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Medzinárodný, kultúrny a vzdelávací rámec Divadelného ústavu

International, cultural, and educational framework of the Theatre Institute

Adam Križan

Abstract

This article aims to describe the professional public in the field of educational sciences familiar with a cutting-edge scholarship that addresses the history, present, and perspectives of the performing arts about experiential education. Based on empirical experience and authentic materials, the article introduces the reader to the organizational structure and the work of the Theatre Institute in Bratislava at the national and international levels.

Keywords: Theatre events. Research. Public relations. Communication.

Communication base for the implementation of the objectives of the Theatre Institute

The Theatre Institute's PR staff is responsible for communication with cultural and educational institutions as well as the wider public. In addition to the main activities, this paper maps the complicated year 2020, which confirmed the ability to work in an extraordinary mode. The Theatre Institute is a professional institution with a nationwide scope under the direct management of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, which is engaged in comprehensive research, documentation, scientific processing, and provision of information on theatre culture in Slovakia since the establishment of the first professional stage in 1920. It manages the cultural heritage in the field of Slovak theatre culture (drama, opera, ballet, dance, puppet theatre, modern performance types). In its professional activities, it systematically collects, scientifically processes, makes accessible and promotes museum, library, archival, and documentary collections from the history and present of Slovak professional theatre and provides a comprehensive information system on professional theatre in Slovakia.

The function and position of PR in the structure of the organization

PR, or Public Relations, plays a crucial role within the structure of an organization. Its function is multifaceted, and its position varies depending on the

organizational structure and strategic priorities. Key aspects involve image and reputation management, communication, publicity and promotion, and relationship building (Chudinová, 2019). One of the most important pillars of the strategy of the Theatre Institute in Bratislava is the Centre for Presentation and Marketing (CPM). CPM comprehensively ensures the operation of the Secretariat of the Theatre Institute, the presentation, promotion, and marketing of all centers and activities of the Theatre Institute, ensures the activities of the CPM in cooperation with the heads of the specialized centers of the Theatre Institute, maintains the central register of the documents of the Theatre Institute, communication with the founder of the Theatre Institute - the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, and cooperation on the projects of the Theatre Institute in cooperation with other centers of the Theatre Institute [1].

On request, it provides information on Slovak theatre and theatre abroad, including consultancy activities not only for researchers but also for the younger generation of students, and works on the preparation of analytical materials in the field of cultural policy, based on which meaningful activities are developed. The institute creates a background for the work of some Slovak NGO centers in the field of theatre, e.g. SIBMAS Since 1954, SIBMAS has been the international network of cultural heritage in the performing arts., It promotes research in the performing arts, facilitates networking among our members, and shares resources about their specific collections and the performing arts in general. SIBMAS organizes biennial conferences focusing on challenges and recent developments of current practical interest for its members encourages genuine collaboration and invests in spreading best practices among its members. Information is delivered through a quarterly newsletter, providing up-to-date news and information about the activities of SIBMAS and its members.

Another international institution that covers cooperation in the field of culture is the IETM, which is an international network for contemporary performing arts is one of the oldest and largest international cultural networks, representing the voice of over 500 performing arts organizations and individual professionals working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide. Its mission is to advocate the value of the arts and culture and empower performing arts professionals through access to international connections, knowledge, and a dynamic forum for exchange. IETM works to stimulate the quality, development, and context of the contemporary performing arts, in all their diversity. The members of IETM are organizations and freelancers working worldwide in the contemporary performing arts. They represent all performing arts disciplines: theatre, dance, circus, street arts, mime, music theatre, new media, performance art, interdisciplinary live art forms, puppetry, object theatre, site-specific work, participatory performance, and more. The members include artistic companies, collectives, organizations, festivals, venues, residencies, producers and independent artists, theatres and dance houses, cultural/research/resource centers, fellow artistic and cultural networks, universities, and institutional bodies. They work in all aspects of international cooperation: education, creation, production,

presentation, curation, promotion, support, and research (Benčíč, 2013; Balme, Fischer, 2022).

The above-mentioned organizations cooperate with cultural institutes operating in Slovakia and Slovak institutes abroad, especially in the exchange of information and documentary materials on theatre events. They communicate with the media, with state and nongovernmental theatres. They ensure cooperation with organizers of theatre events, festivals, conferences, theatre associations, and professional organizations active in the field of theatre. The Theatre Institute thus cooperates on an international level in the preparation of events, especially exhibitions and other presentations of Slovak theatre. It prepares analytical documents for the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and, in exceptional cases for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. It coordinates individual supporting projects, both domestic and foreign, as well as co-production projects financed from EU grant funds (Chovanová, Supeková, 2022). The CPM covers the New Drama Festival, the Night of Theatres, drama competitions, and the activities of the multimedia space Studio 12, which has emerged as a center of new theatre and new media. The CPM is also responsible for coordinating the monthly magazine *Kød* - specifically *ø* theatre.

