

Pan-Demon, Emergency Reconfiguration. Peda-gogy, Art, Humanity

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Abstract: *The new pandemic times reveal, besides the dysfunctions of the health system, a profound and prolonged shortage of material and human resources, as well as psychical blockages, fears and all kinds of weaknesses that we are now forced to confront, being alone with ourselves and inside ourselves. And what is it that causes these meetings, these long adjourned encounters?*

If it is true that being political means integrating into the superstructure of political consciousness of a state, then solidarity can be considered the first political gesture of the Academic Artistic Community in Iasi. At the end of the pandemic, the main function of this facility will be to recover the memory of an event that took place on a global scale.

Equally, it could be the beginning of the study in a new type of theatrical performance, addressing post-pandemically people massively affected mentally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.

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Pan-Demon, a political gesture

If it is true that being political means integrating into the superstructure of political consciousness of a state, then solidarity can be considered the first political gesture of the Academic Artistic Community in Iasi.

In the performative installation created by UNAGE Iasi and carried out between October 28th-31st, we opted for the title *Pan-Demon* to highlight the starting point, the fact that it is rooted in the Sedcom Libris editorial project, as a gesture of multiplication, of solidarity of the Iasi Academic Community given the context.

The meaning of the title in the volume is to bring in the present the Leibnizian theory regarding the distribution of Evil in the world, according to which there are three forms of the evil: a) *The Metaphysical Evil*, implicit (contained) in Creation, b) *The Physical Evil*, a consequence of the original sin, representing the suffering of creatures, c) *The Moral Evil*, represented by the permanent temptation of humans to break the divine commandments. The idea that Leibniz came up with was that, in the best of all possible worlds, *Evil* is necessary. It tends to be poorly distributed in the sense of accumulations, and God, as a perfect being, watches over this best possible world by regulating it through what the philosopher calls “converging nodes” through which *The Evil* will become uniform (even). The idea that emerges from Professor Marius Dumitrescu’s text would be that the manifestation of the pandemic makes us all equal in front of one *supreme Bad (Evil)*.

In the light of the same solidarity, teachers, artists, and students in the field of visual arts, theater and music came together for the first time in the history of collaboration of the three major study directions of the National University of Arts in an interdisciplinary study that involved 106 participants. We consider that in the context of the 160 years of artistic higher education in Iasi, that we celebrated in 2020, the interdisciplinary study *Pan-Demon performative installation* represents the opening of a new type of thinking in the artistic creation of Iasi, a unique bastion in Europe through the presence of so many artistic fields within a parent university.¹ Then, the fact that we launched this study in a context of seclusion

¹The music field includes sections: Strings and piano, Percussion and Canto, Theoretical Music Studies. The field of theater includes: Acting, Marionette puppet, Directing, Choreography, Theater-management. The field of Visual Arts includes: Fine Arts, Design, Fashion-Clothing Design, Mural Art, Conservation-Restoration, History and Theory of Art.

(isolation), of blocking any possibility to create and research - in that exact period we were a closed city, this guarantees the authenticity of the gesture, turning it into an attitude.

At the aesthetic level, this new form of interdisciplinary study becomes manifest.

The dramaturgy of the 7th module

The 7th module starts from the basic text *Now*, written by Vasilica Bălăiță, as a diary (journal) during the extreme (limit) situation created by the pandemic. The text presents the life of a family in which one adult goes to work (father) and the other remains isolated in the house (mother). The dramatic tension comes from the reconfiguration of family life in the space everyone calls “home”. Relationships are painful by crushing existing mechanisms and routine, and equally, life becomes an odyssey through the mother’s effort to bring in the home space the activities carried out until then in institutional spaces: because the two children of the family no longer go to kindergarten, the mother will reinvent it from everything that happens daily, on weekly units of time (Ciobotea et al., 2016); because the teaching activity has been transferred online, the mother will turn it into an opportunity for live (online) research and creation. Because the mother considers sacredness (divinity) an integral part of the human being, she will redefine this aspect by keeping the religious holidays and by transforming the meals in the space of the house into a sacred act.

Concept: On the walls of the hall, some images filmed during a day in the Bălăiță family home are projected. The film is done with a 360° camera, edited, and played back with several video projectors (**FAVD Photo-Video Section**). On the left half of the room the images are realistic, and on the right half, the images are edited in a surreal formula. The sound installation plays in the background the original soundtrack of the movie, and in the foreground, we can hear the brain activity of the performer Vasilica Bălăiță (professor at **Faculty of Theater**), through the sounds rendered by brainwave monitoring with a Muse device. She is positioned in the middle of the room, centered on the demarcation between the video image sections (fields). She is seated on a rocking chair, has a table in front of her with objects specific for the coffee ritual, and shares the diary of her isolation (sound equipment for amplifying the voice).

The performative installation, an opening for the future

At the end of the pandemic, the main function of this facility will be to recover the memory of an event that took place on a global scale.

Equally, it could be the beginning of the study in a new type of theatrical performance, addressing post-pandemic people massively affected mentally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively (Luca et al., 2019, Luca et al., 2020).

Last but not least, the performative installation Pan-demon represents the beginning of a new type of relationship for the 106 participants in the project and the 305 visitors, by uniting us around hope and daring to remain artists and art lovers even in a context hostile to this form of manifestation of our physical, emotional and spiritual life.

Pan-Demon or about the isolation resistance

The new pandemic times reveal, besides the dysfunctions of the health system, a profound and prolonged shortage of material and human resources, as well as psychical blockages, fears and all kinds of weaknesses that we were now forced to confront, being alone with ourselves and inside ourselves (Valcea et al., 2016). And what is it that causes these meetings, these long adjourned encounters (Cîntec, 2020)?

