

ŠANDOR SLACKI



During the interview, which took place one winter night in the Club of Theatre Dr. Inat situated on the fourth floor of the ex army barracks Karlo Rojc, the Inat's stage icon, Šandor Slacki sat on a tiny, uncomfortable bank, surrounded by old posters from theatre plays. I couldn't help feeling that my questions were pushing his body in a fakir's position; that word is to him just a hammered in nail, which he has to endure almost without making a single grimace. After all, I assume, if he had believed in the power of the word, he

wouldn't have been engaged in a non-verbal theatre. A closed position of the body, hands embracing the waist, legs interwoven, he answers to the questions with a smile, the best way to blow out the question, which is a characteristic of the youth. He carries his age well, he gladly accepts his own half-century, but is amazed with it as well. He doesn't visualize, but if it just slips out, he quickly presses back. His body hops just in the moments when he is not the topic. Introvert, he continuously plugs in the defence mechanism and doesn't choose excessively: from slang to loud laughter. He can keep a secret: checked. While he speaks or listens, he reveals to be a lone wolf. Every answer, without exception, begins with NO. Well-read. In the same time complicated and simple. Serious and extremely frivolous. He doesn't let his thoughts being poisoned. He ardently desires to put in his acting repertoire Cyrano de Bergerac and Pinocchio.

ŠANI, CONFIDENTALLY...

I was born in a militaristic family, in a tri-boarder area - Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria - in the city of Strumica. My father is Hungarian, he was a member of the armed forces, my mother is a good woman, before marriage she was a professional theatre actress in Strumica. Imagine, they had a professional theatre then. My grandfather (mother's father) was a bandit, at that time he worked for the Republic of Kruševo, he smuggled weapons, a merchant. There in Strumica, there were these fabulous oriental buildings. And my great-grandmother...she was called Sultana. I remember her well, in that old people's home. Tiny, short, skinny woman, they have killed her husband. My grandfather (father's father) was a bandsman and an alcoholic. I was ten months old when my parents got married. Young lieutenants didn't get married at that time, how were they supposed to build a carrier, if they had a family? Tell me. My father was transferred to Strumica as a punishment. I hate the army, starting from the smallest professional soldier to the highest, the general, they are all guilty in the same way. I don't separate them and I don't distinguish them. They have a mind-set, which says: "carry out the order and regret afterwards!" It means, I am going to do something I understand it is unfair and afterwards I am going to regret it? What nonsense is that?! From Strumica we moved to Skopje and after the earthquake to Pula. My childhood ended, one night when I was six or seven years old and I discovered sexuality. Our landlord's daughter, my brother and I were sleeping in the same bed, because my parents had gone to a ball. I discovered my first excitement, but, it seemed, the grownups made a big fuss about it.

Then I discovered that women deserve something quite different from beating and hitting. In that moment my childhood was over. I stepped on the stage for the first time when I was nine in the "Tone Peruško" elementary school in Pula. I played a little alien robot, who comes to Earth and meets Father Christmas. There were many movements, many mechanic and broken gestures, maybe a sentence or two. As soon as I climbed on the stage, everything became very, very natural and I understood that for me that was it.

...DOESN'T HAVE THE "FAVORITE PLAY", DOESN'T HAVE THE "BEST ROLE"

"Caligula"? It is a play where everybody fell in love. What I saw and felt in the personal contact was unspeakable, it was told, that of course the play had nothing to do with the brain, but that it was fantastic. When Branko was doing the play "For a Black Man", he came to my father, at home, because he heard that I was performing, and my father yelled: „What bloody acting, don't talk to me about acting! Away, gypsies!". Why do I in every role have a Mephistophelean characteristic? There's no person who is not evil. Doesn't exist. Every person has evil and good characteristics. It is about recognizing. When one discovers his or hers evil characteristics, then he or she can put them away. One knows how one reacts when one becomes evil and one has to protect oneself from it. But, one can as well develop it. For a role, for example. To be really evil or really good is a choice. I can be evil. My choice is not to be, but especially I don't want to be manipulated to be evil. I celebrated my twentieth acting anniversary with the "Masque of Red Death". "Charlie", sweet, beautiful role. I played it in a few variations, a splendid fluttery character, it gives a lot of possibilities and anything can be done with it. Many roles I played don't have a name. Everything doesn't have to be defined. Why should it? Sometimes to define a character means putting it in a frame and forcing someone to think just about that frame, which you have given to it. I don't want to come to an understanding by imposing my way of looking at things. I create my roles alone; Branko just corrects them for the stage. I don't measure if a role is successful or not by the reaction of the critics or the audience. I have exclusively my own scale. I ask myself how functional a role is in the whole play. All the rest is not important.

