
CONTROVERSIES.
A PERFORMATIVE RESEARCH

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Abstract: The Department of Theatre Directing and the Research Department of the National University of Theatre and Film worked on a European program called “SoliCultEU”, in partnership with the Replika Educational Theatre Centre, based in Bucharest, Citizen.KANE.Kollektiv in Stuttgart and Teatro dos Aloés in Amadora. This program included intensive research exchanges between I.L. Caragiale UNATC’s theatre directing students and international artists and several theatre productions focusing on the concept of solidarity in culture. As part of this program, a series of theatre events were produced, under the title “TabThePast”, discussing the relationship between artists and power in the recent history of our country. One of these events was the premiere of the performance *Controversies.1961.As you like it?* by Mihaela Michailov and Eugen Gyemant – an adaptation of a famous debate from 1962, between critics and theatre directors, occasioned by Liviu Ciulei’s performance of *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare at the Municipal Theatre in Bucharest. In this article we present our performative research of the tensions between critics and creators, artists and censorship, language and dissimulation.

Keywords: TabThePAST Project, performative, palimpsest, debate, political, criticism, freedom, dissimulation, trial, Elizabethan, Shakespearean.

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1. INTRODUCTION. TWO HISTORICAL EVENTS: a theatre production and the debate it started

One of the essential moments in the history of Romanian theatre was the 1961 premiere of *As You Like It*, by William Shakespeare, at the Municipal Theatre in Bucharest, directed by Liviu Ciulei. In many respects, it can be considered the beginning of modern Romanian theatre directing. The strongly conceptualised nature of the directorial approach, the shift of emphasis from illustrating the text to building a broad stage composition in which meanings are led by the director, rather than by tradition—the assumption of responsibility for the whole—make the premiere at the Municipal Theatre a turning point. In the consciousness of the theatre world, the production carries a legendary aura, and within Liviu Ciulei’s body of work it forms the foundation for much of his later artistic research.

It is at least surprising to discover an almost equally famous debate organised by the publication *Teatrul* in 1962, in which Ciulei is accused precisely of lacking a coherent idea in relation to Shakespeare’s text, of being unable to fully pursue his directorial intuitions, of lacking clarity in his personal interpretation of the classic work (Anon., 1962). Reading the account of this encounter between the critics of 1962 and the young theatre directors Liviu Ciulei, Lucian Pintilie, and David Esrig initially leaves one with a sense that something does not align with the triumphant

image that *As You Like It* would earn many years later. Then a sense of injustice grows increasingly strong, until, eventually, by understanding the double meaning, the falseness—the “hidden performance”—we can look critically, with irony, at the era in which both the premiere and this debate took place.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. ANALYSIS AND ADAPTATION

2.1 Identifying the theatrical in the historical

The production was, to some extent, shocking, although Liviu Ciulei would never have intended to shock. It was not in his nature, and his artistic choices were generally marked by balance. Yet the freedom he took—not so much in relation to the text as to the stereotypes of earlier stagings—managed to irritate part of the specialised critics. And although he was supported by another substantial part of the theatre community, *Teatrul* published, likely without anticipating the waves it would create, a virulent review attacking Ciulei’s directorial project. In it, Mircea Alexandrescu dismantles, point by point, each directing choice, placing it all under the title: “Directing in the Service of the Text or a Demonstration of Directing?” (Alexandrescu, 1961).

Instead of humbly accepting the devastating critique, Ciulei published a reply to the article, titled “Criticism in the Service of the Text or a Demonstration of Criticism?” (Ciulei, 1961), responding point by point to each reproach and arguing for his directorial concept.

We know too little about the relationships behind these public exchanges, and we can only deduce, like investigators—or the way a director reconstructs reality from the words left behind by an author. What is certain is that the outcome of these articles was the preparation of a debate in which Liviu Ciulei was placed face-to-face with important critics of the time. And although the situation is initially wrapped in compliments and congratulations, its true nature soon reveals itself: a confrontation of unequal forces—a staging.

Despite all this, Liviu Ciulei became, one year later, the director of the Municipal Theatre, which became the Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra Theatre. What happened during this debate? What were the stakes? What groups of forces clashed, and what were their aims? History may be less theatrical than we would like to imagine. But it offers many elements on the basis of which we can reimagine the hidden reality of that meeting. And, without forging it—but also without attempting strict reconstruction—the adaptation of this historical moment becomes an instrument of research.

