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The Emergence of Physical Theatre in Hungary

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Abstract

This thesis is informed by Santana's embodiment theory (2006) and Lívia Fuchs' idea that all "artists have their roots and predecessors" (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 61). I have explored the political, social and cultural circumstances in Hungary from the end of World War II (1945) in order to understand how the role of the performing body on stage has changed and how this led to the appearance of physical theatre as a genre during the 1990s. The aim of this research has been to understand what the roots of this practice are, what it means for a Hungarian audience and how it has evolved in contemporary Hungarian theatre. Using qualitative research methods, I have conducted in-depth interviews with four practitioners. First, I investigated Csaba Horváth's career and his working methods in order to understand how he and his company (Forte Company) became identified with the genre of physical theatre in Hungary and what these forms meant to him. I then examined the work of three directors (Kristóf Widder, Máté Hegymegi and Attila Soós), who were Horváth's students in the *Theatre Director - Specialization in: Director and Choreographer of Physical Theatre* programme at The University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest (2009-2014). My analysis of their working method has been important in order to see how they have constructed the tools and, therefore, the genre of physical theatre according to their own training, aesthetics and compositional forms. This research has enabled me to understand how physical theatre has evolved in contemporary Hungarian theatre practice in respect to its historical roots and lineage.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Even the most innovative and experimental artists have their roots and predecessors: [...]. This is valid, it seems, even if the artist himself does not know about his precursors or decides to reject either his contemporaries or the representatives of a previous generation (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 61).

Embodiment theory (Santana, 2006) draws our attention to the connection between humans and their environment. It shows that there is a constant bidirectional exchange of information. Humans form their environment, but at the same time, their environment affects how they think and behave as well. Therefore, theatre, as an art form, cannot be examined without locating it in space and time, since the way artists create is the direct or indirect consequence of the circumstances (whether those be political, social, financial or cultural) in which they work. This is what Shevtsova highlights by arguing that "theatre is not simply an artistic event driven by aesthetic rules, but a social (collective) and societal (belonging to a given society) phenomenon as well" (Shevtsova quoted in Imre, 2018: 18). This means, as Imre further elaborates, that

> [t]he theatrical event cannot only be understood as a process that occurs between text and performance, between performance and spectator or between spectators and text. It can also be defined, on one hand, as an institution with structural and hierarchical relations, which (re)presents the society's/community's fundamental questions, on the other hand, it can be understood as a phenomenon which is embedded in the given society's cultural, historical, ideological and political circumstances (Imre, 2018: 18).

Therefore, I am arguing that in order to understand how an art form appeared in a country and what it means in its culture, it is important to examine the events that preceded the formation of that particular art form and the current circumstances. The preceding events show what tendencies, which events, and whose work laid the ground for the appearance of the new form or tendency. The current circumstances show what makes the existence of the work possible in the present. In this dissertation, I intend to map how the role of performing body evolved even before the notion of physical theatre appeared in order to understand the origins of and the circumstances that made the appearance of physical theatre possible in Hungary. Furthermore, I will analyse what physical theatre means, at present, in Hungarian theatrical culture by examining Csaba Horváth's and his successors', Máté Hegymegi, Attila Soós and Kristóf Widder's, work. The idea that drives this research is the opening quotation

of my dissertation from Lívia Fuchs (see above), which suggests that even if the artist does not recognise it, his work is a direct or indirect consequence of its predecessors' work. Thus, in my research, my aim was to discover the links between the antecedent circumstances and the current artistic work, focusing primarily on the Hungarian practice. The main purpose of this is to gain a broader sense of how this form appeared and to provide an understanding of what physical theatre means in the Hungarian theatrical context.

In 1986, DV8 Physical Theatre was founded in England. Although the term appeared before[1], Lloyd Newson was the first one to explicitly use this term as part of the company's official name. This was an important step because it indicated that they were trying to do something new, something different, which could not necessarily be described simply as dance (theatre). This term was "useful for getting out of the gravitational pull of certain normalizing fields" (Chamberlain in Murray and Keefe, 2007: 118). However, as time went by, this terminology became very popular, and by 1996 it was used to describe a wide range of work: work based on dance, as in the case of DV8, work based on mime following Copeau, Decroux and Lecoq's methods, and work based on the experiments of Meyerhold, Artaud and Grotowski (ibid.). Furthermore, European avant-garde, live art and performance art all influenced new ways of thinking about the performing body on stage, therefore broadening the ideas about what *physical theatre* or *physical in theatre* might be. This means that the notion of *physical theatre* eventually became complex and hard to define.[2] In contrast to this, there was an almost twenty-year delay in the appearance of the notion of physical theatre in Hungary, and it is mainly associated with one practitioner and his company; Forte Company - the first company in Hungary that called itself physical theatre - was founded by Csaba Horváth in 2005, and until now, if Hungarians talk about physical theatre, they mainly talk about Horváth's and Forte Company's work.

As far as I was able to trace back the notion of physical theatre in Hungary, it seems that it appeared in the Hungarian theatrical language at the beginning of the 1990s, thanks to DV8's guest performance of their production *Strange Fish* in 1992. This is probably why the expression '*physical theatre*' in Hungarian exists as a word for word translation of the

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[1] The term 'physical theatre' first appeared in a review written by Peter Ansorge about Nancy Meyers' Antigone production in 1975. (Szemessy, 2013)

[2] For more about the complexity of the notion and about all the different kinds of works of physical theatre, see: Murray, Simon; Keefe, John (2016). *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction.* Routledge.

English, i.e. *fizikai színház.* This is important because if we examine the definition of 'physical' in the Oxford English Dictionary, we can see that there are four main groups of meaning linked to this adjective (1. Senses relating to medicine., 2. Senses relating to philosophy., 3. Senses relating to matter or nature., 4. Senses relating to human body). All these sections are divided into several, more precise definitions. I believe that in the case of physical theatre, *physical* is used in reference to the senses relating to human body, more precisely in the following definition: "Involving or inclined towards bodily contact or activity; tactile; strenuous; vigorous" (oed.com). In contrast, the word *fizikai* in Hungarian has altogether three different definitions: "1. Meaning linked to physics (e.g. physical pendulum); 2. Science that examines its subject from the point of view of physics (e.g. physical geography); 3. In contrast to being linked to the intellectual, it is linked to the state of the human body (e.g. physical strength)" (mek.oszk.hu). This shows that the word *physical* is more diversely and commonly used in English, than in Hungarian. In Hungary, when the word *fizikai* appears, it is used in the majority of the cases in the sense linked to science. Therefore, it can be argued that a new theatrical terminology was created in Hungarian that is not necessarily useful, or does not describe well enough, what it is used for.

In the second and third chapters, I will explore the past, thus the preceding events that led to the formation of physical theatre in Hungary. More precisely, in the second chapter I will explore Hungarian "amateur" theatre and dance under the communist regime. After World War II, specifically from 1947, when the communist politicians (supported by the Soviet Union) took over the Parliament and founded a one-party political system, the life of Hungarian people was placed on new grounds. This new ground meant a strong ideological control, which - in the world of theatre arts - resulted in the restriction of Western ideas and ideologies that could reach the country, and constant control over what could be seen on stage. Therefore, it is important to examine the theatre art of this period because, on one hand, it reveals what caused a delay in the appearance of new tendencies; on the other hand, this political control brought to life an oppositional culture in which the expressive use of body became emphasised. As Bryzgel points out

> [i]n the socialist spaces of Eastern Europe, the body had a unique resonance. Since public (and to a certain extent, private) space was controlled by the state, the individual was constantly subject to the power and discipline that derives from living in the panopticon. […] In this way, the body became a site that enabled the artists to act or express themselves

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in a manner not possible in the public space nor through traditional art forms, such as painting and sculpture, which were regulated by the state (Bryzgel, 2017: 103-5).

This suggests that in a culture where it was not possible to talk and form opinion openly, using the language of the body meant freedom in creation and experimentation. Moreover, for the audience it created a space where social and political feelings could come to the surface, to some extent. The audience learnt to read between the lines and, with the artists, they could knowingly wink at each other. As Galgóczi highlights, in Hungary, from the 1970s

> […] theatre came to play a special role in public life because tone, emphasis, gesture, interpretation, and a living bond with the audience could never be as effectively controlled as the written word (Galgóczi, 1995: 63).

In this chapter, I will also draw attention to the appearance of a parallel system, as the above-mentioned experiments with the expressive body could not happen in the state-subsidized and state-controlled theatres. During the years of communism (1949-1989), state subsidized theatres that operated in a repertoire system[3] with a permanent company (whose actors graduated from the only institution for theatre arts, the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest) were regarded as the only professional theatre-makers. They worked in permanent buildings, with a permanent company which was on a state-funded payroll. Simultaneously, at the beginning of the communist regime (starting from 1949 until around 1957), "the amateur artistic movement began to be organised nation-wide as national policy [in workplaces, schools and villages]" (Nánay in Svetina, 2010: 209). These amateur groups performed irregularly (mainly on the occasion of national or political holidays), and the quality of their productions usually reflected lack of professional expertise. Amateurs cultivated artistic activities (whether that be theatre, folk dance, puppetry etc.) as a pastime (they did not get a salary for it); they did not have an aim to create on a professional level.

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[3] A repertoire system means that a company has a stock of plays that they perform all year round, in rotation, usually having most of the plays from their repertoire on the programme at least once a month. It also means that the program is put together from "older" plays - that they premiered during the last season or, if it is a success, then many seasons before - and "new" plays that they rehearse and premiere during the current season. If a play does not attract enough audience, thus it is not profitable, then the theatre takes it off from its repertoire.

However, after the revolution in 1956, a period of political consolidation slowly arrived in the country. As Hensel points out, this

> […] had an impact on the culture, although it still served the socialist system and was subject to state censorship. Yet, contact by artists with the West was permitted. Contrary to the other people's republics, the Hungarian theatre had the possibility to participate in a cultural exchange with international groups and institutions as early as the beginning of the sixties (Hensel in Brauneck, 2017: 191).

This softening dictatorship created the opportunity not only for exchange of information with foreign practitioners to a greater extent than before, but for the appearance of an intermediate form, between professional and amateur. These companies were in-between professional and amateur because, although they usually worked in "permanent places to permanent audiences in a repertoire fashion" (Nánay in Svetina, 2010: 210), and their aim was to produce high-quality productions, they were not professionals (in the sense that most of them were not graduates of the University of Theatre and Film Arts), and they did not get their salary from the state. Nevertheless, as Nánay highlights "the basis of their functioning, their intellectual attitude and artistic accomplishment had much in common with the professional theatres" (ibid.). Therefore, as these companies did not fit in the description of professional theatre of the time, they were referred to as amateurs, despite the fact that the above-mentioned description of what constitutes an amateur did not describe their practice at all. The appearance of this parallel system of "amateurs", next to the official and professional theatre practice is essential in regard to the topic of this research, because these companies were the ones who pushed the boundaries of conventional theatre making and who dared to experiment (revival of mime, appearance of new dance techniques (Limón, Graham etc.), appearance of body-based theatrical language, etc). By the 1980s, the work of these "amateur" companies had become more and more popular amongst audiences, and more and more respected by theatrical writers, which is shown by the fact that they started to be distinguished "more and more by the use of the term *'alternative'*" (Nánay in Svetina, 2010: 241) from the amateurs, who cultivated theatre only as a pastime. It was recognised that, although they were not necessarily professionally trained, the work they produced could be of a standard as high as the ones of the professional scene, and therefore they could serve as an *alternative* to the already existing (professional) theatrical scene. Tamás Fodor, the founder of Stúdió K, summarizes well what *alternative* theatre means:

> Alternative theatre means an opposition to the existing practice. Alternative existence, as a response to a provocation, is linked to a

theatrical challenge as well. Movements are called alternative when people are opposed to the official forms and practices, while having the needed expertise in the profession. Alternative theatre is based on amateur initiatives and is aiming for professional procedures in its operation. (Fodor quoted in Sándor L., 1992: 63)

Despite the fact that these terminologies could become confusing, I would like to remain faithful to the Hungarian theatrical language by using them throughout my dissertation. I find this important because these terms are still used when referring to the theatre of this period. Therefore, I would argue that the use of these terminologies is unavoidable as they had become a specificity of Hungarian theatrical culture from the 1960s until about the 1990s. In order to make it clear in what sense I will use the different notions, please refer to the table below.

1949	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1989	1990s	2000s	2010s
Professional/State-subsidized Theatres: Theatres that operated in a repertoire system with a permanent company (whose actors graduated from the only institution for theatre arts, the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest) who were on a state-funded payroll and worked in permanent buildings.						*Established Theatres*: I call established theatres the so-called Kő-theatres of Hungary. These theatres operate in permanent buildings, in a repertoire fashion, with a permanent company, financed by either the state (as in the case of National Theatre) or by the City Council (as in the case of Örkény István Theatre for example).		
Amateur artistic movements: The amateur groups were organised in workplaces, schools, villages, etc. as national policy. They performed irregularly (mainly on the occasion of national or political holidays) and the quality of their productions usually reflected the lack of professional expertise. Amateurs cultivated artistic activities (let that be theatre, folk dance, puppetry etc.) as a pastime (they did not get a salary for it), they did not have as an aim to create on high-standard, professional level.		*"Amateur" companies*: Theatre companies in the 1960s and 1970s which constituted mainly of non-qualified, enthusiastic theatre-lovers aiming to create high-quality productions, being open to experimenting with new forms, opposing the traditional conventions of theatre making, and being outside of the circle of state-subsidized and state-financed theatre makers.		*Alternative companies*: „Movements are called alternative when people are opposed to the official forms and practices, while having the needed expertise in the profession. Alternative theatre is based on amateur initiatives and is aiming for professional procedures in its operation" (Fodor quoted in Sándor L., 1992: 63).		*Independent companies*: Companies working outside of the established theatres, which have to apply to the National Cultural Fund on a yearly basis for money to operate or create projects.		

Figure 1. *The change of Hungarian theatrical terminology with time*

In the third chapter, I will point out what effect the change of regime had on the Hungarian theatrical scene and how that led to the appearance of the notion - and practices - of physical theatre.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, I move on to examining current tendencies. In the fourth chapter, I will focus on Csaba Horváth's work, as physical theatre in Hungary is automatically associated with him and his company's (Forte Company) work. I will examine his roots in folk dance and how it influenced his thinking and his work. I will also cover the route that led him to become the head of the university course, *Theatre Director - Specialization in: Director and Choreographer of Physical Theatre* at The University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest, and to the formation of Forte Company. In an in-depth interview, I tried to find answers to what his working method is, what 'physical' means for him and what the roots of his practice are.

In the fifth chapter, I will explore Csaba Horváth's successors' work. The physical theatre director course started in 2009, and the second class graduated in June 2020. From the first class, three students are active not only as performers, but as directors too: Kristóf Widder, Máté Hegymegi and Attila Soós. I conducted in-depth interviews with these three young practitioners in order to find out how they adapted physical theatre to their own image, what kind of works influenced them the most and what their goals for the future are. I have intentionally kept the colloquial nature of the quotes coming from these interviews. The fact that I was able to follow closely as an assistant the working method of Csaba Horváth (*Káprázat* in 2019) and Kristóf Widder (*Az üvegbúra* and *Az arab éjszaka* in 2018) provided me with a unique insight that allowed me to analyse and compare their works based on my own experiences.

This thesis aims to start to fill a gap in the academic research about Hungarian physical theatre. During my research I discovered that despite the fact that there are a lot of resources about the performance scene of the period pre-1989 and quite a few about the performance scene post-1990, it is hard to find resources that link the two periods and follow the chain of thoughts and lines of development around specific ideas or "genres", especially in regards of physical theatre. Therefore, my aim in this thesis is to draw up a clear line of development of ideas about the performing body on stage in Hungary. The account starts in the past, examining how the revolutionary ideas of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s led some adventurous people to go against the conventions and the burdens of a communist system in order to give significance to the body, the gestures and the movements of an actor. Then, I move on to how this atmosphere was altered after the change of regime, and how that affected the

practitioners' work. I then arrive at the present, where Csaba Horváth's work became inseparable from physical theatre, and I ask what it means for Hungarian theatre. Finally, I will try to have a glance at the future by investigating the work of the next generation, their ideas and ideologies.

Chapter 2 - Hungarian theatre and dance between 1945 and 1989

2.1. Theatre and dance between 1945 and 1949

The idea that drives this research is: even if the artists do not recognise it, their practice - in some cases more evidently, in others more indirectly- is influenced by their predecessors. Therefore, I intend to map in this dissertation the links between practitioners and their influences in Hungary in order to see how all of this led to Csaba Horváth's practice, thus to the formation of Hungarian physical theatre. As a starting point for this mapping, I chose the end of World War II, as it is a clear milestone in the country's history. Hungary became the Western border of Soviet influence, and this new political situation had a huge impact on how Hungarian culture developed in the following decades. Examining the extent of political control over the country's cultural life, I discovered that the period between the end of World War II in 1945 and the change of regime in 1989 can be divided into three phases. The first phase is the period between 1945 and 1949, when it seemed that the restoration of cultural life to its previous (before the war) state was possible.

