

## SOCIOLOGY AND THEATRE, A TOO SHORT BEGINNING. PAVEL CÂMPEANU'S STUDIES<sup>1</sup>

MIRUNA RUNCAN<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** In Romania, sociological investigations on theatre are mere illusions that drift further and further away into the sky. In the last 30 years, a few theatres commissioned surveys to measure, as best as they could, the structure and the preferences of their own audience, over shorter (in the case of the 2003 first survey draft at Odeon Theatre, the research lasted no more than one weekend) or longer spans of time (in 2015, at Nottara Theatre, IMAS conducted a survey during a month; the survey applied at the Bucharest National Theatre in 2013 remained a legend, or a rumour rather, as the management treated it with mysterious silence). This paper tries to follow the intentions and the destiny of the researches and surveys dedicated to the theatre sociology by Pavel Câmpeanu and his small team between 1968-1974.

**Keywords:** Sociology, Theatre History, Television, Audience Studies.

The reason for the mutual disregard between theatre and sociology (beyond the superficial economic explanations like “there is no funding”) remains merely a mystery. While in the second period of the “Ceausescu era” this disinterest is easily explicable, as both the faculties in Bucharest and Cluj, and the Sociology Institute of the Romanian Academy were suppressed in 1976, the three post-communist decades seem to offer no explanation - except for the fact that every government seemed ever more incompetent and that, on average, the ministers of culture changed every 1.3 years.

Thus, the sociological studies on theatre conducted by Pavel Câmpeanu are singular in this bleak desert which has become a tradition. They all date back to the same interval, 1968-1974, and testify to a targeted and consequent endeavour, that can only be explained through the fact that, at the time, the author ran a small team of researchers at the Office for Studies and Polls of the National Radio and TV Broadcasting company. It is possible that this activity, that is clearly collateral to the Office's normal work tasks, was part of a complementary project, about which the management of the institution may or

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Romanian by Camelia Oană.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Theatre and Television, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, email: [runcan.miruna@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:runcan.miruna@ubbcluj.ro).

may not have been aware. Considering the fact that Pavel Câmpeanu published, in 1972, *Radio, televiziune, public/Radio, Television and Audiences* (Editura științifică), in 1973, *Oamenii și teatrul. Privire sociologică asupra publicului /People and Theatre. A Sociologic Landscape on Audiences* (Meridiane Publishing House), in 1979, *Oamenii și televiziunea: privire sociologică asupra telespectatorului/ People and Television: A Sociologic Landscape on the TV Spectator* (Meridiane Publishing House), and six years later, together with Ștefana Steriade, *Oamenii și filmul. O privire sociologică asupra spectatorului de film/ People and Film. A Sociologic Landscape on the Film Spectator* (Meridiane Publishing House), it's clear that this was a personal project and, at least to a certain extent, an institutional one, but strangely and sadly pushed to the edge of the cultural life.

The period when Câmpeanu's first studies dedicated to theatre, film and television (sometimes interconnectedly) are published is a highly dynamic one in the country's political history. After the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, the country experienced rapid economic growth and a relative openness in terms of ideology, culture and external policy, raising high hopes, both inside and outside its borders. Legislation went through an accelerated process of reforms at all levels, as in 1968, the country's administrative organization changed from the cumbersome regions to the much flexible counties. A lot of industrial, as well as housing buildings had been erected (the industrialization process saw a new impulse, which caused a new major migration from rural to urban areas, after the one that took place in 1950-1960); internal and international tourism, including towards the outside of Romania (with an emphasis on socialist countries) was favoured by small and relatively stable prices: the Romanian seaside had broadened its seasonal accommodation offer and was always full.

In this context of apparent prosperity and openness, for a long time, the television broadcasting company (officially opened in 1956-1957, with a second national channel starting 1968) would play a central role as a unique, controlled instrument, not just for propaganda, but also for education and entertainment purposes, at a never-before seen level of mass consumerism. That's why, placed in the social and political context of the time, the sociological studies conducted by Câmpeanu's team look like natural and necessary scientific endeavours. Nevertheless, the paradox is that he and his team had an interest to paint an encompassing landscape of cultural consumption, in which television (and to a much smaller extent, the radio) is a mere contrast and control element, not the central topic of his project, in its entirety.

### **Pavel Câmpeanu, an Adventurous Thinker**

According to the spelling rules in effect until 1990, Pavel Câmpeanu (1920-2003) signed Cîmpeanu. As a young man, he was an underground communist (the Communist Party was declared illegal in 1924) and was imprisoned at

Jilava and especially Caransebeș alongside almost all the members remaining in the country (a good part of members escaping persecutions by flying to USSR); in the latter prison, he even shared a cell with Nicolae Ceausescu at some point<sup>3</sup>. The biographic notes we've had access to so far do not mention anything about his studies, but he probably graduated from the Bucharest University after the war. After 1944, he took up rather minor jobs in the party, as a university assistant and then lecturer, then starting 1967, he led the Office for Studies and Polls of the National Radio and TV Broadcasting company<sup>4</sup>, a department established ten years after the television company was born. During those years, he published complex articles, especially in academic journals in Romania and abroad. However, his studies on theatre are first published in cultural magazines, such as *Contemporanul* and *Teatrul*, while a chapter dedicated to the sociology of audiences is included in *Teatrul Românesc Contemporan 1944-1974 (Romanian Contemporary Theatre. 1944-1974)*, an extensive work commissioned by the Academy for Social and Political Studies to mark 30 years of communist rule<sup>5</sup>.

Yet, from a historical viewpoint, Câmpeanu proves to be a very interesting character. Like other communist intellectuals, he was disappointed with the post-1977 economic and political evolutions and, of course, shocked by the dissolution of the psychology and sociology faculties, as well as of the research institutes after 1976; thus, during Ceausescu's last decade, he started gathering material and creating cards for a secret study on political science dedicated to Stalinist totalitarian regimes. After his own memoirs<sup>6</sup>, he started writing this paper in 1971, the same year he met and befriended the American sociologist Jerry Klein at an international congress. In 1976, Klein visited Romania and, despite Ceausescu's interdictions on home visits to Romanian citizens, Câmpeanu himself. As a whole, until 1976, the secret paper was around 1,000 pages long and was kept in three copies at three different addresses, for fear of an unannounced Securitate raid. In 1977, when Ștefana Steriade, his collaborator and partner, received her first visa to see her daughter who was studying in the USA, Câmpeanu had a bewildering

---

<sup>3</sup> Al. Cistelean, "Pavel Câmpeanu" in Al. Cistelean and Andrei State, *Plante exotice. Teoria și practica marxiștilor români (Exotic Plants. Theory and Practice of Romanian Marxists)*, Cluj-Napoca, Tact Publishing House, 2015. Regarding his detention years, the illegal party apparatus and the "Ceausescu era", Câmpeanu published a book of memoirs, *Ceausescu, anii numărătorii inverse (Ceausescu, the Countdown Years)*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> In his *O tribună captivantă. Televiziune, ideologie, societate în România socialistă (A Captivating Tribune. Television, Ideology, Society in Socialist Romania) (1965-1983)*, Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, Alexandru Matei includes brief information about this Office, though he does not make a careful review of Câmpeanu's books.

<sup>5</sup> Alterescu, Simion, Zafirescu, Ion (coordinator) *Teatrul Românesc Cotemporan (Romanian Contemporary Theatre). 1944-1974*, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1975.

<sup>6</sup> See Pavel Câmpeanu, "Povestea unei cărți apărute în Statele Unite" (*Story of a Book Published in the United States*), *Observator cultural*, no. 102, 12.02.2002.

<https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/povestea-unei-carti-aparute-in-statele-unite/>

idea to narrow the huge material down to an acceptable length (about 300 pages), translate it into French and send the manuscript to his buddy Klein through Ștefana Steriade; the original goal was not to publish it, but to have an informed opinion and feedback (information sources in Romania were obviously very precarious). After the manuscript was handed to Jerry Klein, the author heard no news about the fate of his paper.

