

PUBLIC THEATRE'S SOCIAL ROLE AND ITS AUDIENCE^a

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Abstract

Today, public theatre is directed toward adapting to its contemporary socio-economic context. In doing this, it is trying to preserve its artistic values and at the same time fulfill and diversify its social functions and missions. When we talk about public theatre's social function, i.e. the public value it produces, some of the main issues concern its contribution to the most pressing social matters. In general, these issues concern public theatre's role in strengthening social cohesion, cultural emancipation and social inclusion, its role in the process of opening dialogues, revising formal history and re-examining traditional forms of thinking. Fulfilment of these functions is strongly linked with the character of public theatre's audiences. In more practical terms, the scope of public theatre's social influence is dependent on how homogenous its audiences are. If one considers artistic organizations' need for sustainability as a key factor in their need for constantly widening their audience, and particularly the inclusion of "others" (those not belonging to the dominant cultural group), in the context of contemporary society's need for social and cultural inclusion, then the task of today's public theatres becomes rather difficult. Simply said, there are too many needs to be met at the same time. The main questions this paper is asking is: *to what extent do Belgrade's public theatres understand the importance of diversifying its audiences, and how do they perceive their social role?* Starting from the fact that human capital is the primary resource and success factor of any theatre organization, we explore in what manner management and employees in these theatres address these issues, i.e. how they redefine theatre's social role and attract audiences that do not fit the dominant theatre audience model.

Key words: public theatre, theatre audience, theatre's social functions, theatre management.

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ЈАВНА УЛОГА ПОЗОРИШТА И ЊЕГОВА ПУБЛИКА

Апстракт

Јавна позоришта су данас упућена на прилагођавање савременом социо-економском контексту, тако да сачувају основне (уметничке) вредности, истовремено диверзификујући своје функције и редефинишући друштвену мисију. Дебата о ширим друштвеним функцијама позоришта, односно карактеристикама јавне вредности којом оно (треба да) исходи, заснива се на разматрањима доприноса позоришта горућим друштвеним темама или – уопштено – његовој улози у процесима социјалне кохезије, културне еманципације друштва и друштвене инклузије; подстицању јавног дијалога, преиспитивању формалне историје, редефинисању традиционалних образаца мишљења и сл. Испуњавање таквих функција позоришта у спрези је са карактеристикама гледалаца изложених позоришним садржајима, што значи да обим друштвеног утицаја који позориште остварује експлицитно зависи од хомогености (или хетерогености) његове публике. Такође, иако су процеси ширења публике кључни у контексту стратешких активности оријентисаних на постизање одрживости позоришта *per se*, они су значајни и са „ширег” аспекта одрживог развоја савремених друштава, све више суочених са потребама у контексту друштвене инклузије „других” – оних који не припадају доминантној културној групи. Овај рад истражује *Да ли јавна позоришта разумеју важност диверзификације своје публике?*, те *Како она схватају своју друштвену улогу у том смислу?*. Полазећи од тезе да је људски капитал примарни ресурс и фактор успеха сваке (позоришне) организације, истражујемо: како менаџмент и запослени у београдским позориштима приступају овим питањима, односно каква су њихова искуства и ставови на тему редефинисања улоге позоришта и привлачења публике ван оквира редовног и постојећег модела.

Кључне речи: јавно позориште, позоришна публика, друштвена улога позоришта, позоришни менаџмент.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre has always been perceived as “the driving force in the creation and acceptance of cultural values” (Муждека-Манџука, 2000, p. 19). Moreover, through its educational and upbringing potential and its “complex and eclectic structure” (Муждека-Манџука, 2000, p. 23) theatre is believed to influence the development of the society’s consciousness as well as that of an individual. Therefore, theatre’s position in the cultural sphere must be analysed not only from the point of view of its artistic values, but also from the aspect concerning its “more general” social values.

With the formation of first nation states came the establishment of public theatres by these nation states, public theatre being one more of the vehicles for building and empowering national identity and culture. During the last two decades of the 19th century, small, independent repertoire theatres were established as well, but they depended on ticket sales and patrons’ support until the end of the World War II, when the responsibility for their financial sustainability was taken over by the state. Thus, the growing infrastructure of subsidized theatre was “engaged in the task of democratization of the culture” (Klaić, 2016, p. 19-20). This meant that

states (and later governments at all levels) established and funded the work of theatre with the idea that theatre would contribute to overall social cohesion and cultural emancipation.

