

The paper offers an overview of the most prominent poetic tendencies in contemporary Croatian playwriting after the year 2000. Focusing on several well-known Croatian playwrights (such as Mate Matišić, Davor Špišić, Ivan Vidić, Nina Mitrović, Elvis Bošnjak, Dubravko Mihanović, Tomislav Zajec, Ivana Sajko, Tena Štivičić, Ivor Martinić, Olja Lozica ...) whose plays have been staged, published, studied and/or rewarded over the past two decades in both Croatia and abroad, the paper looks into the features of the subject matter (local or global, public or intimate, popular or provocative concerns), the formal and generic qualities (dramatic structure, narration, poetisation, exploration of the limits of playwriting), the representation of cultural identities (personal and collective), the interest in mass and popular culture, the characteristics of dramatic discourse and language, the relation towards social engagement or criticism, and the effort to appeal to targeted social groups or types of audiences. The paper explores the differences and similarities between the playwriting of the 1990s and playwriting after 2000.

Keywords: contemporary Croatian playwriting, Croatian theatre repertoire, promotion of Croatian playwriting, generations of Croatian playwrights, Marin Držić Award, theatre journals, postdramatic writing

Lucija Ljubić, is an associate professor in the Division for the Croatian Theatre History at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb. Her main research interests are theatre history and theory, contemporary Croatian drama and theatre, comparative relations with other national cultures and cultural studies. She has published the books *From Offender to Artist. Theatrical and Social Roles of Croatian Actresses* (2019), *A Ten. Essays on Croatian Drama and Theatre History* (2013) and, in collaboration with M. Petranović, *The Répertoire of Croatian Theatres. Descriptive Analysis of Performances in Croatian or by Croatian Performers in Foreign Languages till 1840* (2012).

lucija_lj@yahoo.com

Martina Petranović, is a theatre scholar and scientific advisor in the Division for the History of the Croatian Theatre at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb. Her main research interests are stage design, contemporary Croatian drama and theatre, and theatre historiography. She is the author of several books on Croatian stage design: *Recognizably Different - Costume Designer Ika Škomrlj* (2014), *From Costume to Costume Design. Croatian Costume Design* (2015), *Kamilo Tompa and Theatre* (2017), *Vanda Pavelić Weinert* (2018), with G. Quien, and *A Painter in Theatre - Zlatko Kauzlarić Atač* (2020); the author of two collections of theatre essays, *On Stage and Around It* (2013) and *Theatre and (Hi)story* (2015), and the co-author of *The Répertoire of Croatian Theatres* (2012), with L. Ljubić, and *The Idea of Synthesis. Set and Costume Design in the 1950s* (2019), with A. Lederer.

martina_petranovic@yahoo.com

Poetic Tendencies in Contemporary Croatian Playwriting

Lucija Ljubić, Martina Petranović

Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Division for the History of the Croatian Theatre, Zagreb, Croatia

Contemporary Croatian Playwriting

In 2020, the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Media received seventy-one submissions to the Marin Držić Award for the best Croatian contemporary play. It was the highest number of plays submitted since the award was established thirty years ago, at the very beginning of the 1990s. At that time, the total number of plays per year was far more modest than in the following years, especially recent ones (Petranović). The candidates varied from well-established names who began their playwriting careers in the previous decades, some even prior to the 1990s (Miro Gavran, Matko Sršen, Predrag Raos, Davor Špišić, Denis Peričić, Damir Mađarić, Hrvoje Barbir Barba, Nina Mitrović ...), and some of the latest winners of the award (Una Vizek, Marina Vujčić, Ružica Aščić ...) to less-known or emerging authors (Monika Herceg, Anja Pletikosa, Espi Tomičić, Dina Vukelić, Dorotea Šušak, Nikolina Rafaj ...). The plays revealed a wide-ranging field of interest with special emphasis on the most recent incentives in the global and local community (COVID-19 pandemic, earthquakes in Croatia) and on formal strategies, generic designations and stylistic qualities representing numerous nuances between more traditional forms of drama on one end and text marked by postdramatic strategies on the other end of the spectrum.¹ That alone can hardly stand for the undeniably prolific and diverse nature of contemporary Croatian playwriting over the last thirty years. However, it can perhaps point us towards some significant elements that helped shape and define it. It is perhaps not a coincidence that many of them became established in the 1990s.

