

On the Scent Trail in and beyond Everyday Life

The international academic and artistic symposium took place in October 2020 as a part of the Professional Programme of the 55th Maribor Theatre Festival. The symposium joined the forces of the University of Ljubljana's Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television and Faculty of Arts, the Slovenian Theatre Institute, and the Sensorium Theatre Institute, which specialises in sensorial language.

The principal aim of the symposium was to map this largely unexplored but significant field of performing and visual arts with performance studies, anthropology, cultural studies and other areas studying art and culture. Today, sensorial theatre is linked to a highly popular branch of immersive theatres that have emerged since the turn of the millennium as a popular form of performance. It interweaves playfulness into the relationship between performer, audience and performance space. While the discussion on immersive theatres has primarily focused on a selection of urban theatre companies that have acquired reputations as the forerunners in the field, it has neglected the practitioners of the sensorial or sensory theatre who are developing immersive methodologies within the theatre. These are, as yet, largely undocumented.

The symposium aimed to contribute to the field of sensory and specifically the role of the olfactory within the theatre culture and extend its discussion by considering the work and the "poetics of the senses" of the Colombian theatre director Enrique Vargas as well as his followers. The conference sought to expand the current conceptualisation of immersive sensorial theatres and examine the possible transformative potential of this specific performative practice. It linked the notion of sensorial theatre to Victor Turner and his "crossing of a threshold which separates two distinct areas, one associated with the subject's pre-ritual or pre-liminal status, and the other with his post-ritual or postliminal status".

Sensorial theatre started in Slovenia in 1996, with the première of *Oracles* by Enrique Vargas, the world-renowned director of Teatro de los Sentidos (Theatre of the Senses). His creative work introduced this specific system to a group of participating Slovenian artists. One of the most prominent researchers in sensory, or rather, multisensory studies, David Howes, points out that the time of the sensorial revolution is coming, not just as a turnaround or a turn (in terms of performative, linguistic, spatial, ontological and other turns).

The symposium focused on the following issues and topics: studies of specific performances and performing models, as well as examples from the field of sensorial in theatre and its research of the scent, performing practices and culture in general.

It aimed to outline specificities of the sensorial and olfactory languages within the immersive and devised contemporary art, mapping, defining and foreseeing which new tools bring sensory theatre to the stage, to galleries and museums and everyday spaces.

The focus of the *Amfiteater* issue which you are about to read represents the fruit of the symposium. This issue presents essays of the prominent scholars and artists from theatre sciences, anthropology, philosophy and psychology of art as well as from sensorial theatre practices. The scholars and artists try to define how the sensorial method activates the process of self-examination by unlocking images, memories and associations; and how it builds up a specific self-reflection and self-awareness. How do performing and visual arts use scents and specifically smell; what does the sensorial revolution contribute to the future of art and culture scholarship, locally and globally? Within, you will find contributions dealing with particular performances and performance models (Barbara Orel, Barbara Pia Jenič, Tomaž Toporišič); performing arts and sensory culture (Enrique Vargas, Igor Areh); the sensorial as a possible tool for the social mediation and association of different social groups (Caro Verbeek, Peter de Cupere, Simon Hajdini, David Howes and Rajko Muršič). It is a meeting place for different perspectives, different backgrounds that we think open up new perspectives on the phenomena of scent in everyday life, theory and performing practices.

We wish to thank our dearest colleague, professor Rajko Muršič, for helping us conceive, organise and conceptualise the Maribor conference. Likewise, we thank our dear friend and authority in sensorial theatre, Enrique Vargas, and his closest artistic collaborator, Gabriel Hernandez, along with the artistic team of Teatro de los Sentidos. Thanks to our dear colleagues from the Maribor Theatre Festival, Aleš Novak, and the Slovenian Theatre Institute, Mojca Jan Zoran. And above all, thanks to our dearest colleagues who prepared the essays dealing with the topic: professors Barbara Orel, Igor Areh and Simon Hajdini from Ljubljana, professor David Howes from Montreal and Caro Verbeek from Amsterdam and Peter de Cupere from Flanders. And the editor-in-chief of *Amfiteater*, professor Gašper Troha. Without him, the entire symposium, as well as this issue of *Amfiteater*, would be unthinkable.

Barbara Pia Jenič and Tomaž Toporišič