purcarete, who established his career at the National Theatre of Craiova, to which Boroghina had invited him, and who won international fame after performances of his *Ubu Rex with Scenes from Macbeth* at the 1991 Edinburgh Festival. Maria Shevtsova holds the Chair in Drama and Theatre Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London, and is co-editor of *New Theatre Quarterly*.

Key terms: Emil Boroghina, Silviu Purcarete, Oskaras Korsunovas, Robert Wilson.

EMIL BOROGHINA, the founder of this amazing Festival, in its eighth edition from 23 April to 1 May 2012, established it as the Craiova Shakespeare Festival in 1994. A man of vision and boundless courage, Boroghina faced the difficulties of restructuring in Romania after the 1989 revolution with the idea that some of the world's most brilliant theatre should come to his university and industrial town of more than 250,000 people. He extended the Festival in 1995 to include Bucharest, three hours away by car to the north, and to this day the Romanian capital shares – or exclusively hosts – several productions in the programme he masterminds.

The Festival was, at first, a triennial event, allowing Boroghina to muster his resources for such an adventurous project in what could hardly be described as a prosperous country, although it was one that had a rich theatre heritage. Encouraged by his success in attracting the attention of major directors and companies, he turned it into a biannual event in 2006, and called it the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival. The added adjective 'international' acknowledged a reality whose dimensions had grown since

the Festival's 1994 inauguration, when Declan Donnellan's globetrotting *As You Like It* was performed in Craiova by Cheek by Jowl.

The inspiration to create the Festival came from multiple experiences. Boroghina, who had studied acting and directing at the Bucharest Academy of Theatre and Film, had a fine career as both actor and director at the National Theatre of Craiova. The theatre's early predecessor was founded in 1850, and numerous touring companies, many from France and Italy, had performed there. Boroghina was the managing director of the National Theatre between 1988 and 2000, and on an invitation to the Edinburgh Festival in 1991 took the comic-grotesque satire on the Ceausescu regime *Ubu Rex with Scenes from Macbeth*, directed by Silviu Purcarete.

The production won several awards, including the Critics' Prize, and, as Boroghina recalls, its 'presence and prizes generated further invitations to important international festivals' (author's interview with Boroghina, 28 April 2012; biographical information and further quotations are also from this inter-

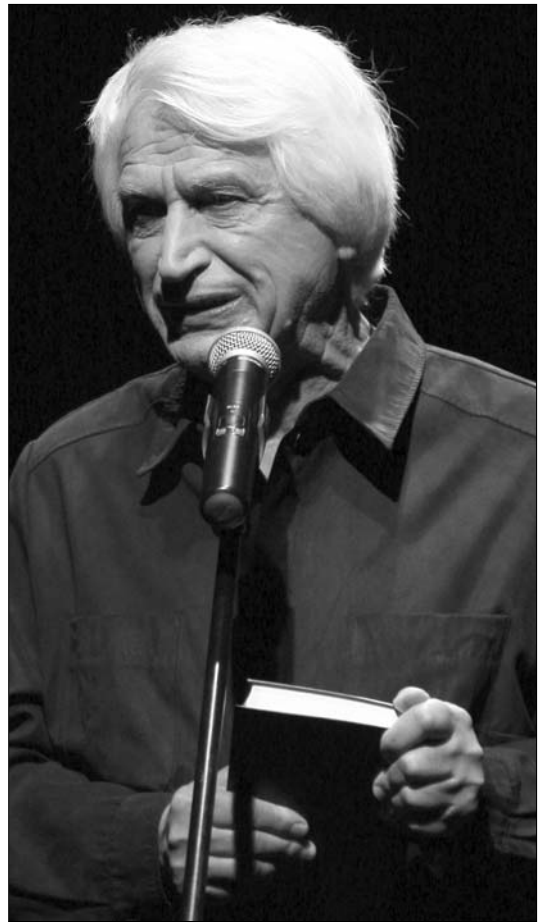
view). The example of Edinburgh, together with that of other prominent festivals, prompted him to consider how Craiova, with its 'old cultural background', could accommodate the forces of a new Europe after the fall of communism to become a significant player on the European cultural scene.