One of the essential characteristics of the period is the emergence of several generations of Croatian playwrights since the early 1990s and the simultaneity of very different

¹ The prize is awarded by an expert jury consisting of three members (usually, but not mandatory, including a stage director, an actor and a theatre scholar or a dramaturg) re-selected each year. The independence of decision-making process is ensured by the anonymity of applied authors, and the plays are registered under code names not known to the jury members and administrative personnel in the Ministry of Culture and Media before the decision about the awarded plays is final. For more information on the Marin Držić Award see also: <https://min-kulture.gov.hr/izdvojeno/izdvojena-lijevo/kulturne-djelatnosti-186/dramske-umjetnosti-188/nagrada-za-dramsko-djelo-marin-drzic/297>. Accessed 17 December 2021.

playwriting practices that resist fixed classifications regarding poetic affiliations and subject matters, even though certain similarities in the formal characteristics, shared concerns and approaches to playwriting and theatre, in general, cannot be completely ignored, especially concerning the significant representatives of the “young Croatian drama” in the first half of the 1990s (Car Mihec). Furthermore, the 1990s also saw the beginning of the institutionally driven revival of contemporary Croatian playwriting, branching into several different directions. For instance, the abovementioned award for the best Croatian play was established in 1991, as was the Marulić Days Festival dedicated solely to the productions in Croatia and abroad of classic and contemporary Croatian plays. Several literary and theatre journals committed to publishing contemporary national plays, such as *Plima* (1993–2000), *Teatar i teorija* (1995–1998), *Glumište* (1998–1999), *Hrvatsko glumište* (1999), and *Kazalište* (2000–), also appeared in the 1990s. The Croatian Centre of ITI launched a specialised book series dedicated to publishing new Croatian playwriting (the Mansioni book series). The Marin Držić Award series, introduced by Disput publishing house in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Media, appeared later in the new millennium, in 2009. Various types of playwriting workshops, public readings and showcases, today almost standard for promoting recent Croatian playwriting, were first tested and verified in the 1990s. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Croatian Radio Drama programme produced numerous radio shows of contemporary Croatian plays and provided strong support to new Croatian playwriting. Moreover, the already mentioned Croatian Centre of ITI, founded in the 1990s, developed into one of the key figures in the national and international promotion of contemporary Croatian playwrights with many of their programmes (bulletins and journals, book series, showcases, public readings, playwriting workshops ...), as did the Department of Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, especially in the new millennium (for example, DeSADU public readings of student plays). In 2009, students and alumni of the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, Ivor Martinić, Lana Šarić, Mirta Puhlovski, Jasna Žmak and Maja Sviben, created the *Drame.hr* web portal in an attempt to offer Croatian playwrights a place to present their plays and to increase their visibility among both national and international theatre managers, directors and dramaturgs.

However, numerous obstacles in contemporary Croatian playwriting remain, for example, the contingent nature of Croatian theatre repertoires concerning contemporary Croatian playwriting and the regular lack of theatre-based dramaturgs devoted to reading new Croatian plays. However, perhaps the biggest of them is the fact that theatres themselves, with only a few notable exceptions, rarely served as incubators or midpoints of Croatian playwriting, even though Croatian theatre scholars and reviewers generally do agree that the majority of relevant contemporary Croatian plays were finally if belatedly staged (Boko, Lederer). Besides the financial support to authors, the Marin Držić Award for the best new play includes public

readings of the awarded plays and substantial financial support to theatres willing to stage them. Nevertheless, a certain number of plays remain unstaged. The readiness of theatres to include contemporary Croatian authors in their repertoires was often connected to changes in theatre management whose artistic programme and creative visions were grounded in productions of Croatian plays (&TD Theatre in Zagreb, Kerempuh Theatre in Zagreb, Croatian National Theatre in Split, etc.), sometimes even resulting in a creative relationship between a particular theatre and writer (for example, playwrights Filip Šovagović and Elvis Bošnjak in Split National Theatre), or even more so between particular stage director and writer, like for example, between Božidar Viočić and Mate Matišić, Borivoj Radaković and Petar Veček, Boris Senker and Robert Raponja, Paolo Magelli and Filip Šovagović, Nenni Delmestre and Elvis Bošnjak (Ljubić). Along that line, some of the theatres periodically introduced the practice of developing new plays within the theatre (more recently, Zagreb Youth Theatre, for example). However, one can rightfully claim that, on more than one occasion, contemporary Croatian playwriting has proved to be more progressive than theatre (production) dared to follow. It has also happened more than once that a contemporary Croatian play was staged abroad before it was presented in the country and/or the language of its origin (certain plays by Slobodan Šnajder, Lidija Scheuermann Hodak, Ivana Sajko, Tena Štivičić, Ivor Martinić).

