



Interview by S. Volodina, “Vash Dosug”, January 2010

ALEXANDER MORFOV:

TO LOVE AND TO FORGIVE



Where do you feel more comfortable – in Moscow or in St. Petersburg?

I feel much better here, in St. Petersburg, at the “Komissarzhevskaya” theatre. I can’t say that actors in Moscow are not good, on the contrary, but in St. Petersburg relations are different – we always stay after the show, we talk and discuss – we enjoy being together. It’s not the same in Moscow – after a show everybody goes home, just leaves.

In the Moscow theatre “Lenkom” you staged the production “The Visit” and “Eclipse”...

When we were rehearsing “Eclipse” there was a certain tension because we wanted to escape from the famous film as well as from previous stagings of that text. I think we managed to avoid all attempts for comparison. Sasha Abdulov helped a lot during my work back then. He was next

to me all the time and we created the show together – that was his contribution, his idea and that’s how the production was gradually being built. Now “Lenkom” is touring with the production “The Visit” in Kiev. I hope they also come to St. Petersburg.

Among the five productions you staged at the “Komissarzhevskaya” Theatre which one is your favourite?

If you have five children – which one would you pick? All of them are favourite. I have put a piece of myself in each of them and cannot do this just like that – for the money or for the working contract.

What kind of actors do you find interesting?

Talented and smart. I want the actor to be a thinking person, to have a talent and to provoke me, and not to be some mechanical performer. I always try to analyse a role together with the actor.

How do you take failures?

I’m sure everyone is entitled to failures and I tell myself: now here I will fail but it’s alright, I’m allowed to fail.

It’s thought that the modern viewer goes to theatre to relax and have a laugh...

Yesterday in Moscow I had a very interesting conversation with a taxi driver. We were stuck in a traffic jam for half an hour and we used the time to chat a bit. He tried to explain to me that he wanted to see theatre productions that would relax him. “You see – he told me – I’ve seen very serious shows, ones that make you think, and then you have all those thoughts in your head – those emotions won’t let me be for the next few days. That’s why now I want to see more easy-going shows.” And it’s not about him being primitive or uneducated – I had talked to him for half an hour and knew that he was interested in many important things in this world and in life – friendship, betrayal, disloyalty, love... But man does not want to take responsibility – even for one’s own feelings. Such an escape from responsibility is found in many, and that’s frightening...

What is the reason you are a stage director?

The reason is the Human being – within me, within the others. I’m searching for an answer to the question of who we are, who I am, how many personalities live inside me or inside anyone else – I’m erratic, inconsistent, nice and terrible, genial and talentless, stupid and smart...

Are you able to forgive an act of betrayal?

I can forgive but won’t forget it. I can forgive because there is always some reason for the betrayal. I would find those reasons and arguments that justified the deed... But if someone has betrayed you just because he wanted to – now that – I cannot forgive... We used to live in times when everyone betrayed everyone, there were informers all around, working for the secret services and they collected information about us on a daily, no, on an hourly basis...

And you still trust people?

Yes. I would otherwise have to live in a total reclusion. And you better live with bad people than live completely alone. Because there is some good in every person and sometimes it's simply the circumstances that force you to betray, to be a scum. There are also weaknesses in all of us. We all love someone, we have children, we try to raise them good. Can you image that anyone would raise his child as to become a bad person?

If you hadn't chosen the path of theatre what would your profession now be?

I don't know. In my childhood, as with every child, I had this dream of becoming a test pilot... I've always had a talent for mathematics – I studied in a mathematical high-school, then for two years in a Technical university, I was almost enrolled in a military school – my father was a military man. I think that in whatever profession I had ended up, I would have found my way to arts...

What does a director need to sacrifice for his profession?

Very often – his personal life. It also happens that you are forced, want it or not, to accept different people as they are – impersistent, not loving, not understanding... While I can't live without love and when love is on hold – I make up for myself a new, intriguing fantasy or some imagery. It's important to me that I'm always in a state of being in love. But sometimes, when you are busy loving, you forget about your family. Then your closest ones become victims of your latest devotion. This is a heavy burden because you realise – it's not suppose to be like that, they are not suppose to forgive you every time. But, thank God, I'm often forgiven...

Who do you address with the “Soap Angels”?

All the people. We wanted to make a human production. I knew that there would be the choosy viewers who won't like it – the modern theatre critics, the conceptualists who always know how modern theatre should sound like. But I'm interested in the common, sensitive, sentimental viewer. When you present him, the one who chose to come and see this show, with specific problems – without trying to make him look stupid or dumb – he suddenly becomes interested in analysing those for himself, for his own life. If the person on stage is not simply showing off or trying to look like a big star but is asking humanely each viewer in the hall – “And what about you – do you want to be loved?” – then each viewer will answer. I think theatre should pose simple, human problems. Every scene from this production brings a different message. If we try now to separate a single thought or a single emotion – it would make the production very poor. At the end of it, the most important message is to remain human, to preserve our souls regardless the circumstances. We have to forgive. We have to love and to forgive.