In 1980, as his son, Gheorghe Câmpeanu, had emigrated to the USA, our sociologist was forced to leave the National Broadcasting Company. He was 60 years old. In autumn however, both he and Ștefana visited their children in New York and were, of course, invited to visit Klein at home. This is where the coup de théâtre took place: Jerry handed him a recently published book, *The Syncretic Society* by Felipe Garcia Casals, with a foreword by and under the care of the renowned American sociologist and political expert Alfred G. Meyer, the director of the Russian Center of the University of Michigan. Klein and Meyer had translated Câmpeanu's book from French into English and carefully published it under a fake name, so as not to cause any harm to the author when he would return to his country.

In the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> decade, *The Syncretic Society* (politely declined by Humanitas Publishing House and published by Polirom as late as 2002!) was wonderfully received in both the USA, and Europe. This little miracle (considering the difficulties of the times) brings the author invitations to conferences and to classes of the world's biggest universities, as well as a chance to create his true big project compared to which the adventurous book published by Sharpe Publishing House in 1985 was but a draft. Over the following years, he would publish a trilogy based on his own political theory about dictatorial Stalinism and post-Stalinism, from a very personal Marxist perspective<sup>7</sup>: *The Origins of Stalinism: From Leninist Revolution to Stalinist Society*, (translated by Michel Vale) Taylor & Frances, 1986; *The genesis of the Stalinist social order*, (translated by Michel Vale), Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1988; *Exit: Toward Post-Stalinism*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990.

Back in Romania, Pavel Câmpeanu was a founding member of the Group for Social Dialogue, where he set up a centre for sociological research, analysed the first free elections of 1990 [Pavel Câmpeanu, Mihne Berindei, Alina Combes, *România înainte și după 20 mai (Romania before and after 20 May)*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1990], and in the following years, published *De patru ori în fața urnelor (Four Times at the Ballots)*, Bucharest, All Educational Publishing House, 1993, *România: coada pentru hrana. Un mod de viață (Romania: Food Queues. A Way of Life)*, Bucharest, Litera Internațional Publishing House, 1994, *Ceausescu, anii numărătorii inverse (Ceausescu, the Countdown Years)*, Polirom Publishing House 2002.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Al. Cistelean, quoted chapter.

## Articles in *Teatrul Magazine*

The first study by Câmpeanu's team published in *Teatrul* magazine came out in a rather happy context. We're in the fall of 1969, when Romanian culture had enjoyed a few years of ideological relaxation, causing an effervescent re-synchronization with international lines of thought and aesthetics at all levels. The October issue of the magazine ambitiously aims at opening an extensive debate on spectatorship, putting together longer or shorter texts, all of them very personal, dedicated to theatre audiences. The first part of this journal brings together an impressive number of contributors willing to be a part of this file: the editor in chief, Radu Popescu, the Academy fellow Victor Eftimiu (with funny recollections of audiences' reactions from all around the world), poet Nina Cassian and playwright Aurel Baranga, a rather chaotic vox-pop investigation with replies by cultural names, TV stars, sportsmen, etc

Câmpeanu's study is preceded by another sociologic intervention<sup>8</sup>, a type of essay/statement of intents written by Dimitrie Gusti's former student, Octavian Neamțu<sup>9</sup>, at the time, the founder and leader of the Centre for Research on Youth Issues. The most important piece of information arising from his essay is that, according to the data in the statistics directory, between 1938 and 1948, the theatre public increased by 75.8% (sure, first and foremost due to an increase in the number of subsidized theatres all around the country, from 6 to 40); and that, in 1968, 4,303,000 had gone to the theatre, seeing no less than 12,889 representations. About this simple numerical data, a correction must be made, for they are based on the number of tickets sold: it is easy to understand that a consistent spectator may go to a higher number of shows in the same year - thus, it is evident that the number of individual spectators is infinitely lower than that of sold tickets.

---

<sup>8</sup> Octavian Neamțu, "*Sociologia publicului de teatru*" (*Sociology of Theatre Public*), *Teatrul*, no. 10, 1969, p. 39-41.

<sup>9</sup> Octavian Neamțu (1910-1976), Romanian sociologist, collaborator of the legendary sociologist Dimitrie Gusti in his teams of monographers in 1930-1946; director of the "Prince Charles" Royal Foundation, founder of the magazine *Romanian Sociology*; after 1948, he was removed, became a teacher at a school on the outskirts of Bucharest, then worked in the glass industry, was involved in Lucretiu Pătrășcanu's political trial and arrested for a year and a half. During the short thaw period, he was recruited as a researcher at the Academy's Institute for Economic Research (a research group whose very name avoided any references to sociology, even if it did undertake such studies) in 1956-1958. From there, he was transferred to the Academy's Institute for Documentation, and after 1960, together with Ovidiu Bădina, he started editing the series of *Opere (Works)* by Dimitrie Gusti. When this essay was published, he led the Centre for Research on Youth Issues, According to <http://www.cooperativag.ro/octavian-neamtu-sau-valoarea-devotamentului/>.

From our standpoint today, “A Sociologist in Search of His Spectators” should be read as a first study with a double purpose: on the one hand, to convince theatre managers, the artistic world and party leaders that the sociological research of the artistic environment brings clear advantages to understanding the audiences; and, on the other hand, that such research could offer scientific perspectives on the elaboration of optimum repertory policies, and even on strategies to develop already existing audiences.

For a long time, sociology was destined for distrust - especially among those who could have used it. Why would theatre people disregard this rule? Anyhow, so far, sociologists in our country have not given them any reason to do otherwise. Thus, the first and most undeniable reason of distrust is the absence of sociological research from theatre life. To this, we add the element of novelty, so the fact that people are not used to the nature of sociological investigations: the ambition to measure the immeasurable (sensitivity, taste, uncontrolled reactions). [...] Sociology’s grandeur and modesty consist [sic!] in the fact that it may give answers based on concrete investigations and on verifiable analysis. But until the flight of sociologists to planet Utopia is organized, until each theatre - or at least the Theatres’ Department - has its own sociologist, until the inherent means - derisory in value, but fabulous in accomplishment - of such investigations are identified, we can only speak of tangential or fortuitous accomplishments.<sup>10</sup>

The content of this work aims at comparatively explaining the evolution, and then the contraction, of theatre and cinema audiences after 1960, a year when television sets had already been distributed in extremely high numbers, indicating mass consumption. In 1969, the population most affected was made up of adults between 25 and 59; evidently, cinema audiences dropped more, as it had been substantially (almost six times) higher. I think that it is important to mention that, for non-specialized readers, Câmpeanu felt compelled to make a crucial distinction, between audience and audiences. He defined the *potential* audience and the differences between this and the *real* audience. He even tried to categorise the particularities of the audience. How could sociology investigations benefit theatre? From his point of view, it could concretely measure how the repertory influenced consumption, how frequently a targeted audience was present, it could help breach the gaps between audiences, serve audiences with optimum products, etc.

---

<sup>10</sup> Pavel Câmpeanu, “Un sociolog în căutarea spectatorilor” (*A Sociologist in Search of His Spectators*), *Teatrul* no. 10, 1969, p. 42-44.

The study, inherently limited to the urban area (Bucharest, Bacău, and Codlea), simultaneously makes use of the statistical directory (which causes clear limits, recognised by the team itself), as well as questionnaires by age and professional groups. This is certainly not subtle enough, just like the sample isn't very convincing either, but it already causes a surprise: percentagewise, at the beginning of 1970, the most stable theatre audience proved to be the young audience, mainly made up of high school and undergraduate students. Modestly, Câmpeanu concludes with some dilemmas regarding the in-depth reasons (besides the competition induced by television) underlying this contradiction between different types of audiences, as well as with salutary strategic proposals: theatre directors should make sociological investigations about why loyal audiences come to their theatre, and what those who gave up have to reproach.

One year later, Pavel Câmpeanu was back in *Teatrul* journal with a broader, two-part study which would also be included in the 1973 book in an improved form, as we shall see. The first one was modestly entitled "Sociological Studies on Theatre. Authors and Plays" and was dedicated to the preferences (or rather to the theatre knowledge turned into preferences) of a sample of (just) 392 subjects, all of whom lived in Bucharest. Bizarrely enough, the author omits mentioning the numerical values of the professional or of the age groups, even though these values, only known to the team, were later used to elaborate the percentages included in the graphs. However, from the very beginning, he points out that this research is experimental and unprecedented, and thus raises multiple methodological and/or technical questions.