Despite the resistance to oversimplifications, it is generally agreed upon that the contemporary Croatian playwriting began in the early 1990s, parallel to the fundamental social, political and cultural changes in both country and region, but primarily due to the new generation of young playwrights formed within the Department of Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb and grouped around The &TD Theatre and its Contemporary Croatian Drama Stage (1990–1991) initiated by its manager and playwright Miro Gavran, the *Prolog* theatre journal and later the *Plima* literary journal (Lederer). This unofficial group is said to create postmodern, intertextually focused plays, marked by grotesque and parody, the disintegration of characters and a lack of coherent plots, with little or no interest in politically charged and subversive subjects that so deeply concerned their predecessors in the seventies and eighties. The main representatives of this new kind of playwriting (Ivan Vidić, Asja Srnc Todorović, Pavo Marinković, Milica Lukšić, Mislav Brumec), along with several other prominent playwrights, began their writing careers in the 1980s such as Lada Kaštelan, Miro Gavran or Mate Matišić, to a large extent dominated the 1990s. They continued to write into the new century, yet their later playwriting, which began to show its new face as early as the second half of the 1990s, revealed somewhat different poetic qualities. Even when pervaded by black humour, grotesque and fantastic elements, it was now much closer to the neorealistic model than before, and the topics were devoted to tackling more contemporary issues, personal or social (Lada Kaštelan, *Posljednja karika*; Mate Matišić, *Anđeli Babilona*

and *Svećenikova djeca*; Filip Šovagović, *Cigla*), and more critical towards the political and social questions of the day. The tendency towards dealing with the realities of the current post-war and transitional Croatian society (traumas, crimes, poverty, unresolved family issues, identity) culminated at the beginning of the new century in Ivan Vidić's *Octopussy* and *Veliki bijeli zec*, Davor Špišić's *Jug II* and Elvis Bošnjak's *Nosi nas rijeka*, along with the plays written by the next generation of authors that gave fresh incentive to Croatian playwriting in the new millennium in both its content and its forms, such as Tomislav Zajec, Nina Mitrović, Ivana Sajko, Dubravko Mihanović and Tena Štivičić who, roughly speaking, emerged at the turn of the century, or Ivor Martinić, Olja Lozica, Dino Pešut and Vedrana Klepica who emerged in the second decade of the new century.

Subject(s) Matter(s)

Over the last thirty years, Croatian playwriting has repeatedly proved that subjects do matter. If we were to turn our heads towards the predominant subject matters of the contemporary Croatian playwriting, it could be said, even at the risk of overgeneralisation, that the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium were more nationally oriented in the choice of overall topics, focusing on the Croatian homeland war and its post-war traumas, and on the ordeals of transition to democracy and capitalism as well as their often devastating consequences on both the individual and the society. On the other hand, the playwriting of the last two decades disclosed more global and international concerns, not entirely unrelated to the general changes in social and political circumstances in the country, the worldwide globalisation processes and the advance of European integrations. Therefore, it will come as no surprise that some of the new millennium playwriting keywords include globalisation, migration, multiculturalism, integration, minority representation, personal identities, invalidity, and human rights.

One of the most obvious examples in that respect is Tena Štivičić, a Croatian playwright based in London and Glasgow, whose first plays appeared at the turn of the century and who always, from the very beginning of her playwriting career in Croatia (*Nemreš pobjeć od nedjelje, Dvije*), openly insisted on surpassing and crossing the narrow national borders, both figuratively and literally, in subject matters (dealing with migration, multiculturalism, globalisation, consumerism, xenophobia, personal, cultural and (inter)national identities), language (she writes in both Croatian and English), and available theatre markets (her plays have been staged in several countries throughout the world). In 2003, when one of her early plays was being staged in Belgrade, she announced that "all of us today think in terms of some sort

of European context, and that reducing things to our own little society and market is clearly not enough" (Štivičić in Lasić 67). She repeated the same claim in 2015: "I always wanted to write across the borders of our country or our countries. I was attracted to the idea of international theatre or film" (Štivičić in Silobrčić 54).

