



**Doctoral School of  
Social Communication**

## **THESIS COLLECTION**

for the Ph.D. dissertation

**“Theater” from a Transylvanian Perspective  
Framing a Concept**

**by Andrea Zsigmond**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. Sándor N. Szilágyi**

(ret.) professor

Budapest, 2016



**Doctoral School of Social Communication**

**THESIS COLLECTION**

for the Ph.D. dissertation

**“Theater” from a Transylvanian Perspective  
Framing a Concept**

**by Andrea Zsigmond**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. Sándor N. Szilágyi**

(ret.) professor

© Andrea Zsigmond



# Contents

<b>1. Previous history of research and justification of the subject</b> .....	5
<b>2. Methods used</b> .....	9
<b>3. Summary of conclusions</b> .....	10
3.1. The three main theater models present in Transylvania .....	10
3.2. The earliest model: “the theater of the writer and the actor” .....	10
3.3. The prevailing model: “the director’s theater” .....	11
3.4. Recent efforts may be called “the theater of the spectator” .....	11
3.5. Conceptual frameworks embedded in the region .....	12
<b>4. Main references</b> .....	13
<b>5. List of the author’s own publications related to the topic</b> .....	16



## **1. Previous history of research and justification of the subject**

In Transylvanian public life one has often witnessed the outbreak of heated debates about theater in towns and cities here and there. Journalists and theater critics, spectators and authors clash in the form of open letters to the editor, newspaper articles followed by online comments, applications and petitions addressed to institutions, under the pretext of theater programs offered by the state theater of Kolozsvár, Sepsiszentgyörgy, Szatmárnémeti, Marosvásárhely or Gyergyószentmiklós. Some people resent excessively “artistic” and incomprehensible performances produced in their cities, while others, on the contrary, are anxious about the spreading of a theater model offering sheer entertainment, of people’s theater features. I have observed similarities in the nature of these various claims and felt the need to analyze their peculiarities more thoroughly, seeking what was in common in the arguments put forward by those who asserted their opinions. In order to contribute to a reassuring outcome of discussions, on the one hand, I propose a hypothesis about the extant theater models and discourses entwined around them, and I attempted to interpret them in the present dissertation. On the other hand, I tried to generate a shift from the traditional perspective of the issue towards a newly emerging package of issues.

In Romania, discourses before 1989 were soaked in hierarchical mentality, the traces of which may be still found in public manifestations and in the self-definitions and communication of theaters. However, in the current democratic system (in Romania), in the media transformations currently taking place – I refer here

to the social media crush – juxtaposition is preferred to subordination, passive citizens become commenters able to express their needs. Theater must also take these processes into consideration and descend from its heights, it should show interest and friendliness towards spectators, or otherwise it will completely lose its contact with the audience.

In my thesis I will try to argue, accordingly, that theater concepts can be diverse, and there are certain approaches among them which are suitable to meet the challenges of the 2010s.

There is, indeed, a type of Transylvanian theater, which develops in accordance with contemporary theater theory and international theater practice, and is accepted by the younger generation (of artists and spectators) as well, however, only on the periphery. One of the goals of this thesis is the interpretive presentation and the facilitation of the “emancipation” of a theater model characteristic primarily for independent theaters, called “the theater of the spectator”.

I am also motivated by the fact that theatrical phenomena in Transylvania get very little and peripheral critical response and representation in comparison with the number of professionals available for reflecting on the theatrical events in Hungary. Thus, I will also try to provide visibility to this “invisible” region in my thesis.

My situation and professional background undoubtedly predestines me to this task. Transylvania and the contemporary theater scene are the context I am permanently embedded in, where I spend most of my time with “participant observation” and active following of theatrical events: learning about theater, watching performances, thinking about and caring for theater, writing reviews, studies and essays on theater, doing interviews, translation



and editing work, being a dramaturge and activist, participating in panels, attending conferences, and teaching theatre-related disciplines at a university.

In recent years, my work has also largely pointed towards dehierarchization.

For instance, I have studied the critic's and the artist's privileged position. Literary cult research has helped me understand and offered me the means to formulate my ideas on the belief in the artist's superiority and related behavioral aspects (Zsigmond 2011, Zsigmond 2015b) – these studies are reflected in my dissertation when the first theater model is discussed.