> [Although] the country's cultural life was restructured following the Soviet-model. The new Soviet-type system however operated -at least at the beginning [between 1945 and 1949]- almost without any changes to the inherited Austrian style infrastructure [4]. […] popular theatre genres were preserved […], such as privileged music theatres (opera and operetta) and entertainment (cabaret). Spoken theatre with its strong *'Bildungstheater'* (educational) function gained strength in this post-war period, however it was never able to reach the success of the lighter entertainment genres (Lelkes, 2009: 91).

Moreover, not only could the restoration of cultural life happen, but the first three years after the war seemed to allow some space for experiments, as well. For example, at the Opera House in Budapest, Jan Cieplinski tried for the first time to compose Hungarian-themed, so-called national ballets; he also attempted to endear the audience to plotless ballets. Decentralization of ballet life started with the formation of a second Ballet Company in the south of the country, in Szeged, in 1946. The fact that György Lőrinc (who experimented

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[4] „The theatre system and its infrastructure developed as a consequence of a process of national identity-building during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy […]" (Lelkes, 2000: 91).

with merging classical ballet and his knowledge in movement art gained from being a student of Olga Szentpál[5]) could lead this company between 1948-1949 also underlies that

> […] there was once again a revival of cultural life which allowed diverse and often contrasting artistic values to co-exist for a certain time. Tradition and innovation, national and international, conservative and avant-garde co-existed in a maelstrom never seen before (Fuchs, 2000: 83).

However, 1949 put an end to this freedom of experimentation and innovation. By this time, the centralization of power gained ground, which means that a second phase could start in Hungarian cultural life. In 1949, all theatres were nationalized; thus, they were governed by the state and "anything that had any link to the West was forbidden. Modern art was regarded as 'shallow' and 'formalist' […]." (Fuchs, 2000: 84) This second phase of total control lasted until the revolution in 1956.

2.2. The second phase: theatre from nationalization until the revolution of 1956

After the nationalization of the theatres, the government gained vast control over theatres' operation. In the spirit of "educating" people (i.e. making sure that the right kind of political ideology was mediated through culture), the government made strict rules regarding the theatres' repertoire: the number of classical, communist and "modern" plays were predetermined, they even had rules about the proportion of musical pieces and comedies in the repertoire, and of course, the plays that they found "decadent" were banned (Balkányi, 2007: para. 25). Balkányi argues that this cultural policy, which had as an aim to control what could be seen in theatres and therefore have an influence on how people think, resulted in the creation of a literary tradition and a naturalistic-realistic acting style (following Stanislavsky's method) on Hungarian stages. Balkányi points out that the 'Bildungstheater'[6] form of the literary tradition "is a priori a strictly disciplined theatrical form", which therefore was "useful" for the government because it set out for the practitioners what could be done on stage, especially in the case of canonized plays (Balkányi, 2007: para. 26).

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[5] Olga Szentpál, one of the leading figures of Hungarian *movement culture* before the war (next to Valéria Dienes and Alice Madzsar) and former student of Jaques-Dalcroze (Eurythmics) worked out her own movement method in which she tried to mix "the modern dance vocabulary of the time with folk dance motifs" (Fuchs, 2000: 83).

[6] „According to Bildungstheater, theatre is a place to gain high-quality literacy and its primary goal is not entertainment" (Szabó, n.d.: para.21).

Therefore, artistic freedom on the side of actors and directors did not exist, as the dramatic text stood above all the composing elements of theatre. Having a repertoire relying highly on canonized literature meant that there was an expectation on the audience's part as well, not to violate the sanctity of classical texts. (For a more detailed explanation of how this kind of theatre worked, please see: Balkányi, Magdolna (2007). A színházi konvenció/ tradíció – A magyar színházi struktúra és az amatőr/ alternatív színház. *Symbolon.* vol. VIII, no. 12, pp. 5-24.)

In short, according to Balkányi, generally three basic conventions dominated the Hungarian official theatrical scene. These are: the domination of the written text; actors whose hands were tied in terms of freedom of interpretation (which was the result of the domination of the literary text); and an audience who was isolated in the dark and received ready-made models on how to act in life (Balkányi, 2007).

2.3. Third phase: Theatre between 1957 and 1989

Between 23rd October and 10th November 1956, Hungarians revolted against Soviet oppression in the country. Although the revolution was unsuccessful, as it was crushed by the Soviet Union, it established the beginning of a new era. Slowly after the revolution, a "more liberal political course", called "Goulash Communism" could take place in the country (from around 1963) with the leadership of János Kádár (Hensel in Brauneck et.al., 2017: 191). This can be regarded as the third phase of political control over culture. This softening dictatorship made possible the appearance of a new generation of theatre artists from the mid-1960s, who, in their experiments, worked against the above-mentioned conventions of Hungarian theatre. Furthermore, a limited amount of cultural exchange with Western countries became possible as well. I found that this era of oppositional culture served as a foundation, in Hungary, for the appearance of new ways of thinking about the performing body on stage. In the following section, I will expand on what novelties these practitioners brought to Hungarian theatrical culture, and how their practice was influenced by the political circumstances and by their foreign colleagues.

Although officially there was no censorship in the country, during the Kádár-regime (1956-1989) a new policy was introduced to "evaluate" different cultural works. This was

the policy of the so-called "three T" (between 1962 and 1988). Its name came from the three categories into which the government classified all art works: Tiltott – Banned (i.e. some neo-avant-garde performances, such as Péter Halász's), Tűrt – Tolerated (i.e. theatre of the absurd, for example writers such as Déry and Genet; and folk dance based dance theatre), Támogatott – Supported (i.e. realism and classic repertoire) (Lelkes, 2009: 92). This made it possible for the government to restrict or even ban the practice of those who were considered to be against the government's policy. If an artist's work was not compatible with the government's artistic and political values, as in the case of Péter Halász's company, called Lakásszínház, they had to close their doors to the public (Péter Halász and his company emigrated to New York in 1976, where they founded the renowned Squat Theatre). If an artist represented values that could partially be accepted, although the government did not ban them from working, did everything it could to make life difficult for these artists. Their work was tolerated, but the government did not make it easy for them to work, as in the case of folk dance choreographer Katalin Györgyfalvay. Although she could become the leader of Népszínház Táncegyüttes[7], where she could experiment (see more about her innovations in the next chapter), she was relegated to premiere her works only for a small number of audiences in the countryside (Lelkes, 2009: 101-2). In the meantime, all state-subsidized, professional theatre companies were supported (ideologically as well as financially) to put mainly the classical canon on stage. Although this system worked as a kind of censorship and made the work of some impossible, it also meant that there was a small gap in the system which allowed for others to experiment and push boundaries. This little gap made possible the appearance of that new generation of artists who challenged the conventions and traditions of theatre. Their existence depended on how well they could navigate the narrow border between Tolerated and Banned. József Ruszt proposes that these "amateur" performances could serve as an outlet for the centrally controlled culture (Huber, 2008: 175). It seems, therefore, that after the revolution, the government felt the need for leaving the possibility open for the existence of certain platforms where people could talk, perhaps not completely overtly, about their situation and create art, and experiment a little more freely than before.

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[7] Népszínház Táncegyüttes was the official dance company of Népszínház, a theatre founded in 1978. During the 10 years of its operation, its artistic director was Katalin Györgyfalvay. The ensemble never had its own permanent performance space in Budapest; therefore, they became a touring company. In 1988 Györgyfalvay was forced to retirement and the new leaders of the group became Csaba Szögi and István Énekes, who formed the Közép-Európa Táncszínház (Central-Europe Dance Theatre) out of the ensemble (mek.oszk.hu).

Therefore, as Lelkes (2009) argues, after the 1956 revolution the consolidation of the regime allowed for the development of a parallel system next to the professional and supported theatre system. These groups of artists who were opposed to the basic conventions of official theatre making, were called at the beginning *"amateurs"*. This misuse of expression occurred because, at that time, people could only be professionals when they graduated from the only official school (University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest) and were employed by the state in a "state-run, state-funded, state-controlled" institution that had a permanent building, and worked in a repertoire system (Balkányi, 2007). Otherwise, people could only be amateurs. Until the mid-1960s, the word amateur was used in the following sense: "One who cultivates anything as a pastime, as distinguished from one who prosecutes it professionally" (oed.com). When this new generation appeared, they stood outside the officially recognised circle of professional theatre makers, because they were not on the government's payroll and most of them did not have an official paper that could prove that they were trained theatre artists; thus, they were labelled amateurs. However, these new "amateur" companies did not cultivate theatre only as a pastime; they trained themselves, and worked hard in a repertoire system in order to reach out to as many people as possible and show them that it was possible to create theatre differently than what was happening in the state-subsidized institutions. These "amateur" productions, as Leposa points out, experimented with the use of space, the use of the actors' bodies, and with changing the ruling ways of making meaning in theatre; they pushed the boundaries of theatrical representations (Leposa in Imre 2008: 217). From the point of view of this dissertation, the work of these "amateur" companies is essential to examine because, using Balkányi's (2007) expression, these companies became "body-theatres" in the ruling tradition of "word-theatres".

As mentioned before, the main premise of my argument is that all practitioners, even the most innovative ones, are influenced in some way by their predecessors, their contemporaries, and by the circumstances in which they live and create. During the years of Goulash Communism, the artists experienced an oppressive political system that seemed to be fertile soil for the appearance of an oppositional culture (creating art from a point of view that tries to raise awareness of hidden or rarely discussed issues in the communist political dissidence). This oppressive government tried to filter and control what kind of information and influence could reach the Hungarian public from Western countries. Although

Hungarians could occasionally access Western productions[8], the control of the government resulted in a delay in the appearance of new forms coming from Western practitioners. In contrast, accessing artworks of similarly Soviet-influenced countries was easier (thanks to, for example, the theatre festival in Wrocław). This is probably why a theatre director and theorist from the similarly Soviet-influenced Poland, Jerzy Grotowski, could have the biggest influence on Hungarian theatre practitioners (and not a Western colleague). The influence of his innovative work can be detected in the productions of the first and thus most influential "amateur" groups: Universitas Együttes (founded in 1961, led by József Ruszt at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest[9]), Orfeo Stúdió (later on Stúdió K, led by Tamás Fodor)[10], Szegedi Egyetemi Színpad (under the direction of István Paál)[11] and Kassák Ház Stúdió (later on Lakásszínház, led by Péter Halász)[12]. The first Hungarian performance in

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[8] For example, Peter Brook's *King Lear* had a guest performance in Budapest in 1964.

[9] Universitas Együttes was part of the 'University Stage' (Egyetemi Színpad), which operated between 1957 and 1991, and its aim was to provide different cultural programs mainly for the students of the University. Next to Universitas Együttes it had a film club, a folk dance ensemble and a band as well. Although it operated until the 1990s, its heyday was during the 1970s and 1980s, when it was so popular that on many occasions the audience could not fit in the venue. The significance of Universitas Együttes is shown by the fact that in 1965 it was the first theatre company that could travel to the West. They could take their production of *Az özvegy Karnyóné* (written by Hungarian playwright Mihály Vitéz Csokonai) to the theatre festival in Nancy, and won the 2nd price with it (Karip, 2016).

[10] The Orfeo Stúdió was founded in 1971 as part of Orfeo Csoport (Group). At this point Orfeo Group was composed of three smaller groups: the puppeteers led by István Malgot, the actors led by Tamás Fodor and a band, called Orfeo Zenekar. However, their co-existence was short-lived as being politically radical, their work was soon banned by the government. At that point, in 1974, the three groups were separated, and Stúdió K was founded by the actors. Their most legendary performance was *Woyzeck,* which premiered in 1977. Stúdió K is part of the Hungarian theatrical scene until today.

[11] The University Stage of Szeged was founded in 1960, and became respected nation-wide for the quality and innovative nature of their productions under the leadership of István Paál between 1965 and 1974 (See: Demcsák in Imre, 2008).

[12] Founded in 1969 Kassák Ház Stúdió operated until 1972, when the government decided that Halász's work belonged to the 'Banned' category, thus, the company had to close its doors. Between 1972 and 1976, they tried to operate out of the reach of the officials, producing works in Halász and Anna Koós' flat in Dohány street or in public spaces (e.g. Szentendrei-sziget). During this period their company was called Lakásszínház (Flat Theatre). However, by 1976 the company decided to leave the country and continue their work in New York, under the name Squat Theatre.

which Grotowski's legacy[13] could be discovered was *A pokol nyolcadik köre* (*The eighth circle of hell*) created by Universitas Együttes and directed by József Ruszt, which premiered in 1967. His company saw Grotowski's most famous production of *The Constant Prince* in Wrocław, and it served as a turning point in how they were thinking about theatre. As Ruszt claims (in Bérczes, 1996: 42), the company wanted to organize a Grotowski-like laboratory in Hungary right after experiencing this new theatrical language in Poland. The appearance of the Grotowski-like thinking about theatre and theatre making in Hungary was significant because it drew the attention of this new generation to the importance of the physical training of the actors. As Murray and Keefe argue, Grotowski is still "an enigmatic figure within the training cosmologies of contemporary physical theatres" (Murray, Keefe, 2016: 169). Therefore, it can be argued that the appearance of actors' physical training following Grotowski's footsteps can also mark the beginning of a route that led to the appearance of physical theatre in Hungary. For example, Paál's company in Szeged originally trained themselves by practicing simple gym exercises; however, in the 1970s they became more self-conscious in their training and started to use Grotowski's training method. The following quote - that is from the documentation of the company's application for the Festival in Nancy in 1971 - proves well how their attention shifted to the expressive physical presence of the actor on stage: "the stylistic aim of the productions is the creation of a system of signs coming from strong visuals and pictures and from the conscious use of dynamic movement dramaturgy" (Demcsák in Imre, 2008: 255).

The experimentation of these "amateur" and later on "alternative" companies did not stop with actor training. Having a further look at their practice, many similarities can be found

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[13] Grotowski founded his Laboratory Theatre company in Opole, Poland in 1959. With his company he was experimenting with reaching out to the audience in a way that the performance would prompt the spectator to go through a self-analysis. He stripped away everything he found superfluous in theatre in order to find its backbone and create a Poor Theatre, where the only thing that matters is "what takes place between spectator and actor" (Grotowski, 1991: 32). In his experiments he paid special attention to actor training, because he believed that the route can lead to the spectator only through a well-trained actor, who can use "the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind the everyday mask -the innermost core of our personality-" (Grotowski, 1991: 37). As music and Keefe argue "Grotowski was seeking psychophysical strategies leading to 'the annihilation of one's body's resistances' (Grotowski, 1975: 114). [… His] purpose was to inculcate a deep imaginative sensitivity and responsiveness to stimuli and impulses both internal and external to the body and its psyche" (Murray, Keefe, 2016: 171).

with the work of other, so-called experimental theatre makers.[14] For Tamás Fodor, the process of the creation and building of a strong company became an important issue, similarly to how Barba moved with his company to Holstebro, Denmark (from Poland). Although Fodor did not change countries, the company built a house and lived together in Pilisborosjenő. He argues that in alternative theatre, being closed up together, working overnight, and living a life almost entirely in theatre creates passion and energy coming from confrontations, which is indispensable for a performance. "This is thanks to which, the performance starts to live. This is when, the audience feels, as if they [the actors] were speaking another language" (Fodor quoted in Sándor L., 1992: 66). He argues that these energies made the Stúdió K of the 1970s and 1980s legendary (ibid). Katalin Demcsák discovers Barba's influence in Paál's work as well. She points out that, except the fact that Paál believed in the hierarchy with the director on the top, his sense of company, his thorough rehearsal process, his active engagement with the audience and his attempt to provoke action in society by speaking out, were all the components of Barba's Third Theatre regardless of if it was a conscious succession of Barba's concept or not (Demcsák in Imre, 2008: 255).[15] Furthermore, reorganisation of the performance space (e.g. Universitas - *A pokol nyolcadik köre,* Stúdió K – *Woyzeck)*, simplification of set and costume designs (e.g. Tanulmányi Színház), "activisation" of the audience (Paál - *Petőfi Rock*) and focusing on the non-verbal modes of expression were all novelties that the "amateur"/alternative generation introduced to Hungarian theatrical practice, following the footsteps of the aforementioned experimental theatre practitioners.

