

ANTON PASHKU SPEAKS WITH "GOF" IN 1979 AT THE ALBANIAN DRAMA THEATER



Creative and Performing Arts

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Abstract

In order to follow the historical consistency in Albanian theater, our view encounters with very interesting approaches; both in form and content. Such is the text and its stage effect, the "Gof" play. Putting people under tension, under constant pressure and denigration, stretched not only scenically or dramatically over time and space, but this time in reality also, making the absurd not to be articulated but asserted instead, as a rebel cell which develops in this fragmented body of the nation early in time, creating a coexistence between the executioner and the victim. Rexhep Qosja, a Kosovar academic, will comment on this coexistence that has not been respected as such: ...honor me if you want me to love you. And, honor - has always had this meaning: accept me the way I accept you.¹ During the observation of this historical-theatrical period, we notice that even in this theater consciously or subconsciously, an articulated Albanian spirit is starting to emerge, I mean, the directing power in this theater will no longer be in Macedonian expressions. The first Prague-educated director, Ahmet Jakupi², arrives in this theater, whilst the previous director M. Stefanovski, is handing over his responsibilities. The shift looks like a very cautious, political game of this community.

Anton Pashku

For the atmosphere of creation and acquisition of Anton Pashku's absurd, at this time and space in the Albanian lands treated in the political-cultural plane, we will refer to the analytical research of this figure by the Albanologist Robert Elisha, while calling him a fan of hermetic observations, his work resembling with that of great writers such as: George Orwell, Fran Kafka or even Robert Musil, which elucidate the human sensation and being, also appreciating his unique dramaturgy in the Albanian literature, which we intend to observe in both literary-dramaturgical and dramaturgical-scenic fields. In "The History of Albanian Literature" Robert Elsie comments on Anton Pashku's time and space in this work: *... he is a writer who does not target the broad public masses, but at the educated reader who is fond of the hermetic observations and details of character analysis in psychological novels. The ferocious political repression in the first generation of writers, in the late fifties led him to withdraw from the literary creativity and create his own hermetic world. The stories, novels, and experimental plays that testify similarities with the works of George Orwell, Franc Kafka, and Robert Musil (1880-1942)*

¹ Qosja Rexhep, *Forbidden People*, Encyclopedic P. House, Tirana, published by the original, Rexhep Qosja, *Forbidden People*, Mega-Medium, Pristina, 1990, pg. 11.

² Ahmet Jakupi (1945) director. He completed his undergraduate studies in the field of directing in Prague. He worked at Pristina's Theater and later engaged in Skopje's Albanian Theater in Macedonia. He was an inventive, witty director with the same aptitude for both drama and comedy. A. Jakupi is distinguished by the fundamental peculiarity of finding novelties within the permissible frames of perfection and fulfillment of dramaturgical texts with a universal and actual spirit, rich imagination with which animates dramatic situations by dynamizing the dramatic action. In the course of his career he has directed around 80 films in various genres of the international and national dramaturgy. The original element in his direction is the tendency for the grotesque. Isaku Luljeta, Islami Nebi, *The Lexicon of Dramatic Arts*, Pub. OI, Pristina, 2012, pg. 256, 257.

are in themselves subtle and masterful studies of man, though they require patience from the simple reader.... Anton Pashku is one of the best stylists in the Albanian literature.³