2.2 TabThePast: context for an adaptation of theatre history

This was the starting point for creating a performance based on the debate around Ciulei's production. Within the SoliCultEU project, conceived in partnership with Citizen.KANE.Kollektiv from Stuttgart and Teatro dos Aloes from Lisbon, in collaboration with the Replika Educational Theatre Centre, I collaborated with playwright Mihaela Michailov to create a performance under the umbrella of TabThePast—a series of theatre-research events on the relationship between artists and power.

In this context, the confrontation between the young director Liviu Ciulei and established critics—some of them representatives of power structures—provided a perfect starting point for research that mirrors the two eras: how today's Romanian theatre world functions differently or similarly to that of 1962; how language is used to conceal; how the tensions inherent to the creator-critic relationship and those between cultural figures and representatives of power are resolved—or not; how culture serves as proof for political debate, and to what extent culture is inherently political.

2.3 Historical versus theatrical—limits and complementarity

Part of a director's work is always investigative. Starting from what the characters said and from certain clues about their actions, one must discover the reality behind these outcomes. One must imagine what actually happened. We could say that every performance is a reconstruction. One of the distinctive traits of the era—and perhaps a difficulty for actors—is double language. Political pressure and a climate that disguises the lack of freedom, lead to a continual falsification of reality. No one revealed their true alliances and intentions, or if they did, it was always with a double message, a double attack. The director must reconstruct the system of relationships, the hidden dramatic structure. For this, documentation is essential. But human relationships are less “documentable.” They can be imagined using the logic of functionality: if the system we construct leads to the final situation without contradicting known facts, then it is at least valid. In this sense, we can see how performative methods become tools of research.

The role of performative practices in education has already been thoroughly argued. To play the 1962 version of Liviu Ciulei or Valentin Silvestru means not only to represent them, but to understand the motivations and intentions that guided their words and actions. Implicitly, it means understanding the stakes of this confrontation and the political, cultural, and historical context. It also means understanding our own political and cultural context. And the work of building such a role gives the actor the opportunity to step inside and imagine the

conditions of another era and the work of these important cultural personalities.

You cannot understand why they speak the way they do and why they choose to speak that way in their given situation, without researching the political atmosphere of 1962. Work on the role is defined by discovering the thoughts behind the words. Between these two levels, a significant distance often arises. On the surface and at a declarative level, what we see and hear is a discussion on cultural topics, a debate on how Shakespearean text should be treated in theatre. Behind these elevated discussions, two more practical matters seem to be at stake: the future of Liviu Ciulei's directing career and the future of the Bulandra Theatre.

Following a method of investigating history through performative means—in simpler words, imagining the parts for which no verifiable documents exist (mainly the intentions and personal motivations of the participants)—we deduced, like investigators, that at this friendly meeting at the Teatrul editorial office, at least three groups with divergent interests took part. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the rather inconsistent nature of journalist Mircea Alexandrescu (who later shifts from denouncing Ciulei, to being one of his fervent supporters, once Ciulei's position stabilises), the very initiator of the discord is absent from the discussion. We can imagine that Ciulei's reply and, especially, the sarcasm in its title, offended him so deeply, that he could not accept even a staged meeting such as this. For it is clear that Ciulei had been lured into a trap.

The director's task is to recreate the conditions leading up to the scenes of action, so we must ask—how was this discussion prepared? I cannot help but perceive a reaction of solidarity among critics on the path to consecration, such as Valentin Silvestru. Around him seems to coalesce the anti-Ciulei alliance, and judging by the attitudes of the various speakers toward him, we chose to assume that the idea for the meeting originated with him. "Let's see whether, face-to-face with us, the young Ciulei will keep the same tone he used in the article," Silvestru seems to have suggested. Here we must emphasise that inventing subtexts and inner monologues to support and make the spoken text plausible is a tool we always use when analysing a play.

I therefore believe the meeting was planned to place Liviu Ciulei in a delicate situation.

Each era discovers in the work of a great author those ideas that the age itself brings forth. Does it not fall to today's creator to uncover here the ideas that are most clearly relevant for today's audience, focusing on what seems to him to fit our own time best? Is it not the task of the director staging this play to be its contemporary commentator and at the same time its interpreter for the present? [...]