We have read about the different neuroses, anxieties occurring on account of social isolation, a brutal awareness taken up around sickness, death and loss (Bolos et al., 2012; Burlea et al., 2012). We are not going to proceed on the consequences that these “encounters” put forward, and we are certainly not going to try and prove which one of them is beneficial or not. It is quite possible that, in fact, everything that occurs during the *encounter* with our being will lead us to a physical, psychological or emotional progress, effects that we can notice, most of the time, only at the end of the crisis. It is true that there are several markers that could be of great help to people during the confrontations with their self, important pillars which could propel the collective conscience towards a more in-depth understanding of the personal shadows, of the traumas that come out in the light and ask to be heard and seen. As this is out of our scope, we shall focus on the effects generated by this period of isolation on professors and students from the artistic academic environment of Iasi.

The impressive initiative of Sedcom Libris publishing house represented for “George Enescu” National University of Arts a good opportunity to recondition the status-quo of the spring confinement in an interdisciplinary performative manner. This artistic specificity was a

consequence of the existing restrictions: a maximum of 3-4 people in the same room, the impossibility to perform in specific venues, maintaining social distance, constantly wearing the facemask, the permanent disinfection of hands and of frequently touched surfaces, and so on.

The idea to create a framework in which the artistic staff strictly adhered to all these safety measures represented an act of awareness, as well as meeting an acute need of belonging. The prolonged online activity in the relationship between artists and artists, between academics and students has equally determined a distancing of the individuals from their job. The lack of physical involvement in situations, the almost nonexistent contact between individuals equally caused an isolation of the consciences of each actant involved in this collective process, while ignoring, obviously, the chaos produced by the proximity of death or by the flow of information more and more varied and not likely to detect authenticity.

Pan-Demon was the encounter of a group of artists, Associate Professor PhD Octavian Jighirgiu, Lecturer PhD Vasilica Bălăiță and PhD Student Andreea Darie, joined by PhD Student Alina Dincă-Pușcașu, Lecturer PhD Adrian Buliga and Andrei Emilian. The first work phase was represented by the selection of 13 articles from the volume *Pan-Demon* and by their conceptual-performative (re)construction. During the second phase, the information was disseminated by the academics of “George Enescu” National University of Arts from all three fields of activity (Visual Arts, Music and Theatre), followed by the completion of the modular work teams with students coordinated by the latter. The next step was to implement all the work directions set out during videocall sessions. Our documenting showed that the project’s interdisciplinary direction is unique in the local and national artistic education. Thus, the main innovative element was revealed by itself, beyond its therapeutic opportunities.

We shall attempt in what follows to offer an overview of the meanings intended or discovered during the working process of one of the 10 performative modules which were created. It is about module 5 of the Installation, called *Aurel* after the text with the same name by Dumitru Crudu, poet and playwright from the Republic of Moldova.

The narrative essay talks about two plans, both authentic and brutally anchored into the reality which emerged during the spring of this year. On the one side, we can observe the perception of a homeless man, a stranger to all the fears caused by the new coronavirus and then the behaviour of those outside him, terrified, in a hurry and confused. We can see how the text proposes us to merge the two perspectives and the conflicts occurring at their intersection. The homeless man deals with the lack of

understanding the others' behaviour, with the distancing and the rush around him – a major change of the daily existence, and “the others” with keeping track of the consequences that these fears have on their behaviour, with the new reflexes that they acquire and with the gradual inner dysfunctionality.

The performative concept of this module represented for us, PhD Student Andreea Darie, a work theme during the doctoral *site* open to study the clown from several perspectives (anthropological, philosophical, performing technique, etc.). The artistic universe of this room consisted in the presence of a clown, a hybrid shape between *the whiteface clown* and *Auguste*, closed inside a ball with a circumference of 2 meters. On the black walls of the room there were arrows indicating the way to the various social spaces that people are more or less addicted to (drugstore, market, bar, church, school, grocery, hospital, etc.) All around, hanging from the ceiling, as well as on the floor, there were green and blue balls, similar to the media advertised visual identity of the new virus. The costume, likewise the identity of the written character, was composed of clownish hybrid elements, clothing combinations of the *Contra-Auguste clown*, *Auguste* and *mime*. The bare feet, uncharacteristic to this stereotype, suggest the authenticity, the uncovering of the self while encountering the other, the lack of diversion. The make-up can be included in the same mixed architecture, being built, equally, from elements of the *whiteface clown* (eyebrows, ears, eyes and lips) and those of *Contra-Auguste* (cheeks and nose).

These descriptions aim at underlining the modern compositions which, using conceptual suggestion, were applied to the entire environment of reference and existence of a man manifesting himself outside the social norms and limits considered beneficial and unshakable. The actual moment of interaction with the audience is based mainly on the impossibility to communicate, to interact, to share and to belong. That plastic ball prevents direct touch. Such a present awareness can bring new perceptions, and along with them, hopefully, new behaviours.

The sub-theme of this module leads towards at least two directions of reference. One of them objectifies the relational micro-universe in which, in fact, there are no encounters between beings, but between perceptions of each other. The second direction relates to the new pandemic reality which consists in the construction of a tight, restrictive, protective circle and, implicitly, isolated from the outside world. This immersive module makes the performer-spectator confront realities from which he is forced to detach in order to look at them objectively.

The interdisciplinary performative installation *Pan-Demon* represents an act of therapy, creation, expression and belonging to a global event, in front and inside of which we are all present. We will, probably, observe later on the effects caused by this extreme situation of the humankind and their evolution in perspective. Are these opportune lessons taught to us once in a while? Was this pandemic crisis necessary in order to objectify the group and individual social neuroses and anxieties? Maybe so; otherwise when would self rediscovery have occurred?

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