This vision of developing public theatre as one more instrument of a “welfare state” lasted until the last few decades of the 20th century, when the new socio-economic circumstances necessitated the need to rethink and redefine the social role of all art institutions. This led to conclusions that publicly subsidized theatre organizations now had to focus on creating public value. As John Holden explains, this meant maintaining one's inherited culture; enhancing trust in public institutions; contributing to equity and fairness; producing value for money; contributing to health, to prosperity; learning; strengthening local communities etc. (Holden, 2004, p. 50-51). Accordingly, although the primary goal for theatre production remained developing *artistic excellence*, the functions of public theatre have continually been widened following the changes and needs of contemporary societies.

CONTEMPORARY (SOCIAL) FUNCTIONS OF ART & CULTURE

During the last decades of the twentieth century and as a result of the development of Cognitive capitalism, the affirmation of Knowledge-based economy and the creation of Network society, a new logic of social development has been constructed which significantly influenced the transformation of previous, generally accepted ideas about the social role of art and culture (see: O' Brien, 2014; Boutang, 2011; Castels, 2005). As a result, European cultural policies have been focused on mapping ways to exploit socio-economic potentials of culture, while an integral part of this strategy is the continuous promotion of new types of values which should be the outcomes of cultural work. In this context, many authors emphasize the importance of new economic cultural values incurred as a consequence of contemporary economic functions of culture (e.g. Trozbi, 2012, p. 29). However, the diversification of cultural values is the result of a much more extensive development of its social functions. With reference to this, Jennifer Craik explains that today the conception of cultural goals is motivated by notions of human improvement, so that cultural values on which the notion of cultural sustainability is built stems from a shared consensus of “core” or “universal” values that include a wide range of human concerns: participation and democratic rights; tolerance, compassion and inclusion; freedom, justice and equality; peace, safety and security; health, wellbeing and vitality; creativity, imagination and innovation; love and respect for the environment (Creik, 2007, p. 28).

Importance of culture in the wider social revival is often used to support the instrumental approach to culture. It is particularly linked to the promotion of creative and cultural industries. On the other hand, ideas

of fostering “intrinsic” cultural values are most often related to the development of traditional (“elite”) arts, promotion of public cultural institutions and support of independent artists. Notwithstanding this conditional division, in most developed countries, the development and support of artistic activities is considered in the context of developing instrumental strategies through which artistic activities are seen as instruments for dealing with current social issues and achieving social well-being (reducing unemployment, revitalizing the community, improving the image of society or its particular parts, social inclusion, rebuilding devastated economies, etc.). This also corresponds to the affirmation of culture as the “fourth pillar of sustainable development of society”. On the other hand, we can find a number of reflections challenging the notion that one can actually know what social values art and culture hold. These critics argue that such a claim implies that artistic experience can be generalized, when studies “from Pierre Bourdieu to Paul Willis” show that the value of the influence of the work of art varies enormously - depending on different factors related to one's identity (including: age, class, health, personal well-being, etc.) (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007, p. 4).

One more, particularly important, critique concerns the issue of measuring social impact of art and establishing a kind of “cult of measurement” in this sphere. The arguments against it vary – from the thesis that results of such measuring could reflect only the relationship between the artist and the audience at a particular location at a given moment, but not generally (Braun & Novak, 2007), to the one that it creates the tension of finding evidence and just seemingly offers facts, while practically its outcomes are insufficiently relevant data instead of a fuller understanding of culture (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007). Another common response to the imperative of measuring performance in art and culture is a standpoint that the main, intrinsic value of culture is that it changes people's lives, and that such a demanding role set before artists and cultural organizations should not be burdened with the additional task of proving empirically the effects of their work. Here, the focus is on the development and fostering of artistic excellence, but even in this context, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the notion of excellence was being redefined.

While excellence used to be considered a synonym for ‘l'art pour l'art’-ism, its contemporary definition is linked to the ability of art and culture to help our understanding of the place we have in the world, asking questions we wouldn't have asked otherwise, understanding the answers we otherwise would not have understood and respecting those things we have not experienced before (McMaster, 2008, p. 9). Therefore, by linking excellence with the experience that a cultural good or service evokes (and not with the excellence of its creation or the success of its realization), McMaster interprets the external influence that culture and art have as their intrinsic value, making a delicate transition from the instrumental to the intrinsic approach to the development of culture and art. Thus, although the concept of excellence and

the concept of instrumentalism seem as extreme opposites, they both recognize social "relevance of culture" (its ability to reflect society as a whole and embrace its diversity in the broadest sense) as one of the most important aspects of development of art.