This investigation may rightfully be considered an experiment, a pre-test for a future research which, taking advantage of certain incipient shortcomings, can paint a more valid and more nuanced picture of the inclinations of our theatre audience.<sup>11</sup>

The first psycho-social details he felt the need to make before confronting the reader with statistical data, referred to a correct differentiation between personal taste and the expression of preferences, as long as the two concepts were in a dialectical, not in a derivation or subordination relationship. Preferences depend on a specific context, taste is a hierarchical process, conditioned by the subject's emotional memory. Educating one's taste obviously depends on the consistent broadening of the spectatorial accumulated and crystalized experiences.

---

<sup>11</sup> Pavel Câmpeanu, "Studii de sociologie a teatrului. Autori și piese" (*Sociological Studies on Theatre. Authors and Plays*), *Teatrul*, no. 11, 1970, p. 81.

Nevertheless, the advantages of the methodology employed are to be appreciated, despite that the total sample is far from being truly relevant: it hierarchizes and motivates preferences, offering data about information / communication with spectators. The focus was on preferences about time, theatre, favourite plays, beloved authors and actors.

When it comes to the preferences arising from consumption practice, Câmpeanu questioned the intervention of both theatre, and extra-theatre criteria (proximity to the theatre, transport, ticket cost etc.). Considering the fact that performances were chosen mostly on actors' fame, he explains this through emotional memory, but also through

... the difficulty, for certain segments of the audience, to distinguish between message and messenger, hence the tendency to confuse the interpreter with the character.<sup>12</sup>

From here on, the sociologist succumbs to the need to generalize, emphasizing the audience's superior capacity to remember the most easily perceptible and sensorially accessible side of a show, "that can be translated into a vast personal, extra-theatrical and even extra-artistic experience". Based on a sample of 392 subjects, while the population of Bucharest was drawing close to two million, we must admit that such statements seem rather intuitive, perhaps even rash.<sup>13</sup>

Anyhow, the results of the research and the author's interpretations are much more interesting. To reduce dispersion and show cohesion points, the most frequent answers were considered: for the question about authors, answers show a cohesion of 60%, for plays, 31%, and 26% for actors. This seems paradoxical, as the results show a picture that is almost inversely proportional to the number answers, the funnel mentioned at the beginning. Maximum dispersion falls on actors, which can be explained by the fact that contact with authors is related to the degree of school education, and with canon, while the actors' presence in public life and in the media induces more diverse preferences.

---

<sup>12</sup> Idem, p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Remember that, quoting the statistical directory, in the above-mentioned article published in *Teatrul*, Octavian Neamțu stated that, in 1968, a total number of 4,303,000 tickets were sold at national level. Considering the ratio between the number of theatres in the country and those in Bucharest, we can estimate that, out of these four million, at least a third of the tickets had been sold in the capital city. Surely, the fact that the sample used was so small was directly connected to the very small number of researchers in the team and, evidently, to the lack of material resources that could have allowed for a broader, therefore more relevant sample.



In short, when it comes to authors, Romanian classic playwright I. L. Caragiale scores 30%, contemporary Aurel Baranga 20%, and Shakespeare only 10%. When these results are corroborated with their frequency in the table of occupations, results are explicable: playwrights were first introduced to the subjects via schools, and only later as spectators, which is why cohesion results depend on the sedimentary memory of childhood and adolescence.

The influence of school over these preferences is the more sustainable, the shorter the school cycle and the more limited the experience in terms of theatre or of dramatic literature after leaving schools - and vice versa.<sup>14</sup>

Romanian authors hold a dominant position compared to foreign writers (21 vs. 9 out of all the answers), but it's explicable that, in the case of this result, Pavel Câmpeanu avoids any political considerations - even if we can realise now that the unbalance is directly related to the education system of the period. Instead, in the theatre play section, despite the fact that it represents the area with the smallest number of results (226 subjects, 58 titles, out of which only 54 refer to real theatre, and the rest are errors, books, operettas, etc.), the results seem to support the author's above-quoted statement: Caragiale's *A Lost Letter* gets 16%, Delavrancea's *Apus de soare* 10%, Caragiale's *D'ale carnavalului* and *Năpasta*, Baranga's *Opinia publică*, *Romeo and Juliet*, G. B. Shaw's *The Millionairess*, and *Hamlet* score 5%.

In the case of plays, autochthonous ones are also indubitably dominant, and Câmpeanu does not highlight, once again, the relation between repertory constructions and Communist Party and press directives regarding original dramaturgy. Conversely, he notices the constant preference, throughout all age groups, for comedy and entertainment, which he (consistently, as we will see below) treats as indicative of a rather precarious theatre culture. In fact, carefully counting the gaps and contradictions between the indicated favourite actors and plays, as well as those between taste and preferences, he does not hesitate in throwing rather rash accusation.

*... the inadequate understanding of the theatre phenomenon by a part of the audience - channelling the need for entertainment towards theatre through an unjustified or partly justified transfer. [emphasis mine]<sup>15</sup>*

The last two parts of the study, published in the following edition of *Teatrul* magazine, dedicated to theatres and actors, must have seemed much more interesting and more effective for that time. The editors decided to place this article in the first half of the publication, not at the end, as it happened in

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 87.

the October number: this shows that they thought the content was important; or maybe the fact that the publication of the first part (in which the editors felt they had to include some “explanations” in a box) had generated certain reactions from the theatrical milieu.

This time, the research aimed at outlining the “personality” of each theatre in relation with the audience’s declared preferences. Still, the author promises at the very beginning that, in the end, he will correlate the facts referring to theatres with those about actors. Since the entire material is about Bucharest, the global order of preferences is as follows: National Theatre 60%, Bulandra Theatre 21%, Comedy Theatre 7,5%, Nottara Theatre 7%, Giulești Theatre 5%, Teatrul Mic 2%. As we notice, the distance between the first and the last positions is significant, while the other theatres (Vasilescu Theatre, Ion Creangă Theatre, etc.) got a bizarre score of 1%, despite the fact that, when the analysis was conducted, their repertoires were based on popular, widely appreciated performances. A plausible explanation is that a significant part of the respondents only rarely went to the theatre, and the National Theatre was the first name that came to mind. On the other hand, however, as respondents do not differentiate (by their own fault, or the questionnaire’s) between dramatic and musical theatres, Constantin Tănase Theatre and Opereta Theatre score a significant 27%, which, as far as the author is concerned, shows that:

... there is an urgent need to conduct thorough studies about the social function of entertainment, about certain delimitations between theatre performances and (specialized) entertainment shows in relation to a potential audience profoundly marked by the broad urbanization process unfolding so vigorously in our country.<sup>16</sup>

The team is not satisfied with global data, but confronts data related to the age group with that related to occupational groups. The necessary corrections in relation to the first result are thus obtained. The National Theatre and Bulandra Theatre dominate the groups over 35, Nottara Theatre obtains a relatively higher percentage among under 35-year olds; the same for Giulești Theatre. From an occupational standpoint, workers are naturally dominant in the case of Giulești Theatre (situated in an industrial neighbourhood) with 50%, followed by the Comedy Theatre - 37%, and the National Theatre - 28%. Intellectuals are dominant in the case of Nottara Theatre with 36%, Bulandra with 27%, while the National Theatre obtains a strange 23%. The same three theatres are also preferred by a relevant group of high school and undergraduate and students: Nottara - 27%, Bulandra - 20%, National Theatre - 23%.

---

<sup>16</sup> Pavel Câmpeanu, *Studii de sociologia teatrului II. Preferințele spectatorilor: teatre și actori* (Theatre Sociology Studies II. Spectators’ Preferences: Theatres and Actors), *Teatrul* no. 12, 1970, p 18.

Considerably increasing the consistency of the analysis, Câmpeanu notes that the preference for a certain theatre also depends on extra-theatrical factors; consequently, the study also aimed at investigating the motivation for these preferences. The set of reasons included the venue, the group of actors, the repertory, access to tickets, the location of the theatre. The motivation questionnaire was also moderated by questions regarding how often the respondent went to the theatre over the last 3-4 years (1 performance, 2-4, 5-6, more than 6). It is thus obvious that, the more frequently the spectator goes to the theatre, the higher the percentages obtained by the actor's team and the repertory, i.e. the artistic factors per se. The group of actors determine preference for a theatre in the case of 56% of spectators going to 2-4 shows, of 44% of those who responded 5-6 shows, and of 53% of those over 6. Along the same lines, the repertory is a determinant factor in the case of 31% of those in the 2-4 group, of 39% for those who responded 5-6, and of 41% for those over 6.