As is well known, public opinion has already described it as a production of superior artistic quality. But unfortunately, taken as a whole, the performance is unclear. The director's idea is unclear. To me, this production did not convey the thoughts of its creators. It seems that it did not reach Mircea Alexandrescu either, and perhaps not others as well. [...] As for the casting: I believe it did not fully serve the author in all the roles, and it made the director's work more difficult. I find the casting of Clody Bertola in the role of Rosalind inappropriate. The actress employs a wide range of feeling, an elegant artistic technique, she does everything that can be done, but there sometimes exists a certain condition of the actor that prevents them from fulfilling the physical and temperamental demands imposed by the role.

Likewise, I believe that casting Liviu Ciulei as Jaques the Melancholic is not good. The actor's interpretation forces the character in a direction that is not present in the text. Placing him on stage at moments when he must deliver lines heavy with meaning situates him ostentatiously in the shadows and, at the same time, casts a shadow on the other actors to whom Jaques must communicate his philosophical views. The actor has, of course, the qualities through which he might have served this role to some extent. I have recently seen Liviu Ciulei in *Children of the Sun*, where he solved the play's difficult demands with great beauty and brilliance in the role of Protasov. Here, however, one has the physical sensation, at a certain moment, that someone is supposed to speak, to say something important, and that this someone is hiding behind the trees. He refuses to make himself heard. It is Jaques the Melancholic, taken away from the spectator. He has been, I would say, de-Shakespeare-ized in the vision of both the actor and the director. (Silvestru, Anon. 1962)

In alliance with Silvestru, appears his less subtle, less erudite counterpart—Florian Nicolau. He is by far the most colourful character in our reconstruction, placing himself, through his own words, on the border of caricature. In an exquisite prefabricated language, he attempts to teach a lesson in cultural-historical materialism, ending up instead sounding like a “new-school pedagogue.”

I believe that the essential issue was not taken as a starting point, namely the analysis of Shakespeare's conception, which forms the basis of both his tragic and his comic perspective. It is a matter of Shakespeare's philosophical position, from which he constructs the tragic outlook and from which he satirizes both decadent feudalism and the young bourgeois order.

This fact is well established, and it does not seem to me that it can still give rise to debate. In the tragedies, Shakespeare can only be interpreted by revealing and giving due weight to the philosophical pessimism of his great tragic characters. The substratum of this pessimism, of this tragic perspective on life, is the hero's inability to forge for himself an ideal of life within the social conditions of his time—that is, his inability to choose between the old feudal order and the new capitalist relations that were beginning to take its place. This is the tragic foundation of the 'To be or not to be' monologue in Hamlet, of the duke's famous tirade against life in Measure for Measure, and of the most significant of his sonnets. Along these lines, many other examples could be given. (Nicolau, Anon. 1962)

Paradoxically, even this mediocre doctrinaire theorist's arguments contain some genuinely interesting ideas. The overall level of the discussion is admirable and reminds us that even public denunciation sessions were once conducted with far more craftsmanship than nowadays.



Controversies.1961.As You Like It?

Directed by: Eugen Gyemant
2024, the CINETic Multifunctional
Hall, I.L. Caragiale UNATC,
Bucharest

Source: TabThePast Project's archive
Photo: Alexandru Ștefan

(Up): Sidonia Doica (Traian Șelmaru /
Mihnea Gheorghiu)

(Down): Victoria Ecaterina Moraru
(B. Elvin/Touchstone), Cătălin Vilcu
(Liviu Ciulei/Jaques the Melancholic),
Cătălina Frunză (David Esrig Celia)

2.4 The power relationship system inside the drama

It is reasonable to assume that Ciulei accepted this ambush-debate only on the condition that his own supporters be present, whom we identify in the young directors Lucian Pintilie and David Esrig—one vehement, intellectually subtle, ready to wrestle with the fiercest of critics; the other apparently timid, neutral, yet articulating the three most important points in favor of the production and against the criticism: the construction of an open relationship with the audience inspired by the Elizabethan stage; the inadequacy of reducing Shakespeare's content to sociological schemes, however "scientific"; and the suggestion of parallels between two historical moments in which the world changes and one system replaces another, while the artist finds himself at home in neither. This alliance is supported, of course, by Mihnea Gheorghiu, an influential defender of Ciulei and his production.

I do not know whether what we have done is historically unassailable, because we imagined the human dimension behind the political action. Personal ambitions and rivalries, internal motivations and intentions belong to the director's craft when working with a dramatic text. And even when discussing a political play—as many of Shakespeare's works are—we must imagine what the sources do not provide. In this case, the situation we were able to reconstruct has two main poles: Valentin Silvestru and Mihnea Gheorghiu. They seem to be the leaders of the two opposing directions clashing beneath the surface, and we assumed that the stake of the encounter was the leadership of the Bulandra Theatre.