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[14] The experimental theatre makers gained ground at the turn of the 19th-20th century as part of the modernist movement of the performing arts. Their goal was to go against the naturalistic, realistic traditions of theatre. In their work they wanted to achieve an active, participatory presence amongst the audience. In order to achieve this goal, they experimented with new ways of using the space, they simplified the scenic designs and put an emphasis on actor training (of which working with the body was an important part); the appearance of devised and interdisciplinary (the use of all art forms in theatre; literature, music, dance) work. Important figures, amongst others, of these experiments were: Jerzy Grotowski, Jacques Copeau, Augusto Boal, Eugenio Barba, Antonin Artaud and Meyerhold.

[15] From 1985 Odin Teatret was a guest of Szkéné Theatre regularly, where Hungarians could familiarize themselves with Barba's work. The interest for their performances did not die down, thus in 2001 Szkéné dedicated a whole week for the presentation of Odin's work. Up until today they regularly visit Hungary; the last time was in 2019 at the MITEM Festival at the National Theatre in Budapest.

These foreign influences could reach Hungarian artists by participating in international festivals in Belgrade and Wrocław (these were the two festivals that they could access more easily, as traveling to Western countries, outside the Soviet Union, was more restricted), or thanks to the International Meeting of Movement Theatres organised by Szkéné Theatre between 1979 and 2003, and the international program of Petőfi Csarnok (Petőfi Hall) starting in the mid-1980s organised by György Szabó. In some cases, as guest performances or participation in festivals abroad was limited (especially during the 1960s and 1970s), influence for Hungarian practitioners could also come from simple sources, such as photographs of foreign productions (for example Paál and his company were influenced to create *Örök Elektra* (*Eternal Electra*) by photos of an *Antigone* production of The Living Theatre).

In short, it can be seen that the experiments of these *"amateurs"* - who, as their work got more and more respected, from the 1980s received the label of *alternatives* - went against the traditions of professional (state-subsidized) theatre practice, and consequently created work that focused on the actors' physically expressive presence and the enhancement of a language beyond the spoken word, were essential. It can be also noted that the controlling nature of the cultural politics of the time could not completely prohibit the influence of new foreign trends; however, it limited the access to it. This slowed down the exchange of information between Hungarian and foreign practitioners. However, I would argue that these experiments of the alternative companies are significant in Hungarian theatre history, because they could serve as a base for the work that we tend to describe as physical theatre in Hungary today.

2.4. Dance life after the nationalisation

The nationalization in 1949 brought changes in the world of dance similar to the ones in theatre arts. Between 1949 and 1956 (the period I classified above as the second phase of the communist era in regard to the extent of political control over culture), all initiatives revived after the war that did not fit in with the communist artistic ideal were banned, for example: all movement culture art schools and the second ballet company in Szeged were closed, all "spontaneous dance events became strictly forbidden" (Lelkes, 2009: 98). Fuchs argues that,

> [t]he cultural education of the period destroyed the basis of modern dance education. Throughout the following decades, dance life in Hungary lacked a concept of appreciating individual initiatives or emphasising the importance of creativity as well as freedom of expression. Canonical and standardized forms, systematic quality and hierarchy were the things that counted (Fuchs, 2000: 84).

Nonetheless, the years of consolidation in the 1960s created some limited possibilities for innovation and experimentation not only in theatre, but in the world of dance as well. During the third phase, the decentralization of the professional dance scene (i.e. ballet) had started with the formation of the ballet company of Pécs (in 1960) and the reanimation of the Szeged company from 1958.[16] This step in the history of ballet was important, because far from the capital, new trends could appear. For example, Imre Eck, the director of the Pécs company, utilised his experience in expressive dance and "attempted to put contemporary themes on stage" (Fuchs, 2000: 86). However, this did not mean that other, more experimental ideas had a chance to develop.

As the movements of modern dance could hardly reach the country, and ballet could only start its reformation slowly in the country side, the only area where important innovations could happen was folk dance during the 1960s and 1970s. Out of the many amateur folk dance groups, a new generation of choreographers emerged. This new generation, similar to the "amateur"/alternative practitioners in theatre,

> revolted against the artistic concept represented by the professional companies, which [in the case of folk dance meant that they] had to represent the continuous high spirits of the working class – the cliché of 'perky lads and modest lasses'- using the artistic means of folklore. [In

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[16] It is interesting to point out, that this kind of decentralization was perceptible in the professional, state-subsidized theatres as well. In 1971, three provincial theatres appointed three young directors to be artistic directors. In Kaposvár, Gábor Zsámbéki, in Szolnok, Gábor Székely and in Kecskemét, József Ruszt could try to bring fresh aspects of theatre making into these professional institutions. Obviously, this could only happen to a certain extent, within a well-controlled framework. Balkányi argues that this new generation of directors handled the classical plays with respect, but they directed performances that reflected their present. She also highlights that they did not try to disrupt the passive relationship between stage and auditorium, only alternative companies experimented with that (Balkányi, 2007: para. 36). Moreover, in the case of Ruszt, this appointment could also be read as an alienation from his "alternative" experiments, as within the walls of Kecskeméti Katona József Színház, Ruszt could not produce as revolutionary works as he did with Universitas. Here, his work could be controlled by the government to a greater extent.

professional folk dance] it was not vital to present real human feelings and relationships (Fuchs in Grau and Jordan, 2000: 88).

However, this new generation posed to themselves the following question in their experiments: "how could folk dance material be staged and be simultaneously 'authentic' and 'contemporary'?"[17] (ibid.) According to Fuchs (2000), two types of approaches can be differentiated in their experiments: one is by Sándor Tímár, who turned his attention back to original folklore, not as a source for inspiration but as an example to follow. Thanks to this, a new composing method was created by the reintroduction of improvisation to folk dance. This gave the artists a sense of artistic freedom and creativity, which, as we noted earlier, otherwise was impossible in the world of arts. The other aspect was represented by Katalin Györgyfalvay, Károly Szigeti, Ferenc Novák and Antal Kricskovics, who intended to blend theatre and folk dance. Two composing methods were emerged from of their work. One was that of 'collage', "in which two decisively different dances are arranged next to each other in order to represent two types of human behaviour [see *Carmina Burana* (1977) by Kricskovics]" (Fuchs in Grau and Jordan, 2000: 89). The other one was the so-called 'montage' method of Katalin Györgyfalvay, "who experimented with assembling different dance layers: music and text on top of and beneath one another. As a consequence, multi-layered choreographies were born, [which thanks to their complexity proved to be a rich source for associations]" (ibid.). A great example of this method is Györgyfalvay's choreography called *Montage*, which premiered in 1973. Györgyfalvay pushed the potential use of folk dances even further by creating works in the 1980s "to the music of contemporary composers, using folk dance material but without any ethnic reference, as if considering her material as something neutral" (ibid.). Meanwhile, around the end of the 1970s, Kricskovics and Novák experimented with the use of plots and traditional dramaturgy (e.g. *The Prodigal Son* by Kricskovics in 1975, or *Hungarian Electra* by Novák in 1984) (Fuchs in Grau and Jordan, 2000: 90). As Fuchs highlights (2000), while Tímár's practice was similar to the Bartók who collected and preserved folk songs, the practice of the second group was similar to the composer Bartók. Their aim, in contrast to Tímár, was not the recreation of original folk dances. They wanted to create something new, and they aimed to use this rich language of folk dance tradition in order to talk about the present. Thanks to the extensive work of

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[17] By experimenting with mixing authentic and contemporary ideas and materials these practitioners followed a model started by Béla Bartók (1881-1945) who was a Hungarian composer, pianist and a collector of folk songs. He noted down and recorded thousands of folk songs while travelling around rural Hungary and Romania. While preserving a very rich material of Hungarian folk culture, he also allowed these findings to influence his own music compositions as well.

these people, a uniquely rich folk dance repertoire could develop in Hungary. Lelkes highlights their importance by stating that, "This 'school' can truly be regarded as one of the forerunners of contemporary dance in Hungary" (Lelkes, 2009: 100). As I will highlight later on in more detail, it is essential to draw our attention to these innovations in folk dance because these provided a fertile soil for new generations of practitioners to dare to improvise and use folk dance in innovative ways. Péter Gerzson Kovács, the founder of Tranz Danz, and Csaba Horváth, the founder of Forte Company, started as folk dancers too; however, they both used their knowledge to take dance and theatre art to another level.

The more relaxed climate of the third phase made possible the appearance of a parallel, *alternative* culture in the world of dance as well. However, in contrast to theatre, there was a delay in this. At the beginning, only a few guest performances could reach the Hungarian audience from the West, such as the Nikolais Dance Theatre in 1969, Ballet Rambert and Carolyn Carlson in the mid-1970s, and Maguy Marin's *May B* in 1983. To acquire training in new techniques, such as Limón-, Graham- and Cunningham-technique, the most accessible were the summer courses of Palucca Schule in Dresden[18], East Germany from the 1980s. Therefore, a real change came about during the 1980s, when, with the opening of Kreatív Mozgás Stúdió (Creative Movement Studio) in Budapest, it became possible to learn these new techniques regularly from both Hungarian and, during the winter and summer schools, from foreign practitioners (such as Steve Paxton, Matt Mattox, Anne Dreyfus, Bruce Taylor, Ann Papoulis etc.). The importance of this contemporary dance school founded by Iván Angelus and Ferenc Kálmán lies in the fact that this was the only place where all modern and contemporary dance techniques and philosophies could be learnt. Moreover, the fact that they made possible to learn these new techniques in Hungary led to the appearance of *alternative* companies in dance life as well.

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[18] „Dresden was a more reachable destination for Hungarians [than Cologne], as no Western passport, nor foreign currency was required from them in order to travel there. The summer courses of Palucca Schule were in a way a socialist competition of Cologne, thus occasionally Graham-, Limón- or Cunningham-technique could be learnt here. However, the emphasis was always on German traditions and jazz dance" (Fuchs, 2017: para. 6). For more on the summer courses of Cologne and Palucca, on how Hungarians could participate and what was the difference between participating in a summer course in a city that was part of and in one that was outside the Soviet Union, please see Péter, Petra (2019). A nyolcvanas évek öröksége a mai magyarországi kortárstánc szcénában. *Tánctudományi Közlemények.* vol. XI., no. 1., pp. 15-30.

> This studio had such a liberating impact, that from 1984 and 1985 a great many independent ensembles started to form comprising pantomime artists, actors, and gymnasts as well as dancers. It was because of this varied background -where dance per se was rather scarce- that these new ensembles were most able to immerse themselves in contact improvisation, promoting the movement theatre so that it became the strongest trend at the time (Fuchs in Grau and Jordan, 2000: 90).

As mentioned by Fuchs above, contact improvisation[19] became an important technique in "new dance". The most influential Hungarian practitioner of this technique was Josef Nadj, who taught at KMS and created work with his company, Theatre de Jel (Sign). He spends a great amount of his time in France (he still lives there); this is where he learnt contact improvisation and contemporary dance (François Verret, Catherine Diverrès, Mark Tompkins) simultaneously with mime from Decroux and Marceau. Thus, when he started to develop his movement culture, he studied all these genres simultaneously, which created the possibility for these genres to influence each other and mingle in his practice. Although he spent most of his time in France, he still collaborated with many Hungarians and performed many times for Hungarian audiences. In his work, Nadj relied a lot on his collaborators, which means that he expected his actors to arrive to the rehearsal with thoughts and intentions to share. Therefore, his working method could easily be described as devising. "It is from the actors' actions and their relation to each other and to the objects that the text of the performance gets created" (Várszegi in Imre, 2008: 441). István Sándor L.'s label for Nadj's work, "choreographic theatre", indicates well that Nadj's productions were somewhere on the borderline of dance and theatre (Sándor L. in Várszegi, 1994: 13-5). This proves the appearance of a "body-centred theatrical thinking" (Fuchs, 2017: 36), which started to blur the line between dance and word-centred theatre.

Another genre which put an emphasis on bodily expression gained ground during the years of this third phase of softening dictatorship. This was mime. The most important

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[19] Contact improvisation is a technique developed by Steve Paxton in 1972 in the USA. In contact improvisation

> "Every movement stems from the abdominal centre, triggered by internal impulses and energies. An impulse originating from the centre of the body enables movement in any direction, and offers possibilities for the body to discover new ways and trajectories. Any movement may generate an infinite number of variations of linked movements, thereby serving as a performance language. When two or more bodies engage in this language at the same time, a dialogue is created" (Várszegi, 2000: 102).

Hungarian workshop of mime tradition was that of Pál Regős and his company Commedia XX Pantomim, later on renamed as BME Pantomim. Regős started to study mime quite late in his life, well into his thirties when he saw Henryk Tomaszewski's[20] work in a festival in Wrocław. He learnt the art of mime from Tomaszewski and Marcel Marceau, and familiarized himself with the technique of Decroux from a book published in Hungarian. Having practiced and taught classical mime for years, by the time Commedia XX Pantomim received the opportunity of having a permanent rehearsal and performance space at Szkéné Theatre (and becoming BME Pantomim), Regős realized that this classical form did not allow him to express the more and more complex nature of the world. Therefore, he started to experiment, leaving behind the realistic elements of traditional mime techniques and using more and more abstract movement. He eventually created his *conscious body technique.* "We investigated how an object or a literary text defines the actor's attitude and movement" (Regős quoted in Bóta, 1998: 28). His son János Regős argues that similar to Japanese practices, in Pál Regős' and BME Pantomim's work, the emphasis was on the "inner creation of the aspiration that manifests itself in action" (Regős J., 1980: 34). His work is important because his experiments were driven by his curiosity about whether he was able to "create the synthesis of movement- and verbal theatre" (Regős quoted in Bóta, 1998: 30). Thus, it can be seen that although coming from a different area of performance art, Regős, like Nadj, tried to blur the lines between movement and verbal work. BME Pantomim operated for eight years, between 1975 and 1983, when it disbanded.

There was an increase of interest in mime during the 1970s and 1980s; for example, Szkéné organised the first mime festival in Hungary in 1978, called International Mime Week, which was followed by the organization of the International Meeting of Movement Theatres from 1979 until 2003, where the organizers regularly included mime companies in the program. Another important person in the Hungarian mime scene is András M. Kecskés, who followed the Decroux tradition, learned from Regős and operated a company between 1978 and 1983 called Corpus. Corpus became the cradle for many artists - who later on, based on what they learnt from M. Kecskés, developed their own style – as, for example:

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[20] Henryk Tomaszewski was a Polish mime artist, „choreographer, director, educator, theater visionary and founder of the unique Wrocław-based Mime Theater. [He] is widely regarded as one of the most outstanding artists and theater reformers of the twentieth century, which had a significant influence both on the shape and development of the Polish theater of movement, as well as on dramatic theater" (pantomima.wroc.pl).

Josef Nadj, Gábor Goda[21], László Hudi[22] or László Rókás[23]. Despite this renaissance of mime art from the 1970s to the 1990s, nowadays M. Kecskés is the "last Mohican" remembering those lively years. (Jászay, 2020: para.5) Although nowadays mime is not as actively present in the Hungarian theatrical scene as it used to be, it was important to have this short detour to explore a little about its golden age, because it well demonstrates that this era of alternative cultures (from the 1960s to 1989) was very much focused on the different means of physical expression on stage. It can be seen that in word/literature-based theatre, in dance, and in mime as well, new initiatives appeared in order to experiment with the expressive use of the performing body. However, I would argue that mime in itself is not present nowadays to such an extent, because as we can see, it became a tendency for practitioners to use the techniques they had learnt (whether mime, contact improvisation, etc.) as a base from which to experiment, to mix with other genres and techniques, to push the boundaries further and to raise their art to another level.

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[21] Gábor Goda is the founder of Artus (1985 - until present). His movement culture, next to what he learnt from M. Kecskés, is based on contact improvisation (his teachers were Steve Paxton, Josef Nadj and Mark Tompkins) and on Yang style TaiJi Quan. He created his own movement training based on his experiences, called Weight-Flow-Contact. With the company, they work together with actors, musicians, and artists in a collaborative way, which makes it possible to devise a language specific to the piece during the rehearsal period (https://artus.hu/tarsulat/goda-gabor-tarsulata/). Goda, in all his works, is interested in the *how* instead of the *what*, therefore "seemingly pointless actions gain significance thanks to the quality with which the performers execute them" (Szász, 2019: 49). Artus is an important company of the Hungarian theatrical scene because, as Csanádi argues, this company "was the first in Hungary to experiment with the abolition of boundaries between genres, […] its members employ different means of expression at the same time – elements of mime, dance, speech, visual art, singing and playing instruments. Since 1995, film, visual art and intermedia too, have played significant roles in their productions (Csanádi in Svetina, 2010: 169). See more about the company in: Sándor L., István (1994). Contrasts – Artus. In: Várszegi, Tibor (ed.) *Félúton: contemporary dance and theatre in Hungary.* Budapest: Új Színházért Alapítvány.