THEATRE'S PUBLIC VALUE AND ITS AUDIENCE

Structuring the cultural value is an intricate process grounded in the complexities of contemporary functions of cultural and artistic activities. Summarizing various theories on the topic we could conclude that the most "operative" division of cultural values is into: *internal* (endogenous) - in connection with the contribution to specific cultural (artistic) activity; *external* (exogenous): in relation to a wider social contribution; and *institutional* or *organizational* - in connection with contribution to institutional (organizational) development. Also, the notion of *public value* is emerging more and more as a key element in calculating cultural value, integrating (in a certain way) different types of external cultural values, supplementing them and operationalizing their projection (see: Holden, 2004, p. 50-58).

Likewise, we can classify contemporary functions of public theatre as 1) artistic (internal)¹, 2) instrumental (external, social) and 3) institutional (organizational)². Within this classification, the second group is of our particular interest. It consists of the following functions: creation and preservation of the expressions of cultural diversity, contribution to social cohesion and cultural emancipation, instigating critical thinking, opening dialogues and public debates, revising formal history, re-examining myths and traditional forms of thinking. Also functions related to positive economic effects of theatre productions belong to this group, e.g. reduction of unemployment, community revitalization, improving society's image(s) and strengthening cultural, social and human capital. In the context of this paper, we are focused on the previously mentioned instrumental functions related to theatre's contribution to the creation and acceptance of cultural values and its participation in the processes of an individual's cultural and social perception and identification.

¹ *Artistic functions* are: encouraging innovation in the artistic form, engaging in the development of artistic experiment, preserving cultural heritage (especially dramatic heritage), education and talent development, providing artist mobility, providing production, transfer and transmission of knowledge about theatre arts, nurturing and developing the audience and affirmation, creation and preservation of the expressions of cultural diversity

² *Institutional functions* of public theatre are: establishing business focused on the audience, adopting cultural innovation, developing a business model based on combination of strategies in order to achieve synchronicity of economic and artistic sustainability, affirmation and development of partnerships and cooperation, providing education and continued professional development of the employees, and application of new technologies.

The dominant method for analysing these types of functions is by way of analysing repertoire policy and/or directorial approach to dramatic texts. This method answers to what extent a particular production responds to current social issues, and how successful it is in being a platform for one's reflections on the society whose part one is. This is *de facto* an important objective. However, when we do conclude that a play opens up critical dialogue, provides new insights and offers a constructive approach to burning topics, certain questions remain. Namely, who it is intended for; who takes part in the debate; and who is willing to actually change his or her own attitudes and perceive things from a different angle? In other words, what is important is: who this content is intended for and who was "brought" to see it?

Such a standpoint is linked with the view that the character of the audience determines largely the structure of the value chain that any given art institution (or its programme) aims to create. Although many authors consider that for the contemporary "cultural omnivore" (Peterson, 1992) classical division between high and low or elite and popular culture ceases to be significant - researchers show that reality is still closer to "Bourdieu's claims and conclusions"³. The upper classes are those who go to museums, opera, theatre and art galleries, while the lower classes, as well as specific social groups, never (or far less often) do these things. On the other hand, Alan Brown and Jennifer Novak express the opinion that development of artistic excellence in performing arts is particularly conditioned by orientation toward attracting new types of viewers. Brown and Novak base such a conclusion on findings that the degree of "aesthetic growth" (related to generating artistic values, deeper audience engagement and excitation of new interests in similar art programs) is most present in audiences who have not had similar experiences before (or those who belong to a professional audience) (Brown & Novak, 2007, p. 14-15). Moreover, the notion of homogeneous character of theatre audience is problematic due to not only the theatre organization's needs for widening the public in the context of their sustainability, but more so because of "more general" needs of contemporary societies for social and cultural inclusion of the "others" (people who do not fit the dominant cultural group).

³ Pierre Bourdieu believes that belonging to upper social strata implies not only the economic capital, but also adequate social, cultural and symbolic capital, i.e. knowledge that is prerequisite for understanding various forms of "elite arts". Unlike this, lower and marginalized social strata have a lack of habit (opportunity, desire) to enjoy these type activities (theatre, opera, ballet etc.), which consequently lead to a lack of cultural capital for their consumption of traditional arts (Bourdieu, 1993, 1997).

*PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES REGARDING AUDIENCE
DIVERSIFICATION OF BELGRADE'S PUBLIC THEATRES*

The latest large-scale research on the cultural needs and habits of the citizens of Serbia (and its comparison with the previous ones⁴) showed that the structure of theatre audience is such that roughly one third is made up of active and non-theatre audiences, and about one-fifth of passive audience (see Опачић и Субашић, 2016, p. 41). Active audience is mostly comprised of women, young people aged 15-29, highly educated and those residing in urban areas (Опачић и Субашић, 2016, p. 63). When it comes to the composition of potential audience, women dominate men; older than 50 and middle-aged supercede the young; in terms of their education, citizens with secondary education takes the largest share of potential audience; while in terms of their place of residence, this position belongs to the people from rural areas. The largest share of non-audiences are people over 50, with primary school and from rural areas. In general, the first reason for not going to the theatre is the lack of time, followed by lack of interest and third - non-existence of the program (Опачић и Субашић, 2016, p. 62-65). In summary, research on this topic suggests that strategies for further development of the theatre should be oriented toward the implementation of activities that would make theatre more accessible to all citizens regardless, activate a part of the passive and non-goer audience to which cultural programs are not available and raise the level of knowledge and interest in theatre arts. Such a strategy would contribute to more efficient and effective fulfilment of the social-cohesive, inclusive and cultural-emancipatory functions of theatre. The importance of this is confirmed further by stakeholders' statements heard in public discourse, as well as by the introduction of laws and bylaws regulating the work of public cultural institutions⁵.

Though implementation of these recommendations is particularly expected from public cultural institutions, the practice of public theatres in Serbia is still different. This is evidenced by various studies, such as

⁴ In 2016 The Institute for the Study of Cultural Development conducted a research on the Cultural Needs and Habits of the Citizens of Serbia (Опачић и Субашић); before that: in 2011 - Research of the Cultural Practices of the Citizens of Serbia, (Миланков и Цветичанин); in 2010 – research on Theater audience in Serbia (Мрђа); in 2007 - Cultural needs, habits, and tastes of the citizens of Serbia and Macedonia (Цветичанин)

⁵ The analyses of legislation (The Law on Culture, The Law on Budget System, (the adopted draft of) Strategy of cultural development of RS, The decrees on the criteria and method of selection of projects in the culture financed from the public budgets, Decree on Conditions, Criteria and Method of Acquiring or Revoking the Status of Institution of National Importance, etc.) suggests that subsidized art organizations and programs should aim at 3 parallel goals: 1) creating high artistic value (recognized by the expert public); 2) nurturing and flourishing of the expression of the Serbian national culture and the cultures of national minorities and 3) establishing a cultural dialogue as well as providing accessibility to other cultural expressions for the domestic public.

those of Dušica Dragin, that drew attention to the fact that public theatres more than anything strive for ever higher artistic reach, intended for critics, festivals and regular audiences with developed cultural needs that make up only 1-2% of the population (Dragin, 2019, p. 42). Among various research topics in this context, we can identify the one that deals with marketing activities of theatres as a common denominator. Maja Ristić (Ристић, 2013), Aleksandra Brakus (Бракус, 2014), Zdravković Milan (Здравковић, 2007), Lukić Drako (Лукић, 2006) are just some of the authors whose research time and time again shows insufficient and inadequate implementation of innovative marketing and PR techniques in the diversification of local theatre audience. In mapping the problem of achieving sustainability of public theatre institutions in Serbia, an important aspect is also the one studied by authors such as Milena Stefanović (Стефановић, 2013, 2017) and Ana Stojanović (Стојановић, 2016), who, in their doctoral dissertations as well as in a significant number of relevant papers, explore the relationship between theatre financing and its social role; i.e. the relationship between evaluation, decision-making and responsible (new public) management and the success of theatre in developing citizens' participation in the cultural life of the society.