The centenary of Slovak Theatre

The centenary of Slovak theatre brought an opportunity to recall the activities that led to the establishment of the Slovak National Theatre, the first professional theatre scene, and at the same time, it was an important theatrical event in a broader context. The events of the nationwide project under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic - Year of Slovak Theatre 2020 fulfilled common goals: to present the values of the past and present period of Slovak theatre culture at home and abroad, to raise awareness of the values of our theatre culture, to contribute to the development of the aesthetic perception of reality, to enrich spiritual life; to help establish new partnerships and creative collaborations between institutions and to link theatre with other forms of art. On the occasion of the Year of Slovak Theatre, the Theatre Institute, which initiated and coordinated the project, prepared several events and activities for the general public and theatre professionals.

When looking for the artistic form and design of the presentation and promotional materials for the Year of Slovak Theatre, the Theatre Institute, as with the RSD (*Rok slovenského divadla - Year of Slovak Theatre*) logo, continued the idea of approaching Slovak professional designers. The author of the visual of the Year of Slovak Theatre is graphic designer Jana Gavalda Bellanová, who also prepared and programmed the website www.rokdivadla.sk. In addition to basic information about the RSD project and its flagship events under the auspices of the Theatre Institute, SND (*Slovak National Theatre*), and NOC (*Národné osvetové centrum – National Education Centre*), the website provided up-to-date information about events of all

theatres and other cultural institutions from all over Slovakia throughout 2020. Following the introduction of pandemic measures and the related restrictions on 'live' events, the website mapped in detail the online activities and offerings of theatres in Slovakia, as well as many of the Theatre Institute's online activities and projects.

In the first phase of the project, the Theatre Institute prepared several presentation and promotional materials for the Year of Slovak Theatre, such as an English-Slovak folded leaflet with information about the RSD flag events, a weekly Diary 2020, a postcard for the Year of Slovak Theatre 2020, thematic bookmarks with quotations from the most famous Slovak dramatic texts, leaflets and posters in A1 and A3 format.

The identity of the RSD project was supported and promoted by well-known personalities from the field of theatre - honorary ambassadors Emília Vášáryová (actress of the Slovak National Theatre), Stanislav Štepka (artistic director and founder - Radošina Naive Theatre), Gabriela Mihalčinová Marcinková (actress), Jolana Fogašová (opera diva), Nina Poláková and Roman Lazík (soloists of the Viennese State Ballet).

For the RSD project, the Theatre Institute also created special social networks Facebook and Instagram, on which it published current information (Chovanová, Supeková, 2022) from the world of theatre, as well as short presentations and promotional videos throughout the year. After the introduction of security measures against the spread of COVID-19, the Theatre Institute moved the presentation of the Year of Slovak Theatre to the online space and also used this space to inform about current events. One of the first online questionnaires "Mapping the situation regarding the impact of measures against the spread of coronavirus in the field of theatre" was also published on the website rokdivadla.sk in March to gather indicative data from theatres, civic associations, and individuals regarding the state measures introduced, which resulted in the banning and cancellation of cultural events in Slovakia. In this way, the CPM obtained information from more than 60 entities (state, municipal, independent theatres, and individuals), which it evaluated and included in a comprehensive statistic mapping the first period of theatre closures. The RSD also paid special attention to the continuation of the presentation of the jubilee of Slovak theatre abroad and made available on the RSD website and drew attention to several theatre projects and websites available in foreign languages: Slovak Drama in Translation, Contemporary Slovak Directors, and Ten Choreographers of Slovak Contemporary Dance, the Theatre.sk catalogue.

Media coverage of Theatre Institute activities

In 2020, the Theatre Institute's PR informed the media and the professional public about activities and projects through 24 press releases. Press releases and information on these events are published on the Theatre Institute website www.theatre.sk. It also provided information on the achievements of the

Theatre Institute, on new publications and exhibitions of the Theatre Institute, on events and presentations of the Theatre Institute and Slovak theatre in Slovakia and abroad, on the program of Studio 12 as well as on other events related to theatre culture. He informed about the deaths or life anniversaries of theatre personalities. It published information through a monthly newsletter (activities of the Theatre Institute /events and challenges in Slovakia and abroad in the field of performing arts), through the internet portal www.theatre.sk and www.navstevnik.sk, the Facebook fan page of the Theatre Institute www.facebook.com/divadelnyustav and the Nová dráma festival (*New Drama 2020 Festival*). The Theatre Institute's PR covered new publications of the Theatre Institute, World Theatre Day and International Dance Day, awards of the Theatre Institute, exhibitions of the Theatre Institute, projects of the Theatre Institute, competitions of the Theatre Institute, Nová drama (*New Drama 2020 Festival*), Nová drama (*New Drama – alternative*), Night of Theatres, theatre co-production and Studio 12 program, as well as various organizational changes and announcements, invitations to events, foreign and out-of-Bratislava activities of the Theatre Institute, as well as information concerning the activities of the Theatre Institute related to the situation of the COVID 19 case. The worldwide pandemic also resulted in the interruption of projects in the pipeline that the department was working on the New Drama Festival/New Drama