In an article commenting on debates on theater criticism I attempted to deconstruct the critic's superiority (Zsigmond 2012b) – this writing has been embedded in the dissertation, in the subchapter *A homlokzatról* [*On face-work*]. I made efforts toward equalization also when working for festival newspapers (coordinating the activities of teams of theater studies students as an editor). In the coordinating editor's position, I welcomed humor, playfulness and mosaiclike structure, giving room to the unconventional experiments of young entrant authors. The medium of theater is full of privileged positions, like those of directors and theater managers, and asymmetric confrontations abound in this atmosphere. In order to abolish this hierarchy, our newspapers also included simple spectators' opinions, moreover, artists and technical support staff were also given the opportunity to express their views. (The experience gained during the edition of festival magazines finds its application in the present thesis when discussing the so-called “third theater model”.)

My review of the book entitled *A felügyelt színpad* [*The Supervised Stage*], written by George Banu resulted from similar rea-

sons: the need to know more about the various forms of oppression and to render them more recognizable to readers (Zsigmond 2013). Having been asked to compile a volume of interviews about Gábor Tompa's directorial approach and discourse, I decided to choose a more playful form for the book, presenting the subject in friendly light, highlighting, however, the elements of asymmetry in the mindset of the director-manager (Zsigmond 2010). These texts are also analyzed in the subchapter entitled *Gábor Tompa's Views on Theater*. In my analysis written about the drama adaptations of Lajos Parti Nagy I disapproved stigmatization of certain characters and social strata by their way of speaking. One of my minor essays, *Két férfi pelenkában* [*Two Men in Diapers*] thematizes the conflict between theater and opera, including theater-goers and opera-goers, as well as their exclusive practices, My "one screen" article *A színházban a nő* [*Women in Theater*], focuses on the social gender aspects of oppression.

Providing a different way of equalization, in a study entitled *Könczei karikatúráinak esete a nyelvvel, a rokon műfajokkal és az epikussággal* [*The Case of Könczei's Caricatures and Language, Related Genres and the Epic Genre*], I give try and full vent to the joy of scientific interpretation of popular genres, showing its usefulness. In my first theoretical literary studies on reception issues I tried to move the search towards a more practical, sensual and unreflectiv dimension, rather than focusing on elitist and rational acts of perception.

In these studies, one may observe an amalgamation of theoretical approaches: in these writings, I frequently refer to the concepts and perceptions of cognitive semantics, trying to reconcile them with elements of knowledge deriving from literary theory. I followed a similar path in the present thesis, i.e. I juxtaposed per-

ceptions taken from cognitive semantics, communication theory, narratology, theories of history, literature and theater studies, as my goal was to attempt the application of certain humanities approaches in the context of theater research.

## **2. Methods used**

In my thesis I shall attempt to explore the basic ideas of Transylvanian theater-makers and participants of the public discourse on theater, as well as to reveal the hidden assumptions their actions and utterances contain. Furthermore, I shall also explore the hierarchical systems built into the structure of discourses, the metaphors and narratives on theater appearing in different topics, as well as the functions assigned to theater and status of theater makers.

In my analysis, I partly rely on my knowledge of the Transylvanian theater scene (as I have been attending lectures and festivals for many years, for example, I have been editor in chief of theater festival magazines more than ten times). On the other hand, I have selected text corpora to be analyzed using the theoretical terms listed hereby: conceptual frame, cognitive metaphor, pattern, cultural scenario, story, face-work, problem, etc.

I shall examine the following types of text: primarily texts originating from theater artists (actors/actresses, directors), theater writers and journalists, interviews, notes, sections of theater history books, volume prefaces, websites of theatrical institutions, etc. The particularities of the approach posited as the first model shall be demonstrated, for example, by means of a collection of

quotations compiled by Sándor Enyedi (entitled *Vallomások a 215 éves Kolozsvári Színházról!* [*Confessions About the 215-year-old Theater of Kolozsvár!*]), followed by an analysis of the prefaces of a so-called conversation book series entitled *Prospero könyvek* [*Prospero Books*], applying the terms of literary cult research in both cases (which is a novelty in this field). Furthermore, I will enquire into a volume by Gábor Tompa, as well as several interviews, notes, chapters of theater history books, debate articles and blog entries.

### **3. Summary of conclusions**

#### *3.1. The three main theater models present in Transylvania*

Theater history is about the alternation of approaches; changes may be described in terms of various environmental impacts and changes in the hierarchical relations. In my thesis, I claim that there have been three views of theater alternating and living side by side in the last three decades in Transylvania. (The question that arose for me as crucial was: Who/what is on the top of hierarchy in a theater model?)