Research Method

The overall conclusion of the mentioned and other similar studies is that cultural policy makers do not sufficiently encourage activities related to audience development and expanding public theatre's social role. Therefore, strategic activities in this context are as expected: bottom-up, from theatre organizations and by themselves. As an additional important aspect of research on this topic, we identify the attitudes of theatre managers and their employees regarding the importance of theatre's public role, as a prerequisite for orienting their practical work to recommended direction. Accordingly, searching for the answers to the question about Belgrade's public theatres' practices regarding audience diversification, we established two points as the focus of our analysis: 1) their concrete practices related to attracting "others" - those who do not fit the dominant audience model: the elderly, poorly educated citizens, citizens who are from non-urban areas, national/religious minorities, socially vulnerable groups etc. and 2) the analysis of personal attitudes of directors and marketing sector employees on the subject of theatre's instrumental functions. By theatre's instrumental functions, here, we refer to these functions that relate to external (non-economic) influences of the theatre, its public value and "social relevance". As particularly important for the topic of this paper, we emphasize the theatre's contribution to social cohesion and cultural emancipation by way of producing basic and additional programs oriented towards audience education, connecting different social groups and inclusion of citizens who belong to vulnerable categories in the cultural life of the community. Also, by organizing additional programs that

enable “extended theatrical experience”, i.e. contextualize the content seen on stage, the theatre instigates critical thinking, opens dialogues and public debates. Furthermore, it enhances trust in public institutions by conducting responsible, legal and transparent business and contributes to equity and fairness by externally oriented business that respects diverse social differences within the community.

The findings that we will present are part of a (more extensive) research conducted in seven Belgrade theatres: Atelje 212 Theatre (Atelje 212), Yugoslav Drama Theatre (Jugoslovensko dramsko pozorište), Belgrade Drama Theatre (Beogradsko dramsko pozorište), Zvezdara Theatre (Zvezdara teatar), Terazije Theatre (Pozorište na Terazijama), Bitef Theatre (Bitef teatar), the Youth Theatre „Dadov“ (Omladinsko pozorište „Dadov“) and the Cultural Institution „Vuk Stefanović Karadžić“ (Ustanova kulture „Vuk Stefanović Karadžić“); from March to July 2017, as part of the preparation of a doctoral dissertation defended at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in December 2018. It included 1) a survey of theatre directors; and 2) conducting questionnaires and in-depth interviews with employees in marketing sectors. The survey intended for theatre directors contained statements that respondents rated on a scale of 1 to 5, depending on the degree of agreement⁶. The survey comprises three parts. The first part refers to the business of the institutions they manage, the second to their personal views regarding the way public theatres operate in Serbia, and the third to their personal views on the importance of artistic, instrumental and institutional functions of public theatre⁷. The statements in the first two parts of the survey cover marketing activities, the evaluation of theatre work, development opportunities for diversifying theatre programs and services, program policy and guiding principles in its conception. The questionnaire intended for employees in marketing departments comprises numerous open-ended questions relating to existing theatre practices. Here, we will refer to the results that convey attitudes about: the mission, vision and program orientation of the theatre, the achieved results, theatre activities in local community, experiences in promotional activities and activities in researching audience reactions and needs, experiences in organizing programs intended for audience diversification and education and inclusion of specific and vulnerable social groups in the community's cultural life.

⁶ 1: strongly disagree, 2: generally disagree; 3: moderately agree; 4: mostly agree; 5: totally agree.

⁷ The functions are classified according to the categorization shown in the chapter *Theater's Public Value and its Audience*. Theatre directors were asked to rate these functions on the scale of 1 to 5 depending on the extent to which they find them 1: not at all important, 2: small importance; 3: medium importance; 4: quite important; 5: very important.

Research Results

The attitudes of theatre directors regarding the importance of additional programs vary. Approximately a half speaks positively in this context, while the other half are of the opinion that additional programs are merely optional, unnecessary part of the theatre's activities. The directors of Atelje 212, Zvezdara theatre and Dadov explicitly state that the primary task of theater is to enable the creation and dissemination of theatre performances, adding that any other activity is distracting them from this goal. Marketing sector employees of these theatres mention additional programs, such as occasional lectures, round tables or talks with the authors and performers within a jubilee or a similar event as significant. However, most of those who attend (and are invited to) these programs are exclusively part of the steady audience group, while when talking about programs intended for "others" – there are very few examples. Activities directed toward attracting senior citizens, people with special needs, marginalized groups, etc., largely come down to lowering ticket prices, but not to creating content suitable for the specific needs and tastes of these groups. The statement of the director of Terazije theatre marketing sector that "the organization of programs intended for vulnerable social groups is the responsibility of every public cultural institution" reflects the declarative attitude of employees in all theaters. However, practice demonstrates that most often theatres do not initiate inclusive projects (most often these are initiated by an NGO); at best, they participate in them.