Shaping the Festival and its Aims

Boroghina admired how the 1991 Braunschweig festival Teaterformen had showcased a few but very strong productions by Lev Dodin, Andrzej Wajda, Gyorgy Tabori, and Silviu Purcarete – Peter Brook and Peter Stein were the only two to have featured the year before; and the Braunschweig model of concentrated quality became Boroghina's, at first in its smaller-is-beautiful variation and then on a much larger scale, as was the case in his 2008, 2010 and 2012 editions. He decided to focus on a Shakespeare rather than a general theatre festival following the National Theatre of Craiova's performance in Tokyo of *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Purcarete not long after the company's triumph in Edinburgh.

He also realized that a great number of Shakespeare productions had been staged over the years at the National Theatre and that performances of 'high quality' were there for the asking in the theatre's repertoire. And then there was his 'devouring love for Shakespeare', which had found an outlet in a show of his devising of Shakespeare soliloquies in 1974, which he reprised and performed at the 2012 Festival – an unusual act for a modest man who had never before sought the limelight during his eighteen-year stewardship of the Festival.

From its inception, the Festival has had a broader remit than its immediate target of giving 'Romanian theatre specialists and audiences the chance to see the work of great directors'. The aim, too, was to help to 'make Craiova known in Europe in the future', a potential of which the local citizens have become well aware. In Boroghina's words: 'Both for the town of Craiova and for the National Theatre, the Shakespeare Festival



Emil Boroghina.

represents a reason for joy, but also for reflection and relation to the world'.

The goal of 'reflection and relation' also involves the Festival's education programmes, which, from the very beginning, have run workshops for students of acting and theatre criticism, and, as well, of directing and design for students at the Bucharest National University of Theatre and Film.

These workshops became international in 2006, supported by the UNESCO Chair of the International Theatre Institute, and I still remember the rehearsals and showings I saw in 2008. These were of the same scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, set for all by the Festival as part of an exploratory process with a prize at the end. All were quite exceptional, particularly those by students from Russia and China, and a group from Craiova that had devised a dance version of the play.

Built into the Festival from the beginning, as well, was a critics' seminar on Shakespeare, which was placed in 2008 under the patronage of the International Association of Theatre Critics. Since 2010, there has been a Shakespeare conference in collaboration with the European Shakespeare Research Association. Music has also featured at the Festival, whether in the form of British Renaissance ensembles, symphony orchestras playing compositions old and new inspired by Shakespeare, or operas based on the plays, such as Verdi's *Falstaff*, which was performed by the Craiova Opera in 2012.

The Festival has been consistently funded by the Romanian Ministry for Culture, regional and local government and administrative authorities, the Romanian Theatre Union (UNITER), and various private sponsors (although still in limited numbers). The current economic crisis has seriously affected Romania, and consequently the diverse cultural events organized in the country. This meant a considerable financial shortfall for the 2012 edition, and the great expense in the present circumstances of the Berliner Ensemble's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, directed by Robert Wilson, necessitated postponing till 2014 the participation of a number of companies whom Boroghina had initially invited.

It is a sign of Boroghina's enormous engagement and energy that, in tough times, he is looking ahead to the 2014 Festival, whose theme of 'Everybody's Shakespeare' indicates his customary faith in the importance of Shakespeare to the moral and cultural health of contemporary societies. Boroghina began to give themes to the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival in 2006, starting with 'Shakespearean Performances in Parallel Visions'. The theme for 2008 was 'Great Performances, Great Directors, Great Theatres of Europe and the World', while in 2010 it was 'Hamlet Constellation'. The latter was possibly the only major festival in Europe ever to be devoted exclusively to *Hamlet*, and, from Boroghina's point of view – *Hamlet* is his favourite Shakespeare play – it was the Festival's peak achievement. Boroghina: 'My wish, I would even say my dream, is for the

Festival to go on, to resist time and surpass every type of obstacle, to continue to live and to develop, even when we no longer exist.'