#### *3.2. The earliest model: “the theater of the writer and the actor”*

The first model is called here “the theater of the writer and the actor”, since those adopting this approach do not consider it acceptable that someone (a director) treats the text of the playwright arbitrarily and treats actors as puppets. In this approach, an essential element of theater is the (high-quality) script and comprehen-

sibility, while obscene words are not acceptable. Those who adopt this model are usually fond of entertaining plays. Another function of theater in the case of this model is the mediation of moral and national values, therefore classical plays are also popular with the group sharing this mentality. I have found that Csíki Játékszín is an excellent example of this type of theater, and I have analyzed its season plans, as well as the rhetoric of the director and website accordingly.

### *3.3. The prevailing model: “the director’s theater”*

The second model is called “the director’s theater”. We may talk about independent “theatrical art”, i.e. productions in which drama scripts are overshadowed, image and body come to the fore, since the emergence of the director in the twentieth century. These performances are largely characterized by metaphorical coding instead of immediate intelligibility, therefore they are not understandable to all, and the “art for the director’s sake” on the “tax-payers’ money” triggers antipathy in many people. This model does not serve other (moral, linguistic, national) purposes than art. In the Transylvanian context, among others, the vision of Gábor Tompa, director and manager of the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, may be classified as belonging to this model, therefore I chose to analyze his rhetoric in the present thesis.

### *3.4. Recent efforts may be called “the theater of the spectator”*

In the third model, “the spectator’s theater”, the artistic and aesthetic value, which is the core of the previous approach, counts less. In this model social issues become more important for creators, who try to establish a direct relationship with the audience. Improvisation, fragmentation, sensual presence, and the existence

of civil and natural elements indicate that a performance fits into this pattern. We may also talk about the elements of these performances applying the terms/genre definitions of contemporary theater theory: performativity, postdramatic theater, devised theater, applied theater. As regards the Transylvanian context, this way of thinking is mainly characteristic of independent theater companies (e.g. Tandem Group, Waiting Room Project).

### *3.5. Conceptual frameworks embedded in the region*

In addition to the above mentioned complex theater models, there are also simpler factors present in Transylvanian theatrical discourse, which are also deeply embedded in our consciousness, frameworks that are socially determined. In my dissertation I refer to the “stubborn” economic framework, in which spectators are “consumers” and performances are “commodities”. I also recall a nostalgic framework in which theater competes with television and computers (the Internet). I mention the “foreign theater – Transylvanian theater” pattern, too, in which “foreign” has a positive connotation, whereas “domestic”, Transylvanian refers to the underdeveloped countryside, hoping to rise from its present state. Similarly, there is another asymmetrical pattern, that of visible versus invisible theater scene. In the present thesis I also deal with the idea of theater as the “guardian of values” in a “barbarian” environment. Metaphors are also frames, frameworks. For instance, artists may have the attitude of a physician towards society, when they “cure” it through their artworks, or they might as well be “militant”. “Service” also appears in the discourses analyzed in the thesis, this concept being an element of major importance in several frameworks (such as the fulfillment of “mission outside the theater”). We also make reference to the framework defined

by the director–actor relationship, in which the director plays god, and the actors feel like puppets or robots. At the beginning and finally, we shall talk about the creator–spectator framework, which, if only conceptually, offers the possibility to experience togetherness, the very essence of “theater”.

#### 4. Main references

- BANU, Georges (2006): *Színházunk, a Cseresznyéskert*. (transl. by Koros Fekete Sándor) Kolozsvár, Koinónia.
- BARTHA Katalin Ágnes (2010): *Shakespeare Erdélyben. XIX. századi magyar nyelvű recepció*. Irodalomtörténeti füzetek nr. 167., Budapest, Argumentum.
- BODÓA. Ottó (2014): *Húsz év erdélyi magyar színháza*. Kolozsvár, Eikon.
- BÓKAY Antal (1997): *Irodalomtudomány a modern és a poszt-modern korban*. Published: Budapest, Osiris.
- DÁVIDHÁZI Péter (1989): „Isten másodszülöttje”: *a magyar Shakespeare-kultusz természetrajza*. Published: Budapest, Gondolat.
- ENYEDI Sándor (2007): *Vállomások a 215 éves Kolozsvári Színházról!* Downloaded from: [www.szineszkonyvtar.hu/contents/enyedi.htm](http://www.szineszkonyvtar.hu/contents/enyedi.htm) (Last download: 25. 08. 2015)
- GOFFMAN, Erving (2008): *A homlokzatról*. (Transl. by Síklaki István.) In: Síklaki István (ed.): *Szöbéli befolyásolás II. Nyelv és szituáció*. Társadalmi kommunikáció sorozat. Published: Budapest, Typotex.