The directors of Zvezdara Theater and the Cultural Institution "Vuk Stefanović Karadžić" disagree with the view that additional activities disrupt theatre's "primary goals", and generally agree that the organizations they manage are oriented towards animation of specific, minority and vulnerable social groups. However, their practice in this context is quite modest, too. Plays subtitled for hearing impaired persons are a part of Zvezdara Theatre's regular repertoire (Yugoslav Drama Theatre, too) are representative examples. The director of Bitef Theatre demonstrates the most affirmative attitude towards the development of additional programs, stating that artists who create in this theatre have to be engaged in the development of their own and future generations, that audience education programs are a prerequisite for its expansion and development, and that public theatre must occupy a central place in the cultural life of all citizens in a given community. Regarding inclusive projects, this theatre goes a step further involving specific groups in the creative process. To exemplify they list plays of their regular repertoire: "City", directed and conceptualized by Dina Radoman Caranović, is produced with and involves persons with disabilities, plays co-created with the Roma community and many others addressing pressing social issues.

The animation program of the "ordinary", adult audience, in addition to the mentioned round tables and lectures, includes an occasional "festival"

(or a sort of a “fair”) program usually held on the plateaus in front of theaters; as well as educational tours of theater, such as those organized by JDP and Atelje 212⁸. The program of this type is intended for the devotees of theatrical art (sporadically for tourists, too) and does not represent the institutions' regular practice. Projects that would make the passive or non-audience of the theatre better acquainted with the program or theatrical life in general are even fewer. For example, programs attracting citizens from parts of the country with poor or no theatre offer are almost non-existent. A specific example of this kind is Yugoslav Drama Theatre project titled “Visit JDP”. However, its basic goal can be evaluated as more marketing oriented than socially-cohesive. The project was an organized visit to the Yugoslav Drama Theatre for the citizens of the Kriva reka village who have never visited a theatre before. The recording of their moving reactions went viral, but it also created a divided public opinion. While one part of the public and theatre community considered it a case of successful democratization and de-elitization by the JDP, others held the view that it achieved exactly the opposite, elitizing theatre arts further and “pointing fingers” at those people, (ab)using them for the theatre's own promotion.

The Cultural Institution “Vuk Stefanović Karadžić” director's words, that attracting young people is an important part of the activities of the theater he manages, reflect the attitude of all respondents. Indeed, system-wide, the most developed among additional programs are those intended for attracting the youth, mainly by organizing visits for high school students and – far less – by staging plays developed for this exact target/age group. Successful examples of youth animation are the festival “June deadline”, summer event “A dance by Vuk” and winter event “Fairy Tales Plateau” (all by Cultural Institution „Vuk Stefanović Karadžić”), as well as different acting schools. Beside Dadov (which is a youth amateur theater and as such focused on drama education of young people) Bitef is also a theatre that creates “deeper” experiences with/for young audiences by developing a specific acting school aimed at educating young audiences and production of specific programs for them⁹.

Most directors believe that the work of the marketing sector is of great importance for audience animation. In this regard, the manager of Atelje 212 marketing sector notes that, since the end of 2000, the importance of this sector in improving ticket sales has received significant recognition. However, this recognition has not resulted in allocating an adequate budget

⁸ In these educational tours visitors have the opportunity to see the space “behind the stage”, hear about the process of play preparation and get information about the history of an institution.

⁹ Regarding the work of this school, the artistic secretary and director of Bitef say that it was founded with the idea that it is necessary to provide more institutional frameworks for the participation of young people in theatrical life.

for marketing purposes. Other respondents also agree that innovation in the promotion of plays and theater as a whole bring good results, but that “marketing campaigns require the financial resources that are most often lacking.” The outcome of marketing activities, without exception, is communication with the existing audience, while attracting passive and non-audience is lacking. In this sense, the most successful examples are the actions of large ticket discounts that attract the wider public (JDP), the development of communication on social networks through interesting projects involving famous actors (Zvezdara: facebook columns “10 questions for” and “Stories from the theater”) and the promotion of programs in public space (C.I. Vuk: promotions on the plateau in front of the Institution, in shopping centers, main shopping street and at the faculties).