Conclusion

Scientific and international collaboration between the Theatre Institute in Bratislava and between those studying theatre history, theory, and practice brings several important benefits to education. In particular, there is the broadening of knowledge and perspectives, based on exchanging information and ideas. In the international context, it is the implementation of new trends from different cultures, countries, and continents. Particularly important is the promotion of creativity and innovation. This helps students and professionals to broaden their understanding of theatre, its history, its cultural context, and its significance. It also contributes to the knowledge of the history and specificities of different cultures, as it allows the audience to enter a simulated environment that faithfully depicts the specificities of different ethnic groups. The plays outline solutions to contemporary problems in a divided society. The use of authentic sources and archives is important for credibility and the promotion of truthful information. Dramatic works can be used, especially by young people, to discover new facts about cultural traditions. Developing concepts and strategies through the dramatic or operatic arts that contribute to cultural exchange can have a positive impact on global understanding and tolerance in a non-coercive way (Shepherd, Wallis, 2004; Oliva, 2014).

Scholarly and international collaboration among theatre studies scholars plays a key role in the provision of theatre studies education by enabling students and practitioners to access diverse perspectives, resources, and opportunities for

critical reflection and innovation. Generally public cultural institutes, often play a crucial role in supporting action art, which encompasses various forms of performance art, interventionist art, and happenings. These institutions provide platforms for young artists to showcase their work, engage with audiences, and provoke thought and discussion. Cultural institutes provide physical spaces for action artists to exhibit their work. This can include galleries dedicated specifically to performance art or spaces within larger museums and cultural centers. Many cultural institutes offer funding and commissions to action artists to create new works. This financial support allows artists to dedicate time and resources to develop and present their projects (Kováčová, 2020; Kováčová et al., 2021).

Documentation and Archiving: Cultural institutes often document and archive action art performances, preserving them for future generations. This documentation can take the form of photographs, videos, written descriptions, and other records, ensuring that the work is not lost after the performance is over. Documents from the archives and exhibitions of the Theatre Institute are used in professional and scientific journalism, which reaches the international level, i.e. the publication outputs are also in international peer-reviewed databases such as Elsevier SCOPUS, EBSCO, ERIH PLUS, DOAJ, CEEOL and CEJSH. Scopus is a large, multidisciplinary database consisting of scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings, which deliver a comprehensive overview of the world's research output in the fields of science (Benčíč, 2010). As an example, the supervisor of the author of this article, who conducted his scientific studies (and one of the last articles of international dimension) in collaboration with the Theatre Institute. In 2021, Stanislav Benčíč worked for several months on his research in the archives of the Theatre Institute and in his article (Benčíč, 2022), uncovered unknown facts from the life of Edita Gruberova. This article was published by the Slovak Academy of Science (SAV) in the Journal "Slovenské divadlo" "Stanislav Benčíč, through the analysis of reviews and shorter journalistic pieces, brings to light the circumstances, opportunities, and conditions in which the future "queen of bel canto", opera singer Edita Gruberová, whose professional beginnings (1968-1970) are linked to Slovak stages, was formed before the beginning of her great international career. Since the author of the text, Stanislav Benčíč, works in the field of media studies, he offers a view of Slovak music journalism in the late 1960s in addition to a reconstruction of Gruber's Slovak career, which is only minimally reflected in the foreign memoir literature on the artist" (Mojžišová, 2022, p. 108).

Educational programs and workshops related to action art, help to contextualize and explain the work to audiences. This can include artist talks, panel discussions, and interactive activities that engage viewers with the concepts and techniques behind action art (Kováčová, 2020). Curators and art professionals working within cultural institutes play a crucial role in selecting and presenting action art exhibitions. Their expertise helps to contextualize the work within

broader artistic movements and provide critical analysis and interpretation to audiences.

Theatre education in a broader context is part of theatre pedagogy. The concept of theatre pedagogy and the term itself is becoming more and more well-known in the world. It encompasses all attempts to use at least some elements of theatre, dramatic activity in a school or after-school setting, among children, youth, or adults, to teach the world through theatre or theatre as an art form. The practice of theatre pedagogy encompasses a wide range of activities in a variety of forms, such as: performance activities, performance and preparatory and/or processing activities, introductory theatre, classroom theatre, comprehensive packages, multi-session sessions (not related to performance but to the theatre), and supplementary programs within theatre activities. In addition to the above, these include special literature classes, matinees, talks, etc. The work of the Theatre Institute also encourages the use of action art in the production, whether in the form of elements or the entire script (Kováčová, 2021).

Education through drama uses a series of activities carried out by children or young people under the guidance of experts in different disciplines to achieve specific educational outcomes aimed at understanding interpersonal relationships and other issues. The aim is to connect the listener to a specific role in a specific situation and to achieve a specific educational goal. That goal may be to develop the ability to express oneself or to solve problems posed by contemporary issues. PR of Theatre Institute is integral to the success of the organization, as it helps to shape public perception, build trust, and maintain positive relationships with all social groups. Its function and position within the organizational structure align with the organization's strategic goals and priorities.

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Mgr. Adam Križan

Pan-European University, Faculty of Mass Media

Tematínska 10, 851 05 Bratislava

adam.krizan@paneurouni.com