



Daniela Angelova, TV Europa, 30.05.2011

ALEXANDER MORFOV:

IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME TO BECOME A DIRECTOR



This is Alexander Morfov's admission in the studio of TV Europa, remembering his early years in theatre. The renowned director shared that he still hasn't lost his feeling and passion for theatre and that his strive is far from proving any point but he is simply thankful for having the chance to do what he loves most.

How did theatre provoke you in the beginning?

I'm connected to art. My mother was a teacher in music, she

used to compose songs, she ran a choir. In her childhood she was also curious about theatre. I was not obsessed with theatre since my childhood. I was obsessed with the street, with playing outside, with adventures. During my military training when I would get arrested I would entertain my friends and one of them once said that I should become an actor. This stuck into

my head. When I was enrolled at the Technical University I signed for their theatre company. The director of this company was Stoyan Alexiev who is now part of the troupe of my production “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest” and before that he was also in “The Lower Depths”. He was actually my first teacher. In his theatre company I spent almost two years – after quitting the university I had decided to do theatre.

How did you enter professional stage, you weren’t an actor..?

After quitting the university I applied at the Theatre Academy and failed the exams the first year, so I started as a stage worker for the theatre in Sliven, also light manager and props manager.

Did you imagine, back then, that one day you will have accomplished what you have accomplished today? What were your dreams back then?

I can’t say I remember clearly but deep inside I’ve always had the belief that this will be my profession. It never occurred to me to become a stage director. Although I was an organiser – we had a second theatre within the theatre – ‘Theatre of the stage worker and other staff’, I ran it. After each premiere we would make a programme to entertain the actors, I used to write poems, compose music. I was quite confident and ambitious although suspicious by nature, hesitant.

What does your road to professional theatre stage look like?

I successfully passed the exams at the Academy the third time I applied, puppet theatre at that, not drama theatre. Later they announced a competition for a place for directing in Russia and I won the competition. Five days before I leave I received a message that the place is closed and I had to go back to the Academy. I had burned all bridges there and had no chance to return. At that point Julia Ognyanova called me and invited me to study directing with her... everything was a series of chances. I suffered a lot – because you want something to happen and it just doesn’t, as if someone’s pulling your leg, you are being humiliated for not being good enough, they tell you that there are far more talented people than you, more reliable. But I didn’t give up.

So you proved that you are good enough, I guess...

I don’t have anything to prove. I am happy because I take pleasure in my work. I love my job, I love having the chance to support my family with this and even, from time to time, to be greeted for what I do...

How has your work evolved since “Political cabaret”? You staged this production in your student’s years, one changes over time.

Not much because the thrill of making theatre now is as the thrill I had back then. Not it's even more challenging, somehow. This whole commotion before you start, the hesitation whether you will be able to inspire the actors with your idea, to convince them that you are rightfully sitting in the director's chair. Every actors has a slight mistrust for the director in the beginning.

Maybe because they have their own idea of the character?

Yes, very often you would see actors that stage themselves, they have their own concepts. Each time you rehearse you have to overcome this mistrust, this barrier.

Is this the most challenging thing about directing – convincing actors and then the audience?

This is a hugely worrying, hugely tormenting... to me, personally, because I know a lot of directors who have no respect for the actor. People who don't care of anyone's thoughts or emotions, they are as confident as that! They are rude, humiliating, usually consider themselves to be geniuses and then they just leave. They never go through this emotional torment that I or people like me go through. The most difficult moment to me is when I have formulated all the problems, at that point you are basically faced with mere survival. The most enjoyable moment is being obsessed with thoughts, fantasy, ideas – all of them coming to you at once, one after another – so many of them that you cannot even say them out loud. This condition is comparable to flying, I feel truly happy. Then some obstacle occurs and you have to break your head over it but it lasts for not more than a few days and it's worth it, especially while flying.

Sounds like the worst thing is having no ideas?

There are a lot of directors who lack ideas but still manage to stage a production – based on mathematics, on analysis, on logic. I've never found that interesting, I don't draw plans in theatre.

How do you draw your productions then?

I enter the skin of all characters, I live days on end within each of them, I imagine what would their actions be, their problems. Those are complicated dialogues that I lead – between myself and the characters. This is on the edge of schizophrenia, there is no genuinely sane person who does this sort of work and hasn't been on the edge of going crazy.

Your productions are said to have a very specific style. Low and high levels go hand in hand in your work. Is there a definition for your style, is what the critics say true?

You can trust a critic (*laughs*). I've never paid attention to critics' opinions and I'm not reading them since about 10 years. I've always searched for what presents life as it is. Look

around, everywhere the lows and highs are the same, unfortunately in the past few years we are witnessing more lows than highs. Our mission is to continue supporting the highs – I mean, purity of thoughts, purity of genuine human existence – those are the desired heights for me and they always go hand in hand with the depths. Everything else is false and boring. It's interesting for me how a granny stumbling over something and rolling down the stairs is funny to some kids, laughing, saddening to her friend, enriching for her daughter who quietly awaits to finally inherit her, and painful for the granny herself, suffering while falling... there are so many points of view – you can first laugh, then cry, I find this the most authentic. Imagine if we could only cry with one eye and laugh with the other... that's how life is.

Are there similarities between what we see in “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest” and what goes around here?

There are some. This is what triggered me to stage this text because judging by myself, I can see this brutal modernity, a world of corruption, violence, avarice and money – this is all stressing me out, making me neurotic, forcing me to shrink into myself and if I were weaker, I would have completely hidden from it. Maybe there is still some strength in me that makes me want to fight this world, like a man, I want to defeat it. I won't be surprised if one day I go completely nuts and wish to hide somewhere as those people did, they hid in the madhouse because they simply have no strength to endure those things in their lives.

And no alternative?

Yes.

Why did you decide to show this to the audience? This is your second stage version. The first one was in Moscow and was accepted by the audience very well.

Yes, it is still on the repertory of Lenkom Theatre.

But the subtitle there is “Eclipse”, right?

Yes. Problems are identical, not much different from ours. It's just that the amplitude is much larger. The rich are much richer and the poor are much poorer. And then, what about the average, normal man – he is in Russia as he is in Bulgaria. I don't think I... I believed that I can make a better show with this team here than the production in Moscow and I think that Deyan is a much better actor than his Russian colleague.