[22] László Hudi was the founder of Mozgó Ház Társulás (1994-2002) and a founding member of Josef Nadj's Theatre de Jel. See more about his company in: Imre, Zoltán (2008). Szöveg-előadás. A Mozgó Ház Társulás posztmodern bricolage-ai. In: Imre, Zoltán (ed). *Alternatív színháztörténetek – alternatívok és alternatívák.* Budapest: Balassi Kiadó.

[23] László Rókás was the founder of Sofa Trio (1990-2005). See more in: Várszegi, Tibor (1994). The Divertimentos of a Clown with a Pock-marked Face. Sofa Trio. In: Várszegi, Tibor (ed.) *Félúton: contemporary dance and theatre in Hungary.* Budapest: Új Színházért Alapítvány.

The appearance of many new alternative companies created the need for a space to perform. As we noted earlier University Clubs (Szegedi Egyetemi Színpad) and even small flats (Halász's Lakásszínház) could serve as performance spaces. In this context, the existence of Szkéné Theatre (founded in 1968) became very important. Szkéné Company, at the University of Technology in Budapest, first functioned similar to many other university theatre clubs. However, under the direction of János Regős (from 1979), Szkéné, the first black box theatre in Hungary, became the first 'receiving house'[24], as it "set for itself the task of providing a venue for the realization of endeavours which could not find a place within the framework of the larger theatres or which has deliberately chosen to take their productions outside the theatre establishment" (Regős in Várszegi, 1994: 21). In terms of the topic of this research, Szkéné's work is important to highlight because it was one of the cradles of body-centred work. Between 1979 and 2003, they organised the International Meeting of Movement Theatres where Hungarian artists could see how foreign artists worked and be inspired by them. Between 1988 and 1992, they also organised the Meeting of Hungarian Movement Theatres, creating the possibility for Hungarian dance and mime companies to showcase their work. Nánay argues that these two festivals definitely contributed to the emergence and unfolding of Hungarian dance and movement theatres (Nánay, 2009: para.6).

In short, it can be seen that when the political consolidation of the 1980s provided the chance for Hungarians to better familiarize themselves with Western trends, a parallel structure developed in dance life as well. This meant that Hungarian practitioners could move away from the exclusiveness of classical ballet and official folk dance and start to experiment with new forms that put an emphasis on the creative and expressive use of the performing body.

2.5. Conclusion

All of these tendencies show that alternative/experimental theatre opened its doors towards a more conscious bodily presence on stage or even to incorporating expressive movement with verbal performances; meanwhile, dance started to seek theatrical ways of

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[24] *Befogadó Színház*, aka 'Receiving House' is an expression in Hungary to describe venues which do not have a residential company of their own, but provide space and opportunity for companies without permanent performance space/theatre building to show their work to the public.

expression. Therefore, the two art forms (dance and text-based theatre) started to merge and blur the line of distinction between them. I see the opportunity of the appearance of 'physical theatre' in this moment of pushing the boundaries of the genres in order to eventually eliminate the distinction. It was important to look at the theatre of communism in Hungary because on one hand, it shows why this change happened a few years later in comparison to Western countries. On the other hand, the alternative/parallel culture starting from the 1960s was the hotbed of these changes in Hungary, which created a base for the appearance of *"independent"* companies and for their further experiments after the change of regime in 1989.

Chapter 3 - Liberalisation

The year 1989 was an important turning point in Hungary's history. The Republic of Hungary was proclaimed on 23 October 1989, which meant

> the regaining of the country's sovereignty, and the replacement of the central plan command management and state-party system with market economy and a multi-party democracy (Bíró-Nagy, 2016: 6).

This change of regime caused transformation in all aspects of life, therefore, in arts as well. Centralised control over cultural production (for example, the policy of the three T[25] was abolished) and political pressure became less severe with the introduction of democracy, which made it possible for artists to create free from direct political pressure and to exchange information and knowledge (even with colleagues from the West) without any restrictions. Galgóczi argues that in the early 1990s, this resulted in an excitement for trying out and experimenting with anything and everything. Artists felt that "the time had truly arrived for the reassessment of theatre's ars poetica" (Galgóczi in Stefanova, 1995: 64). Consequently, this led to an increase in the number of theatre and dance companies. As Péter Müller P. summarizes (Szűcs, 2017: 132), in the 1989/90 theatrical season, there were 39 established theatres (which had a building to operate in and a permanent company to work with) in Hungary, which altogether had 265 premieres during that season. Eighteen years later, the 2007/08 theatrical season showed a significant increase in numbers in comparison to the theatrical season of the regime change. By 2007/08, there were 60 established theatres and almost 120 independent companies which organised themselves for the creation of a specific production. These established and independent companies had altogether 771 premieres. This shows evidence that the Hungarian theatrical life started to flourish after it was liberated from the controlling forces of the communist regime. It is also worth noting that, while in 1989/90 the "amateur"/alternative companies did not make it into the official statistics, by 2007 there was a change in this as well. This suggests that these companies became officially respected and acknowledged from/after the 1990s.

It is also important to highlight that this significant growth in the number of companies includes the appearance of dance groups with professional goals as well. Lelkes argues that

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[25] see in Chapter 2.3

"While in the 1980s spoken theatre dominated, with the increasing number of dance performances, the proportions [between the number of dance and text-based performances] began to equal out and dance gained significance" (Lelkes, 2009: 107). The significant growth in the number of practitioners and companies meant that the need for venues solely used for dance increased. In 2001, for example, the National Dance Theatre in Budapest was opened, which works as a receiving house, making sure that a wide range of genres and a big selection of companies get the opportunity to showcase their work. Contemporary dance became the segment of Hungarian theatrical life which progressed the most in the 1990s, and it finally gained its place amongst the contemporary art forms (Péter, 2019: 19).

The theatrical terminology around the "amateur"/ alternative companies changed as well during the 1990s. This could possibly be linked to the fact that these companies, in order to gain independence, had to change into legal entities (Csanádi in Svetina, 2010: 155). This is how they were able to apply for funding (either to create a production or to maintain a company), initially to the Soros Foundation[26], and from 1993 onwards, to the National Cultural Fund as well. Therefore, after the change of regime, the pre-existing parallel structure stayed in place with the existence of established theatres[27] and *independent* companies[28]. Although the parallel system had been preserved, it is important to point out that the artistic differences present before the regime change (literary tradition and naturalistic-realistic acting style in the established theatres, experimental work in the alternative companies) started to fade with time. When strong political control over theatre arts ceased to be, the two ends of the parallel system started to move closer to each other artistically: there was and still is an exchange of personnel and knowledge between them.

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[26] „In 1984-85 the socialist power system, under attack from its internal opposition, officially licensed the operation in Hungary of the Soros Foundation – which had previously been operating illegally – and this contributed significantly to the transformation of artistic life. On one hand, it brought in the previously non-existent competitive system based on democratic principles, which provided material resources for primarily experimental arts and alternative theatres. On the other hand, it set the ruling official system an example and incited it to set up a different basis of cultural support" (Csanádi in Svetina, 2010: 154).

[27] These theatres operate in permanent buildings, in a repertoire fashion, with a permanent company, financed by either the state (as in the case of National Theatre) or by the City Council (as in the case of Örkény István Theatre, for example).

[28] These are companies working outside of the system of established theatres, who have to apply on a yearly basis for money to operate or create projects to the National Cultural Fund. They usually work without a permanent venue, in a repertoire system, in most of the cases with a small permanent company and additional guest performers.

Nevertheless, with the preservation of the parallel system, the structural and financial gap stayed in place.[29] The competition system of the National Cultural Fund, which allows independent companies to apply for money to cover their operational costs, is repeated on a year to year basis, and consequently it fails "to provide companies with sufficient support for continuous working." (Csanádi in Svetina, 2010: 156) This means that the existence of these companies was and is always on unstable grounds.

With the opening of the borders after the change of regime in 1989, Hungarian artists and spectators could familiarize themselves with all Western trends without restriction, and had more opportunity to showcase their own work outside the country as well. Csaba Horváth believes for example, that in the 1990s, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was Europe's cultural market, and having the opportunity to participate in this festival

> […] opened up immense possibilities for us. […] The Western artistic
> world was very curious about what could be found behind the iron curtain.
> […] At that time this had a big effect on European art [the artists from
> behind the iron curtain were affected by the Western trends, the Western
> art world was affected by the work of Eastern artists]. However, this effect
> softened since then, in my opinion the international art market had
> softened completely. Thus, there are monochrome trends; in most of the
> cases Eastern European artists adjust to the Western European trends
> (Horváth, 2020).

Therefore, it can be seen that the exchange of information accelerated after the change of regime and today it can happen continuously, without any restrictions. This means that while, for example, the notion of physical theatre could only appear in Hungary in the 1990s (possibly thanks to DV8's first guest performance in 1992 at the Petőfi Hall), six years after DV8's establishment, nowadays there is no outside (political) force that would limit the flow

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[29] "In contrast to the ideologically vulnerable and oppressed but financially stable decades of socialism, in the new system the cornerstone of arts became ticket revenue. Publishing, the film industry, music, fine arts, etc. all went through significant structural and economic changes. An exception to this were theatres, where in the majority of the cases the structure (the unity of the building + company + repertory) that they developed during the years of socialism and the method of financing (which previously relied exclusively on state subsidy, a few years later [after the change of regime] was built on the financial support of both: governmental and council funding – with the exception of theatres that were solely financed by a ministry -) was preserved" (P. Müller, 2010: 715). Nowadays, established theatres are financed by the council (except National Theatre that is financed by the state) and both established theatres and independent companies can apply for funding to the National Cultural Fund. Besides these their only source of income is the money coming from ticket sales.

of information between Western and Eastern countries. Thus, the time that passes between the appearance of new trends and tendencies abroad and their appearance in Hungary has shortened significantly.

As we can see from the previous chapter, thanks to, on one hand, the influence of the experimental theatre practitioners, and on the other hand, the political control over culture, the expression through movement and a conscious bodily presence on stage became more and more important and emphasised in the alternative theatre experiments of the communist era. As argued before, the language of the performing body could become a site of freedom under state socialism because movement and gestures were less controllable than the written text. Practitioners and companies such as Josef Nadj, Gábor Goda (Artus), Katalin Györgyfalvay, Antal Kricskovics, Ferenc Novák, József Ruszt, László Hudi, 25th Theatre, Yvette Bozsik, Arvisura Theatre, etc. all contributed in one way or another to these experiments. Moreover, practitioners such as Josef Nadj with Theatre de Jel or Gábor Goda with Artus continued their experimental, body-based work after the change of regime as well, providing an opportunity for new generations to familiarize themselves with this kind of thinking. Therefore, I would argue that although Csaba Horváth is the practitioner who is linked to the genre of physical theatre in Hungary, the experiments and the contribution of these above-mentioned practitioners are not negligible when examining the appearance of body-based theatrical thinking in this country. However, exploring the work of all of these practitioners and how they developed or altered the thinking about the performing body is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I intended to explore the main ideas that they introduced to the Hungarian theatrical scene in the previous chapter; nevertheless, there is no space here to further expand on them. Yet, I strongly believe that these people, who were not satisfied with the naturalistic-realistic traditions of theatre, who dared to push the boundaries, experiment and try out new ideas, provided an important base which nourished the experiments that did not stop with the regime change and helped the appearance of physical theatre in Hungary. It can even be argued that physical theatre was present in the work of all these practitioners long before Horváth and his theatre, despite the fact that it was neither labelled as such nor indeed understood as something called 'physical theatre'. It is important to point out that the appearance of the expression of 'movement theatre' during the 1970s and 1980s, that was regularly used to categorize the work of some of these practitioners, highlights the new way of theatrical thinking that they represented and could suggest a strong link to the practice of physical theatre.

This new world of democracy, where information could flow unhindered and artistic expression was no longer controlled, created the opportunity for Csaba Horváth to establish his independent company (Forte Company). His aim was to experiment with a new theatrical language which relies on the possibilities given by the expressive nature of the performing, moving body while working with text. As mentioned before, this is the work which is primarily identified as physical theatre in Hungary. Therefore, in the following chapter I will explore Horváth's practice and the roots that led him to this kind of work.

Chapter 4 - Physical Theatre in Hungary, The work of Csaba Horváth

Csaba Horváth (born in 1968 in Veszprém) started his career as a folk dancer and gradually changed from choreographing dance performances to directing theatre which contains a combination of text and movement. Having founded Forte Company in 2006 and becoming the programme leader of the university course called *Theatre Director - Specialization in: Director and Choreographer of Physical Theatre* at the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest in 2009, meant that his name has become inextricably associated with the practices of physical theatre in Hungary. In this chapter, I will examine how his career led him to directing, what influences formed his thinking, and what his opinion is about physical theatre.

Horváth started folk dancing at the age of around ten. After graduating from primary school, he became a student at the State Institute of Ballet[30], specializing in folk dance (between 1983 and 1987). He argues that moving to the capital and studying at this renowned institution meant that the world had opened up for him both professionally and personally.

> Moreover, at that time -we are talking about the early to mid-1980s- a reformation in folk dance had started. Folk dance was not only the embodiment of authentic folklore anymore; very important artists discovered the effects of folk dance on stage (Horváth, 2020).

Horváth is talking here about those new approaches to folk dance that were discussed in Chapter 2.4. On one hand, it was the work of Sándor Tímár, who turned his attention back to original folklore and used it as an example to follow in his practice. On the other hand, it was the work of Katalin Györgyfalvay, Károly Szigeti, Ferenc Novák and Antal Kricskovics, who used folk dance as an inspiration and whose purpose was to blend it with theatre. As mentioned above, during the 1960s and 1970s, as other modern dance styles could hardly reach the country from the West, important experiments and innovations could happen only in folk dance. This is why Lelkes argues that these experiments in the world of folk dance

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[30] The State Institute of Ballet was opened in 1950. Originally it operated as a secondary school, and the students could only study ballet dancing. However, from 1971 folk dance was added to the teaching repertoire of the Institute. From 1983, it started to operate as a higher education institution, and in 1990 it was renamed as the College of Hungarian Dance Arts. Since then, not only dancers but dance teachers, choreographers and dance historians/writers could study there, too. Since 2017 it has been called the Hungarian University of Dance Arts (mte.eu, 2020).

could be seen "as one of the forerunners of contemporary dance in Hungary" (Lelkes, 2009: 100). However, it is important to highlight that during the 1960s and 1970s, these experiments were not supported by the state. The professional folk dance companies (i.e. the ones that enjoyed the financial and ideological support of the ruling classes) "had to represent the continuous high spirits of the working class – the cliché of 'perky lads and modest lasses'- using the artistic means of folklore" (Fuchs in Grau and Jordan, 2000: 88). In contrast to this, these innovative artists presented real (everyday) human feelings, relationships and stories on stage by using the means of folk dance. This practice was only tolerated by the state, but not valorised or financially supported (see the policy of the 'Three T' in Chapter 2.3). However, it is interesting to point out that Horváth's class at the State Institute of Ballet was the first one "whose education incorporated dramatic stage folk dance" (Horváth, 2020), thus they could study, on an institutional level, the kind of folk dancing that was represented by Antal Kricskovics, Ferenc Novák and Katalin Györgyfalvay (the experimental folk dancer-choreographers). This shows that the control of the communist regime over the arts had softened by the end of the 1980s. Thanks to this, Horváth learnt it in school that folk dance can be about more than the authentic preservation of traditions. He learnt to tell real stories with the use of folk dance, instead of making clichéd representations of the Hungarian working class. After graduating from the State Ballet Institute, he spent five years at the Honvéd Ensemble under the artistic direction of Ferenc Novák, where similar values to those he learnt at the Institute were represented artistically.

In contrast to the experiences at the Honvéd Ensemble, Horváth's decision to leave that company and join, in 1992, Gerzson Péter Kovács' company called TranzDanz, brought a significant change to the way he approached folk dance.

> It was not Kovács' cup of tea to tell a story, to create a dramatic dance-play adapted from a literary work. It was very inspiring for me to experience at Gerzson's company how jazz music and folklore, or jazz music and dance can connect to each other. This had a shocking effect on me. The world, once again, opened up for me thanks to what I learnt from Mihály Dresch[31] and from the music I started to listen to (Horváth, 2020).

Gerzson Péter Kovács started his career as a folk dancer during the 1980s in Sándor Tímár's Bartók Dance Company. As seen in chapter 2.4., Tímár followed the example of the

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[31] Mihály Dresch (1955-) is an important figure of the Hungarian jazz scene. His music is a unique combination of Hungarian folk music and jazz.