Likewise, since the beginning of the 21st century, more and more Croatian playwrights have developed their careers abroad, not only in terms of having their plays staged out of the country but in terms of moving abroad and writing from the perspective of internationally and globally situated and oriented playwright (Ivana Sajko, Nina Mitrović, Ivor Martinić, Dino Pešut), always however struggling to break or overcome the narrow image of an Eastern European writer.

While the main concerns of Croatian playwriting in the late 1990s and early 2000s still rested within the taboos of the 1990s and subsequent deconstruction of various aspects of national ideology, myth-making and collective identity formation (Ivan Vidić, *Octopussy* and *Veliki bijeli zec*; Nina Mitrović, *Komšiluk naglavačke*, *Kad se mi mrtvi pokoljemo*) or war traumas (Filip Šovagović, *Cigla*; Dubravko Mihanović, *Žaba*; Mate Matišić, *Posmrtna trilogija*), the attention of Croatian playwrights in the 21st century seems to have turned towards the representation of various types of minority groups and socially constructed identities that fall outside the dominant and normative matrix. More than ever before, the new millennium plays reveal playwrights' widespread interest in those who are socially stigmatised, excluded, discriminated, disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised, such as ethnic, racial and national minority groups, gender minorities, international refugees and migrants, poor and powerless, informal and precarious workers, imprisoned, older persons, persons with chronic illnesses, people with physical or mental disabilities, children and youth, etc. For instance, Filip Šovagović in *Ptičice* and Elvis Bošnjak in *Otac* write about the imprisoned, Dubravko Mihanović in *Prolazi sve* about old age, and Ivor Martinić in *Moj sin samo malo sporije hoda* focuses on invalidity. Socially deprived working classes or the unemployed are the subjects of Nina Mitrović's *Familija u prahu*, Olja Lozica's *Sada je zapravo sve dobro* and *Reces i ja*, Goran Ferčec's *Radnice u gladovanju* and Vedrana Klepica's *Keinberg*, to name but a few examples. Numerous plays and projects continuously and methodically developed by the writer, dramaturg and director Olja Lozica discuss autism (*Vincent*), minority identities such as poverty, disability, old age and gender and ethnic minority (*Gozba*), dementia (*Zadnji put kad sam ti vidjela lice*) and depression (*Dobro je ništa*).

One of the prevailing subjects in plays written by, for example, Dino Pešut are the topics of coming to terms with personal traumas of growing up and generational questions of the so-called millennials (*Pritisci moje generacije*, *Posljednja panda ili o statici*, *L.U.Z.E.R.I.*, *H.E.J.T.E.R.I.*). At the same time, some recent playwriting of not only

Pešut but the younger generation of writers as well, reveals a deep interest in issues of family traumas caused by conservative upbringing or even violence, sometimes, but not always, related to transgenerational violence or gender issues (Espi Tomičić). There are several female authors of different generations and rather diverse if not opposed aesthetic preferences who use their playwriting to meticulously and vigorously analyse, decompose and reinvent the position of women, regarded as objects of either desire or abuse, in a male-dominated society. They are doing so by introducing both historical and present-day concerns, as well as locally or globally oriented perspectives (Ivana Sajko, Tena Štivičić, Vedrana Klepica, Lana Šarić, Jasna Žmak, Diana Meheik). Elements of popular culture intersecting with media exploitations and manipulations and media or, more recently, cyber violence, also entered the stage in several prominent plays, such as Tomislav Zajec's *John Smith, Princeza od Walesa* and Darko Lukić's *Važno je biti pozitivan*, as did corporative violence in plays by Ivan Vidić (*Dolina ruža*) and Filip Nola (*Tri X i ja*), to mention but a few. The complex entanglement of private and public, fiction and faction, playwright and character, along with the absurdity of the playwright's position in a culture dominated by mass media, is exploited by Mate Matišić in his more recent trilogies *Ljudi od voska* and *Moji tužni monstrumi*. Several Croatian plays in the last two decades also scrutinise the relationship between identity and language, especially in the extreme situations of being deprived of one's mother tongue (Darko Lukić's *Kraljice*, several plays by Tena Štivičić such as *Fragile!* or *Nevidljivi*, Diana Meheik's *Jerihonska ruža*). Playwriting in Croatian dialects is also increasingly present and intensely promoted by several authors (Denis Peričić, Mateja Posedi), as are resolute attempts to liberate the dialect from the stigma of comedy (Elvis Bošnjak, *Nosi nas rijeka*).