...MORE INCLINED TO SELF-CRITIC THAN TO SELF-PROMOTION

We performed with "Prometheus" at the BRAMS. I, Stole and some friends of his some journalists got drunk, because satisfied with the play. The audience and the critics welcomed the play, while in the meantime we had four or five hours of rest. We started dabbling. A journalist from a radio asked me how I build the slow motion. "I stand up, stop, concentrate the balance, then motivate my leg and move it ahead..." For three months Radio Belgrade was playing that jingle "...and afterwards I motivate the other leg..." Shame killed me.

...IT IS SAID THAT IT'S VERY HARD FOR HIM TO CLIMB ON THE STAGE FOR THE APPLAUSE

It gets on my nerves. I don't like glorifications. But I have my dose of vanity and narcissism, if not I wouldn't be on stage.

WHAT IRRITATES ME THE MOST...

What irritates me the most is the self-infatuation of the people, who make a bad play and think they have done an excellent play and in this way consider me a fool. I can't bear it.

To let nonsense, just because it is more aggressive - rule our lives, there is no bigger mistake. It is good when people show you your mistakes, because next time you'll have the chance to correct them. I am not a know-it-all. It is awful to be so self-admiring to think that you are the only, the best, the dearest, the youngest and the thinnest on stage. It doesn't exist. It is horrible to me. If I don't say to the young members in Inat what have they done wrong, they will still be self-infatuating and will repeat the same mistakes. I get crazy then and I cut them impudently. No one can stop me there. This is what irritates me the most.

EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH INAT

In the moment when Inat will close down, in that moment I won't drop a tear. It just means that time has come for it to die, because we have brought it to the end. If a thing has come to an end, then we have to let it in peace. I am not God-given, neither is Branko. To cultivate something by force it's totally absurd. If we can make a step ahead, make something new, then I am here ready to do it. Inat is an idea, not these walls. We have worked well even without facilities. Inat is a media through which I can very well express myself. Does it mean being emotionally connected? To the idea? I don't ever think about these past twenty years, they don't exist without the things that are to follow. But yes, I terrifically enjoyed, all these past years. I enjoyed in what I was doing. We created Inat in comedy, a genre, which is totally neglected nowadays and can be magnificent. We began with the comedy "Snow-White...", this comedy created Inat. Now, with our last play "Circles", we have started entering the humour field, to be fair, black humour with quite a delay.

...WHAT IS BRANKO SUŠAC TO YOU?

Totally crazy. Workaholic. If he doesn't work, he is dead. He doesn't go on holidays. In his little brain something works very actively, something that he hasn't raised to consciousness. He thinks he's absolutely irreplaceable at every level of work or organization. The problem is that he has no confidence; he permanently has no confidence in people. In his heart he is not a repressed performer, he has a vision of the performance, how a movement should be and this makes him a good director. He sometimes tries to show through the motion what should be achieved from a role. It is horrible, awful and we all laugh our heads off. I repeat, he has the vision of the motion, but he doesn't know how to transform it... And then he explains it to the actors through me. We have entered each other's mind to such a degree that we can presume the way in which the other person thinks. I realize very quickly what kind of motion I should assume in order for him to be able to visualise the image of the motion - literary the motion he has in mind. It is not as reading his thoughts. Maybe it is me imposing my thoughts to him? If he doesn't agree he makes me do three hundred different motions and afterwards he says that nothing is functioning and that the best motion was the first one. Branko and I are like antibiotics: good for one thing, but poison to other things. Without Inat's new generations, which are like yoghurt to us, we would very quickly close ourselves in our meditative relation, in our world, to the end.

...CHARACTER

An excursion I made out of Inat was the one with Vili Matula and some people from Daska. However the play didn't go in the direction I thought it should have gone. It wasn't a good excursion. No, no I wouldn't go playing in another ensemble. I am not interested in leaving. Something you do, you should do it in your environment. I do good things for my environment. To me it is very important where I work. I live here with these people; this is

my environment, my home. I want to give something here. Outside people don't know me for how much we may travel. I won't be telling lies, it is nice to be a cheapskate. However, I am a traveller, who is rooted. I love being from Istria.

au revoir...

"I was dead many times, but never as this time!"

This Latin epitaph of a Roman actor from the world beyond altruistically makes the audience laugh and cry. I am dedicating this monograph for Inat's twentieth anniversary to the actors, who with their creations in this theatre have left a bright and beautiful trace. Well, to the memory of:

BERNARD MUDROVČIĆ (-)

ROBERT MATIĆ (-)

VOJISLAV STOJKOVIĆ (-)

DAVOR GERŠIĆ (-)

MIROSLAV MANDIĆ (-)