*The most attractive factor determining preference for a certain theatre is, for all audience categories, regardless of how familiar they are with the theatre - so possibly of their theatre culture - the team of actors. [emphasis mine]*<sup>17</sup>

In what regards the section dedicated to actor preference, dispersion reaches maximum levels. However, it is absolutely necessary to keep in mind extra-theatrical factors: a tendency to create models, the actor's iconic/star reputation, how often they appear in films or on TV. The research also categorised preferences based on sex and occupation, not just age. Ranked by the number of preferences, in the global count, the first place was held by Radu Beligan, followed by Florin Piersic, Ștefan Bănică, Octavian Cotescu, Carmen Stănescu. Toma Caragiu, Coca Andronescu and Silviu Stănculescu shared positions 5-8, Stela Popescu and Victor Rebengiuc were ranked 9-10, while positions 11-13 were held (astoundingly, I might add, if one considers the enormous difference of age and style between them) by Irina Petrescu – best known as young film star, George Calboreau – an old drama and tragedy actor, and Dem Rădulescu – specialised in light/commercial comedy.

The author notices how few women made the list (4 out of 14), but his explanation is rather confusing (as he says that women mostly voted for men actors). But, of course, "... when it comes to actor preferences, occupation is an active socio-demographic element".<sup>18</sup> In the case of intellectuals, actresses hold higher positions, except for Stela Popescu, while Dem Rădulescu is totally

---

<sup>17</sup> Idem, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, p. 23.

absent. Here, we should reflect on the classification in which the two are seen as preponderantly entertainment artists, i.e. who cannot be taken seriously - schooled intellectuals are evidently rather snobby.

Another point to discuss is how Câmpeanu refined his explanations regarding the differentiation between drama actor vs. comedy actor, as the extra-theatrical representation variables result in confusions that majorly impact the results. In our case, the perception that Irina Petrescu is a “dramatic” actress probably stems from cinema, while Coca Andronescu and Octavian Cotescu are likely associated to the characters of *Tanța si Costel*, from the TV humour show; Toma Caragiu is associated to TV sketches more than theatre roles, in contrast with Rebengiuc (theatre, as well as film), who paradoxically does not make it into the first five positions.

So many decades later, we should also reflect (for the authors don't do this) on the formidable cohesion, in the case of all age and occupational groups, when ranking Radu Beligan first. His formidable popularity in 1970 (and of course for a long time after) is based on a series of combined reasons, prevalingly extra-theatrical I would say: he was not just an actor (ingrained in collective memory as Rică Venturiano character, in both film and radio), but also a highly influential public figure: a theatre director and member of the Central Committee, an international official of the International Theatre Institute, who appeared a lot on television (not necessarily as an actor, but as a cozeur intellectual and institution manager who was popularly charming, as he talked to spectators and listeners about everything and anything from a civilian position). Still:

From the public's perspective, the same actor - at least from the standpoint of the preferences he induces - gains an image which is sometimes considerably different from one age group to the other. Each actor, seen as the same person and thus having invariable value, is painted by the audience into extremely varied pictures.<sup>19</sup>

The analysis of the full list of actors (45 names in total) also includes those who didn't score high enough to make it among the first 13 positions. Here, results change: there are 28 people in the drama group, and just 18 in comedy, while actors under 35 are dominant. This corrective can offer a much clearer image, as the very dispersion of preferences broadens the landscape and testifies to a certain dynamic of the spectator's horizon, despite the small size of the sample. Furthermore, at this point, the study shows one of its great merits, as it precisely captures (as other studies will confirm) a mutation, a generational turning point. Pavel Câmpeanu thus takes the liberty to reflect on this with a certain enthusiastic kind of lyricism:

---

<sup>19</sup> Idem, p. 26.

... the spectators who are most open from all viewpoints and most violently worried about the juvenile need for projection and identification, for which a model or a star becomes a hope for integration into a so far unknown life - youngsters between 15 and 24 - make up the only age group that more frequently opts for drama, rather than comedy actors. Therefore, beyond these extravagant and sometimes slimy clothes, beyond the long hair, the beards and the goatees, beyond these too short, too long or too colourful skirts, beyond these eyes covered in too much make up, this worrying need for rhythms, screams, cigarettes and loud processions, beyond all these conducts that cause elderly people's frowning, suspicion, disapproval or even aversion - lies a cloudy consciousness about the gravity of life, a respect for sadness, the need for an inexorable and disturbing theatre in its searches, totally different from the type of theatre that seems especially appreciated by people who are well-dressed, who wear proper haircuts and make up, for whom the doubts of integration are in the past and who, on their way to see *A Flea in Her Ear*, harshly admonish beard-wearers on their way to the so small Cassandra hall to see the stirring youth play *Chips with Everything*.<sup>20</sup>

Not least, the correlation between theatre and actor preferences, as promised early in the introduction to the study, is also surprising. The National Theatre holds supremacy in this case too (with 42 names), the Comedy Theatre drops dramatically, with just 2 actors (not Beligan), as does Nottara, with just 5; on the other hand, Giulești Theatre increases to 13 actors, while Teatrul Mic holds 12 preferred actors. This is a good opportunity for Pavel Câmpeanu to highlight once more the dialectics between taste and preferences, as well as the fact that the mostly young team of Teatrul Mic proves solid among devoted theatregoers, despite not including TV stars.

Interestingly, the author explains Beligan's absence from among the preferred names at the Comedy Theatre by the fact that some actors travel a lot between theatres and are not always identified with the group of the theatre that employs them. As mentioned above, the actor's strong position in the top of preferences is primordially connected to notoriety, not acting. However, this dominance is contradicted by the preferences of young intellectuals, as well as of students, who rank Florin Piersic first, perceived as dramatic actor (probably because of highly resonant shows like *Of Mice and Men*, *The Idiot*, etc.). Therefore:

A look at these graphs shows that hopes for concordance were very much derisory. [...] **It's likely that, when forming an opinion about this or that theatre, the group of actors contributes less, or anyhow**

---

<sup>20</sup> Idem, 27-28. *A Flea in Her Ear* by Georges Feydeau, a voudeville from the XIX century was, at the moment, one of the most popular shows in Bucharest the season Câmpeanu made his research. *Chips with Everything* by Arnold Wesker is a political anti-war drama, and was recently staged, with a great critical and audience succes, at the theatre of the Theatre and Film Institute.

**less directly than what the spectators themselves believe.** It's also possible that the public prestige of an actor is very much cultivated outside the theatre he works for, and independently of himself (especially through public manifestation tools, such as film, television, radio, mass media, etc.). [emphasis mine]<sup>21</sup>

Compared to the analysis basis, the author's conclusions at the end of the study seem to a great extent based on personal impressions, rather than demonstrated or demonstrable. For example, this hierarchy of the audiences as a whole:

Theatres have a consistent, competent, but small audience - and another one, fluctuating, accidental, less informed, but very broad in its entirety, pushed towards theatre by mainly extra-theatrical aspirations and requirements, which, among others, show improper ways to understand the stage message. Finally, there is a third type of audience, characterized by theatrical insertion, who do not say no to talking about their very own kind of theatre, but that theatre lives more in their imagination rather than in reality.<sup>22</sup>

Still, these conclusions are offering possible ideas and projects, very sensibly suggested to the theatres; they seem to target the cultural leaders who could have wanted (or would have been wise enough to wish for) truly relevant investigations, beyond improvisation, focusing on the core of the theatrical praxis:

... theatre does not need testifying, but participative sociology. In this sense, I think it is necessary to move from studying the audience globally (as it happened in our inquiry) to a differential study on the audience, starting from general response to the pressure system mentioned above. [...] As far as I am concerned, I believe that the most interesting approach would be a profound psycho-sociological study on the mechanism of a theatre success at artistic, social and individual level.<sup>23</sup>

Since no authority actively encouraged or supported these proposals, as we will see, Pavel Câmpeanu tried to continue his project, with the few resources he had. As much as it was possible.