"collector Bartók"[32], thus in his choreographies, the dancers reproduced the original, authentic folk dances of the Carpathian basin. However, Kovács soon felt that the strict rules and forms that he had to follow in these choreographies were very much limiting for him. In 1987, he created his first solo performance called *Transz Tánc* (*Trans Dance,* which premiered at Szkéné Theatre) in collaboration with jazz musician, Mihály Dresch, which he marks as the foundation of his company, TranzDanz. Although this performance "was still characterised by original folk dance-material and an authentic dancing style" (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 61), the introduction of jazz music opened the doors towards new means of expression. Between 1989 and 1991, he was part of Brigitte Farges' company in France, where he operated both as dancer and choreographer. These two years served as an important turning point in his life. He notes that,

> [p]reviously, I had been dancing in a way which was too much based on scholarly research, I knew everything about the given dance, about its motifs, structure, musical accompaniment, and its related customs. In Paris, however […] [t]hey expected me to make every movement my own. I was allowed to do anything I wished; nobody labelled my dances, nobody insisted on fastidious authenticity. It struck me that I did not have to observe the rules, I was allowed to trespass anywhere if I was otherwise artistically original and authentic (Kovács quoted in, Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 63).

After this eye-opening experience, he moved back to Hungary to pursue his own artistic vision. His significance as a choreographer lies in the fact, as Fuchs points it out, that he did not start to copy "a contemporary trend of modern dance" (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 63). He drew from his experiences -both from folk dance and from the dance technique he learnt in France- in order to find his own voice and create his own unique style. Fuchs also argues that the way Kovács uses folk dance materials as a groundwork and mixes it with "various elements of modern theatre and music" (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 61) suggests a direct line of succession with the practice of Katalin Györgyfalvay and Károly Szigeti. Thus, again it can be seen that the innovations in folk dance started in the 1960s and 1970s had an important influence on further generations' work.

Gerzson Péter Kovács's approach to folk dance, the way he took folk dance out of its original context and the way he merged it with other genres, was very inspirational for Horváth.

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[32] Béla Bartók, Hungarian composer and collector of Hungarian folk songs. He travelled around the Hungarian-speaking territories in order to collect songs and therefore, preserve the Hungarian folk music.

I continuously experienced while working with Gerzson that the possibilities are endless. It was not a conscious learning, it was rather a very inspirational period for me, which made me think. Moreover, it evoked in me the need to create something alone. Though, I was always interested in putting something on stage, or choreographing something, or putting two moves next to each other (Horváth, 2020).

The time spent with TranzDanz showed Horváth new ways to approach and use folk dance on stage. Moreover, in the acquaintance of Mihály Dresch, this time gave him a professional connection and a friendship that accompanied him after he parted ways with TranzDanz. Dresch wrote the music of many of Horváth's productions later on, for example *Szarvashajnal* (Közép-Európa Táncszínház, 2000), *Szindbád* (Közép Európa Táncszínház, 2003) or *Toldi* (Forte Company, 2016). As mentioned by Horváth above, the time spent with TranzDanz created the need in him to choreograph. Thus, in 1993 he choreographed his first production, called *Duál,* which premiered at the MU Theatre. It was a duo performed by Horváth and Gabriella Bakos.

I was searching, on one hand, for moods, moods in music and scenic moods, on the other hand I was, obviously, exploring a relationship between a man and a woman. But there was no authenticity in it. Thus, every move was based on folk dance, but it moved on from folk dance. This performance had a movement language that was inspired by folk dance (Horváth, 2020).

In short it can be argued that the three years (1992-1995) that Horváth spent with TranzDanz gave him courage to create independently and showed him freedom in experimentation which allowed him to move beyond the authentic folk dancing style.

In the following three years (1995-1998), he continued to work as a choreographer and performer with a company called Sámán Színház (founded by Éva Magyar).

These performances were absolutely movement theatre performances. There was not much text in it, they were not based on text. […] It was very interesting that Éva came from theatre, as she was an actress, and I came from dance, and somehow here, dance and theatre could meet and for a while it was a well-functioning amalgamation of the two worlds (Horváth, 2020).

I would argue that these three years, on one hand, created an opportunity for Horváth to get to know a more theatrical approach; on the other hand, he could really get started as an independent artist, choreographer. His success in this is shown by the fact that in 2000, he became the artistic director of Közép-Európa Táncszínház (Central Europe Dance Theatre).

The Közép-Európa Táncszínház is the successor of the Népszínház Táncegyüttes, which was founded in 1978 and managed by Katalin Györgyfalvay. In 1988, Györgyfalvay was forced to retire and her place was taken by Csaba Szögi and István Énekes. In 1989, the company's name was changed to Közép-Európa Táncszínház. Until 1991, it operated as part of Népszínház; from 1991 to 1996, it operated as part of Budapesti Kamaraszínház; and since 1997, it has operated as an independent company. Horváth was the company's artistic director between 2000 and 2006. These six years were a very fruitful period in Horváth's career. He argues that his aim, similar to how Dresch and Bartók worked, was not to rework the original folk dances, but to reinterpret them, to use them as an inspirational source in order to create something new. Andrea Tompa's writing about two of his choreographies at Közép Európa Táncszínház (*Ancient K* and *Stags' Dawn* both premiered in 2000) underlies this approach well and provides a clear picture of Horváth's choreographic style at this period:

> Lyricism, strong, immediate effects, humour, irony and self-deprecation all give birth to a complex language combining both theatrical and dance elements. None of these performances are limited to narrative, though in both cases there are allegorical elements or shades of a story. Folk dance elements are basic for both choreographic works, but "there is a constant break in the continuity of these steps: some movements are emphasised, outlined, twisted – as if they came into being right now in front of our eyes. So, we can see both the survival of archaic, traditional forms, and the emergence of autonomous self-expression, which breaks free from this tradition" (Vera Vazsó: The prehistory of the personality, Ellenfény, 200/3-4) (Tompa in Nánay, Tompa (eds.), 2000: 101).

During this time, Horváth still worked solely as a choreographer, mainly with folk dancers; however, a tendency towards using literature could already be observed. Many of his choreographies were based on literary works such as *Nero, a véres költő* (*Nero, the bloody poet*) by Dezső Kosztolányi or *Szindbád* (*Sindbad*) written by Gyula Krúdy. He argues that literary works inspired him, "Therefore there was always some kind of background material to each performance, that had something to do with literature"

(Horváth, 2020). This interest in literature possibly led him to not only use the story and tell it through the language of dance, but to start to work with the text itself, which as we will see, became a characteristic of his later works.

A new milestone in Horváth's career was when he left the Közép-Európa Táncszínház:

> We performed in most of the cases at the Bethlen téri Színház, and I tried everything out with that space that was possible (I put the spectators on stage and we played in the auditorium, I played with all sorts of lighting designs, I made the spectators sit in the round etc.) and I knew all my dancers inside out. I had a feeling that the possibilities, the potentials started to narrow down, despite the fact that it became a renowned company under my artistic direction (Horváth, 2020).

Consequently, in 2006 he founded his own company under the name Fortedanse.

> When I founded Forte, at the beginning I still originated my work from dance and I especially wanted to work with classically trained dancers. Thus, at this moment folk dance took a bit of a back seat. The movement language that was characteristic of me did not take a back seat, but I was curious about how this movement language could change and transform on the bodies of classically trained dancers. Thus, I invited dancers from the Opera House to work with me and we created two performances: *&Echó* [in 2006, MU Színház] and *A testek felszínének esetleges állapotairól* [in 2007, Trafó] (Horváth, 2020).

It can be seen from this that Horváth, leaving Közép-Európa Táncszínház started to open new doors in his own choreographic style. Although he had not moved away from dance itself yet, it can clearly be seen that he had an intention to push his own boundaries and try out something new. This intention of experimenting with something new manifested itself first in working with dancers coming from a different professional background, and from 2007, in working with actors and incorporating text into his productions.

Simultaneous to the foundation of his own independent company Fortedanse, Horváth joined the company of Csokonai Színház as well, in Debrecen in 2006 as the leader of the theatre's dance ensemble. Here, he started to work, amongst others, with the actors who had just graduated from The University of Theatre and Film Arts (Nóra Földeáki, Máté Andrássy, Csaba Krisztik, József Kádas, Péter Nagy, János Mercs, Katinka Egres and Tibor

Mészáros). This is important, because the students of this class (headteachers: Andor Lukáts and Tamás Jordán, studying between 2002 and 2006) were the first ones who received a new kind of movement training[33] thanks to the reformations of Andrea Ladányi. Horváth paid close attention to the work of these students during their university studies, thanks to his professional relationship with Ladányi. Horváth and Ladányi worked together on several occasions at the Közép-Európa Táncszínház. Thus, when Horváth met these students in Debrecen, he had the chance to push his boundaries even more, and started to work with actors who might not be dancers, but who had received a serious movement education on which Horváth could build. Therefore, his work on *Spring Awakening* (written by Frank Wedekind; premiered in Csokonai Színház in Debrecen, in 2007) was again an important milestone in his artistic practice. This was the first production in which he worked independently with actors and in which he adapted a literary work (this time, he did not only use the story of the literary work, as before, but he incorporated the text itself with the movement). This meeting of a choreographer with actors and text had a unique outcome. Perényi, in his review, points out that,

> [t]he performance is an imposing system of counterpoint, simultaneous effects, contrast, enhancement, repetition, variations, rhythm. Probably theatre productions usually forget about or neglect these essential theatrical effects, because they trust too much in the pleasure of storytelling and in the listening of it. In contrast to this, in contemporary dance there is no chance for similar easy-to-follow storytelling. Thus, it is exceptional, when somebody can tell a story clearly about fate and human lives with the theatrical musicality of a movement theatre production (Perényi, 2007: para.2.).

What can be seen from this, is that Horváth's background in dance meant a fresh approach to storytelling in theatre. When directing *Spring Awakening,* he did not solely rely on the text to tell the story, but helped it with gestures, movement, dance, thus with the language of the body. Perényi argues that this added something new to the Hungarian theatrical scene:

> Not only in its energy (in its exaggeration or in its moderation), in its tone (being grotesque, playful or deep), nor in the relationship between character and personality (being personal or alienated, being experienced or exposed) differs the acting [in *Spring Awakening*] from the local

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[33] Starting from the 2002/2003 academic year Gábor Székely (the rector of the University) asked Andrea Ladányi to make some reforms in the actor students' movement education. Ladányi introduced a new system in which students could learn twelve new movement styles (e.g. tai chi, acrobatics, rhythmic folk dance, contact etc.) in monthly workshops. This meant a huge change in the actors' movement education. Before the reformation actors only learnt to fence or ride a horse. Thus, their physical abilities were not developed in equal measure with the needs of modern theatre.

tradition (traditions). It is different in every aspect from what we can see from night to night. This work is characterized by another type of thinking, rehearsing method (character building?), acting states, concentration, another means of expression (Perényi, 2007: para. 2.).

From this point on, Horváth's directing style is mainly characterized by the use of text and movement simultaneously. Although a change can be observed in this, in the sense, that meanwhile in *Spring Awakening* scenes, which were dance choreographies could be found, nowadays, the choreographies are replaced by expressive movement sequences and gestures. The work he started with these young actors in Debrecen was continued when Horváth left Debrecen in 2008 along with Nóra Földeáki, Csaba Krisztik, Máté Andrássy and József Kádas. These four young actors and ballet dancer, Borbála Blaskó, became the new independent company of Horváth, under the name of Forte Company. A slight name change (between 2005 and 2008 Horváth's company was called Fortedanse) shows the new direction in which Horváth was heading. In their 'Artistic Policy' they stated:

> The company, composed of actors and dancers, is experimenting with the creation of a theatrical language that is less known in Hungary. The aim is to create a homogeneous language with bodies, sound, dance, music and text. The *physical theatre* genre which is reformulated this way tries to think in new ways about storytelling, situation, scenes, stage time, space and dramaturgy. Furthermore, it evokes an exciting and genuine acting style (Forte Company's old website).

At this point in Horváth's chronology, it is important to draw our attention to the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest. As mentioned above, the reformation of actors' movement education started from 2002; furthermore, a four-year choreographer course was launched in 2003, and a two-year choreographer course ran between 2003 and 2005. These new initiatives strongly linked to the development of students' movement culture suggest that, the instructors of an institution where the main focus was text-based theatre realized the importance of movement education in all levels, whether that be movement education of actors, or choreographing for theatre. To take this further, in 2008 Gábor Székely (the rector of the University) with the help of Andrea Ladányi launched an accredited new course entitled, *Theatre Director - Specialization in: Director and Choreographer of Physical Theatre*. Originally, alongside Ladányi, four theatre professionals and tutors would have been the leaders of the class and their education: Andor

Lukáts[34], Sándor Zsótér, Josef Nadj and Csaba Horváth. Their aim was, as Ladányi pointed out in an interview:

> […] not to educate only performers, we, exceptionally, would like to create a complex education for independent artists. As during the creative process, the directing, choreographing and performing abilities are not separated, we consider education in all three areas equally essential. This means that our students, as this specialisation is part of the *Director* course, have to fulfil the requirements of the Director course, as well as the requirements of the Choreographer course and they also have to take part in the classes of the Movement Department (Nánay, 2008: 36).

In 2008, however, this class could not get started under the leadership of Ladányi, because there were not enough adequate applicants. By the time the reopening of the applications arrived in the following year, Csaba Horváth and Andor Lukáts were left alone in this project.

Although the expression *'physical theatre'* was known in Hungary, thanks mainly to the guest performances of DV8, it seems that it became legitimized in Hungarian theatrical language with the foundation of this course. As Horváth became the head of this class and simultaneously, with his company, created performances that relied heavily on the expressive use of the actors' bodies and their movements, the notion of physical theatre blended with his name. Horváth argues that "The denotation of this genre is linked to my name, but it was not me who invented it" (Horváth, 2020). As detailed before (in the Introduction), he also points out that in Hungarian this expression brings with itself a linguistic difficulty, as *fizikai színház* is the word to word translation of its English equivalent. "This is more a linguistic dilemma, than a dilemma of a theatrical genre. Simply because *fizika* (physics) is a subject. It could have been the theatre of physicality, but it was not named like that, it became physical theatre" (Horváth, 2020).

As pointed out in the Introduction, the notion of physical theatre is problematic in English as well, mainly because it describes a wide range of practices starting from works heavily based on dance, through mime to works based on Meyerhold, Artaud or Grotowski's

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[34] Andor Lukáts (1943-) started his career as an amateur actor at Pinceszínház, later on he worked first as an extra, then as an actor and finally as a director at the Csiky Gergely Színház in Kaposvár (1972-1991). Between 1991 and 1994 he worked as a free-lancer, then he was part of Katona József Színház's company (1994-2008). In 2008 he founded his own theatre company called Sanyi és Aranka Színház.

experiments. This complexity and variety of the nature of works that can be described as physical theatre is recognized in Hungary as well. Horváth, while talking about differences between movement and dance theatre[35], argues that "The notion of physical theatre, in my point of view, incorporates everything and does not exclude anything" (Horváth, 2020). However, I would argue that in Hungary - thanks to Horváth's work as the leader of the University course and as the founder of Forte Company- when we talk about physical theatre, the origin and the reference point have become Horváth. Therefore, in Hungary physical theatre is associated with the type of theatre that Horváth is making. This means that the production is usually the adaptation of a literary work, it incorporates spoken text, and it is characterized by abstract setting, an acting style where the language of the body is consciously used, and generally, by the use of movement in a way that helps the storytelling.

As indicated in Chapters 2 and 3, the emphasis on the expressive nature of the performing body, of movement and gesture was present in the work of practitioners such as Katalin Györgyfalvay, Pál Regős, Josed Nadj or Gábor Goda. Thus, this kind of work had started long before Horváth's appearance on the Hungarian theatrical scene. In different ways, these practitioners aimed to allow cross-pollination of genres in their work in order to highlight the importance of the performing body in the otherwise word-dominated theatrical world. Horváth continued this legacy while discovering his own means of creation and his own language. I believe that the work he is doing is an important composing element of the history of Hungarian theatre. However, I would argue that his biggest contribution to physical theatre in Hungary was the fact that - with the foundation of Forte Company and with leading the above-mentioned university course - he legitimised the existence of the notion itself. This is similar to how the notion of physical theatre became part of the British theatrical scene after the foundation and success of companies such as DV8 and Complicité.

