

Abstract

For many years, bilingual and multilingual practices have been one of the distinctive features of contemporary theatre work by the Slovenian minority in Carinthia. More recently, they can also be observed in the productions of other Carinthian theatres, both non-institutional and institutional, with which actors from minority backgrounds repeatedly collaborate. Some have (co-)founded new bilingual and multilingual theatre structures within or outside this environment. Others are working simultaneously to a greater or lesser extent in theatres in the wider German and Slovenian language area and elsewhere, including in the fields of directing, choreography, acting, set design and theatre music, as well as in television and film productions. Given that these phenomena have not yet been systematically explored in detail, the article outlines the contemporary Slovenian bilingual and multilingual theatre scene in Carinthia, its structures, activities and staging practices. Based on the current range of the manifold activities, it also addresses the question of how to conceptually encompass these diverse practices.

Keywords: theatre studies, Carinthian Slovenians, multilingualism, theatre practices, theatre actors

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Contemporary Slovenian Bilingual and Multilingual Theatre in the Context of Carinthia

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Summary

The theatre activities of the Slovenian minority in Carinthia include working with children and young people, organising theatre events and a wide range of theatre groups and founding a professional bilingual drama theatre. In addition, contacts and links with institutional and extra-institutional theatres in Carinthia and other theatrical environments have expanded significantly recently. On the other hand, new theatre structures have emerged, which, although bilingual or multilingual, are not necessarily linked to the traditional cultural institutions of the minority, which are also open to various forms of cooperation.

A large part of the more recent minority theatre activities is based on bilingualism and multilingualism. However, guest performances of theatres from Slovenia primarily cover the offer of plays in the Slovenian language. The first incentives for Slovenian–German bilingualism on Carinthian theatre stages came from the minority. Today, however, especially in the area of Klagenfurt, such bilingualism is a relatively widespread and established practice in several theatres, which also involve Slovenian-speaking theatre people. Without these initiatives and practices and the distinctive Carinthian Slovenian theatre activity combined with a professional approach to theatre work, it is difficult to imagine today's lingual diversity.

This ever-decreasing yet culturally and artistically productive minority has contributed to transforming Carinthia into a visible region of bilingual and multilingual theatre despite being confronted by assimilatory pressures for decades. The development of this specific cultural-sociological phenomenon has yet to be defined as something transitory or more enduring.

Indeed, these activities, performative practices and cooperations have not yet

been explored in detail and require new methodological approaches. As the article highlights, concepts of minority, multilingual, intercultural and transcultural theatre and other approaches in the field of the sociology of theatre can provide appropriate tools for the empirical and praxeological description and analysis of this phenomenon, which stands out not only in the Austrian theatrical, cultural and social context but perhaps also in relation to other comparable bilingual or multilingual environments.