The mapping of audience reactions is an important segment of the work of marketing sector. These are collected “directly from the performance”, through the web site and social networks. The viewership of the play is determined exclusively by the number of tickets sold, while the attitude on the topic of factors in evaluating the success of the theatre is almost the same for all respondents. Both directors and employees in marketing sectors say that the success of the season is generally not measured on the basis of the professional public’s (theatre critics and academics) opinion, nor is the number of tickets sold taken to be a measure of success. The statement “we know how much we are worth” is generally marked as “mostly agree” though the respondents admit that the processes of determining that value is quite weak because in practice it is reduced exclusively to a formal annual report to the City Assembly.

When it comes to the managers’ attitudes regarding instrumental functions of public theatre, results show that, on average, these functions are the least important for them. Most important are the artistic functions, followed by institutional functions. Moreover, the average grade of importance of general social functions (creation and preservation of the expressions of cultural diversity, contribution to social cohesion and cultural emancipation, instigation of critical thinking, opening of dialogues and public debates, revising formal history, re-examining myths and traditional forms of thinking) within the set of instrumental functions is 3,33 (out of 5), while the importance of positive economic externalities of theatre’s work (reduction of unemployment, community revitalization, improving society’s image or the image of one of its actions, etc.) is graded 3,83. What holds our interest in this finding is the comparison between the low grades for socially-cohesive functions related to the de-monumentalization of cultural memory and the importance of public theatre’s role in opening dialogues and public debates on one side and high grades of functions associated with positive economic externalities of theatre’s work - on the other. The reason why these results were unexpected is the fact that representatives of Belgrade’s and Serbia’s theatre scene often stress the importance of the development of critical thinking and freedom of

expression, while they usually distance themselves from the standpoints related to the socio-economic benefits of theatre practice.

According to the respondents, general social functions theatre should have are the affirmation, creation and preservation of the expressions of cultural diversity, contribution to social cohesion and contribution to cultural emancipation. They consider contribution to social inclusion as less important, as is confirmed by the practice of the institutions they manage. Even though artistic functions are not in the focus of this analysis, we have to mention that the highest grade in this group was given to the function of nurturing and developing audience, which we, in a sense, find paradoxical. This is because the corresponding practice to this function should start from the tastes and needs of the audience in creating the program offer (which should be actively determined by closely following audience reactions to the offered content and the continual mapping of new audience groups that need to be animated), and this is obviously not the case. In support of this is the finding that the majority of directors agree that the audience's taste is not the starting point when designing seasonal repertoire. Moreover, they consider the audience's taste to be in collision with the "taste of art" (which theatres strive to satisfy) and link it with the "commercialization of art". Therefore, we can conclude that the declared orientation of the managers toward nurturing and developing audience is actually about nurturing and developing the ideal or "discourse audience", which is not an externally given fact, but the result of the discourse production within the cultural institution (Tomka, 2015, p. 7).

Finally, the previous conclusion is also confirmed by the answers related to the list of priorities among institutional functions. They are not the focus of this paper, but it is important to note that within them, too, nurturing and developing the audience is seen as the most important organizational activity, followed by innovations in the exploitation of resources and the increase and exploitation of the social and cultural capital. However, the positive standpoints on the importance of innovation in the exploitation of resources are not accompanied by a high grade of the function related to the development of programs and services, so the question arises: what does innovative approach to resources refer to? In addition, attitudes toward the development of the processes of (self)evaluation is rated with low grades of importance. In general, managers consider the existence of performance indicators to be moderately important and demonstrate a neutral attitude toward the fact that there is a strong link between the financing of public theatre and its role in the society. In that sense, this research confirms that the existing parameters of a theatre's performance are reduced to quantitative indicators (number of premieres, number of tickets sold, number of awards won, etc.) and do not contribute enough to the diversification of theatre audiences, but rather depict an overall lack of explicit orientation to strategic activities in that context.

CONCLUSION

Relevant research shows that there are many reasons for insufficient work on theatre audience development in Serbia. This particular one offers an additional aspect for understanding such a situation – the aspect related to personal and professional attitudes of people who create theatre life in a society directly. We could find a reasonable explanation for the diagnosed situation in the difficult position of Serbian theatres – the fact that in turbulent, decades long, socio-economic atmosphere it has been an imperative (and a challenge) to preserve and enable theatrical production at all. Thus, since its main goal is to create artistic value, it is not surprising that practices, as well as attitudes, are mainly focused on preserving artistic excellence.