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[35] „If I try to define these notions according to my experiences, then Honvéd Együttes is dance theatre. There is a strong language there, which is that of folklore, in most of the cases pure folklore, and this is weaved into different ancient, classical or contemporary dramas, in most of the cases into classical dramas that are reformulated. In case of movement theatre, modern trends such as mime, or Eastern trends such as butoh get in the picture, but it is important to point out that this is not dance, it is expression with/through the body. Josef Nadj's work could possibly be described like this, but I think this is more than that. The notion of physical theatre, in my point of view, incorporates everything and does not exclude anything." (Horváth, 2020)

Horváth notes as a determinative experience in his route that led him to work with text, his experience with the drama students of Harvard University in Boston. He worked there, next to János Szász, as a choreographer (*Mother Courage and Her Children* in 2001, *Marat/Sade* in 2002) and independently as a director (*Spring Awakening* in 2003). The work with actors instead of dancers and the work with literary texts proved to be so fruitful that he claims today:

> To be honest I diverged much from the classical dance world, let that be folk dance, ballet, contemporary or anything. I am more excited about creating performances with actors, in which physicality and physical theatre can be present. I am more interested in this, than working with dancers, although I like dancers, I like working with them, but I do not think that a dancer can speak on stage in the same quality as an actor. Meanwhile the actors' physical abilities are more variable. Thus, according to my experiences, even if actors do not have the abilities according to which they could be called dancers, you will still be more surprised by them and get more inspiration from them (Horváth, 2020).

This departure from the world of dance and from working with dancers meant a change in Horváth's career: he started to create fewer and fewer dance choreographies per se and started to use more, visual expression through movement; furthermore, the creative use of space and objects started to characterize his work. This visually exciting and creative performance style where the actors' body and its language is consciously used is what Hungarians started to recognize as physical theatre.

Based on my personal experiences with Forte Company's productions, I discovered characteristics of Horváth that can be found to a certain extent in most of his works. In the following, I will outline these characteristics in order to understand how Horváth works and how the theatre that Hungarians associate with the genre of physical theatre looks. Firstly, coming from the dance world, music and musicality always played an important role in Horváth's productions. He argues that music is always present: "One brings out the other, it is either the text that brings out the music -and music is present, even if there is no music-, or the music brings out the story" (Horváth, 2020). He works regularly with musicians and composers or uses already existing music pieces as an inspirational source. Bartók's *Concerto* and *String Quartet No. 5* (which premiered in 2016) are great examples of his using original pieces of music as an integral element of the production. In this case, he left the music piece untouched and expressed himself, his vision evoked by the music, through

the actors and their movements. It is important to highlight, that although after a long time these (*Concerto* and *String Quartet No. 5)* were one of his productions in which he did not use any text, he chose to work with actors instead of dancers, because as he argues "I demanded a stage presence from the performers, that makes the performance intelligent and expressive. The thoughts I wanted to share with this production could be expressed better with actors" (Grozdits, 2017: para. 12). Lívia Fuchs summarizes well in her review what kind of movement Horváth used in these choreographies and highlights the difference that the use of actors instead of dancers makes:

> Horváth's movement culture is far away not only from folk dance, but from all known movement language. It is put together from simple movement motifs that are ready to explode at any moment. These movement motifs are in one moment like everyday movements and gestures, but in the other, knowledge in acrobatics and virtuoso preparedness is demanded from the performers. Most of these performers -which is quite unique (it might only be Newson, the founder of DV8, who experimented with similar)- are not dancers, but actors. The decorative function of movements ceases to exist with these actors, and instead it is only the pure and overwhelming energy, a kind of truth of the movements that stays (Fuchs, 2016: 31).

In other cases, Horváth works with a composer in order to create original music for the piece as, for example, in *Káprázat* (an adaptation of Elias Canetti's novel *Auto-da-Fé*, which premiered in 2019 at the Szkéné Theatre), where the music was written by Tamás Keresztes. Horváth highlights the importance of music in his productions when he argues that:

> In my point of view, this kind of work can be called music theatre as much as we call it physical theatre. I am talking about the *music theater* -as they use it in the German-speaking world- which is not equal with operettas or musicals. […] In this case music is never illustrative, it is an equal composing part of the performance similar to dance, prose or visuality (Horváth, 2020).

When we look through Forte Company's archive, we can see that in most of their productions, Horváth worked together with a composer or musician in order to create the musical world of the performance. In many cases, this person was Csaba Ökrös, a renowned folk musician, violinist. I find it important to highlight his person, because again, it shows that despite the fact that Horváth had departed from the traditional, authentic folk dance world, his origins still in part shape his artistic work. In many cases, he draws inspiration from folk music.

Horváth does not only use music written for the specific production or original music pieces. He also creates music or sound by using the space, the actors' vocal abilities, the objects or even the actors' bodies. Usually, he creates rhythmic sounds by repetitive movement sequences, clapping or playing with objects. The multifunctional use of objects is a very important characteristic of his theatre. On one hand, this multifunctionality manifests itself in using the objects as a source for creating sound. For example, the use of cow shoulder blades in *Vaterland* (which premiered in 2018 at Trafó, House of Contemporary Arts)[36], the use of sheets of foam in *Crime and Punishment* (which premiered in 2015 at Szkéné Theatre)[37] or the use of plastic and metal pipes in *A te országod* (*Your Country*, which premiered in 2015 at Trafó)[38]. On the other hand, this multifunctional use of objects gives a very specific language to the performance. By multifunctional use of objects, I mean that Horváth usually chooses one kind of object for one performance, for example cows' shoulder blades, sheets of foam, vegetables, pipes etc., and he uses those objects in such a way that they will signify many things by the end of the performance. According to my own experiences, as a member of the audience, this starts a chain of association in the mind, which makes me, as a spectator, actively engaged with the performance, looking for layers of meaning in the production. Horváth argued in an interview that

> The kind of expression that avoids being nuanced, and being abstract in order for its message to be clear for everybody is far from me. I do not like to see a world that is put on stage in a straightforward way. As a spectator and as an artist as well, maybe because I'm coming from dance, I always wanted to decrypt the secrets, I was looking for the chance to be able to think and associate (Vlasics, 2018: para. 21).

As mentioned by him in this quote, the result of this kind of use of objects makes the language of the performance abstract. His productions are not realistic representations of everyday life. Horváth creates always changing, expressive images by creatively using the actors' bodies, the objects or the set design elements. Therefore, it can be argued that his theatre is visual theatre, as much as it is physical theatre, because he builds on the expressiveness of movement and images. He argues that if you find the right kind of object

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[36] To get a sense of the production please see its trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fwro_paC8IU
[37] Trailer of the performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQOqvFm8ses
[38] Trailer of the performance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-zpeK10Mgo

that can be used throughout the whole performance, then that object or group of objects can provide the 'mortar' of the performance.

> It was always important for me to achieve the effect when it becomes evident for the spectator, that a piece of wood, is not only a piece of wood anymore. It becomes countless clever objects, through which they can associate. In the sense of object-use it is associative theatre. But, to be honest, this does not stand far from what can be found in stage dance itself; that every move, gesture have a meaning without explaining itself, its meaning overtly. But it is important to point out that it is not equal with symbolism: that there are symbols that you show what they mean, and from then on, it becomes evident what that symbol signifies (Horváth, 2020).

It is important for Horváth to find this 'mortar' in the first place, because later on it will affect the language of the whole performance. For example, in his production of *Káprázat* this 'mortar' was the stilts.

Figure 2. *Káprázat* (2019) – Szkéné Theatre, Budapest. Director: Csaba Horváth, Photo: Csaba Mészáros

According to my experience[39], finding the mortar is the starting point for Horváth. As soon as he decided to include the stilts in the performance, he started to experiment with how they could be used in the most diverse ways, and what different meanings they can have in the performance. As these stilts very much influenced how the actors could work and exist on stage, during the rehearsals, there was usually a big emphasis on creating movement and images. This means that for Horváth, creation is more likely to start with the visual elements (composition of images and movement), than the analysis of the text and the situations.

One could argue that in comparison to European (and mainly British) physical theatre practices, similarities can be discovered between certain companies and Horváth's practice. For example, that Horváth's practice emerges from the world of dance (folk dance) and that his early works relied very much on dance itself and choreography (and not gesture, movement and expressive physical presence), suggests association with DV8.[40] Furthermore, Murray and Keefe argue that "[Simon] McBurney [co-founder of Theatre de Complicité[41]] regularly invokes the formal patterns of musical composition – rhythm, tempo and phrasing, for example – to help his actors structure material where the normal scaffolding of linear narrative and psychological motivation is absent." (Murray, Keefe, 2016: 108). As mentioned earlier, musicality is also a very important composing element for Horváth who argues that "there is music even when there is no music" (Horváth, 2020). This suggests that areas of further research to compare McBurney's and Horváth's practice might be productive. However, the framework of this thesis did not allow me to investigate in depth the European practices which would allow me to make such comparisons and draw a valid conclusion from them.

In short, we could see that Horváth - being the programme leader of the university course Directing and Choreographing for Physical Theatre and being the founder of Forte Company (who introduced a new theatrical language into the Hungarian theatrical scene) - became one with the practices of physical theatre in Hungary. The theatrical language that he created has some easily-recognisable characteristics. His productions always operate within an abstract setting, and this setting contains only set design elements and objects that can become an

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[39] I worked on the production of *Káprázat* as an assistant to Csaba Horváth.

[40] For more please see Chapter 1 (page 6).

[41] „Complicite, […] has often been identified as the most accomplished and obvious exemplar of contemporary physical theatres to be framed and driven by the traditions of twentieth-century French mime, […]" (Murray, Keefe, 2016: 107)

integral part of the performance and its language. This occurs by using them multifunctionally, thus using them outside of their original function and meaning. As Horváth argued, the purpose of this is to create an open-minded atmosphere in the auditorium where the audience engages with the performance by letting a chain of association happen in their consciousness. Musicality is always present in his performances, be that the use of composed music or sounds and rhythms created by the actors on stage. Using the actors' bodies, their engagement with the set and objects creates a visually expressive theatre. As there is equal emphasis on musicality, acting (text and movement) and visuality, it can be argued that Horváth's theatre is a total theatre[42].

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[42] „[Total theatre is a t]erm used in the twentieth century to describe performance that uses, or aspires to use, numerous artistic elements to create a powerful or overwhelming experience for the audience. The urge to draw upon and exploit the totality of performative devices—music, dance, acting, scenography and the plastic arts, costume, masks, lighting, playhouse architecture, the configuration of the stage and auditorium, and spectator environment—is particularly modernist, rising from Wagner's intention to produce a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total work of art' in his music dramas and Craig's attempt to elevate the director-designer into the prime artist of the theatre. The major theoretical proponent of total theatre was Artaud, who in the 1930s demanded that the stage abandon its logocentric history in favour of a theatre of cruelty: a sensory, kinetic, and visceral strategy that would invoke the darker or Dionysiac side of human life" (oxfordreference.com).

Chapter 5 - The Successors

All three artists whose work I will introduce in this chapter are the successors of Csaba Horváth in the sense that they are all the graduates of the first class of the program, *Theatre Director - Specialization in: Director and Choreographer of Physical Theatre* at the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest[43]. As specified in the description of the course on the University's website "During the creative process the talent in movement art, in acting, in directing and in choreographing cannot be differentiated, therefore training in all of these areas is equally important" (szfe.hu, 2016). This means that over the course of five years, students study acting, directing and choreographing simultaneously. Thanks to this, they can choose what kind of career they want to pursue after graduation. Some work solely as actors, some work as actor and director or actor and choreographer, some work solely as director. The first class, which pursued studies between 2009 and 2014, consisted of 13 students. I chose to examine the career of the following three (Kristóf Widder, Máté Hegymegi and Attila Soós), because they are the ones who, despite working occasionally as performers or choreographers (next to a director), also work regularly as directors with their own company, as in the case of Attila Soós, or with important independent or established companies, as in the case of Widder and Hegymegi. I conducted in-depth interviews with them in order to get a better understanding of what *physical theatre* means to them. My aim is to outline what this younger generation inherited from its predecessors and in which directions their practices point. The question I posed myself is: How does physical theatre evolve in contemporary Hungarian theatre? In the following I have mainly examined their work in relation to Csaba Horváth, but an area of further research might be to place their practice in a wider context (both in Hungary and in Europe). This task, however, falls outwith the scope of the present thesis.

5.1. Kristóf Widder

Kristóf Widder (born in 1988 in Budapest) works regularly as a choreographer or movement director (alongside a director as, for example, in *The Raven King* at Bóbita Bábszínház in Pécs, 2020), or independently, as in the case of *The House of Bernarda Alba*

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[43] This program was initiated by Andrea Ladányi in 2008. She was supposed to start the teaching with the help of Sándor Zsótér, Joef Nadj and Csaba Horváth, as the four main tutors of the class. However, in 2008 the course could not get started because there were not enough suitable students who had applied. The following year, Csaba Horváth and Andor Lukáts started the class as head teachers.

(which was produced in 2015 in collaboration with Forte Company). He occasionally appears on stage as a performer (for example, in Forte Company's *Káprázat*). He often works as a director with independent companies (e.g. *To be or not* with KV Company in 2020), with established theatres outside of Budapest (e.g. *Pettson és Findusz* at Ciróka Bábszínház in Kecskemét, in 2019), or with renowned established theatres in Budapest (e.g. *The Bell Jar* at Örkény István Theatre in 2018). The wide range of jobs he is doing indicates that the education he received at The University of Theatre and Film Arts made it possible for him to be versatile and to explore many aspects of theatre making simultaneously. However, when asked, he refers to himself as a director-choreographer.

Widder believes that by the 21st century, everything that was possible in theatre arts had been achieved. However,

> […] we are here in the 21st century, and despite, as I said before, that everything had been discovered in terms of forms, this does not mean, that people of the present time do not need arts, of course they do. Although everything had been discovered, this does not mean that everybody has seen everything. […] However, it is important that the arts of the present time have to react to the present. Even though I think that there is nothing new under the sun, this should not mean that we give up, and do the thousandth Hamlet out of habit. Therefore, now the need should not be for the reformation of theatre arts, in my point of view, the need has shifted to be valid. The most important is to be valid, whatever we talk about (Widder, 2020).

This validity means on one hand, that the director should talk about our present, reflect on current issues or problems through the production. On the other hand, Widder highlights that the director needs to pay attention to using this "stock" of knowledge, these already-discovered forms with enough intelligence. The aim should be the creation of a new "recipe", thus, their own language, that sounds valid on stage today. Widder's idea of this "stock of knowledge" suggests that he agrees with Fuchs' idea (which is the opening quotation of this dissertation and the driving idea of this research): "Even the most innovative and experimental artists have their roots and predecessors" (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 61). Therefore, it is not a surprise that Widder is aware of the influences that formed the way he works and thinks about theatre.

In the interview I conducted with him, he revealed that his biggest influence was (obviously) his instructor Csaba Horváth.

> I am very much influenced by the way Csaba thinks about the body, about how expressive it can be either in an empty space or in a well-designed abstract setting. With a posture, by keeping a little body-part away from the rest of the body, character, time of day, location, thus, everything can be expressed, this is amazing. During none of my rehearsals do I think about Csaba himself; however I can see, when I start to think about it, that he is the biggest and most important influence on my works (Widder, 2020).

Where can this influence be traced in Widder's work? As detailed in the previous chapter, a characteristic of Horváth's productions is the creative and multifunctional use of objects. Horváth uses the language of the body, a movement or gesture to create atmosphere, to indicate location, relationships or feelings, instead of indicating these things with the use of multiple objects. A similar approach can be recognized in Widder's work, too. An example of the multifunctional use of props from Widder's works could be *The Arabian Night* (which premiered in 2018 at the Vörösmarty Theatre in Székesfehérvár), where the only objects the

Figure 3. *The Arabian Night* (2018) - Vörösmarty Theatre, Székesfehérvár. Director: Kristóf Widder. Photo: Vera Éder

actors used were empty wine bottles. During the performance, these bottles could work as instruments, a knife, binoculars, keys, shopping bags etc., and of course, as bottles. This multifunctionality transforms the performance from being naturalistic and provides an

abstract setting in which the spectator is asked to engage with the performance by using their imagination. This is very similar to how the use of different vegetables works in Horváth's production of *The Notebook* (an adaptation of Agota Kristof's novel, premiered in 2013 at the Szkéné Theatre). It is important to highlight that in these cases, the one kind of object that is used is a conscious choice. This always has a strong link to the text and a meaning in itself: in *The Notebook*, Horváth deliberately decided to flood the stage with the one thing everybody was short of during the years of war (i.e. food); Widder's empty bottles can be linked, on one hand, to the shortage of water in the building, on the other, to the immense alcohol consumption of one of the characters. However, as these objects are used beyond their original meaning, thus, the vegetables are not only employed as vegetables or the bottles are not used as bottles to drink from, they provide a new language for the performance. As a spectator of these performances, the multifunctionality of the objects made me not take anything for granted and asked me to look beyond my first impressions. I realized that it is not enough to consume what I see; I had a feeling that the creators invited me (to a greater extent than I had ever experienced before) to give free way to my imagination and associations, and therefore, they asked me to make an effort to make meaning of what I saw on stage.