Romanian and International Directors

Selection of productions at the forefront of theatre practice has involved astute planning, especially where mixing Romanian and productions from abroad is concerned. Productions by Purcarete have featured regularly at the Festival over the years, including, apart from *Titus Andronicus* already noted, *Twelfth Night* (2006), *Measure for Measure* (2008) and *The Tempest* (2012). All three were with the National Theatre of Craiova, while *Troilus and Cressida*, also in 2006, showed Purcarete directing the Katona Jozsef Theatre, one of Budapest's most celebrated companies. Purcarete is very much a son of Craiova, Boroghina having brought him to the town in 1988, and it is with the National Theatre of Craiova that he won international fame. His productions with this theatre have travelled as far as Melbourne and Montreal.

In 1992, Purcarete was appointed to the artistic directorship of the Bulandra Theatre in Bucharest, then known as an experimental powerhouse and still considered a leading light. Purcarete left Romania in 1996 for France, from where he has expanded his international reputation while returning frequently to direct in Craiova and elsewhere in Romania with permanent ensemble companies: the latter know his approach well and have a sense of continuity not normally available for project-based theatre guided by a visiting director; and Purcarete benefits from the cohesion and shared creative values of such companies.

Purcarete's artistic stature is indisputable (his spectacular, multi-spatial *Faustus* was invited to the Edinburgh Festival in 2009; a compact, though similarly highly theatrical *Gulliver's Travels* came in 2012). However, a number of other important Romanian directors and companies in the thriving Romanian theatre have graced the Craiova stage. These have included Victor Ioan Frunza, a favourite of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj in Transylvania, the region being



bilingual, Romanian and Hungarian (*Twelfth Night* at Craiova 1997); Liviu Ciulei, director of the Bulandra during the 'golden' 1960s and of the Guthrie in Minneapolis in the 1980s (*The Tempest*, 2003, the year Lithuanian Rimas Tuminas showed his *Richard III* with the National Theatre of Vilnius); Vlad Mugur,

who was greatly loved by audiences across Romania and who was also associated with the National Theatre of Craiova (*Hamlet*, 2003); Gabor Tompa, the current general and artistic director at Cluj (*Hamlet*, 2003); and Laszlo Bocsardi, who has built up a strong Romanian-speaking company at the Tamasi

Two earlier productions of the National Theatre of Craiova directed by Silviu Purcarete. Top: *Twelfth Night*, 2006. Below: *Measure for Measure*, 2008 (photos: Florin Chirea).



Aron Theatre in Transylvania's Sfantu Gheorghe, the majority of whose inhabitants are ethnic Hungarians (*Cymbeline*, 2006, the year Yoshiro Kurita and the Ryutopia Noh Theatre Shakespeare Company were invited to Craiova with *The Winter's Tale*). Bocsardi received the national Best Director award in 2012, the year, also, of the second edition of his biannual festival Reflex, centred, to date, on Central and Eastern European theatre.

The presence of international directors and companies increased from 2006, the year Declan Donnellan staged *Twelfth Night* with his Russian company, the International Chekhov Festival. Theirs was an unexpected interpretation, in which, at the end of this production, Malvolio proves to be a tragic character who is genuinely in love with Olivia and heartbroken by the pranks played upon him; and where Feste's gay marriage parallels Orsino's 'straight' one (with all of Shakespeare's sex and gender ambiguities intact). Donnellan was to return in 2008, this time with Cheek by Jowl's *Troilus and Cressida*, a production cast in the rather severe geometry of space, movement, and language familiar from his work with Cheek by Jowl. It was in 2008 that Donnellan was to receive the Craiova Festival prize, which Boroghina decided should be conferred on a director.