- HORÁNYI Özséb (ed.) (2007): *A kommunikáció mint participáció*.  
Published: Budapest, AKTI–Tipotex.
- IMRE Zoltán (2008): *Színházak – történetek – alternatívák. A színháztörténetírás és -kutatás lehetőségei és problémái*. In: idem: (editor): *Alternatív színháztörténetek. Alternatívok és alternatívák*. Published: Budapest, Balassi kiadó.
- JÁNOS Szabolcs (2000): *Színház, templom, iskola. Színházelméleti gondolkodásunk kezdetei*. Published: Theatron, 2000/summer–autumn.
- KÉKESI KUN Árpád (2007): *A rendezés színháza*. Published: Budapest, Osiris.
- KOSELLECK, Reinhart (2003): *Az aszimmetrikus ellenfogalmak történeti-politikai szemantikája*. (Transl. by Szabó Márton) In: idem: *Elmúlt jövő. A történeti idők szemantikája*. Published: Budapest, Atlantisz, 241–298.
- KÖVECSES Zoltán – BENCZES Réka (2010): *Kognitív nyelvészet*. Published: Budapest, Akadémiai kiadó
- MNOUCHKINE, Ariane (2010): *A jelen művészete. Beszélgetések Fabienne Pascaud-val*. (Transl. by Fehér Anita, Körösi Petra, Molnár Zsófi, Khaled-Abdo Szaida.) Published: Budapest, Krétakör Alapítvány, prae.hu kiadó.
- NORA, Pierre (1999): *Emlékezet és történelem között: A helyek problematikája* (Transl. by K. Horváth Zsolt) Downloaded from: [http://www.multesjovo.hu/hu/aitdownloadablefiles/download/aitfile/aitfile\\_id/476/](http://www.multesjovo.hu/hu/aitdownloadablefiles/download/aitfile/aitfile_id/476/) (Last download: 2014. 12. 09.)
- PAVIS, Patrice (2005): *Színházi szótár* (Transl. by Gulyás Adrienn, Molnár Zsófia, Sepsi Enikő, Rideg Zsófia). Published: Budapest, L'Harmattan.
- POPOVICI, Iulia (ed.) (2015b): *Sfârșitul regiei, începutul creați-*



- ei colective în teatrul european. / The End of Directing, The Beginning of Theatre-Making and Devising in European Theatre.* (Transl. by Lia Catargiu, Bogdan Georgescu, Mirella Patureau, Iulia Popovici.) Festivalul Internațional de Teatru de la Sibiu / Sibiu International Theatre Festival Book Collection. Colecția Atopos. Published: Kolozsvár, Tact.
- PROPP, Vlagyimir Jakovlevics (2005): *A mese morfológiája.* (Transl. by Soproni András.) Published: Budapest, Osiris.
- RADOSAVLJEVIĆ, Duška (2015): *Theatre-Making: The End of Directing as We Know it.* In: POPOVICI, Iulia (2015b), 179–198.
- SIMHANDL, Peter (1998): *Színháztörténet.* (Transl. by Szántó Judit) Published: Budapest, Helikon.
- SZILÁGYI N. Sándor (2013): *Metaforák és elmevírusok.* A kolozsvári Babeş–Bolyai Tudományegyetem magyar tagozatának tanévnyitó előadása. 2013. szept. 30. Downloaded from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDU8ycARDPY> (Last download: 2015. 08. 11.)
- TAKÁTS József (2007): *Ismerős idegen terep.* Irodalomtörténeti tanulmányok és bírálatok. Budapest, Kijárat.
- TOMPA Andrea (2015): *Persona, personal, public. Essay on Hungarian Author-Directors.* In: POPOVICI, Iulia (2015b), 199–210.
- TVERDOTA György (2003): *Az életrajz mint passió.* In: TAKÁTS József (szerk.): *Az irodalmi kultusz kutatás kézikönyve.* Tanulmánygyűjtemény. Budapest, Kijárat. 159–171.
- VARGA Anikó (2013): *Nézni a különbséget.* Kisvárdai Lapok, 2013. június 27., 7.
- VISKY András (2016): *A mainstream vége. Jegyzetek a posztszín-házi identitásról.* Játéktér 2016/1.

## 5. List of the author's own publications related to the topic

### 5.1. In a foreign language

ZSIGMOND Andrea (2013): *Discursive Utopias of Theatre: The Desired Theatre Image Reflected by the Prefaces of the Prospero Books Series*. In: Symbolon, Marosvásárhely, 2013/25.

Gábor TOMPA (2014): *Label Curtain. A Private Theatrical Dictionary*. Book concept, editor: ZSIGMOND Andrea (Translation: Előd Márton and Gábor Tompa). Csíkszereda, Bookart.

