

## Emotional Attendance of the Pre-school Audience at the Emotional Context of the Play and the Affective Life of the Characters

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**Abstract:** *Expressing ideas and feelings through the means of its specific art, the puppet show addresses to the affectivity and sensitivity which, at the age of re-school audience are the inward support of all actions and generate an endless series of artistic emotions and feelings which lead to the confinement of certain esthetic and moral feelings, contributing to the complex development of children. The content of audience's ideas, expressed through a convincing emotional form, positively influences the process of development of children's character. It is an established fact that for using Arts as mean of education, firstly it has to be an aim of education.<sup>2</sup> This means that Arts have formative value only in the sense it is achieved as such.*

**Key words:** *puppet play; pre-school child; feelings; spectator; characters; esthetic;*

### Introduction

The child's approach to Art represents also the transformation of Art into a mean of development and modelling of his personality. The child's receptivity and sensibility for beauty are required to be cultivated in order to become a fundamental and steady feature of each personality.

The double aspect of theatre – literature and art of the show– contributes to the multivalent approach of the reality. In the auditorium, the artistic emotion of the audience takes shape as a fact of social psychology. The auditorium becomes a laboratory de esthetic education. The psychologists are unanimous in considering the pre-school stage as being of a great and perpetual curiosity<sup>3</sup>. It is the period of „intellectual hunger” or of „why?” This period, also called „the age of questions” is a motivational factor of great educative value. The characteristic of the pre-school age is also the fact given by the richness of emotions, the child living all what he likes as shape, color and movement, on affective level. The problems of ethics take a special significance for the child: he was shown what „is beautiful” and what „is not beautiful” to do. The esthetical gains an ethical coloratura at this age. On his affective, reach and sincerely expressed background the sentiments are educated.

Another characteristic of this age is the spirit of imitation which must be harnessed. The tendency to imitate, so specific to childhood, is also due to their impressionable nature. Without a formed critical spirit, the child imitates indiscriminately, anything. Therefore, it is necessary to offer them positive models of life and behavior, which the puppet theater performance is and should aim to do through its generous repertoire

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<sup>2</sup> Salade, Dumitru & Ciurea, Rodica. 1973. *Education through Art and Literature* – studies. Bucharest: Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Lovinescu, A. V.. 1970. *The Psychology of pre-school child* – Manual. Bucharest: Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, p. 75.

## 1. Objectives

In preschool children's psychology, emotions and feelings are defined as reflecting the relationships between people and the objects or situations that provoked them. Therefore, the same situation can provoke different feelings in different people. Emotions are elementary affective processes, and feelings reflect complex relationships between people and their environment, especially the social environment. Theater performances place the child in more complex situations than those experienced through personal experience, making them aware of the feelings one can experience in various situations. The imitation reflex contributes to enriching the number of situations that can provoke one emotion or another.<sup>4</sup> In preschoolers, higher feelings develop, namely moral, intellectual, and aesthetic feelings, whose elements are only sketched in the earlier period. Often, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic feelings merge into a single positive or negative attitude toward the heroes of the play. They love positive heroes and consider them the most beautiful, while negative heroes are not only bad but also ugly to the preschool spectator.

The characters in the plays express different feelings, developing the child's ability to understand the experiences of those around them. The preschool child's activity has a strong affective coloring. Through puppet theater, certain situations can be created where the expected feeling naturally arises. The child's thinking is very changeable; their social relationships are too little considered to talk about authentic feelings<sup>5</sup>.

### *1.1. Is the young child capable of moral feelings?*

Aesthetically, what is actually garish is not taken as beautiful. Therefore, the responsibility regarding the character's refinement, psychological motivation, and consistency of their actions becomes greater. Negligently conceived characters can cause confusion or even unwanted effects in the child's soul. The child's feelings are in formation, and the puppet theater's efforts converge toward molding them along with the great attitudes of the personality.

The formation and development of attitudes, feelings, and motivation presuppose, as a necessary condition, passing through the stages of knowledge. A single theater performance cannot form feelings or attitudes, but it can sensitize children through the affective charge it presents, creating fertile ground for the influences they are systematically exposed to in kindergarten. The better the puppet theater performances manage to bring the lived situations to the children, the more the transmission of the play's affective charge can be achieved, and the more we can expect the children-spectators to "live" the situations presented in the performance.

Perceiving the performance consists of an intimate complex of affectivity and intelligibility; in the theater hall, children find themselves in front of another available world, free for complex participation. The theatrical performance succeeds in deciphering this miraculous unknown, which is the wondrous universe of a child's mind. Without diminishing the primary importance of the dramatic text, the theater has the capacity to visually and plastically transmit a content of ideas, in other words, the ability to suggest through the intrinsic poetry of the scenic image<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Gîrboveanu, Maria. 1975. *Some Psychological Aspects Regarding the Appreciation of Artworks and the Aesthetic Preferences of Preschoolers*. Bucharest: Pedagogical Journal, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Debesse, Maurice. 1970. *The Psychology of the Child from Birth to Adolescence*. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, p. 120.