Some Notable Productions

Eimuntas Nekrosius received the same prize in 2012. His work had been showcased at the 2008 Festival, when *Macbeth* was performed in Craiova, and *Hamlet* and *Othello* in Bucharest – productions that were extraordinarily inventive, finely etched, and deftly performed. *Hamlet*, which was crafted in 1997 and, by 2008, had become a legend, featured a major Lithuanian rock star as Hamlet, who lost his footing and slipped and slid in the water slowly seeping across the stage as it dripped from a huge melting block of ice – Nekrosius's main metaphor among several for the treacherous environment of Elsinore.

Oskaras Korsunovas, Nekrosius's compatriot, came in 2010 with his *Hamlet*, preceded by *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2006 and followed by *Romeo and Juliet* in 2012.

And 2008, the bonanza year of 'Great Performances, Great Directors', saw Dodin's *King Lear* and, uncharacteristically for Craiova, two non-Shakespeare productions that, to Boroghina's mind, conformed to his category of 'great'. Moreover, whether calculated to do so or not, they threw into relief the Shakespeare productions that he had programmed.

One was Brook's *The Grand Inquisitor*, performed by Bruce Meyers, a core member of the group Brook had gathered around him at the Bouffes du Nord in Paris. The other was Wilson's production of *Lady from the Sea* by Ibsen. Brook's adaptation of Dostoevsky chimed well with Purcarete's presentation of insidious power in *Measure for Measure*, a hard-hitting parody of the hypocrisies of the Ceausescu elite, which Purcarete cross-referenced with his earlier *Ubu Rex with Scenes from Macbeth*. Wilson's characteristic mystery and visual beauty, finely captured by Angela Molina, a flamenco dancer turned into a Wilsonian 'cool' performer, resonated with Shakespeare for those sensitive to the 'unknowable' and 'invisible' in his writings. There was also in 2008 Michael Pennington's solo compendium of selections from Shakespeare, *Sweet William*, in dulcet tones.

Wilson returned for 'Hamlet Constellation' in 2010 with a lecture and the video of his making of *Hamlet* in 1996, in which he had played all the parts. Yoshihiro Kurita and Ryutopia Noh Theatre also returned, as did Nekrosius's *Hamlet*. Other than the productions already cited, this Festival brought *Hamlet* productions by Lee Yun-Taek from Korea, Richard Schechner from the Shanghai Theatre Academy, Monika Peckiewicz from Poland, a compelling one-man open-air performance by Piotr Kondrat from Poland, and Margarita and Ivan Dobchev from Bulgaria with their Laboratory Theatre, Sfumato. Thomas Ostermeier's mud-and-farce *Hamlet* arrived from the Schaubühne in Berlin. The Wooster Group's *Hamlet* travelled from New York only to Bucharest, prior engagements preventing them from performing in Craiova.

Local stagings of *Hamlet* were Tompa's directing the National Theatre of Craiova and Bocsardi's with the recently established

Metropolis Theatre in Bucharest. Liviu Lucaci presented a *Hamlet* workshop with acting students from the University of Bucharest. The local and the foreign met in a public discussion of *Hamlet* between Michael Pennington and the renowned Romanian actor Ion Caramitru, who had given highly celebrated Hamlets on the stage and had gone into the streets of Bucharest in the role of Hamlet as a leader of collective opposition when the Ceausescu government was brought down by the 1989 revolution.

As should be evident, the scope and artistic range of the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival speaks clearly to Boroghina's commitment to have 'Craiova known in Europe'. The 2012 Festival was planned on a no less ambitious scale than its immediate predecessor, although there was no question but that it suffered in its actual delivery from the budget cuts imposed by the Ministry for Culture, virtually at the last minute. Its theme, which turned out to be somewhat poignant in the difficulties generated by the economic crisis was: 'All the World's a Stage and All the Men and Women Merely Players'.