During these years when the absurd in Pashku was born, in himself, his hermeticism compared to what was happening in the Albania of that time, torn apart by the class struggle, Albanians against the Albanians, completely in an absurd situation, wandering in vicious savagery, an idyllic self-destruction. Pashku's "Gofi" is impossible to penetrate into the motherland, not even as a literary affair, much less as a stage reading. R. Elsie thus describes this event in the Albanian literature, separated by two or three spaces, with the infamous line of demarcation, which divided Albanians not only physically but also into historical-political, socio-cultural perceptions: *These plays, of course, were not staged in Tirana, where such experiments were declared categorically detrimental to youth and the social progress. In the early seventies a liberalization of Yugoslavia's policy towards the Albanian 'minority' and a temporary improvement in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania brought about an increase in cultural contacts between Pristina and Tirana, with ensembles, filmmakers, actors, writers and university professors exchanges. Although these exchanges were fruitful for both parties, their usefulness was limited. The heavy dogmatism in politics and Stalinist propaganda of the Albanian side was viewed with great suspicion by the Yugoslav authorities, while the wider range and experimental, eclectic nature of a good part of the theaters in Kosovo was equally viewed with suspicion by the Tirana authorities. In these circumstances, political barriers again became an obstacle to the development of a unified Albanian culture. After the 1981 uprising in Kosovo, all cultural contacts with Albania virtually ceased. After the 1981 uprising in Kosovo, all cultural contacts with Albania ceased.*⁴ Being a new trend, this play is a teaser for the intellectual thought, as it fails to touch the vast masses of readers, this spirit that seems to be surrendered, self-accepting of the destiny, closed in itself, in fact it is very provocative, making you reflect on its sublayers. In order to qualify and compare this trend in the Albanian dramaturgy, as a beginning of modern drama, prof. Dr. Besim Rexhaj- the play scholar, sees Anton Pashku's play, and not only, as the founder of Albanian literary dramaturgy, as compared to the latter modern playwrights, or read years later due to the regime's censorship, such as Kasem Trebeshina, who is described as one of the first modern Albanian playwrights. Prof. Dr. B. Rexhaj points out: "As I have noted at the monograph's preface, due to the implementation of the literary reception method and the Reader Response theory, the works by which modern dramaturgy is founded are those of the great creator, Anton Pashku..."⁵ For the first time, the absurd speaks in Albanian, not just in the language but also in the content. Deep in it, content articulates potentials of the aftermath physics, awareness and enlightened consciousness invigorate. The breakdown of psycho-psychological situations, is embodied in flash, fluid approaches. His escalating protest is permeated by the mythical, tragic, and grotesque without the need for the element of time. Prof. Dr. Stefan Çapaliku states about understanding what the profane theater is: *Theater of the Absurd is a term derived by Albert*

³ <http://www.elsie.de/pdf/B1997HistLetShqip.pdf> seen in 16. 07. 2019

⁴ <http://www.elsie.de/pdf/B1997HistLetShqip.pdf> parëmë 16. 07. 2019

⁵ Rexhaj, Besim, *The Albanian Drama after WWII 1948-2008 (Poetics, Typology, Periodicals)*, Volume I, Prishtina, 2009, pg. 7.

*Camus and popularized by Martin Esslin's book "Theater of the Absurd" published in 1961, first applied to the works of some playwrights of the early 1950s in the last century. In his 1942 essay "The Myth of Sisyphus", Camus defines the absurd as a tension created by man's determination to discover purpose and order in a world that permanently prevents them from appearing.*⁶

Modern Drama or Modern Tragedy - Gof

It is presented not in acts or scenes (drama conventions) but in: An epilogue. After an epilogue. Before a prologue. A prologue. So he used only two conventions: the beginning and the end, seeing this ones also from the opposite. A provocative dramatic experiment. Introduces the characters: Seen and heard: Lulash, Lulan, Lulua. And a bird, a voice, lots of voices and the howls of wolves, mixed with the sounds of the storm that burst in April, 1939.⁷ There are three characters that have the same name stem: Lul-ash, Lul-an, Lul-ua. They resemble the names that designate respectively: northern Albania, central and southern Albania. All three together are actually one, Lul-ash in a gof state can be multiplied in three, the drunken Lulan who stays close to the fire, or even Luluavery drunk.

An epilogue⁸

So, the work starts from the end, from the epilogue - Given the legalities of the drama convention which starts with the prologue, acts, scenes and the epilogue, we come across a modern concept of these drama legalities, tailoring the ending with the beginning, or the start and finish to give us a closed cycle, a vicious circle. Moving drama units or dealing with only two of them, such as: the prologue and the epilogue and their development after the epilogue and before the prologue, he treated the discovery of two new units; what happens after the end and what happens before the beginning of a dramatic event, building a unique dramatic curve, we also notice that the function of the drama units is not lost. The thread connecting the seemingly invisible characters, the axial action, the climax, or the solution come originally by serving us the experimental drama, destroying the form and dimensioning the content with tragic notes.

An epilogue: We are struck by the presence of an invisible bird, evidently shown by the flapping of its wings and the chirp while stopping at a tree chunk, also invisible to the eye. The dialogue in this epilogue is between one voice and many voices and at the end with the bird. It seems that the character-One voice, asks the others, Many voices using a code – "T'rroke..." (I hug...). The other character; Many voices responds affirmatively "Rrok" (Hug)! But One voice insists, Many voices responds again until the Bird responds by stopping this dialogue.