<sup>6</sup> Gîrboveanu, Maria, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

### *1.2. Puppet theater transmits the real in the form of the imaginary.*

For the child, even real objects take on fantastic forms in the process of photographing the world around them. In puppet theater performances, one finds the literary text, music, visual arts, choreography, and artistic interpretation. In this respect, puppet theater has that complex of means through which its influence can be exerted on children through all channels: visual, auditory, emotional, and intellectual. Therefore, performances realized with artistic mastery are intensely experienced by children, and their memory lingers long and influences their way of thinking.

## **2. Results and discussions**

Observing closely in the presence of the spectators the plays from the repertoire of the "Căluțul de mare" Children's and Youth Theater Constanța, I notice every time their desire to be active participants in the performance, their desire to enter into this game offered to them. Directors, actors, and set designers experiment with specific forms to engage the child-spectator in the scenic game. The specificity of our spectators' age, their psychological coordinates, and their level of knowledge impose finding and simultaneously using a wide range of performances and various texts to constitute the starting point of the theatrical performance. Therefore, a fundamental direction in the aesthetic program of the "Căluțul de mare" Children's and Youth Theater Constanța is the construction of a repertoire that stands out through the generosity of its message.

In its 21 years of existence, the theater has had and still has a rich repertoire, addressing children of different ages: fairy tales, stories that help develop moral qualities, and educational performances inspired by great classic and universal literature. The theater has in its repertoire plays that invite children to understand major facts, feelings, and actions, performances that contribute to aesthetic education, playing a particularly important role in the development of the human personality. Due to this role of forming and developing aesthetic, moral, and social feelings, aesthetic education constitutes one of the educational objectives of puppet theater.

Living the performance moment as a game that is contemplated, first of all, the three-four-year-old child learns to become a spectator.

Art being a cultural phenomenon, by knowing it, the child uses and develops their own originality.<sup>7</sup> Its specific character is formability, aiming at understanding an idea expressed plastically by someone else, acting on the cognitive component of the child's psyche: expressing their own impressions about the performance, offering the possibility of translating new affective experiences into their own creation, acting in the direction of engaging the actional-character component of the child's psyche. The objectives of my research (in the sense of a natural experiment) were to capture the type of spontaneous reactions of children in receiving the puppet theater performance and preferences for certain characters. I chose performances of the "Căluțul de mare" Children's and Youth Theater with educational and affective content, accessible through the clarity of the conflict, simplicity of construction, helping them to discover its meaning and taste its beauty, performances in which the child following the story can identify on an imaginary level with the hero of the fairy tale, which cultivates goodness, courage, friendship, and diligence.

The chosen performances were: "Pinocchio" after Carlo Collodi, "Jack and the Beanstalk" after Joseph Jacobs, "The Old Woman's Daughter and the Old Man's Daughter" after Ion Creangă. I followed the behavioral reactions every time and observed that the young spectators

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<sup>7</sup> Salade Dumitru, Ciurea Rodica, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

effectively participate in the events the heroes of the plays go through. They revolt against negative heroes, rejoice in the positive heroes' successes, sometimes intervene from the audience, giving advice to the positive heroes on how to avoid the dangers that threaten them or punish the enemies. I saw those in the small group gradually move from bewilderment in front of the unknown (those who are in their first contact with puppet theater) to the restlessness of the curious child, eager to see and understand everything. The mimicry and gestures of the child-spectators, carefully followed, allowed me to record reactions of joy or sadness, sympathizing with the play's hero, applause for acts of courage. I also noticed some psychological aspects regarding the preferential choices of preschoolers concerning the puppet theater performance. The child operates quite often with aesthetic notions but also with moral ones: beautiful, ugly, good, bad, etc.

The preschool child can perceive a work of art through their way of seeing and understanding if given the opportunity, whether or not they receive an aesthetic education.<sup>8</sup> It is known that the preschooler is sensitive to color and shape, which eventually become criteria for preferential choice. This increases the responsibility of puppet theater creators, who, beyond observation, must engage children in an imaginative life that extends, colors, or transfigures reality.

Theater, a domain of dreams and enthusiasm laden with emotion, adorned with fiction and symbols, is the universe where each child's sensitivity opens up, feelings develop, and are expressed more clearly.

Puppet theater preserves the valuable tradition of this ancient art, while also finding direct expression of communication through a diversity of scenic forms. The child is particularly receptive to beauty, and all the efforts of our theater converge towards achieving this BEAUTY.

### 3. Conclusions

In general, it can be concluded that the education of sensitivity and feelings through puppet theater performances is possible and should begin at a young age when the child is eager and receptive to knowing and understanding the world.

We find that the educational function of art is reflected in the key compartments of human personality, as aesthetic value leads to affective and social values. The influence of aesthetic education appears to a greater extent in the affective and ethical sphere. There also emerges a genesis of aspirations and ideals related to the perspective of developing the child's personality.

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<sup>8</sup> Lovinescu, A. V., *op. cit.*, p. 73.