While for some authors, questions about intimate relationships and topics that interest them on a highly personal level came first (Lada Kaštelan, *Prije sna*; Dubravko Mihanović, *Bijelo*; Tena Štivičić, *Nemreš pobjeć od nedjelje*; Ivor Martinić, *Drama o Mirjani i ovima oko nje*), others, like for example, Vedrana Klepica, insisted on writing about the universally understood "state of the society", as she puts it, consciously setting aside subjective and individual preoccupations (Klepica in Ferčec and Žmak). For the majority of playwrights, however, the imperative of being socially critical or provocative and dramaturgically experimental, as proposed, or consequently subtly imposed to the future aspirants for the award by the jury of the Marin Držić Award in 2012 proved not only impossible to meet but also unacceptable, and they openly dismissed it. Thus, one of the best play award winners, Kristina Gavran (*Spremni*), claimed that such a request made her uncomfortable and "feel like an outsider because she was attracted to some perfectly ordinary, universal topic like, let us say, love" (Gavran in Rogošić 187).

Approaches to Playwriting

The plays submitted to the mentioned Marin Držić Award came in many different forms and genres, from more traditionally and neatly structured plays based on easily discernible plots and/or characters to more open textual structures experimenting with intermedial, auto-referential, poetic, narrative, documentary or metatheatrical disruptions of dramatic form. The same basic division can be applied to theatre writing during the last thirty years as well, including different models of playwriting and different approaches to writing and theatre-making, i.e., reflecting variable attitudes of contemporary Croatian playwrights towards plays seen either as finished, complete and independent literary pieces or as performance texts in case of which the writer's work is hardly finished at the table, or somewhere between the two. When asked in an interview whether he thought that the time of playwriting was over, playwright Ivor Martinić did not deny a high degree of ongoing experimentation in contemporary (Croatian) playwriting. However, he emphasised that even though plays are being subjected to different types and levels of modification during the course of the production and that nowadays, no one expected a play to be produced "as it was written", he still believed that a play continues to be just as important element of theatre-making as any other (Martinić in Ferčec and Žmak).

In contrast to the postmodernist 1990s that showed significantly little concern for the model of new European drama, except for several noteworthy examples such as Davor Špišić and Borivoj Radaković (Boko), several playwrights in the new millennium revealed an interest in more classic dramatic forms with straightforward plots, references to everyday reality, psychologically depicted and linguistically differentiated characters, discernible spatial and temporal coordinates, etc., as noticeable, for example, in plays written by Ivan Vidić in contrast to the ones he wrote in the 1990s,² in the most prominent plays of Elvis Bošnjak, or in the playwriting of Tena Štivičić and Dubravko Mihanović, whose writing was sometimes welcomed by theatre criticism as a long-awaited turn towards new sentimentalism and intimism opposed both to the brutalities of the new European drama and the social disengagement, escapism or even autism of Croatian playwriting dominant in the 1990s.

On the other hand, in line with the consequences of the proverbial postdramatic turn in understanding theatre and live performance, several playwrights developed their own types of postdramatic text marked by some of the well-known elements of postdramatic writing, such as metatextual and intertextual strategies, documentarism, auto-referentiality, autopoietic subversion, the poetic role of stage directions, the absence of coherent plots and characters or apparent space and time patterns, discontinuity and termination of linearity, focus on the dissolution of illusionistic

² Vidić himself would say that his earlier plays were grounded "in language" and the recent ones in "the harsh reality" (49).

and representational principles, the autonomy of language, open endings, and direct communication with the spectator (Lehmann, Barnett, McClelland, Delgado, Lease and Rebellato, ed.). Some of the most prominent representatives of such writing types in Croatia include Ivana Sajko and Goran Ferčec. Furthermore, in the last couple of years, contemporary Croatian playwriting displays a growing tendency towards poetic plays that employ various lyrical strategies and lyrical elements, such as lyrical subject, verse, rhythm, repetitive and incantational tone, poetically structured monologues, soliloquies or intermezzi, dependence upon musical qualities of the language, etc. (Monika Herceg, Marija Dejanović).

