

Nenad Colic, director (PLAVO Theatre)



### **Observations from the working process**

The concept of justice in these circumstances in the country we live in, has acquired a completely new dimension. This real-political moment of ours, even in relation to our colleagues from Poland and Germany, is somehow different, not only because they are in the European Union and we are not, but also independently from that, in relation to justice. Taking into account current protests in Serbia<sup>1</sup>, here justice has acquired a connotation that is unusually elevated and the synonym of protest is the fight for justice. It is probably always like that when something is absent to that extent. When there is a huge lack of something, it is normal and logical that there is an excess need for it. And especially when it comes to such a category, which has been present in society since the beginning of humankind. There will never be enough of Equality, Justice and Freedom.

When it comes to the theme we brought in this process, there are several layers. The first one is the one from which we started, which is Kafka's chapter from the novel *The Trial*, *In the Cathedral*, that is the parable *Before the Law*. In that chapter he talks to the priest and in that conversation with the priest, near the end of the chapter, he comes to a not so popular conclusion, which is: This world is built on lies. For me this horizontal, earthly plane was insufficient. I saw it as an opportunity to introduce the dimension of Divine Justice, or injustice, not only earthly justice. And to make things symbolic in a way, and we don't have much symbolism in our work, all these years of existence of the Plavo Theatre, one of the central discourses that keeps us in balance and that is like a compass that determines the direction of our movement is related to Dostoyevsky.

When it comes to Justice, there is no better and more explicit example than *Rebellion* (*The Karamazov Brothers*, F.M. Dostoevsky). So, the *Rebellion* is the chapter which in the novel

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<sup>1</sup> After the mass shootings in a primary school in Belgrade, in which 9 students and school genotor were killed and 6 persons injured and in two Serbian villages in which 9 young people were killed and 13 persons injured, all in May 2023, massive protests titled Serbia against Violence were held throughout Serbia during summer and autumn 2023.

comes before the chapter The Grand Inquisitor. There are two crucial questions here and they are: "Is there anything worth the tears of a child?" and "Can happiness be built on the misfortune of another?". Those questions could be measure of someone's relationship to things. It is actually that Divine, that vertical measure of the relationship to the issue of justice.

We shouldn't come into the situation where we in any way evoke that so-called Russophile moment which, unfortunately, currently exists in the country we come from. Simply, to clearly and very decisively make a distance in relation to it and to focus solely and exclusively to that intellectual, soulful and creative part of what we are referring to. Moreover, I am convinced that the same Dostoevsky, if he were alive today, would be disgusted by current (Russian) politics. Especially in relation to the war in Ukraine, but not only in relation to that. Also, he would be disgusted in relation to the state of human rights as well as all other aspects of contemporary society.

It is very important to emphasize from the philosophical point of view, that one cannot live from rebellion. Therefore, rebellion can and should be an intellectual and philosophical intention, intention of thought, which at the same time confirms the thesis that one cannot live without rebellion either. So, how to exist in that point which is in between.

To conclude, the questions from Rebellion and Before the Law present inner motifs for the creation of materials of Plavo Theatre for the coproduction.

## **Impressions after the performance in Belgrade**

From my experience, it is much more difficult to make a coproduction today than ten or twenty years ago. Today, we are involved in different projects and coproductions where for example some social themes are more dominant than the artistic ones, which is from my point of view absolutely right and necessary. But when we initiated this cooperation two years ago, it was basically with the idea to make an artistic coproduction. The opportunity to work on artistic goals and to include different socially sensitive groups to follow the process, which this project provided, for us it was precious. We have known our partners, Grotowski Institute and Theaterlabor Bielefeld, for more than 20 years. Through all these years of collaboration some chemistry appeared which has not been easy to keep through time. On one hand, this is what made the realization of this coproduction easier, but what I felt was a constant mixture of emotions and experiences on the stage, you could feel the experiences the actors had exchanged during the working process, which as all in all something sublime. At the end, thanks to the involvement of Jaroslaw Fret, director of the Grotowski Institute and Teatr Zar, who had the role of editing all acting materials into one piece, he succeeded that everybody on the stage function as one group for most of the time. I imagined a person entering the space without knowing that there are three theatre groups and I am sure that this person would have an impression of one group.

Plavo Theatre performed many times in Centre for Cultural Decontamination (the centre where The Passage was performed in Belgrade), which we like very much, and had various

experiences. During performing The Passage I felt something extraordinary positive and close in the audience.