Boroghina neatly filled some of the gaps imposed on him by rapidly changing conditions with local school productions and workshops, thereby respecting the pedagogical brief integral to the Festival since its beginnings. Billed as 'Education in Schools through Shakespeare', this programme turned a potential negative into a positive – much as was the case with the Odin Teatret's visit with Eugenio Barba, who, instead of a fully fledged production, presented a work demonstration by Tage Larsen and Julia Varley based on excerpts from *Othello*. Their intention was to show how a physical and vocal score could be developed out of dialogue through improvisation. This familiar Odin principle was sustained, together with the *Othello* motif, through Augusto Omolu's *Orô de Otelo*, which was inspired by Verdi's opera rather than Shakespeare's text, and is part of the Odin repertoire.

Because of financial constraints, both Odin pieces were confined to Bucharest, as was Nikolay Kolyada's wacky *Hamlet* in a 'cave' of icons, paintings (Mona Lisa conspicuously

visible), and piled up clothes inhabited by creatures whom Kolyada, when I saw the production some years ago in Moscow, described as 'Stone Age'. Provocative and critical, as always, Kolyada's production set out on a collision course to expose the inanities of the contemporary world – in Russia, yes, certainly, but not Russia alone. Britain's contribution to the Bucharest part of the Festival was the Globe Theatre's *As You Like It*, directed by James Dacre. Most unusually, the production was not shown within the dates set for the Festival but prolonged it, so to speak, into July.

There were, then, for Boroghina, certain disappointments in 2012. His vision may not have materialized according to his desires, but what he managed to carry off was, by and large, splendid.

Shakespeare's Sonnets

The Festival opened with *Shakespeare's Sonnets* – quite a feat, given Wilson's prestige and the financial outlay and people-power of this production: a large cast of thirteen (with actors' doubling roles, anyway), a live band plus a string quartet of eight, a large production team (requiring three days for the lighting alone), and a star turn by none other than Rufus Wainwright, who wrote the music (unabashed saccharine) for the show. Right through there was Wilson, spinning his magic across twenty-five sonnets loosely linked by a phrase or a mood and, more often than not, by the contrasts of tone, subject, image, or rhythm between them. The whole, while something of a kaleidoscope of juxtapositions, flows easily at the deliberate, measured pace typical of Wilson's work.

The *Sonnets* (premiered in 2009) are in the high-camp mode of his music-theatre pieces, from *The Black Rider* (1990) to the more recent *The Threepenny Opera* (2008) at the Berliner. Mimicry, gestures, movement, and every other bodily action are stylized to the extreme not only for the maximum impact of the composition in its entirety, but also to accentuate its details – the turn of a head, the curve of a cheek, the line of a nose, the extension of a finger, the length of a limb, and so on.



The Berliner Ensemble's *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (2009), directed by Robert Wilson. Photos: Lesley Leslie-Spinks.



Emphatic make-up – heavily blackened eyebrows, shadowed cheekbones, thick red lips, whitened faces – meticulously arranged sleek wigs and sumptuous costumes structured with whalebone, padding, corsets, and hoops give the whole an exquisite, ‘finished’ look. These costumes generally evoked the

Elizabethan period, not least when they sported large codpieces on supremely elegant doublet and hose.

The stage, as always in Wilson, is awash with ever-changing light, which is either in bold sheets of colour or in muted, pearly tones that shift delicately across the space from second to second. A richly textured sonosphere of sung words and, on occasion, spoken ones, and the play of different instruments and sound effects – Wilson’s trademark cartoon-style slides, zips, pops, and the like – foreground the counterpoint that he creates not only between sounds but also between the intonation, pitch, timbre, and duration of sounds, the sounds of words and their meanings, and the latter and the myriad of visual components which are also in counterpoint. In lesser hands, all this could have been cacophony, but in Wilson’s it is playful harmony.

The sonnets in this universe are anything but literary renditions. Wilson neither interprets nor illustrates their content, but extrapolates from it, making imagistic abstractions in the freely associative way characteristic of him. Such abstraction can be zany in a camp idiom – the case of Sonnet XXIII (‘As an imperfect actor on the stage’) in which three perfectly still figures in flesh-coloured figure-hugging outfits hold petrol hoses upwards – blatant phallic images – as they stand beside petrol pumps the colour of their costumes.