The other type of object use that is characteristic of both Horváth and Widder, is when different kinds of objects can appear on stage, but their number is limited. *The Bell Jar* is a great example from Widder's works for limited use of objects. In this performance, the only objects the actors use are three envelopes and a handbag which hides a red lipstick. Everything else is visualized by movement and postures, whether that be a camera, a blade or drinks. In the case when an object is not present on the stage, it means that not only is the actual object important, but the situation and the feelings they evoke in the character, which can be well represented by movement. The limitation of the number of objects also puts an emphasis on the few that are used. In the case of *The Bell Jar*, the recurring appearance of the light blue envelope always foreshadows a turning point in the lead character's relationship with her first love. Meanwhile, the red lipstick (signifying blood) highlights the only moment throughout the play when the lead character is exposed to violence.

Figure 4. *The Bell Jar* (2018) – Örkény István Theatre, Budapest. Director: Kristóf Widder, Photo: Judit Horváth

A point of comparison for limited use of props from Horváth's repertoire could be *Crime and Punishment* (which premiered in 2015 at Szkéné Theatre) in which the only actual objects they used were some glasses and paper money. As mentioned before, this limited use of objects highlights the ones that are used; however, in the case of *Crime and Punishment*, the emphasis was put more on a multifunctional set-design element, rather than the few objects. Human-size sheets of foam covered the floor at the very beginning of the performance, which were used, on one hand, to indicate the locations later on in the play. On the other hand, they signified more than locations; they became such an integral part of the language of the performance, thanks to their creative and constant use throughout the play (they were used for example as instruments, people were wrapped in them, money was chased with them, etc.) that eventually, they became more than simple set design elements.

Figure 5. *Crime and Punishment* (2015) – Szkéné Theatre, Budapest. Director: Csaba Horváth. Photo: Róbert Révész

This kind of object-use creates an abstract language, in which expression through the language of the body becomes emphasised. In order to be able to express atmosphere, relationships and the story, the actors get into the most diverse relations with the objects and set design elements, which in most of the cases means a strong physical engagement. This engagement usually results in the creation of expressive images through which the directors communicate the story. Thus, it can be argued that both Horváth's and Widder's work can be described as visual theatre as much as physical theatre.

Horváth's influence on Widder can be also traced through the importance of musicality in his works. Similar to Horváth, he sometimes works with original pieces, as, for example, in his choreography to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (which premiered in 2017, at the Thealter Festival in Szeged); or with a composer, as in the case of *The Bell Jar*, where the music creates atmosphere and underlies the inner-thoughts of the main character (the music was composed by Dávid László Bakk), and the creation of sound and rhythms with objects is characteristic of him as well (see the opening scene of *The Arabian Night* where the actors created rhythmic sound by hitting the set with and blowing into the bottles).

Although these links can be made between Horváth's and Widder's practices, Widder recognizes the differences as well. "I think I am doing something completely different from him [Horváth] artistically. […] From the very first moment we start to work with the text in two very distinct ways" (Widder, 2020). Based on my experiences[44], I can agree with that. Working with Widder, I witnessed how important it is for him to understand and make the actors understand what the text says. However, it is important to point out that this does not mean that the text becomes primary. "It is very important for the form and the material to meet" (Widder, 2020). Thus, he argues that, if they (movement and text) are handled equally,

> […] then it becomes possible to let it [expression through choreographed gestures and movements] go as much as I did in [*To be or not*, a performance he directed for KV Company in 2020]. […] The use of space, the trajectory of the actors, these are all coming from thinking with a movement centred mindset, however this is absolutely not conspicuous. […] I still feel them equal, but I used very fine tools in this case, which are not visible for the naked eye (Widder, 2020).

It can be seen from this, that Widder approaches a new work from analysing the text in order to discover the best form with which he can make the material come alive. He admits that, "[i]n my relation to the text Sándor Zsótér[45] had a significant influence on me" (Widder, 2020). Meanwhile, as detailed in the previous chapter, Horváth tends to approach the material through the form, by trying to find the "mortar" of the performance (which is usually an object, or a design element).

As a difference between his own and Horváth's work, Widder also points out that while Horváth has a distinct style which can be easily distinguished from others, "when I look back to the past five-six years, since I graduated, and put two or three of my productions next to each other, it makes me feel good that they are different [in their form, in the tools that were

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[44] I worked as an assistant on the productions of *The Bell Jar* (2018) and *The Arabian Night* (2018) next to Kristóf Widder and on the production of *Káprázat* (2019) next to Csaba Horváth.

[45] Sándor Zsótér (1961-) graduated from The University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest in 1983 as a dramaturge. Between 1983 and 1992 he worked as a dramaturge in many theatres around the country. Since 1992, he mainly works as director. Since 1996, he teaches at The University. He was one of the instructors of Widder's class.

used, in their style] from each other" (Widder, 2020). In this respect, Árpád Schilling's[46] work with Krétakör Theatre inspired him the most.

> Although 80% of Krétakör's productions were directed by Árpád Schilling, it seemed to me as if each of them was directed by a different person and this had a big influence on me. […] This chameleon-like quality of Schilling [that he could reinvent himself for each production] was very sympathetic for me and I think it somehow got embedded into my subconscious (Widder, 2020).

His versatility is shown by the range of his works. He has choreographies with no spoken text (e.g. *The Rite of Spring*), productions where expression through movement is emphasised (e.g. *The Arabian Night*) and works where, seemingly, movement work is de-emphasised (e.g. *To be or not*). Widder highlights that,

> [t]hese are not changes of direction for me, I rather like to examine – and this is what I learnt subconsciously, I think, from Árpád Schilling, as the spectator of Krétakör – what form the given text and the message that I want to convey with it calls forth. This is the most important (Widder, 2020).

In short, we can see that Widder always starts from the material. The analysis and understanding of the text are very important for him in order to find the right form and tool set for its interpretation. Thanks to this approach to the work, movement or any tool of the physical theatre genre only appears in his productions when its use is well-founded.

> It was important fundamentally that Emőke [the actress who played the lead character in *The Bell Jar*] had a background in dance, but the point is, that this was not the priority. The priority was what it expressed that the floor was rocking, that she was standing or sitting, that she was sitting at which stair (Widder, 2020).[47]

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[46] Árpád Schilling (1974-) the founder of Krétakör Theatre, which operated between 1995 and 2008 and was one of the most successful and well-known independent companies in the country. He graduated from The University of Theatre and Film Arts in 2000 as a director. He was part of Kerekasztal Színházi Társaság (Roundtable Theatre Company) between 1991 and 1993, and Arvisura Theatre between 1993 and 1995. Both of these companies were important workshops of the alternative/independent movement of the 1990s. Schilling worked on many occasions not only in Hungary, but abroad as well. He lives and works in France since 2018.

[47] Please see the trailer of the production of *The Bell Jar* at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D4ypbTW_GQ

This shows that Widder consciously and equally tries to communicate in each of his productions with all of its composing elements. Design (set and costume), music, movement[48] and acting are all equally important and emphasised, even if it does not seem so at first sight. In his case, this resulted in very different productions to be present in his directing repertoire. However, it is important to point out that even if it is not conspicuous that physicality is present in a performance, it is always part of his mindset during the rehearsal process. Although he argues that his theatre could not be described as physical theatre because it does not challenge the actors physically as much as, for example, Horváth's theatre, I would argue that it can be. I would argue that it can be called physical theatre because of this consciousness (of the expressive nature of the acting body) with which he composes his productions.

5.2 Máté Hegymegi

Máté Hegymegi (born in 1989 in Nyíregyháza) works mainly as a director since graduating from the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest in 2014. He is starting to be well established in the Hungarian theatrical scene, which is shown by the fact that he works with renowned established theatres in Budapest (for example, he directed *The flies* written by Jean-Paul Sartre at Örkény István Színház in 2019; *Molière - the passion[49]* at Radnóti Színház in 2019; *Jeanne d'Arc[50]* at Katona József Színház in 2018), he works outside Budapest as well (e.g. *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry, in Kecskemét in 2018; *Barbarians[51]* in Sepsiszentgyörgy in 2019). He also works with independent companies (e.g. *Peer Gynt* written by Henrik Ibsen, in collaboration with Stúdió K in 2017; *Sömmi* written by András Cserna-Szabó in collaboration with K2 company in 2017); moreover, he was awarded with *Junior Prima Díj[52]* in 2018. He got involved in theatre at the age of ten when he was cast as a child performer in a production at the Móricz Zsigmond Theatre of Nyíregyháza. In the following ten years, he appeared on this theatre's stage regularly, at the beginning as a child performer, later on as a member of the theatre's dance ensemble. Simultaneously, he studied

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[48] Widder also acknowledges that the genre of ballet and butoh, the Graham technique, and the work of Pina Bausch, Yvette Bozsik and Pál Frenák had a great influence on him.
[49] Written by Feridun Zaimoglu, Günter Senkel and Luk Perceval.
[50] Script written by Judit Garai.
[51] Witten based on Zsigmond Móricz's two short stories: *Barbarians* and *The last outlaw*.
[52] *Junior Prima Díj* is an award founded in 2007 and it recognizes excellence amongst young talents under the age of 30 in the following fields: sports, science, education, architecture, music, media, literature, visual arts, theatre- and film arts, folk arts.

in a secondary school majoring in drama. His secondary school studies are an important part of his education, because here he studied folk dance from Zsuzsa Demarcsek[53]. He argues that,

> […] we studied folk dance with her, but they called it some kind of "theatrical movement", which was some sort of expressive movement. It is hard to define it, because it was still a bit about the aesthetics of dance, but they started to use it a bit as theatre. I would not call it physical theatre, because it was completely undeveloped and its language could not be encoded. However, it was a sort of antechamber of physical theatre. Looking back on it, it was quite amateur, but in contrast to hip-hop, break and folk dance, that I had been practicing until then, it was something different (Hegymegi, 2020).

This experience is important on one hand, because it opened a new door for him to see different ways of how movement and dance could be used; on the other hand, it highlights the significance of folk dance workshops as discussed in Chapter 2.3. This example maintains the argument that folk dance workshops could become important places where a new kind of thinking about what dance can mean on stage could appear during the 1960s until the 1980s, as other innovative dance styles from the West could hardly reach the country at that time. Hegymegi's experience shows that at the beginning of the 2000s, the influence of these folk dance experiments of the 1960s-80s could still be felt.

Becoming a member of Móricz Zsigmond Theatre's dance ensemble meant a life-changing experience. His master was Andrea Ladányi, who

> […] in 5 years with tough training, created a serious dance ensemble out of a typical theatrical dance ensemble feeling. She choreographed a performance for us, which was literally physical theatre, without any prose (Hegymegi, 2020).

Ladányi introduced Hegymegi to a movement language which could be expressive, which could tell a story, and which was not made for achieving aesthetic goals. "To be honest, all the performances, all movement that she was doing, none was classical, she did a twist on everything" (Hegymegi, 2020). He argues that she was the one who taught him how to work and that it is essential to have credit as a director.

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[53] Zsuzsa Demarcsek is the wife of György Demarcsek who founded the Nyírség Táncegyüttes (a folk dance company) in 1983 which is operating until today. For more see: https://www.nyirsegtanc.hu/

> She is "the" Andrea Ladányi because of her talent and persistence, she
> could not ask for anything that she would not have been able to do herself,
> thus, when she asked us to do something, it was not a question whether to
> go with it. […] This is very important for me and stayed with me, that I
> am not afraid to ask for a lot because my limits are high, but I am trying to
> take the actor there too, obviously bearing in mind his own limits
> (Hegymegi, 2020).

Therefore, after graduating from secondary school, he put aside his acting ambitions and applied to the University of Theatre and Film Arts' course for physical theatre directors, founded by Andrea Ladányi. Although his application proved to be successful, the course did not start in 2008 because of the lack of sufficient and suitable applicants, and by 2009, when it finally could be brought to life, the leader of the class, therefore Hegymegi's instructor, became Csaba Horváth.

> I was very happy about this, because I learnt from Andrea for five years,
> and I am sure there was a lot more to learn from her too, but the fact that I
> could learn from Csaba meant a lot for me, he gave me a new point of
> view, I think it did me good. […] He is a very strong influence on my
> work. He was basically the one who showed and explained to me, what
> this is exactly (Hegymegi, 2020).

To be able to discover what Hegymegi inherited from Horváth, what other influences can be discovered in his work and to get an idea of who Máté Hegymegi is as a director, I will use one of his productions as a case study, an example through which I will try to identify the traditions he is coming from and where his routes lead him. I chose for this purpose his production of *Kohlhaas* which premiered in 2015 at the Szkéné Theatre. I selected this performance because Hegymegi believes that despite his continuing development as a director, it still demonstrates who he is as a director.

> I managed, by accident, to talk about something in this production, that I
> am interested in until today. It is a performance which has as its focus a
> political and social problem, and it reflects sharply on what surrounds me.
> I rewrote it, we took the story in a direction that we thought was suitable
> and we used a language that contains physical theatre, live music, the
> creation of images…, everything, but it is theatre. There are so many things
> in this performance that I was interested in, and somehow, with luck, we
> managed to pull it together. It is still a very hard job to include all these
> things and make it work like this. […] But, in this work, accidentally I
> managed to realize what I will want years later too (Hegymegi, 2020).

The most eye-catching inheritance from Horváth's theatre, as in the case of Widder, is the use of objects on stage. In the case of *Kohlhaas*, these objects are two huge water tanks and timbers.

Figure 6. *Kohlhaas* (2015) – Szkéné Theatre, Budapest. Director: Máté Hegymegi. Photo: Csaba Mészáros.

In many of his productions, he uses only a few objects in multiple ways, giving them multiple meanings and therefore, a great level of significance. In *Kohlhaas,* the two large water tanks functioned as set design elements dominating the two sides of the stage; later on, their contents were released and litres of water flooded the stage, signifying the unchangeable consequences of the main character's decision. They were also used as "backpacks" when mother and daughter had to leave their home, and as desks during the trials. Thus, these big plastic containers, as the story develops, become more than simple objects that define the look of the stage. Similar to these water tanks, the timbers change status as well; first, they are the forest in which Kohlhaas is driving his horses, then they become the barrier that stops him in his journey, then they function as a carriage, as a death bed, as gallows, as a tool for combat, etc. As I detailed before in the case of Widder, the use of a simple set design with multifunctional use of its elements is a very significant tool that can be found in Horváth's work as well. Although in *Kohlhaas* the multifunctionality of objects is dominant, we can see examples for limited use of props in Hegymegi's work, too. As, for example, in his

production of *Jeanne D'Arc* at the Katona József Theatre, two objects came into the spotlight: the sword and the flag. He argues that

> In the performance, the flag and the sword are both present as exhibited objects. Anybody can take them down, hold them in their hands… The question is, whose hands they get into and for what that person will use them. It is not accidental at all, that there is no other object in the performance that is emphasised in such a way (Csatádi, 2018: para.13).

This underlies the argument from the previous chapter, that the use of a limited number of props highlights and gives extra significance to the ones that are used. Furthermore, Hegymegi draws our attention to the fact that if the use of an object is replaced by a movement or gesture, then, later on in the performance, that can give an extra layer of meaning to an otherwise simple, quotidian gesture. In *Tin Drum*[54] (which premiered in 2016 at the Katona József Theatre), a specific movement with the hand signified the playing cards, and he argues that "after that gesture was introduced, every touch and grab meant something more than a simple touch" (Hegymegi, 2020). All of this suggests that a unique language is brought to life in these productions. Therefore, I would argue that although there is a similar technique that became almost a characteristic of each of these practitioners, it does not make their work appear the same, because the way they make use of this technique brings to life a very different language in every case. The emphasis and where they put it, is always shifting.

An integral part of *Kohlhaas*'s theatrical language is the music. At specific moments of the performance the actors play live music, which does not work simply as an underlying effect, but it always carries an extra layer of meaning. For example, Nyéki highlights in his review that Zsolt Nagy's (the actor playing Kohlhaas) drum play not only provides the rhythms of the war, but it makes him an outsider of the bloody events, signifying his loss of control over the consequences of his decisions (Nyéki, 2016: para. 3). This ability to think about music as a dramaturgical element is present in both Widder's and Hegymegi's work. The importance of music in the productions can be traced back to Horváth's practice, who, coming from the world of dance and being used to working with music, prefers to use mainly live music in his productions.

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[54] Günter Grass' novel was adapted to stage by Csaba Mikó.

Another important scenic element of *Kohlhaas* is the litres of water that flood the stage at a specific moment in the play. This is not simply a spectacular element of the set design, but it becomes an integral part of the production. As pointed out before, when the water floods the stage it signifies the unchangeable consequences of the main character's decision. Moreover, it makes the existence in the space uncertain and insecure, similar to the situation in which Kohlhaas and his family find themselves. It can also signify the blood of those who died in the combats that were incited by Kohlhaas' actions. Working with natural material reminds me of Josef Nadj who used clay in many of his productions (for example in *Woyzeck, ou l'ébouche du vertige*, which premiered in 1994 at Théâtre National de Bretagne in Rennes). Hegymegi argues that Nadj's work was very much an inspiration to him.