Still, and with this “excuse” in mind, we have to highlight that the homogeneous character of theatre audience seriously affects the scope of its social and artistic influence. For theatre management one of the most important aspects has to be the planning and implementing innovative methods of audience development. Moreover, they have to move from deepening the relationships with existing audiences to establishing new relationships with theater’s “non-audience” – the audience outside the dominant audience group. This is achievable by developing programs for vulnerable social groups (people with special needs, immigrants), minority culture groups and groups that according to research represent potential audience (senior citizens, people from places with poor supply of theatre content). Also, the development of educational programs and programs that initiate public dialogue on current social issues; even by exploiting the location and spatial resources of theatre in the direction of expanding its activities in the local community. The development of such programs should be preceded by research of different audience types, as well as the establishment of active cooperation with academia, educational institutions and various civil societies in designing adequate programs that will meet diverse cultural needs and tastes.

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ЈАВНА УЛОГА ПОЗОРИШТА И ЊЕГОВА ПУБЛИКА

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Резиме

Јавна позоришта су данас упућена на прилагођавање савременим социо-економским приликама, тако да очувају основне (уметничке) вредности, истовремено диверзификујући своје функције и редефинишући друштвену мисију. Дебата о ширим друштвеним функцијама позоришта, односно карактеристикама јавне вредности којом оно (треба да) исходи, заснива се на разматрањима доприноса позоришта горућим друштвеним темама или – уопштено – његовој улози у процесима социјалне кохезије, културне еманципације друштва и друштвене инклузије; подстицању јавног дијалога, преиспитивању формалне историје, редефинисању традиционалних образаца мишљења и сл.

Најчешћи правац промишљања на ову тему заснива се на анализама репертоарске политике и/или успешности редитељског поступка у разматрању различитих друштвених питања. Међутим, чак и када (тј. ако) закључимо да одређена представа, позоришна кућа или фестивал нуде нове увиде и критички приступ „горућим темама”, намеће се питање коме је то заправо намењено – ко учествује у представом иницираном дијалогу, ревидира постојеће ставове и стварност сагледава из нових углова. Другим речима, када расправљамо о позоришту, а нарочито у контексту теме развоја његове друштвене улоге, као значајно питање намеће се „Које је позориште намењено?”.

Такав дискурс постаје прворазредан имајући у виду актуелна друштвена кретања (миграције, стратификације), али и изражену хомогеност позоришне публике као глобално присутну појаву. Ту појаву у Србији потврђују истраживања културних навика и потреба грађана чији налази (из године у годину) сведоче о томе да сталну позоришну публику у највећој мери (и готово искључиво) чине људи средњег доба, средње класе и интелектуалци. Она закључују да даљи развој позоришта захтева стратешко усмерење ка примени активности које би позориште учинило доступни-

јим свим грађанима; активирале део пасивне публике и непублике, којима културни програми нису доступни у довољној мери; те које би дугорочно утицале на подизање нивоа знања и интересовања грађана за позоришну уметност. Међутим, релевантне студије показују да културна политика у недовољној мери подржава практичан рад позоришта на развоју публике и ширењу друштвеног утицаја, због чега се промене у овом смислу очекују одоздо нагоре – од стране самих позоришних организација.

Полазећи од тога, те имајући у виду да се примена таквих препорука нарочито очекује од јавних позоришта (која су – за разлику од независне сцене – егзистенцијално „сигурнија”), рад мапира парадигматична искуства позоришта чији је оснивач Скупштина града Београда; и истражује мишљења и ставове менаџмента и запослених у овим установама – на тему важности процеса развоја, неговања и анимације публике, као и важности ширења друштвене улоге (јавног) позоришта уопште. Анализирајући постојеће праксе и поредећи их са исказаним ставовима испитаника, аутор закључује о недовољним активностима на ову тему и нејасним (па и не-критичним) ставовима породице посредника и доносилаца одлука. Исход (и узрок) таквог стања је непостојање стратешке оријентације јавног позоришта којом би се планирање и имплементација савремених метода развоја публике сагледавале као начин редефинисања његове друштвене мисије и процеси у контексту обезбеђивања његове одрживости у актуелном друштвеном контексту.