They can be sexually titillating parody – the case of Sonnet LXVI (‘Tired with all these

for restful death I cry'), where a beautiful man in cross-dress emerges from behind a green tree at centre stage, crunches a red apple and displays a snake pulled out from his bosom as he dances, more or less cabaret style, along an imaginary line towards the audience and back again. Or else they can be plain fun – the case of Sonnet XCI ('Some glory in their birth, some in their skill') where a very fat Cupid flies through the air and launches an arrow from his bow, aiming for Elizabeth I half-asleep in an armchair.

The humour of the production is underscored by the fact that roles are reversed so that men play women and women, men. The man playing Elizabeth I appears briefly in a witty vignette dressed as Elizabeth II with exactly the kind of suit, hat, and handbag iconic of the British monarch. And while there is no narrative as such in the production, something like a whiff of narrative comes through the production's framing devices: an old actor, recognizably Shakespeare, who sits during the first sonnet with his back to the audience; Elizabeth I's silent presence; the Fool in black, who periodically appears between sonnets (performed by ninety-something Berliner Ensemble stalwart from

Brecht's days, Ruth Glöss); and a Diva Master/Mistress of Ceremonies dressed in black velvet and a blond wig, who queens his/her way through outrageous monologues in front of a curtain dropped now and then for scene changes.

Romeo and Juliet

A romp of a different kind was to be found in the Yohanza Theatre Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Seoul, which was not as exuberant as its performance in Gyula the previous year (see *NTQ* 108, 2011): much of this had to do with its being performed in Craiova indoors. Another romp, *Play Shakespeare*, in which the Tandarica Animation Theatre from Bucharest merged *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, also probably needed open space to give its best.

By contrast, *Romeo and Juliet* (2003) by the OKT/Vilnius City Theatre flourished within the proscenium. Korsunovas's Montagues and Capulets are pizza-making families whose kitchens on the stage are side by side. Their proximity concentrates space, allowing actors to cross into each other's turf in order to pick fights associated in some way with

From *Romeo and Juliet* in the production by Oskaras Korsunovas (2003). Photo: Goodlife Photography.





The Nurse and Juliet in Korsunovas's production. Photo: Goodlife Photography.

pizzas. Thus flour flies, or dough is kneaded with extra vigour, or huge pizzas are suddenly made there and then by the actors, as if in a competition of dexterity and speed. Or one of them will just as suddenly make an outsize penis from dough and stick it drooping on to his sexual organs to goad his enemy. Paris, performed cleverly with heavy stupidity by Dainius Gavenonis, in one hilarious moment looks at the shortness of his tie to suggest, by implication, that the joke on gigantic sexual organs is played at his expense.

It is sharply clear from the very beginning that these pizza-parlour warring families are Korsunovas's conceit for Shakespeare's antagonists and the thoughts on a needless quarrel that he mediates through them; and Korsunovas modernizes Shakespeare's story with great humour as he replaces foils with flour and turns the youthful characters who fight with them into swaggering local kids. Trainers, loose-waisted jogging pants, and occasional hoods confirm the social scene. The production is relentlessly bawdy and frequently obscene in the carnival spirit of

the 'grotesque body' familiar from the writings of Bakhtin. There is, as well, something Breughel-like in this plebeian atmosphere filled with close groupings of people and their taciturn faces – taciturn, that is, until they flare up into mockery, most of it good-natured rather than full of spleen, much as the taunting dialogue is in the opening scenes in Shakespeare.

The adult Montagues and Capulets of this social setting with their airs and graces are closer to shopkeepers one step removed from the peasantry, who would be happy to climb further up the social ladder but do not quite have the grip to succeed. With his keen sensitivity to the social climate, Korsunovas gauges Lithuania's temperature in the first years of the twenty-first century, which is not altogether unlike that of the rest of Eastern and Central Europe. Audiences in Craiova and Bucharest registered his social nuances only too well.