---

<sup>21</sup> Idem, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Idem.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

## People and Theatre

The volume *People and Theatre. A Sociological Outlook on the Audience* was published in 1973 by Meridiane Publishing House in Bucharest. It contains several studies conducted between 1969-1972, including those published in *Teatrul* magazine, revised and enhanced to a certain extent. That is why we shall not go over them again, except to mark the differences. The book follows a logical organization, into several sections made up of a varying - both as structure, methodology, and perspective - number of subchapters, each of them a self-standing research. We assume that all these (with one bizarre exception to which we shall return) were made by the same Office for Studies and Polls (OSS) of the National Radio Broadcasting company. Nowadays, it's difficult to estimate to what extent those investigations, except for the one about television theatre shows, were conducted with the knowledge and consent of the institutional leaders.

The first chapter, entitled *În căutarea titlurilor (Searching for Titles)*, is a research based on a big sample of 7,500 people, in which the team<sup>24</sup> aims at investigating how titles of theatre plays are assimilated and structured in people's memory. Despite such a big sample and the fact that the subjects mentioned 500 titles, the results are trivial, very similar to those in the article about authors and plays, published in *Teatrul* Magazine. Therefore, we have the same *Lost letter*, the same *Apus de soare (Sunset)*, but also satirical comedies by Aurel Baranga that are sometimes ranked very high, such as *Mielul Turbat (The Furious Lamb)* and *Opinia publică (The Public Opinion)*.

The section *Publicul mamă (Mother Audience)* has various subchapters which make up distinct investigations: "*Un deceniu într-un teatru*" (*A Decade in a Theatre*) analyses the accounting and coverage data of the Bulandra Theatre in relation to its repertory between 1960-1970. This is quite an interesting research, as the host theatre is compared both to the other theatres in Bucharest, and to those at national level. In this case, one may suspect that if this wasn't commissioned (institutionally impossible), at least it proves a good collaboration with the theatre management, especially with the legendary literary manager, Tudor Steriade<sup>25</sup>, but also with the general manager, theatre director, Liviu Ciulei.

---

<sup>24</sup> In the introduction of this chapter, Pavel Câmpeanu is kind and open enough to mention his young colleagues in the National Radio and TV Broadcasting company OSS: Petre Baron, Octavian Buia, Simona Herșcovici, Jean Popovici.

<sup>25</sup> Tudor Steriade (1926-2015), translator, working alone or in collaboration with his colleague Lia Crișan, of tens of theatre plays, most of them from Russian. He was the literary manager of the Bulandra Theatre for well over three decades.

Here, Câmpeanu makes the same mistake as in the 1969 article, assimilating sold tickets (on average, approximately 255,000 per year) with the number of spectators. On the other hand, we must admit that, since the research is solely based on the theatre's administrative papers, he could not have instruments based on which to approximate the relation between the number of tickets and the number of actual spectators. Even so, the theatre had reasons to be proud: the average percentage of spectators/tickets sold by drama theatres, at country level, was 2.4% in that decade, while Bulandra's average figure was more than double, 5.5%, with a room occupancy coefficient of approximately 70%.

The team aimed at analysing the success (based on a correlation between the total number of spectators, the number of shows per season, and the number of spectators per representation). They thus compared the performances played for one season only, with the productions that made it through 5-7 seasons. The resulting ratio was 1/6, or 15 performances out of 88 titles, to be more exact, were qualified as great successes. Still, in the season 1966-1967, we notice a particularity in terms of great successes.

In terms of Romanian original drama, unsuccessful shows are predominant, while in foreign dramaturgy, things are different. *In the seventh decade, the audience rarely preferred original plays to foreign ones.* [emphasis mine]<sup>26</sup>

The seasons when successes are predominant are 1964-65 until '68. The most favourable season is 1965-66 (evidently, corresponding to the implementation of Liviu Ciulei's fresh managerial programme). Yet, numerical data is not always converging. The team of sociologists thus decides to centre the comparison on the first criterion, related to the total number of spectators, correlating the others criteria. Therefore, it becomes clear that, compared to its public success, Bulandra Theatre's repertory profile is a cosmopolitan one, asking a certain theatre culture from spectators, even if its most important shows address general audiences:

The general quality of this repertory of great successes resides in their literary quality: Shakespeare and Shaw, Brecht, Tennessee Williams and Caragiale make up an encouraging landscape of preferences established through facts, characterizing both the Bulandra Theatre, and its audience in a complimentary manner.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Pavel Câmpeanu, *Oamenii și teatrul. Privire sociologică asupra publicului (People and Theatre. A Sociological Outlook on the Public)*, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing House, 1973, p 57.

<sup>27</sup> Idem, p. 60.



The study looks at the very life of successful performances, with its ups and downs, through specific tables and graphs. The analysis of the seasons, only based on the performances that have been seen by over 10,000 spectators, shows that 3/5 of the chosen titles score higher - which we must admit is a proportion that would be envied by most current theatre managers. Anyway, the team also investigates the differences between two theatre's halls (The Isvor Hall and the Studio) in terms of audience: the results show that the Studio Hall has an uncertain and somehow neglected repertory. This probably led not only to different shows being staged in the big hall compared to the studio, but also to the renovation and redesign of the Studio by Liviu Ciulei and Paul Bortnowski<sup>28</sup>.

The research brings forward an interesting phenomenon: the theatre had offered 7,004 representations in 11 years, which on average means 636 representations per year. But these dropped significantly after 1966, both at home and on tour/on the road. Pavel Câmpeanu does not investigate the reasons behind this decision to reduce the total number of representations (a phenomenon which took place not only at Bulandra, but everywhere around the country), nor does he comment on this observation.

We believe that the main reason has to do with the changes in Communist Party's state politics concerning culture in the first years of Ceausescu's rule: the intense cultural activism strategies, with a Stakhanovite dimension, imposed to performing arts institutions are gradually replaced (yet, with no public statement on the topic) with a more relaxed policy, in terms of the rhythm of producing shows, and of the distribution obligations, both at home or in road shows. This is also the period when the time allocated to performance production increases significantly (for instance, some shows at the Comedy Theatre are finalized in months, which gives rise to snide comments in the press and at official gatherings of the State Committee of Culture and Art). At the same time, we must establish a connection, even an indirect one, between the lower number of representations and other two related phenomena: the national spectatorial contraction caused by the emergence and the generalization of TV show consumption, on the one hand; and the (silent but, in the end, irreversible) transition from socialist realism to socialist aestheticism<sup>29</sup>.

---

<sup>28</sup> The Studio, later renamed Toma Caragiu Hall, next to Grădina Icoanei Park was the festivity hall of the Central Girls High-School (at the time, the Zoia Kosmodemianskaia High School); it was damaged in the 1940 earthquake, repaired by the great architect Horia Creangă, and then turned into a cinema hall after the 1948 nationalization. In 1955, Lucia Sturdza Bulandra (1873-1961), the theatre manager and leading actress, convinced the authorities to entrust it to the Municipal Theatre to be used as a studio hall. Director Liviu Ciulei fully redid the inside of the hall in 1973, when *Oamenii și teatrul (People and Theatre)* was published.

<sup>29</sup> See Mircea Martin *Radicalitate și nuanță (Radicality and Nuance)*, Bucharest, Tracus Arte Publishing House, 2015, and Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului (Criticism in Tranches. From Socialist Realism to the Autonomy of Aestheticism)*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească Publishing House, 2011.

The chapter *Memoria publicului (The Memory of the Audience)* resumes, with a few improvements, the articles published in *Teatrul* magazine in 1970. It's likely that, due to the pressures arising from the paradigm changes in cultural policies caused by the theses of July 1971, Câmpeanu adds into the study an essay-chapter entitled "*Teatrul politic*" (*Political Theatre*), which is very strange considering the economy of the book. This focuses on Aurel Baranga's comedies, "read" quite artlessly, just from their socio-political dimension, and somehow shown as exemplary. For example, the reader encounters strained eulogies like:

This tragicomedy fragment so excellently interpreted in Bucharest by the People's Artist Radu Beligan had both the value of an evocation, and of a warning. The author and interpreter - both of them members of the Central Committee - address consciousnesses with the same pathos specific to comic satire<sup>30</sup>, asking for a deep and severe consciousness examination of everybody's attitude.<sup>31</sup>

This essay seems in no way connected to the previous study, except for a few mentions of some of by Baranga's comedies among those preferred by spectators, and, stylistically, it falls into a totally different type of writing; one can suspect that this was used by the author as precaution/shield, or perhaps that it was a corrective intervention by the censorship during the publishing of the book (something like: "Comrade, you must include something nice in the conclusions, for people to understand the political relevance of your analysis!").