After an epilogue: Lulash's condition deteriorates, outside the storm has fallen, the bird has left, while in the room, which is described as having a chimney and a traditional stool

⁶ Çapaliku Stefan, *The Little Dramatic Book*, pub. Press. Onufri, Tirana, 2011, p. 24, 25.

⁷ *Modern Drama*, Anton Pashku, Gof, Syncopé, Ernest Koliqi, Rrajtevizin, Critical Essays and Selection, Leka Ndoja, Pact, 2012, Tirana, pg. 16.

⁸ The final chapter or concluding part of a literary work, which gives the solution of the work or the conclusion of the events elaborated upon or speaks of the further fate of the characters after some time has elapsed since the events were told. The solution or the end of something.

Dictionary of today's Albanian language, Acad. Of Sciences Albania SPR, press. Mihal Duri, Tirana, 1980, pg. 431.

(*shkame*), Lulu keeps on drinking. Lulan warms himself by the fireplace. Lulan and Lulo were conversing in short breaks about different subjects e.g. it begins with the topic of fire perception as a service rendered to man: *Lulan -Of course. Had it not been for the cold, we would have forgotten the fire. Lulu, smiling- If we had forgotten the fire, we wouldn't know what the ashes were.*⁹ Whereas in Lulashi's monologues resolved through his gofi, in delirium we are given many messages and political themes of the 60s and 70s in Europe, Albania and Kosovo. Interesting in the two topics parallelization is the theme of animal slaughter which is carried over into his rhetoric, by adding new topics from time to time, thus stratifying and deepening the thought. All of these topics can be deciphered from the text that Pashku has put into his mouth through the rhetoric: Lulash - Will we be left without meat? ... No, France will not give to Italy any piece of land ... We will eat meat ... and we always must... But London, is a separate issue: should we slaughter in the slaughterhouses here, as ever so far London has been solitary with Paris against Rome's revindication in Africa and the Mediterranean...¹⁰ One of the expressions repeated by both boys and by Lulash is: "Of course, rats smell even when they are sleeping." Another topic is the trade issues with Italy, by the words he uses in Italian, paralleling the other topic raised, after the epilogue, the issue of bigamy as a wound of the Kosova society of those years: Lulash... we have a whore at home, but a second wife.¹¹ All of Lulash's rant or gofi starts escalating into facts and tempo-rhythm as he tries to stand up in protest, but falls out of bed screaming. The boys lift him up, try to calm him down.

Before a prologue: Lulash is calmed down, too, and the Lulan, who seems to be one of the most rational, reticent characters who is thinking throughout the dramatic act, and is interrupted by this state only by Lulo's questions. He is worried about Lulashi's plight, while Lulu is more withdrawn, or admits they have nothing to do about it. Lulan accuses Lulo of losing his medication and the raki napkins are to no avail, so they must do something. Other members of this family are also found in the conflict, so they were not alone. Giving us another fact, that only these three survived this storm, while all others, like: *Lula, may have died. Lulu- as if is guilty. Lulan- I am reminding you this is not the moment to argue. Short silence. Nods his head. I had them, this is true, but I gave them to Lulec, Lulan- Lulac? Lulu-Lulec... I gave them to him..., Lulan-you hit him right in the spot...*¹² In this prologue we are presented with a panorama of their journey as a mountaineering expedition, to conquer the high peak of the mountain pasture (Bjeshket e Nalta)¹³ and the consequences they had from this storm. They say they were lucky to be alive, although Lulan didn't agree with this departure and says it is not luck but: ... misfortune... Who aims the high peaks, aims also towards the dangers ... We all knew this before we left.

⁹ Ibid, pg.21

¹⁰ Ibid, pg.20

¹¹ The concept repeated several times in the "Gof" play about the different attitudes of Muslim-majority Kosovo regarding polygamy as social wounds that have been criticized by intellectuals in the '70s in Kosovo. The phenomenon of the European trend towards monogamy suffered some recessions with the bigamist marriages of immigrants at the time of writing the drama.

¹² Ibid, pg. 41, 42

¹³ The High Peaks of the High Mountain pastures: a metaphorical paraphrase for freedom. Specifically the freedom of Lulë = Leks = Albanians
Ibid, pg. 43.