Caught between the two groups are the editors of *Teatrul*. They had published Alexandrescu's review without considering the effect a mere critical article would have. But Ciulei requested the right to reply, which they had to grant, thus becoming his accomplices in the eyes of censorship. They now had to mend the conflict they carelessly triggered. No one knew how the meeting would end, and they had to save themselves regardless of its outcome. In their case, double language is most clearly visible. From what we deduced, one of them had to appear as an accuser of Ciulei, while secretly supporting him; while another had to seem like Ciulei's ally, while, in fact, delivering the most dangerous criticism. The strategy aimed to conceal, from both groups, their true sympathies—and ultimately, their lack thereof.

3. METHODOLOGY. THE STAGING OF A STAGING

3.1 Translating the elizabethan stage into our arena

A constant concern in Ciulei's work is the relationship between performance and audience, and the contemporaneity of the Elizabethan stage (Ciulei, 2009).

Directing for a stage with the audience on three sides substantially changes both the construction of the performance and, especially, the acting methods. It is impossible to perform in an Elizabethan-type space according to the same principles as in one predicated on a fourth wall, because in an arena, all the walls become the fourth wall. A stage surrounded by spectators deprives the actor of the possibility to hide, and the relationship with the audience must become more direct. The Italian-style stage creates illusion; the arena creates debate.

Just as in a ballet the convention of dancing en pointe does not prevent us from discerning its allusion to reality, just as reducing a painting to a single plane does not keep us from recognising the landscape, so here as well the theatrical form is a means of speaking to us about reality, about the world, about society, about life. This explanation should no longer have been necessary. Yet criticism demands it of me.

This is how I understood that the play should be staged. Not on an Elizabethan stage simply because that is how it was performed in Shakespeare's time, not on a stage like that of the Globe Theatre, where the play was first produced, and certainly not in order to make a demonstration of scenography or directing, but because on such a stage I believed the popular character of the performance could be realised, and because through such a stage the direct contact between the audience and the performers can turn the spectator into a living factor, a participant in the entire performance. The audience has fully responded to this procedure and follows the play actively, sentence by sentence, meaning after meaning. It accepts the convention, is amused when the performers themselves intentionally break it, is startled, only to let itself be drawn back a moment later into the rules of the game.

On such a stage I was able to remind the audience more strongly that they are attending a theatrical performance and not the unfolding of a reality. I could constantly tell them that what they have before their eyes is not Orlando, but an actor, a young leading man of the troupe who, 'with broad, theatrical gestures' and heavily made-up, makes the spectator disbelieve the immediate reality of the performance and instead believe in the reality contained within the overall metaphor of the play. If our heroes had acted 'simply' and 'naturally', we would have had to search, needlessly, for the inner logic of Oliver's transformation from evil to good, to justify geographically the reality of a landscape conceived decoratively by the author himself—like a tapestry scene, with unicorns and lions against a monochrome floral background framed with ribbons inscribed with proverbs. (Ciulei, 1961)

A general model for how action changes in an arena space is the situation of a trial. Here, structures of attention—the components of any stage situation—open the address toward an audience. The participants appear to speak to each other, but the prosecutor's questions to a witness are not meant to clarify the truth for the prosecutor, but for the audience, the jurors, the judge. This type of public address, characteristic of a trial, is defining of Elizabethan theatre and arises from the practical necessities of the stage. One can pretend the audience is not there only when shielded from it, when the audience sits quietly in the dark. But when one is surrounded by a large group of people, they must be dominated. Their attention must be captured and maintained, which leads to a type of acting that includes the audience—not through direct frontal address or Brechtian detachment, but by turning the performance into a debate, into a trial.

In her work *Ciulei și spectrul tatălui* [*Ciulei and the Specter of the Father*] (Hațiegan, 2024), theatre historian Anca Hațiegan offers a fascinating investigation and demonstration that the almost archetypal image of a trial haunts Ciulei's work and seems to appear, in one form or another, in nearly all his productions. All the more surprising, then, is the moment when the director himself finds himself in a dissimulated trial, as in the meeting at the Teatrul editorial office.