Conversely, *O stagiune într-un oraș (A Season in a City)* is a rather more ambitious comparative research, probably conducted along the same time and based on a similar sample (370 people in the first case, 400 in the second). The small size of the sample, despite the note that the subjects were interviewed at home (400 subjects by maximum 5 people in a single season? Such huge effort!) raises questions regarding the interpretation of the results, just like in the case of the articles in *Teatrul*. However, they added something that was missing back then: the reference sample for professional groups.

Pavel Câmpeanu admits to the limits of the study from the start: the audience is not familiar with investigation techniques, the instruments are scanty and deficient, they lack a comparative dimension as no other studies were conducted before this. Worse, out of 400 people, only 31% saw at least one show in the 1969/1970 season. In the case of the professional groups, 53%

---

<sup>30</sup> The author refers to Chitlaru's monologue in *Opinia publică [The Public Opinion]*, staged in 1967 at the Comedy Theatre, directed by Mihai Berechet.

<sup>31</sup> Pavel Câmpeanu, *Oamenii și teatrul (People and Theatre)*, p. 156

of high school and undergraduate students saw at least 1 show, followed by 47% of intellectuals (an embarrassing percentage, compared to France, where it reached 60%), 28% of workers, and 22% of retired persons. This could constitute the first clue as to the generational turning point in Bucharest audiences' composition (also noted in *Teatrul*).

Yet, when mentioning the performances, we see a great dispersion, 60% of 105 subjects only mentioned one or two titles. Just 40% mentioned three or more. Still, the best-known show is *A Flea in Her Ear*, a sensational 19<sup>th</sup>-century play very successfully staged at Bulandra Theatre; but in the case of high school and undergraduate students, it only obtains 11-12%. In original dramaturgy, the percentage is as low as 2.8-3.8%, with *Opinia publică* on the first position. But things seem irrelevant in this case too: "A small number of the shows mentioned are part of the season under study: the great majority are replayed from previous seasons."<sup>32</sup>

The team deems it necessary to also talk about the reasons behind the appreciation for a certain show. But the author (rightfully) draws our attention that:

The audience barely dissociates between the actors' interpretation and the director's mark, so that, when explaining why they liked a chosen performance, more than 50% of the subjects think that the main contribution resides with the actors, while just 5% confer this privilege to the director.

The generational mutation is visible here too, as 11% of young people motivate their preference through directing quality, compared to just 5% of intellectuals. Paradoxically, the percentage is similar in the case of devoted spectators, who saw the show over 6 times.

Câmpeanu and his colleagues wish to investigate the factors keeping spectators away from theatres: the most frequent answer is "lack of time", and the author skilfully ridicules this inertial response, a symptom of pure idleness. Otherwise, the extrinsic hindering factors are completely comparable with those in France (purchasing tickets, distance from their house, late hours to return from the play), except for the price (invoked by 7% of Romanians vs. 31% French).

The competitive factors for theatregoers are naturally very interesting: television scores 31%, reading 7%, and cinema 6%. But the differences highlighted in the occupational and age table are major: here, television obtains 45% in the case of respondents older than 55 and retired persons, and just 18%

---

<sup>32</sup> Idem, p. 105.

among students (14-24 years old). The biggest shock comes from the low score obtained by the competitor cinema, considering the almost insignificant difference in tickets prices. However, in the case of the 14-24 sample, we already see an indication of films being consumed by 19%. But in fact, theatre/cinema spectatorship does not seem in opposition, on the contrary - which says a lot about fictional availability in the field of entertainment for the devoted audiences of 1970.

Theatre-goers visit the cinema more often, while those who do not go to the theatre are less interested in the cinema too. Instead of an inversely proportional ratio, we notice a directly proportional one. [...] Tackled from various angles, the relation between cinema and theatre shows a consonant, rather than competitive character.

In order to prove that such a sociological research is useful, despite the precarious sample and the almost voluntary logistics, the investigator draws a series of conclusions, hoping that central decision-makers and, most especially, theatre directors take the results into account. For instance, he deems it necessary to redesign the ticket distribution system:

*Theatres in Bucharest should remember that their most devoted spectators (those who go to the theatre more than 6 times per season - our note) seem to think the ticket distribution system is a hinderance. [emphasis mine]<sup>33</sup>*

This final piece of advice seems to have been heard, as at the beginning of eighth decade, performing arts institutions in Bucharest changed their sale strategies: they started offering subscriptions, even distributing monthly tickets, through marketing agents, directly into factories and research institutions, in schools or military units etc.

\*\*\*

A special and fully predictable section is named *Teatrul și televiziunea (Theatre and Television)*, and includes several surveys, two of which are genuinely interesting. The first one refers to television theatre shows as a major educational and entertainment factor at the moment of the investigation. This time too, the research is based on an investigation of the spectator's memory. The author pragmatically avoids questions about the structural and aesthetic particularities

---

<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 115.

of television performances, so as to not confuse the minds of the subjects with complicated evaluations; and, at the same time, to make it easier for non-specialized readers to understand the study. But his starting point about the dissemination power of television is firm:

This is not a hypothesis, but an indubitable fact: television acts like an active mediator between the play and the audience. It has the necessary technical means to do this. We shall see to what extent these technical means can carry and even amplify the text's aesthetic values (which I believe to be an obligation for any interpretation) or in other words to what extent its technical potential can become artistic.

The investigations were conducted in 1970 and 1971 and, once more, the published study does not mention the size of the sample for any of the two years, which raises some questions. More than that, to our astonishment, we find that methodological errors were identified, which to a certain extent altered the results, but these mistakes were corrected:

The TV share in securing the most consistent theatre satisfactions varies from year to year because, in 1971, the research only included people who owned a TV set at home, while in 1970, this only happened by chance.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, nowadays we find much more relevant the concrete data showing the expansion of consumption at national level:

Due to the number of *TV sets*, *televised theatre strengthens its position as main source of information and theatre satisfaction* [emphasis mine]. [...] At the beginning of the last decade (in 1961), the number of people over 15 who owned a TV set at home was only around 240,000 at national level - while that same year, the number of spectators present in theatre venues was 5.1 million. At the beginning of this decade (in 1971), around 4.5 million people owned TV sets, while the number of physical spectators dropped to 4.3 million.<sup>35</sup>

To reduce dispersion in the analysis of subjects' preferences, the team chose to classify them based on the first 7 most-mentioned performance titles in both years, and to organize them according to how the subjects came into contact with that play. The percentages obtained by television were thus overwhelming.

---

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 164.

<sup>35</sup> Idem.

For instance, a top theatre preferred drama for those years, *Ciuta* by Victor Ioan Popa, had become known to 0.9% of respondents by actual theatregoing, to 0.4% through radio, to 2.2% by reading, and to 96.5% by television.

The study offers precious information on the repertory of televised theatre for the 2 years under discussion: 35 plays had been staged, of which 30 dramas, 10 classical plays, 7 interwar plays, 19 contemporary, 12 foreign, 24 Romanian, while plays staged for the first time in Romania exceeded 50%. Câmpeanu reiterates some statements rooted in his previous studies, once again jumping to generalizations:

Most Romanian sociological studies focusing on the audience [*which studies?* - our note] show that, unlike film (where melodrama is prioritised), when it comes to theatre, spectators are constantly inclined towards comedy. In this respect, we could talk about a certain inconsistency between the audience's expectations and this inclination of TV theatre repertory, both in its entirety, and particularly from the viewpoint of contemporary original dramaturgy.<sup>36</sup>

I could assume that, in reversing the drama-comedy relation in terms of the dominant preference for comedy, the National Television aimed a strategic purpose - the central objective of television (a public, unique body, with two channels starting 1968, though the second channel did not yet cover the entire country) being educational-ideological. Using theatre shows, that were so loved by consumers, as an aggregate to increase the level of culture throughout all social categories, the leadership of the institution had in mind the necessity of a repertorial projection dominated by drama, which was proportionally compensated by the presence of entertainment shows (including moments of humour, dance, music, etc.) in all the weekends. It may be worth placing this strategic decision into context, by reminding that, starting 1970, the television's offer also included *Telecinemateca* every Tuesday, which broadcasted old movies from all around the world, preceded by specialized presentations, thus increasing the level of film culture among spectators of all ages and social backgrounds<sup>37</sup>.

