

The Digital Theater Festival

Welcome the participants of the symposium and the guests of the 4th Tbilisi Biennale of Stage Design 2022 . The topic of my presentation today is the digital theatre festival "Moz-Art". The festival was held for the first time in 2020 at the base of Tbilisi Youth Theater. Hotel complex "Kachreti-Ambassador" was the partner of the festival.

The Digital Theater Festival was created during the pandemic. The existence of the theater has been challenged. This festival aims to create an alternative vision and inspire new practices for the functioning of the theater. The goal of the first season was to try and figure out how the theater could integrate different digital mediums. The Moz-art festival had become the platform that allowed artists, scenographers, stage designers to show their abilities, expand their artistic thinking and turn non-theatrical environments into stages for dramatic plays.

The pandemic has had a severe impact on culture, especially on the theatre, since the theatre exists by its audience. As a result of Covid-regulations, after the first wave of the pandemic, theatrical performances were allowed in open spaces. Transferring performances to open spaces required scenographers to solve different and difficult tasks. "Moz Art" festival allowed directors and scenographers to turn open spaces into theatrical stages.

The format of the festival is application-based Jury members anonymously select 5 projects. After the presentation, the jury selects the winners in different nominations.

So in 2020, 5 plays were selected for the festival through a competition. Performances were held in the park area of "Kachreti-Ambassador" hotel, in different locations.

The main idea is that, every new season uses different multimedia technologies in order to create new experiences and formats. The concept changes over time. The main focus and attention are on independent artists so that they can realize their creative intentions.

The experiments of the 2020 festival showed us that the acting environment can become interesting in which fine elements are enriched with different mediums, and new technologies play an especially big role in them.

The scenographic space was conceptual in the festival plays. Due to pandemic regulations, performances were allowed only in open spaces. There were also a number of regulations that forced the directors and artists to take into account the placement of the audience and the flow of people.

This experiment was carried out in 2020 on a high level, each performance was experimental and innovative with both organization of spaces and use of decorations.

The plays - Disaster, No Exit and Phaedra - were the most interesting in that regard.

The play "Disaster" became a performance which depicted the spiritual crisis of the nation in a naturalistic poster way, just as it's in the works of Georgian classicist Davit Kldiashvili.

In the play No Exit, the audience's conditional hall created a closed space from which the exit took place in the void (the open field where the performance was held) and it became a theatrical metaphor.

In the play Phaedra, the actors were accompanied by a video shoot. This was made to show how social networks and various means of surveillance make human life open and accessible to everyone and people losing their individual freedom.

The stage designers used natural lighting in Disaster, Pearda and Frenzy Of Two, and the use of different lighting systems in No Exit and Kobo Abe - The man who turned into a stick. The stage became related to the terrain of the park. The breaking of the conventional stage board made the playing spaces more plastic and dynamic.

In the second season, the organizers preferred it to be in English. The season was supposed to be for a young audience – it was selected several fairy tales, and animations. Due to the second wave of Covid, The festival could not take place in the summer, so we limited ourselves to only one show which included:

Two Fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen, which SCombined into one play and it took place in an outdoor space. "Daniel's Magic Garden" - the name of the rose garden, where the organization had played for the children.

The third season of Moz-Art was planned in the city of Gori. 5 plays were chosen within the framework of the digital festival. Based on ancient plays or their modern reminiscences. Therefore, we found a place, an old dilapidated column, where a water scene, touch lights, and a round screen with a laurel frame would be placed. Digital lights would be installed around the stage, which would change colour and stability according to the vibrations of the sound. Objects placed on the old buildings of the city. For example, "Citizens" and "Kartli" would be installed in different parts of the stage and would be illuminated with laser lights. We wanted to transfer the entire content of the festival to the stage with symbols and transform the old, abandoned object into a new, experimental space for the interest of the audience and the maximum involvement of the creative team creating the play.

Unfortunately, the third festival did not take place, but Moz-art was the first important experiment in terms of holding a theatrical performance in an alternative space and using new media technology. This experiment was innovative which has great potential in the future.

Thank you for your attention.