3.2 Palimpsest—revealing and disclosing

Every performance is a palimpsest, but in this case we can see even more clearly how successive layers take over and comment on the same material, turning theatre into a commentary on a commentary. We wanted to reinterpret Ciulei's reinterpretation of the Elizabethan space—of course without presuming that we are inventing anything new, by doing so. Our project seeks theatricality within a non-theatrical text and aims to eliminate theatricality where we would expect to find it. A performance closer to the audience is at once less spectacular—fewer means of performance remain—and more spectacular, if by this we understand the capacity to cause direct sensations. Our round table is an arena, and the fighters confronting each other can win only if they convince.

The directorial choices follow this palimpsest technique: we try to create a screen, through which another screen can be glimpsed, thus revealing the layer of Shakespeare's text. Our space is the interpretation of an interpretation, but the same applies to the logic of casting. We sought to produce distance between what we show and that which is shown. By emphasising the representational aspect—the difference between physical characteristics and historical reality—attention is shifted to what is being said and to internal motivations, to the workings of a system of relationships, rather than to what the critics participating in the debate

call “characters.” It is debatable whether our project is a reconstruction or an anti-reconstruction, because like Ciulei with *As You Like It*, we did not aim to reconstruct. The personalities created were not meant to be historically accurate, but logically coherent.

But the palimpsest also works on another level: the internal themes. We aimed to insert, like pieces of evidence introduced in a trial, a series of scenes from the production being discussed. These were not built as reconstructions of Ciulei’s production, but as arguments for the debate. Through each decision, we aimed to focus attention on the ideas being discussed and on how each is used to serve the pragmatic purposes of each group. One might say this led to an aesthetic that is sparse, austere, raw—intentionally withholding pleasure from the spectator, or concentrating it solely on the political and intellectual dimension. More precisely, on the pleasure of seeing the intellectual dimension being used politically.



Controversies.1961.As You Like It? Directed by: Eugen Gyemant
 With: Cătălin Vilcu, Alexia Maria Mocănescu, Mălina Andreescu, Victoria Ecaterina Moraru,
 Cătălina Frunză, Sidonia Doica, Bianca Archip, Alexandru Stan, Robert Brage
 2024, the CINETic Multifunctional Hall, I.L. Caragiale UNATC, Bucharest
 Source: TabThePast Project’s archive; Photo: Alexandru Ștefan.

3.3 Exile: a shakespearean theme / a political theme of 1962 Romania

Yet beyond this major theme, several hidden ones emerged, as we attempted to reconstruct scenes from *As You Like It*. One example, through which we can understand how the palimpsest operates beyond the main theme of our performance, is the scene between Rosalind and Jaques the Melancholic. Although the two see the world in the same way, they see their own mode of being in the world so differently that their views can never be reconciled. Around these two characters, the major criticisms aimed at Ciulei's production are concentrated because, although political expectations would have Jaques function as the author's voice criticising his era, in the 1961 production he was himself seen critically—as a voice commenting on the present—and constructed through a caricatural composition, lessening the viewer's adherence to what he says. "(...) His role as a herald of the end of a society is exaggeratedly attributed to him as a result of a superficial study and represents a vulgarized application of Marxist theory" (Ciulei, 1961).

Rosalind, by contrast, emerges as the true hero of the play, representing the enlightened line of Shakespeare's female characters, possibly modelled after Queen Elizabeth. Rosalind is the person who is a few steps ahead of her contemporaries, but must still live among them. Jaques is also a lucid thinker, but his lucidity reflects only outwardly; he cannot see himself clearly—an important Shakespearean theme: the failure to know oneself.

But if we consider that these roles were played by Liviu Ciulei and Clody Bertola, at a political moment of regime change—after the establishment of a world fundamentally different from the one in which they had grown up—and at a time when the question arose of whether to remain in this new world or leave it for another, then the scene between Rosalind and Jaques gains a less philosophical, but a more deeply human meaning. One pleads for fleeing a world he criticises; the other mocks exile. The theme of exile appears here not accidentally—it is the backbone and the intrigue of Shakespeare's play. Even if the production argued against exile, against withdrawal from the world, against escape—and in a way, for accepting with sad irony a political system that is seen critically—the mere fact that this echoed contemporary reality, made it suspicious of containing some subversive intent. Because critics could not pinpoint the subversion—because it did not exist in Ciulei's intentions—they accused him instead of lacking commitment, of being politically unclear.