In addition, there is more than one example of blurring the boundaries and intersecting the roles between the writer, director or actor/performer: actors are turning into writers (Elvis Bošnjak, Filip Šovagović, Arijana Čulina, Filip Nola ...), writers are acting as directors of their own plays (Dubravko Mihanović, Filip Šovagović, Ivor Martinić, Olja Lozica, Vedrana Klepica ...) or performers (such as Ivana Sajko, who calls such performances “the autoreferential readings”). Along with some well-established playwrights who actively participate in producing their plays and modifying (or creating) their texts in collaboration with the actors but remain in a domain of classic referential playwriting, new generations of playwrights see themselves more vigorously involved in the process of theatre-making. They conceive the plays as performance texts related to the overall idea of the theatre event and perceive the written text only as a starting point or an element in the process of theatre-making, associated with or subsumed to each performance and the space and context of the production and the performers (Vedrana Klepica, Rona Žulj, Jasna Žmak, Jelena Kovačić ...). Therefore, their concerns are not only about the status of the play within the performance or the impossibility of repeating the play (or text) outside the context of a specific performance – like in devising the productions of Bobo Jelčić – but also about exploring new models of the co-existence between play and performance. In that respect, one must underline the examples of symbiotic and long-term writer-director partnerships, such as those between Jelena Kovačić and Anica Tomić or Rona Žulj and Miran Kurspahić. It can also be useful to point out the example of Bobo Jelčić, who refused the Best Play Award at the Satire Days Festival in Zagreb (2018) for *Govori glasnije!* because he believed that the play should be repeatable, while in this case, the text was an integral and inseparable part of a unique devised theatre project.

Some authors experimented with different writing procedures, forms and strategies and refashioned and remodelled their playwriting approaches (T. Zajec, E. Bošnjak, O. Lozica) so that they are equally prone to creating classic plays finished before the production, modifying or developing their plays during the rehearsal process, participating in collaborative writing processes and improvisations throughout

rehearsals, building their plays with regard to a specific actor, stage director and practical theatrical circumstances, or writing down their plays like some sort of postfestum notes to the production itself. As an example, we can briefly focus on Olja Lozica, who acts as a playwright, dramaturg and director in different combinations of the three. Sometimes she is the playwright and director of her own plays written before the rehearsals. Sometimes she is the dramaturg and director who gives the idea to the actors and then develops the text during rehearsals or uses only text provided by the actors. Sometimes she abandons the written text altogether, introduces postdramatic elements and procedures and focuses on the actors' nonverbal expressions and interactions. In any case, her work with the text and on the text as theatre material is equal to any other during production rehearsals and draws heavily upon the communication and collaboration with the team members, the dramaturg, the designer, and most of all, the actors: "The text is not a dead letter on the paper, it is subject to modifications and situations on the stage, it can be adapted, erased, rewritten. [...] People who act solely as writers see it differently than I do when approaching the theatre as an author in a more holistic manner. During rehearsal, I am ready to change the text ten times if necessary so that the actor can communicate with it in line with his or her professional and private habitus" (Lozica in Crnčević).

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the 1990s, for more than thirty years, contemporary Croatian playwriting has incorporated several generations of playwrights and introduced numerous and various (post)dramatic worlds and strategies. The early 1990s saw the beginning of previously unseen, broad and diverse institutional cultural support to Croatian playwrights and playwriting in inviting, following, rewarding, publishing and staging contemporary Croatian plays (best Croatian play award, theatre festival of Croatian drama, theatre journals and book series ...), but also had to face the reluctance of more than one theatre management towards producing new Croatian playwriting. It happened on more than one occasion that Croatian plays premièred abroad before reaching the stages in their homeland, which on the other hand, contributed to their international acclaim. However, several playwrights and stage directors in Croatia developed continuous creative partnerships spanning several productions, theatres and decades.

The last thirty years also speak in favour of the multifaceted and manifold nature of generations of Croatian playwrights, such as those who asserted themselves as playwrights well before the 1990s, the representatives of the "young Croatian drama" in the early 1990s (most of whom continued to write into the next decades and until today),

and the most recent generations of writers who joined the ranks of Croatian drama after the year 2000, including both authors who were nationally and internationally recognised and those who became better known in the last couple of years.