Pavel Câmpeanu comments on the results of the preferences for the first 10 positions in audience (over 50%), ascertaining that high audience shares are recorded in quarters 1 and 4, i.e. in autumn-winter (when potential theatregoers probably prefer to stay in their warm homes). He then compares the samples of

---

<sup>36</sup> Idem, 166.

<sup>37</sup> Substantial information with regard to this, including about the fact that TV theatre and the *Telecinemateca* dominated the audiences' preferences, can be found in Pavel Câmpeanu's book *Oamenii și televiziunea (People and Television)*, Meridiane Publishing House, 1974.

the best shows as mentioned by the audience, to those preferred by the experts; from my knowledge, this is the only such comparative attempt in Romania (not just in the case of television theatre, but of theatre per se).

As far as the adequacy of a value of judgement depends on the competence of those who make it, we can say that the appreciations made by theatre experts are the closest to the objective value of the mentioned performances. The corollary of this argument, applied to the above-mentioned competences, is that, in this light, the theatre taste of the general public looks very precarious. [...] The differences are so clear, that it seems unlikely that the expert's options may supply elements for an efficient repertorial model. In terms of educating the general audience's theatre taste, the most useful recommendation is to carefully select and artistically create the texts for which they seem to have a real interest - original dramaturgy, comedy. [...] <sup>38</sup>

Anyway, as mentioned earlier, we think that the decision-makers within the television management at the time, even if they were politically appointed, applied a different propagandistic and educational-artistic philosophy when selecting the repertory of TV theatre, at least for a while; still, due to the political changes after 1971, Romanian dramaturgy would increase a lot over the following years compared to foreign dramaturgy.

A different subchapter in this volume is courageously dedicated to "*Theatrical Culture in Villages*" (*Cultura teatrală la sate*). This proves to be a separate investigation, aimed at following the differences between the urban and the rural environment in perceiving and assimilating television theatre. About this much broader inquiry we are told that it is based on a sample of 7,500 subjects over 15 years old. The sample had a balanced proportion of men and women from all around the country, of all ages, professions and levels of training. At present, it's hard to imagine how the team efficiently managed such a big project (number of field operators, the logistics, etc.).

In the urban environment, which is used as reference system, 4,506 people provided complete answers, that means over 50%. The cities chosen for this investigation were Cluj, Iași, Timișoara and Sibiu. No answer at all was provided by 36% of the subjects. Later, the investigation was reconducted in the urban environment, in smaller towns, adding 979 subjects from Babadag, Titu and Vlăhița. In this sample too, 50% of interviewees provide no answer at all.

The results show that, when it comes to both accessing information, and formulating preferences related to theatre shows, information comes from television (40%), the radio (12%), reading (12%), but also actually going to the

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 169-170.

theatre (36%). When looking at this percentage in an objective and detached manner, it raises serious questions, even for the big cities in the first part of the inquiry - it is possible that the results were artificially raised for political reasons.

In the rural environment, 3,318 subjects were interviewed, of which 45% did not respond. Of those who identified as farmers, 38% indicated real preferences for television theatre, a percentage which nowadays seems rational, if we consider the novelty and the “exceptionality” of the new means. In any case, Câmpeanu’s conclusions are of course in line with the Communist Party policies.

For now, the little information available seems to indicate a likely current of theatre initiation spreading into villages, including for the historically levels of people for whom this difficult, fruitful, and dignifying art was the less accessible. Should this data be validated by subsequent investigations, I consider true the statement that the theatrical culture expansion process reaches a new level.

\*\*\*

The final section of the book is entitled *Publicul grup (Group Audience)*, and is made up of three different experiments, each raising certain methodology and interpretation questions. Their common factor is Câmpeanu’s combination between ethnography, psychology and semiotics, both in his objectives, and the discourse analysis - at the time, structural analysis and semiotics were the new beginnings of humanistic academia (and not only).

*Experimentul 1: Mimica (Experiment no. 1: Mimicry)* seems to be the author's first collaboration with Ștefana Steriade, alongside whom he later signed the book *Oamenii și filmul (People and Film)*. In order to analyse the actors’ facial expressions, 4 pictures of actors were used, some dressed as civilians, others in performance costumes. The experiments used two groups of subjects: one made up of apprentices from the vocational school of locksmiths from the Railway Company’s Workshops ‘Grivița Roșie’, and the second of the Institute of Theatre and Film (IATC). Pavel Câmpeanu states that methodologically speaking, the experiment is badly flawed, a failure, irrelevant. However, from inexplicable reasons, he publishes it.

*Experimentul 2: Spectacolul (Experiment no. 2: The Performance)* is an interesting and brave initiative, that seems based on a deep level of involvement by the entire team. It tests the reception, how meaning and value judgements are constructed in a target group that has no spectatorial experience in theatre. The same classes of apprentices from Grivița Roșie were invited to see the



show *The Disappearance of Galy Gay*, by Bertolt Brecht, at the Comedy Theatre. They watched the play on 14 February 1971. Four researchers in the team accompanied the youngsters to the show and, with the text in their hands, they noted their reactions. At the end, the subjects filled in a five-point survey. Five days later, they were invited to give an account in class, and answer to a much more detailed questionnaire. Three months later, they were asked to rewrite the account. To a great extent, the study published is based on the second account, as the team was interested in the assimilation process of the spectatorial experience.

Anyhow, the entire material reveals that, if we turn the mirror around, the experiment conducted by Pavel Câmpeanu's team in 1971 created a special kind of enthusiasm among CFR apprentices. I wonder what happened with these boys later on.

Perhaps the most debatable and the strangest experiment made by Pavel Câmpeanu is the last one, entitled "*Publicul ca individ. Ion*" (*The Audience as Individual. Ion*). For present-day readers, this chapter raises numerous suspicions and methodological and ethical reserves. Câmpeanu describes this action as an individual, "experimental qualitative investigation". The anonymous character in this chapter was also chosen from the apprentices in Grivița, and the author says he followed him in 1969-1971 (from 16 to 18 years of age). Ion was apparently chosen for his incipient interest for theatre, qualified as "availability". In the end, it turns out that his availability was in fact well-managed histrionism, and Câmpeanu's choice is only justified by the particularity that the subject could write more coherently and grammatically more correct than his colleagues.

A first objection that must be made about this experiment refers, in our view, to the author's essayistic, almost intimate tone, that betrays a very unscientific attachment to the subject of his investigation. In this sense, some fragments show almost uncontrollable lyricism:

In relatively similar conditions as his colleagues' - and this is mysterious - the fabric that makes up Ion's being seems to provide a special resonance to the message brought to him by theatre. Why does this unique vibration of the theatrical message suit Ion and another small number of his colleagues?<sup>39</sup>

In short, on the same tone, Pavel Câmpeanu describes the subject's origins, life, informing us about his father who was a countryside tailor, the head of a family with many children. Ion was a good pupil, but he was not allowed to go to high school because of material hardships (but in the subtext, the author suggests several times that this is first and foremost a mentality issue). Ion is a fan not of the Rapid football team (despite being a CFR apprentice), but of Steaua, as he has a brother at the military school; he loves Elvis Presley. Obviously, he

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 225.

doesn't like the profession he was pushed towards, nor the conditions in the boarding school, so he lives with a cheap landlord in a slum; he doesn't like the school he goes to either, and every year he dreams of becoming something else - a locksmith, an officer, a kindergarten teacher. He wants to go to university, of course. At this point, the author's lyricism reaches pathetic peaks:

I will only say that, unlike the road to hell, the road to the profession of train locksmith at the big, revolutionary plant in Bucharest is not paved with good intentions.<sup>40</sup>

Evidently, this biographic cameo must at some point lean towards motivating the decision to conduct this experiment.