Thus artistic content conceals the biographical layer, just as the dogmatic theorist rationalises Shakespearean motivations. It is striking to see the distance between the arguments used—sometimes brilliant, as in Silvestru's case; other

times comical through the overuse of stereotyped language, as with Nicolau—and the motivations pursued. But it should not surprise us, for it is logical that in a high-stakes game, players mobilise their strongest resources to win. And the more elevated the critical discourse, the more serious the situation.

4. CONCLUSIONS. LAYERING BY CREATING DISTANCE

We pursued the palimpsest effect by overlapping the discussion about Ciulei's production with the discussion about the discussion. In several moments, ambiguity emerges, raising the question of whether remarks on what the production intended—or should have intended—refer to Ciulei's *As You Like It* or to the performance in which we are participating, thereby questioning the contemporary relevance of the 1962 ideas about theatre. And these ideas remain, without a doubt, just as interesting today: how much of a performance is representation, and how much is merely an image, a commentary; how we decide what is contemporary in a classic text; where the border lies between actor and spectator, and how the latter participates in the performance.

A difficulty for the UNATC acting students involved in our project—and simultaneously an aspect that makes our approach particularly useful for actor training—is that, since the entire context is built on concealment and on language that hides, rather than expresses, debate-theatre calls for a more athletic, than emotional positioning. Events unfold according to the rules of a game that must become very clear to the audience—this is the director's challenge, as the rules of the situation are rather convoluted. If the rules are clear and the players fight for their objectives, emotions will arise in the audience. But it is not an acting system based on emotional work; rather it works against emotion, which must be hidden at all costs. Instead, actors must not only understand what the characters are saying—which is not always simple, given the intellectually demanding material—but must think through everything being discussed in real time. They must perform an act of thinking, which borders on acrobatics at times.

Double language and working with the distance between what characters think, what they say of what they think, and what they want to be understood from what they say, is also excellent training for actors, who by the nature of acting, tend to erase this distance. They will strive to be sincere. So a text in which they must be sincere while lying is, at the very least, a challenge. And even if we reduce the distance between ourselves and the character, the character—like any of us—still contains a distance between itself and itself.



Controversies.1961.As You Like It?, Directed by: Eugen Gyemant
 2024, the CINETic Multifunctional Hall, I.L. Caragiale UNATC, Bucharest
 Source: TabThePast Project's archive, Photo: Alexandru Ștefan
 Cătălin Vilcu (Liviu Ciulei/Jaques the Melancholic),
 Victoria Ecaterina Moraru (B. Elvin/Touchstone), Cătălina Frunză (David Esrig/Celia).

We pursued this distancing effect through casting as well, which ignores the historical characters' sex, age, and demeanor. We avoided any kind of composition—the kind for which Ciulei is attacked in the debate—to avoid turning our performance into a doctrinaire depiction of oppression and censorship. These emerge on their own without needing emphasis. More interesting than stating the traits of a totalitarian political system was examining the internal mechanisms through which they function, and in this sense performativity becomes genuinely educational. When you must persecute—because you are playing the persecutor—you can no longer remain at the level of theoretical statement. You must construct persecution in action. In this sense, theatre can be an excellent method for research, knowledge, and education.

In the end, I allowed myself a flagrantly non-historical gesture—a liberating, vital, trivial, demystifying, foolish, theatrical, absurd gesture—that reveals the absurdity of the event we have witnessed and the distance between our world and that of the story. At a time when everyone desperately seeks to make old stories relevant, it is important to notice that they are relevant because

they are old. You can learn just as much about the world you live in by discovering coincidences or unchanging elements from other eras; but just as well by opening your eyes and seeing the differences. And a world in which this trial can end the way it does, is still one of freedom.

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Eugen Gyemant is a theatre director at The Jewish State Theatre in Bucharest and a PhD Lecturer at I.L. Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest. Since graduating in 2008, he has directed 46 productions, with over 870 performances and more than 90,000 spectators. Of these, 8 productions are running in the 2025–2026 season. He has completed numerous translations and adaptations, including the translations of William Shakespeare’s plays *Richard the III-rd* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In 2017, he defended his doctoral thesis titled *Universul regizoral: Liviu Ciulei/The Stage Directing Universe: Liviu Ciulei*, after a two-year period in which he participated in creating the Liviu Ciulei archive. In 2024, he directed the production *Controversies.1961. As You Like It?*, in collaboration with playwright Mihaela Michailov and the Acting Master’s students at I.L. Caragiale UNATC in Bucharest.