A Prologue: Presented with effects, the resounding of the river slowly calms down, only its gurgle can be heard merging with the sound of the mill. Out of all the noise, the sound from the mill's stones dominates.

Gof - Premier

The first staging of "Gof" comes with the premiere of December 21, 1979, three years after its release in 1976. Directed by Ahmet Jakupi. Scenography - ZhivojinTrajanovoi. Music - Ismail Hoxha. Costumes Ahmet Jakupi. Interpret: Lulash- XhevatLimani, Lulan - SefedinNuredini, Lulua - ZijaudinMurtezi, Living Figure - ZeqirDuraku, and Statist- Hekuran Loga.

Ahmet Jakupi's Stage reading

The provocative text also brings a provocative performance by giving the creative staff of this theater, namely the director and actors, a free hand towards an experimental theater, using elements of this theater, combining plastic with word, the word with effects and music. Realizing or perceiving the character as a semiotic cluster acquired in a discourse situation, its ambiguous discourse lies in concrete relations with other elements within the given situation, An Ibersfeld states: "Only the discourse situation defines its meaning whereas the first element of this discourse situation is the character- as a semiotic cluster, viewed in a concrete relation with the other semiotic clusters."¹⁴The characters discourse depends therefore by the given situations and is the one who defines its understanding and by treating or understanding the character as a cluster, as well as the stage actor, where they are acquired within this container, not only in the literary plane of the character, but also in relation to the other semiotic, sensory, and psychological clusters, this whole cluster breaks down from situations in which the character or characters are placed.

The effects of this injection embody the experiment in almost its every detail. Harmonizing the details, starting with the added characters to this work, such as: The Living Picture and the Statist (supernumerary), their stage existence is without a text, where we can understand them in several variants such as: a divided Lulash into many selves, dimensioning his figure, or even as a figurative revival of their tribe lost in the storm. The "Gof" Show is called a theatrical celebration, for the courage and breaking of theatrical conventions, written in the press of the time by the playwright TekiDervishi: *The Gof's play was a welcomed and long-awaited theater feast. It was not like that because it bravely and inventively broke a stage convention and proved a literary-dramaturgical value, but even as she revealed three or four actors who, not even for a moment during the show, gave us time to think about value and the importance of presenting a truly new fracture and form on the stage of the Albanian National Theater drama.*¹⁵ In the stage construction same as in the play time does not exist, it is perpetual. Deeply rooted in the dreams of the characters, their hallucinations and fears, the stage event comes to fruition with the continuity of the scenic and dramaturgical action, given that Pashku's synthesis work brings the postmodernist trends in time with the developments of European dramaturgy. This bloodthirsty act of this

¹⁴Ibersfeld, An, Hysaj's "The Character", Fadil, *Theatrology, Dramaturgy, Directing and Acting, Writing Anthology*, Pub. Sythi, Pristina, 2006, pg. 643.

¹⁵DervishiTeki, "XhevatLimani'sLulash", *The Brotherhood's Flame newspaper*, rubric: Small Anthology Role Showcase, 25 December 1979.

experiment- be it text or performance, its stage reading, with a lab approach where the work is occasionally made a pretext and not just a text, sticking to its structure, we obtain a stage expression, just as the textual one, in the absurdity of an original text with folk colors, contemporaries and individualities.

Stage expression of an original text

It begins in an epilogue, with the storm and wolves effects, performed by the two actors Sefedin (Lulan) and Ziauddin (Lulua). At first they bring us the (small) vocal presence, that is, in the distance of a wolf, where the wolves are put on stage by the actors and they stay as part of the scenery, and personal requisite, their function begins to unravel the articulation of the closing symbolism in the vicious circle or trap that has been done to them, escalating as a form of communication, where during the set stage action it multiplies to even greater proportions: *Lulua and Lulan bring in a larger wolf, then the wolf present from beginning to the end of the stage ceases to be an associative requisites and acquires a symbolic extension, signifying and semantic meaning.*¹⁶ The embellishment of these characters at the verge of their existence, evokes the scenic action, giving us a stage expression whereby its message unravels through ritual and the all-encompassing current and contextual world as a single body of dynamics, universalizing and affirming the present in her gof.

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¹⁶Ramadani Musa, *"The Metaphor of Suffering and Bloodshed"*, Rilindja newspaper, rubric-Culture-Art-Science-, December 31, 1979, January 1, 2, 1980.