Bodies are crammed into ovens, or fall out of doorways, or, in the case of Romeo and Juliet, perch at the top of the great stoves that



From Silviu Purcarete's production of *The Tempest* (2012). Photo: Florin Chirea.

eat up the space. These bizarre effects are in keeping with the surrealist aesthetics that Korsunovas has made his own, and keep at bay the pathos of *Romeo and Juliet's* story. Instead, he rolls this into a comedy, and suddenly gives it a strangely ethereal dimension. Faces whitened with flour suggest the death of one lover and then the other, as if their souls were now separated from their bodies and were about to leave this earth.

The Tempest

Purcarete's surrealism is not wildly different in its satirical thrust. He is less prone to Jarry-style antics than Korsunovas, although, like him, he is attracted to the metaphysical possibilities of the theatre when they suit his purposes. *The Tempest* (*O Fortuna*) is an oneiric composition, and it is Prospero's meditation, filtered through Purcarete's, on the significance of his work. Prospero's work is not only the magic he exercises on his island: it also involves the education of his daughter whom, at the end, he must also set free. Purcarete's work is the magic of the theatre, into which enter the spirits of his imagination. It is he, the director, who must eventually set free his actors and spectators,

as they must free him in return. Purcarete appears to take his cue from Prospero's epilogue to guide and shape his production.

The beautiful *chiaroscuro* of the whole is fundamental to its dream-like quality, and the suggestion that its events are the stuff of dreams comes from the fact that Prospero sleeps, from the start, slumped in a chair. He awakens now and then to join in the play, notably when he commands Ariel, or scrutinizes Ferdinand, or chastises Miranda. The sense of dream comes, equally and most powerfully, from a stunning sound score by Vasile Sirli. Howling wind, the crash of doors blown open, the crash and moan of waves somewhere in the distance, indeterminate voices diffused from afar, snatches of indecipherable music, and fragments of *Tristan and Isolde*, distorted but their passion surging forward like the sea – all these together with intermittent held silences suffuse the air.

There is much in this production that is rich and strange, starting with a throwback in time, as Prospero sleeps, to men and women in eighteenth-century costumes, bustling through the doors of a large cupboard in Prospero's dilapidated room. This is the court of Milan before Prospero's brother's treachery and Prospero's exile on his island.



Another scene from Silviu Purcarete's production of *The Tempest*. Photo: Florin Chirea.

Apart from the cupboard, from which come and go at least four Ariels with red clown noses and blue hair (when flesh-coloured stockings are not pulled over it to make them look bald), the island/room contains a large bed. (These Ariels appear in multiple guises throughout, including as copies of Miranda.)

Books are stacked in the cupboard before they collapse to make a doorway (a collapse that must surely signal the end of Prospero's magic). Books tied with string are piled up on the floor near the bed, as is a mountain of paper from which, eventually, emerges a bald figure who plays Miranda. This male creature in a brown paper dress doubles as Caliban in another strange twist to the production's tale. Paint peeling from the walls and ceiling adds to the image of decay and disrepair projected at the outset.

There is perhaps no real sense in Purcarete's casting Miranda and Prospero as mirror images of each other (except possibly to imply that they are brother and sister?). But, be this as it may, the effect is one of

illogical combination, exactly as occurs in dreams. By the time Prospero's would-be murderers are shown still to be capable of murder, there is no question as to why Prospero's room/island is abandoned to the elements: Prospero appears to have lost the will to live. By the time the production ends and Miranda leaves her father, only with a moment's hesitation before she goes for good, no farewell having been spoken between them, it seems that its enigma has something to do with lost hope. Purcarete, it seems, inverts Shakespeare's ending of love and reconciliation into one of sadness, emptiness, and permanent loss.

Enigmatic it stays, as if Purcarete believes that this can be his only way to see *The Tempest* in such times of deep uncertainty as today. The Craiova Festival has been instrumental in promoting his work, as it has recognized and supported the range of theatre artists that it has invited over the years, looking towards the future. The 2014 edition is yet to come.