How are all these connected to theatre? They are, because - unlike football and pop music and, to a much more relevant extent, film - theatre can give Ion the occasion to assimilate direct human experiences, theatre can clear his self-consciousness, contribute to the crystallization and social exploitation of this personality.<sup>41</sup>

The sociologist first investigates Ion's evolution over three years, from the standpoint of his models: his dad is gradually replaced by his best friend: "Ion identifies with his friend, who is endowed with gifts that he doesn't have." From the data obtained during the experiment, we find out that the subject's total spare time is 3-4 hours per day, that his usual entertainment consists of reading newspapers, listening to the radio, walking with his friends (later, girlfriend), sports. The costs of other types of entertainment largely render them prohibitive. Ion's favourite songs are, as the years go by, *Doar băieții sunt de vină*, a trendy hit by Luminița Dobrescu and *Lună dă-mi o scară de mătase*, sung by Dan Spătaru. The author believes that the subject's need to project himself in the cultural object justifies most of Ion's preferences. But to our surprise, the text includes some of the boldest critical statements against the system, which escaped censorship almost inexplicably:

With limited efficiency, middle school instilled in Ion an almost congenital inclination towards language sensitivity. The vocational school, the Union of Communist Youth (UTC), the atmosphere of urban life and his ascent on the sinuous roads of adolescence manage to debilitate even this poor literary breath ingrained by 8 years of school. A literary temperament, Ion remains far away from literature.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 227.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 230.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 243.

In terms of theatre, up to the age of 15, Ion had seen three performances at the Community centre in his commune. His first year in Bucharest, he went to the theatre four times, to Bulandra and Giulești (but the verification with titles shows that he mistakes Bulandra for the National Theatre). In 1970-71, he went to Giulești, to Sala Palatului, and the Comedy Theatre. He went to Giulești twice (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Comedie cu olteni*, which he'd seen before). He forgets about *Ulise și coincidențele*, avoids mentioning *Dispariția lui Galy Gay*, which leads to a number of five plays (three of which he saw at Giulești, close to the school and the CFR Workshops). His favourite actors were Toma Caragiu in 1969, and Silviu Stănculescu in 1970 and 1971. Evidently, he likes Silviu Stănculescu as a masculinity model, especially considering that Pavel Câmpeanu always mentions that Ion is obsessed with nice, elegant clothes.

By analysing Ion's answers in the previous experiment, the one with *Dispariția lui Galy Gay*, the sociologist concludes that Ion didn't fill in the initial survey after the show. Instead, he wrote the review five days later, filled in the second questionnaire and the review/account three months later, plus the related survey. Pavel Câmpeanu opted to combine all these dimensions, as revealed by the data he collected, in an essay, which once again raises serious methodological questions. In this line of thought, his very aim in this experiment seems risky:

The topic is not how well Ion assimilated Brecht's message, but how the connection between his inner world and this type of outside message, i.e. the theatre performance, is established.<sup>43</sup>

Ion doesn't mention any actor in *Dispariția lui Galy Gay*, he just refers to actress Stela Popescu, not saying her name (he of course thus sublimates a natural erotic drive). He just describes the roles from a situational standpoint. Yet, the author notes Ion's original way of interpreting the performance, but gives no examples in the form of quotes:

... the first characteristic of this vision's originality: instead of the chronological flow, Ion builds a hierarchical structure. Descriptive discourse gives way to analytical comment, and the comfort of sequence to decoding effort.<sup>44</sup>

It's interesting that "For him, action is more important than the situation."<sup>45</sup> This suggests to the author that Ion might be, *sui generis*, Brecht's ideal spectator. Strictly in relation to his accounts of this performance,

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 247.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 249.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 250.

Câmpeanu notices (and we can't contradict him, as long as he doesn't present fragments of his raw material, just his own interpretations) the ethical core of reception, which is perfectly in line with such a dramaturgical offer:

Here, it's not personality that prevails over the theatrical message, on the contrary. And when Ion perceives this message, feeling substitutes pleasure. His affective participation is ethical rather than aesthetical, for he had built a hierarchy of moral values but - as we've shown - not one of aesthetical values.<sup>46</sup>

Paradoxically (here Ion's character, whom we now see as a literary one rather than the subject of an experiment, shows a certain availability to theatre), his accounts settle down and the review he makes three months later becomes more consistent and profound than that made five days after the show. Culturally placing this endeavour as not entirely sociological, nor totally ethical (considering present-day research ethics), Câmpeanu concludes philosophically:

Marcuse says that constraints are not efficient in the moral domain - an ethical rule only becomes operational when the exterior drive is internalized. I think this observation is largely valid in the aesthetic domain too.<sup>47</sup>

All in all, the strange "scientific" meetings between the sociologist and his subject, instead of causing us great revelations regarding the generic theatre spectators, actually sell a story with a disquieting degree of mystery. Here and there, Ion is vaguely histrionic, like any teenager, a little rebellious, but seems to create a fairly controlled picture of himself in the eyes of the interviewer. But who studied whom? And what became of Ion's dreams? Did he end up an officer, or a teacher? For he most likely didn't stay with the Railway Company as a locksmith<sup>48</sup>.

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 252.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 260.

<sup>48</sup> The files dedicated to Pavel Câmpeanu as a subject for the Secret service investigations, as they actually are at the National Council for the Study of Securitate's Archives, have 7 volume with a total of more than 2000 pages. Their content focusses on the interval 1980-1982, but also enough references to previous investigations whose traces completely disappeared. Still, according to the information I received from researcher Ana Teodorescu, PhD candidate, in the seventh volume (I 0064759, File ,Pavo') we can find an official note, from 1973, sending to a previous file opened in 1971. One of the informants in 1971 is covertly named Petre Giuleşteanu - and offered intelligence on Câmpeanu's family, research interests, his opinions and state of mind etc. The note specifies that Giuleşteanu is a co-worker of Câmpeanu, but the fact that the fake name chosen by the secret service uses the root ,Giuleşti' - a boulevard where the School of Apprentices of the Railway Company was based, also the name of the neighbourhood Ion was living - seems a good reason for our suspicions concerning Ion. Could the young man be a "rat"?

Beyond this dilemmatic end, the sociological studies on theatre conducted and synthesized by Pavel Câmpeanu at the beginning of the 1970s, though they didn't cause any significant echoes in the theatre world, nor over the government's cultural strategies because of the political evolutions of the time, nowadays have more than scientific value (despite certain inherent, contextually explainable inadvertences). They testify, from grassroots level, to an effervescent moment of cultural history which was captured in a snapshot and put into a frame thanks to his team's efforts, largely made against the current. The brutal interruption of this generous endeavour, as well as the oblivion that fell upon them are part of a sad tradition shared by us all, sociologists and theatre people alike.

## REFERENCES

- Alterescu, Simion and Zăfirescu, Ion (Eds.) (1975). *Teatrul Românesc Contemporan. 1944-1974 [Romanian Contemporary Theatre. 1944-1974]*. București: Editura Minerva.
- Câmpeanu, Pavel (2012). Povestea unei cărți apărute în Statele Unite [The Story of a Book Published in United States]. *Observator cultural*, nr 102, 12.02, 2002. <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/povestea-unei-carti-aparute-in-statele-unite/>
- Câmpeanu, Pavel (1972). *Radio, televiziune, public [Radio, Television and Audiences]*. București: Editura Științifică.
- Câmpeanu, Pavel (1973). *Oamenii și teatrul. Privire sociologică asupra publicului [People and Theatre. A Sociological Outlook on the Audience]*. București: Meridiane.
- Câmpeanu, Pavel (1979). *Oamenii și televiziunea [People and Television]*. București: Meridiane.
- Câmpeanu, Pavel and Ștefana Steriade (1985). *Oamenii și filmul [People and Film]*. București : Meridiane.
- Cistelean, Alex (2015). „Pavel Câmpeanu”. In Al. Cistelean and Andrei State (Eds.) *Plante exotice. Teoria și practica marxiștilor români [Exotic Plants. Theory and Practice of Romanian Marxists]*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Tact.
- Goldiș, Alex (2011). *Critica în tranșee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului [Criticism in Tranches. From Socialist Realism to the Autonomy of Aestheticism]*. București: Cartea Românească.

- Matei, Alexandru (2013). *O tribună captivantă. Televiziune, ideologie, societate în România socialistă (1965-1983) [A Captivating Tribune. Television, Ideology, Society in Socialist Romania (1965-1983)]*. București: Curtea Veche.
- Martin. Mircea (2015). *Radicalitate și nuanță [Radicality and Nuance]*. București: Tracus Arte.