The topics of contemporary Croatian plays written in the first half of the 1990s reveal a lack of direct interest in the social realities of the day. However, the picture began to change in the second half of the 1990s, focusing on the Homeland war, war traumas and transition, and their reflections in personal identities. In the last two decades, the emphasis has been placed on the position of personal identity towards internationally relevant social phenomena such as globalisation, migrations, multiculturalism and various collective identities. Furthermore, the youngest generations of playwrights are seen as more concerned with generationally marked questions of the millennials, including an interest in both virtual reality and working-class rights and in the violence and intolerance towards different, often marginal and underprivileged social groups.

On the one hand, contemporary Croatian playwriting includes plays taken as finished and independent works of art. On the other, more and more playwrights since the year 2000 seem to nurture somewhat radical approaches to playwriting, insisting on writing plays during and parallel to the staging process or even after the performance itself. More than a few playwrights belonging to different generations of authors created their own idiosyncratic versions of postdramatic playwriting, whereas several recent playwrights reveal a tendency towards writing plays deeply imbued with poetic elements. Finally, more and more theatre artists of the new millennium are actively involved in both playwriting and staging processes, blurring or merging the boundaries between different theatre professions, so it is quite usual, for example, for actors and stage directors to write plays, and for playwrights to stage plays or perform them in person.

In 2020, indisputably marked by the pandemic and earthquakes, the Association of Croatian Screenwriters and Playwrights, web portal *Drame.hr* and *Kazalište* theatre journal ventured into a joint effort of inviting nineteen Croatian playwrights to write short monologues on the topic of isolation during the lockdown, and to do so from the perspective of either a newly created character, one of their old characters, a well-known character of some classic or canonised author, or a real historical or contemporary figure. Both the monologues and the subsequent theatre production in the Zagreb Youth Theatre, directed by Anica Tomić, exposed some of the burning issues of the day, equally probing the minds of the playwrights and the general public but also demonstrating that formal closures, in approaches to playwriting or in social life, cannot obliterate the need of playwrights to write plays and to open themselves to (dramatic) dialogue with the world around them.

Literature

- Barnett, David. "When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts." *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2008, pp. 14–23.
- Boko, Jasen. "Hrvatska drama devedesetih: povratak monologu." *Nova hrvatska drama. Izbor iz drame devedesetih*. Znanje, 2002.
- Car Mihec, Adriana. *Mlada hrvatska drama. Ogledi*. Matica hrvatska ogranak Osijek, 2006.
- Crnčević, Lidija. "Smijeh i suze." *Prasac koji gleda u sunce (programska knjižica)*. Kazalište Marina Držića, 2012.
- Delgado, Maria M. et al., eds. *Contemporary European Playwrights*. Routledge, 2020.
- Ferčec, Goran, Žmak, Jasna, eds. "Dramsko pismo 00." *Frakcija*, no. 56–57, 2010.
- Lasić, Igor. "Kult pljuvanja." *Feral Tribune*, no. 916, 5 April 2003, p. 67.
- Lederer, Ana. *Vrijeme osobne povijesti. Ogledi o suvremenoj hrvatskoj drami i kazalištu*. Naklada Ljevak, 2004.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramsko kazalište*. Centar za dramsku umjetnost, Centar za teoriju i praksu izvođačkih umjetnosti, 2004.
- Ljubić, Lucija. "Suvremeni hrvatski dramatičari i njihovi redatelji." *Dani Hvarskog kazališta. Književnost, kazalište, domovina*, HAZU, Književni krug, 2019, pp. 200–218.
- McClelland, Richard. "Between Postdramatic Text and Dramatic Drama: Recent German-Language Playwriting by Lukas Bärfuss and Katja Brunner." *Humanities*, vol. 9, no. 3, doi:10.3390/h9030061, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/9/3/61>, 2020.
- Petranović, Martina. "Pa i dramski pisci su pisci! Nagrada za suvremeni hrvatski dramski tekst – poticaji i posrtaji." *Dani Hvarskog kazališta. Književnost, kazalište, domovina*, HAZU, Književni krug, 2019, pp. 155–179.
- Rogošić, Višnja. "Dramski pisac u raljama života." *Kazalište*, vol. 16, no. 53–54, 2013, pp. 184–194.
- Silobrčić, Dobroslov. "U Londonu sam počela boksati. To je sjajan sport." *Jutarnji list*, 1 August 2015, pp. 54–55.
- Vidić, Ivan. "Teorija u kupleraju." *Kazalište*, vol. 1, no. 3–4, 2000, pp. 48–49.