### 5.2. In Hungarian

#### a) Books

ZSIGMOND Andrea (compiled and edited by) (2010): *Címke-függöny. Tompa Gábor színházi magánszótára*. Published: Csíkszereda, Bookart.

ZSIGMOND Andrea (2012a): *Mi kritika még? Színek és ének*. Published: Kolozsvár, Korunk – Komp-Press.

ZSIGMOND Andrea (2016a): *Mi az, hogy színház? (Egy erdélyi néző válaszai)*. Scientia—EME, Kolozsvár (in course of publication)

#### b) Studies published in peer-reviewed journals

ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015a): *Miért ne fogyasszunk kulturális terméket? Esettanulmány: kísérlet a „színház” szó jelentésének kibontására*. Jel-Kép, 2015/1. 61–77.

- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015b): *Az író meg a színészt félnek (nem) kell. A kultikus magatartás vizsgálata*. Disegno – a dizájn-kultúra folyóirata. A Moholy-Nagy Művészeti Egyetem lektorált folyóirata. II. évf., 2015/1–2.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015c): *Tart még a varázs? A Prospero Könyvek sorozatról*. Erdélyi Múzeum 2015/3, 159–162.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015d): *Miről beszélünk, amikor a színházról beszélünk? Újabb kísérlet a szó jelentésének kibontására*. JelKép. Kommunikáció, közvélemény, média. 2015/4.

### c) Essays published in other journals

- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2011): *A színház és a szavak 5. A kultikus metaforákról*. In: Korunk, September
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2012b): *Az udvariatlan kritikus*. Kritikavita a Revizoron, 5. Downloaded from: <http://revizorononline.com/hu/cikk/4179/vita-a-kritikarol-a-revizoron-5>. (Last download: 2015. 11. 15.)
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2013): *Véled, uram, de nélküled*. George Banu *A felügyelt színpad* c. könyvéről. Downloaded from: <http://www.jatekter.ro/?p=4782>. (Last download: 2015. 11. 15.)
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2014): *Gennyfakasztó buli. Székely Csabával a tárnák csillagos ösvényein*. In: Fekete Vince (szerk.): *Térhatárok. Határon túli írók antológiája*. In: Kortárs Kiadó, Bp.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015e): *A büfé az én nappalim*. Downloaded from: <http://www.jatekter.ro/?p=11342>. Last download: 2015. 11. 15.)
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015f): *Mint a nap. Színházi világnapi kívánság*. Downloaded from: <http://eirodalom.ro/publicisztika/item/2272-mint-a-nap/2272-mint-a-nap.html#.Vg6FMRHtmko> (Last download: 2015. 08. 16.)

- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015g): *Átlátunk a falon? (Lábjegyzet a Színkritikusok Díjához)*. Downloaded from: <http://welemony.transindex.ro/?cikk=25489> (Last download: 2015. 08. 21.)
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2016b): *A hiányzó atya. Tompa Gábor színházában*. Színház, May
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2016c): *Bocsárdi László műhelyében (talált szavak – A fősvény próbáin)*. Látó, June

#### **d) Interviews**

- ZSIGMOND Andrea (1999): *Versenyparipa a Figuránál*. Beszélgetés Szabó Tibor színésszel, színházigazgatóval. In: Korunk 1999/6. 68–74.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (1999): *Ariel kinyílik és elrepül*. Interjú Dimény Áron kolozsvári színésszel. In: Korunk, 1999/6.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2001): *Kihívás, igényesség, elrugaszkodás*. Interjú Csíky Andrással, a kolozsvári színház Jászai-díjas művészeivel. In: Székelyföld, 2001/12.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2005): *A mozdulatlan néző*. Beszélgetés Bocsárdi László színházi rendezővel. In: Székelyföld January/2005, page 65–74.
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2006): *A zárt formák rendje*. Interjú Tompa Gábor színházi rendezővel, a Kolozsvári Állami Magyar Színház igazgatójával. In: Székelyföld, January, 2006
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2008): *Emlékátvitel*. Interjú Sebők Klára színésszel, a kolozsvári színház örökös tagjával. In: Székelyföld, January, 2008
- ZSIGMOND Andrea (2009): *Húzzuk fel a rolókat – Európa itt van Kolozsváron*. Beszélgetés Tompa Gáborral, Visky Andrással és Nagy Noémi Krisztinával a 17. UTE-Fesztiválról. In: Erdélyi Riport, 22. January 2009

ZSIGMOND Andrea (2015): *A színház: szakadék*. Beszélgetés  
Bocsárdi László színházi rendezővel. In: *Helikon* 7/2015,  
10. April