> His thinking and his personality -we worked with him once, we could spend one week with him in Magyarkanizsa [in Serbia] during our first year at the University- was a defining experience for me, it was very interesting. I have never tried to do my work like him, I am not sure whether that would be possible, but his personality was very exciting (Hegymegi, 2020).

Here, I return to Fuchs' idea (which is the opening quotation of this dissertation and the driving idea behind my research) that, although it might not be a conscious choice of an artist to follow patterns and techniques of other artists, everybody "has their roots and predecessors" (Fuchs in Várszegi, 1994: 61). Thus, I would argue that there could be a line of influence between Nadj and Hegymegi if we investigate the use of natural materials in their work. It can be seen that Hegymegi respects Nadj very much.

> That is physical theatre, Josef Nadj's *Woyzeck*. He is telling a story, there are scenes, everything serves the purpose of representing situations and relationships, but everything is told with movement. This could be a character, or a walking, or eating a pea, or the woman on the wall put in the corner. But all of this expresses the story, the relationship and the status, with the body (Hegymegi, 2020).

Hegymegi believes that as an artist he is closer to theatre than dance, because he is usually interested in stories and problems, and that is the starting point from where he creates. He argues that he operates differently from a dancer or choreographer, because when dancers start a new project, usually they do not have a specific story or problem in their mind that they want to explore. They focus more on pushing the boundaries of a specific dance technique. He argues that,

> […] the dancer goes into the rehearsal room and improvises for a month, after which he starts to arrange the useful material that came out of the improvisations. In contrast, I start to think, right from the beginning, about what the form could be and how I can tell a story, and even if there is no play, the main direction I follow is the telling of the story following a dramaturgy (Hegymegi, 2020).

He traces back the difference between dance and physical theatre to here. In his opinion, in most of the cases the driving force behind dance (theatre) is aesthetics, while that of physical theatre is storytelling. He believes that in physical theatre "[…] movement is used as a tool for expression, and it is not used for the purpose of aesthetics" (Hegymegi, 2020). This is probably why Hegymegi found inspirational in DV8's work that, as he argues, Lloyd Newson and his performers used the body, although not necessarily as dance itself, and in many cases, as for example in *Can we talk about this?* they kept movement at a minimal level. "This is what I'm looking for in my work too: using movement at a minimum and not as a fundamental means of expression, using it only when it has a big emphasis. But movement has to be always present in the body, all the time" (ibid). He also highlighted that he found it interesting in DV8's works the way they used dance styles and its elements (such as break) differently, out of their original context. He intends to implement this in his own practice too. Every time he starts a new job, firstly, he looks for the appropriate material, a story to tell, whether that be a play or a novel. Simultaneously, the material starts to bring out the form that is needed to tell that story. He argues that the use of space, the use of objects and the abstract composition are always present in his working method, but dance itself is less and less. He rather uses movement as tool for expression, and not for the sake of dance.[55] However, Hegymegi argues that he would not call most of his works physical theatre.

> I rather say, that it is not, or that it contains physical theatre. It is part of its tool box and it very much influences the way I think and work. But I am not doing physical theatre, I am doing theatre, of which physical theatre is an element (Hegymegi, 2020).

This approach to the work is highlighted by Judit Csáki as well, in the review she published about *Kohlhaas.*

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[55] Another influence on Hegymegi, that is important to highlight at this point is Peeping Tom. "I believe that if something is really is new and good theatre, it is them. […] they use dance pure in a theatrical context in a way that as whole it expresses a concrete feeling, relationship and situation. They do not rely on gestures to do this for them." (Hegymegi, 2020). Peeping Tom is Belgian dance theatre company founded in 2000, for more please visit: https://peepingtom.be/en

> Máté Hegymegi's route seems similar only at first sight to Csaba
> Horváth's directing style. A significant difference is - thanks to the
> collaboration with Sára Gábor (university student) dramaturge - that the
> language of movement theatre collides with and interweaves with another
> kind of thinking about theatre that builds on text, therefore it can be said
> that there is a teamwork behind the meaning. Movement and text drive
> forward the story together […] (Csáki, 2015: para.5).

In short, it can be seen that Hegymegi carries on Horváth's inheritance mainly in the way he is thinking about theatre. The most obvious manifestation of this influence in his work is the different use of objects and abstraction. Otherwise, he has his own style and language that naturally develops with time and experience. What came out of my interview and the productions I saw is that he is searching for a language in which the physical presence and the movements and gestures are consciously executed. This consciousness means that every move and gesture, or even stillness, is purposeful and provides the spectator with extra layers of meaning.

5.3. Attila Soós

Attila Soós, like Widder and Hegymegi graduated from Horváth's first class as a physical theatre director in 2014. He founded his company in 2013 with Péter Bárnai (an acting student who graduated from the university in the same year as Soós), entitled Trojka Theatre Company. Since his graduation, he works as a director and performer, producing works mainly for this company. According to their artistic policy, their "performances are exploring the borderline between physicality and prose in theatre" (Trojka official Facebook page). In this chapter, I will explore how Soós works with his company and what physical theatre means to them.

First of all, if we examine the company's repertoire, it is significant that most of their productions are adaptations of text (written specifically for their productions) which were not originally written for stage (e.g. Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* was premiered by Trojka in 2018 titled as *The Unfinished Story of Anna Karenina*, Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* was premiered in 2016 or Büchner's novella *Lenz* was premiered in 2013). When asked why he adapts the stories he is working with, he answered: "Because it is bloody difficult for me

to lie. […] I always tailor the text to the production that is being prepared in my mind" (*Ötös*, 2019). This shows that in the majority of the cases, Soós is inspired by a literary text, and the deep understanding of that text is very important for him. Moreover, he does not only want to understand the text, but he wants to find himself in it, to find what is important to him in that given story. Therefore, if he needs to alter the original story in order to highlight the thoughts that he finds important in it, then he is not afraid to do so.

> After writing the order of the scenes based on the novel [*Orlando*], I decided that I have to change the turning point of the original story. I had to "traumatize" the reason for becoming a woman out of a man. I had to make the principal character's decision about the change of his sex painful and very personal. Thus, I got his pregnant wife murdered before his eyes. I took everything from him that he could believe in (Soós in Csendes-Erdei, 2017: para. 11).

This is one of the basic composing strategies of Trojka's works: Soós is not afraid to put his stamp on every text he works with (let that be one that is part of the classical canon or not).

In an interview, Soós claimed that the base of the company's functioning is telling stories in "Trojka-way" (Gócza, 2019: para. 9.). This means, that

> [t]he key is adaptation, the adaptation of a literary text. And how this adaptation comes to life alongside of pictures. Thus, how the text can be visualised (by visualisation I mean theatre, not only physical theatre) in a way that text and imagery do not seek balance (Soós, 2020).

From this it can be seen that Soós is thinking in images through which he can visualise the text. He argues that,

> The point is to create images that can be understood by everybody. […] we translate texts, whose meaning might not be self-evident, to the language of movement that talks to everybody (Soós in Kovács-Cohner, 2017: para. 13.).

In this sense, it can be argued that his theatre is visual theatre. However, this might be a generalization in his case, because the quote above also suggests that for him it is not a priority to keep movement and text on equal levels. It is always the material that defines the nature of the performance.

> For example, the script that came out of the adaptation of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* and John Fowles' *The Collector* was altogether seven pages

long. [In this case, the characters and the situations were not filled with meaning through the text but through images. Meanwhile,] in the adaptation of Genet's *The Screens* it was the text that dominated, next to which only as a restrained, a repressed secondary element could physicality be present (Soós in Kovács-Cohner, 2017: para.17).

Although Soós claims that in specific cases it is the text that dominates a performance, in my personal experience (*The Silence Book, Lenz, Cleansed*) Soós uses choreographed movement sequences (that are close to dance) more than Widder or Hegymegi.[56] Soós inserts into his productions choreographed sequences to music, which help the characterization and creates atmosphere. These sequences are very close to dance; however, it is important to point out that they are not part of the production in order to have something aesthetically delightful on stage. These choreographed movement sequences do not stand out from the story, they help the development of the characters and the plot.[57] Meanwhile, in the case of Widder and Hegymegi, movement is also part of the story and of the characterization, but usually it is less dance-like and more about the physicality of the characters, about gestures, about showing situations with the aid of the performing body. Soós argues that either a piece of music or the text itself inspires the movement, and it is very important that, before he even starts the rehearsals "I already see scenes [in the play] that would be impossible to express in prose" (Soós, 2020). Thus, for Soós, movement starts when words are not enough to express the thoughts. This is very similar to Ladányi's approach to speech on stage. She argues that she only speaks when movement and gestures are not enough: "[…] I start to speak or scream or send you to hell only if the smashing of the table or the plates cannot express anymore what human voice can" (Ladányi in Nánay, 2008 :35).

This approach of Soós to text and movement might be the reason that he is the only one amongst the three directors who does not oppose the label of physical theatre to describe his work. When asked whether he would describe his own work as physical theatre, he answered: "This is like asking me whether I am the son of my father and my mother" (Soós, 2020). In his understanding, physical theatre is "the meeting of speakable and unspeakable, the meeting of narrative and illustration, the physical meeting of music and fine arts" (Soós, 2020). This definition suggests that imagery (showing the 'unspeakable', the illustration of

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[56] It is hard to define the difference between choreography, movement sequence, movement built on gestures etc., I would argue that a whole research could be built on the different nature of movement, however, this is beyond the limits of this dissertation.

[57] The trailer of the production of *Cleansed*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1gDlmvDvtE

the story, the expression of music through movement) and literature (the speakable text, the narrative) are simultaneously present and they interact with each other in productions that can be called physical theatre.

When examining Trojka's productions, it is unavoidable to talk about the choice of performance space. Trojka's last four to five productions were not performed in theatrical spaces. For example, *Anna Karenina* was performed at KuglerArt Gallery[58], which is an upper middle-class flat in the heart of Budapest, while *The Cherry Orchard* was performed in one of the halls of the Hungarian Theatre Museum and Institute[59]. Being an independent company, this might seem as a constraint, since they do not have a permanent performance space. Moreover, it is usually difficult to play a production on a regular basis at one of the receiving houses (as they are overloaded with the many independent companies that exist today). Thus, performing in 'found' spaces seems an adequate choice. However, it is not only a constraint; working in found spaces adds to the performances dramaturgically, technically and artistically. On one hand, as Soós points out, in these spaces they work with direct lights (there is no theatrical lighting): "This made the performances simpler technically, thus it made them more mobile and moveable. This caused an independence and freedom" (Soós, 2020). On the other hand, the space gave a new layer of meaning to the productions: "when the spectator takes his place, then the space as well, starts to communicate the story" (Soós, 2020). Therefore, working in found-spaces might have started out of necessity; however today, when working on a new production, Soós is already thinking in non-theatrical spaces, making it a conscious choice, in order to help the development of the story. Working in these found spaces also means that there is no need for set design (which is built specifically for the production), as the given location is incorporated into the story and it provides the scenography of the performance. In this respect, this working method could remind us of Grotowski's poor theatre, because Soós does not use grand set designs and a great number of props; instead, he prefers to rely on the given abilities of the space and the actors. This practice, especially in the case of *The Unfinished Story of Anna Karenina* (being performed in a flat) can also bring to mind Péter Halász and his company Lakásszínház (Flat Theatre). When, in 1972, the government banned the work of Péter Halász in Kassák Ház Stúdió, the company decided to work out of the reach of the officials, therefore producing works in Halász's and Anna Koós' flat on

[58] https://www.facebook.com/kuglerartszalongallery/about
[59] https://oszmi.hu/index.php/english

Dohány Street (Lakásszínház operated between 1972 and 1976). From this it can be seen that space became an important composing element of Soós' work. Working in these 'found' spaces might have started as a necessity, however, today it is a conscious choice that defines the nature of his performances.

Having his own company, Soós also has the advantage of having a well-functioning team and system around him. He argues that "When a theatrical season ends, all the experiences and inspirations of the past year show the way to the next season" (Soós, 2020). The members of the company can build upon each other and upon their shared experiences, they can experiment and progress together. In an interview, Dorka Gryllus, the actress playing Anna in *Anna Karenina* stated that,

> [w]e started to work with Eszter Balassa's adaptation [of *Anna Karenina*] following her and Attila Soós, the director's original conception. During the rehearsals, we [the actors] formed and shaped the play as well, adding new layers to it, that came from us. For me, for example, it was important to have Anna's child appear in the performance. It was exciting, that there was a novel, a huge background material, a collection of scenes, from which we could pick (Gryllus in Marton, 2018: para. 6.).

This suggests that the company is ready to work and think together in a way when the director's role is not that authoritarian. Thus, he lets the whole company operate as an ensemble and have their input in the work. Based on Gryllus' statement, I would argue that the method of devising might be an important working method of the company.

In short, it can be seen that since 2013, Soós has worked with the same company of people towards the goal of "exploring the borderline between physicality and prose in theatre" (Trojka official Facebook page). Soós' working method is mainly characterized by the use of 'found' spaces which provide an opportunity to affect the audience with the space (the space talks for itself even before the performance starts), and with the close proximity of the play (these are usually very small places, where the actors are within reach). Soós tends to adapt literary texts that originally were not written for stage. Moreover, he is not afraid to even change parts of the original story in order to highlight the thought that he wants to communicate with the performance. Experimentation and the method of devising are tools they use during rehearsals. Soós' theatre can be called physical theatre because he uses

movement when something feels impossible to be expressed in words. He incorporates choreographed movement sequences that help to develop character and atmosphere.

Chapter 6 - Final Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the tendencies in Hungarian theatrical culture from 1945 onward in order to discover how the genre called physical theatre appeared in the country. Furthermore, I examined what physical theatre means in the Hungarian theatrical context through examining Csaba Horváth's and his successors, Kristóf Widder, Máté Hegymegi and Attila Soós' work.

In my research, I realized that the communist regime had a significant influence on the development of Hungarian theatrical culture. The government controlled the influences that could reach the country from the West. This caused, on one hand, a delay in the appearance of new methods (the first physical theatre company in Hungary was founded in 2005, meanwhile DV8 was founded in 1986). On the other hand, it incited the development of Hungarian initiatives: the experiments in folk dance, for example, were so significant, that folk dance could become "one of the forerunners of contemporary dance in Hungary" (Lelkes, 2009: 100). Moreover, this political control facilitated the appearance of a parallel system, in which the alternative companies could become a platform where people could knowingly wink at each other, where audiences learnt to look for the meaning that was between the lines; thus, a strong bond between stage and audience could form. "Tone, emphasis, gesture, interpretation" (Galgóczi in Stefanova, 1995: 63) were the tools to talk about the present. This shows that the political situation incited the appearance of the language of the body and gestures on stage, as this somatic language could not be controlled as easily as the written text (of television, press and publishing).

The alternative companies of the 1960's, 1970s and 1980's pushed the boundaries of conventional theatre making and the work that they started did not end with the change of regime: there are companies that were founded during this time which still operate today (e.g.: Artus), artists who are still actively present in the performance scene (e.g. Josef Nadj) or artists whose legacy is still present in Hungary (e.g. Péter Halász). This means that their influence can still be felt, for example Horváth (2020) and Hegymegi (2020) both admitted in their interviews that the work of Josef Nadj influenced them greatly. The influence of the experiments of these *alternative* practitioners can also be discovered in many contemporary (physical theatre) performances: the reorganisation of the performance space (e.g. *Woyzeck*

– Stúdió K (1977), *Peer Gynt* – Hegymegi Máté (2017)), working in found spaces (Péter Halász's Lakásszínház (1972-1976), *Anna Karenina* – Attila Soós (2018)), the simplification of design (e.g. Tanulmány Színház (1979-1989), *Káprázat* – Csaba Horváth (2019), where there is no set design, the use of objects is emphasised instead) and the activisation of the audience (e.g. *Petőfi Rock* – István Paál (1973); *Peer Gynt* – directed by Máté Hegymegi (2017) is a promenade performance, where the audience has to travel and walk in order to follow the development of the piece). These are all specificities that could be discovered in the work of the alternative companies (mainly influenced by Grotowski) and in the work of physical theatre directors, thus in the work of Horváth, Widder, Hegymegi and Soós as well. Furthermore, the importance of actor training was passed onto the next generations, and was revolutionized on an institutional level thanks to Andrea Ladányi.

It is important to highlight that folk dance from the 1960s and contemporary dance styles from the 1980s had a big influence on the role of the performing body on Hungarian stage. Contemporary themes (Imre Eck - ballet) and reflection on the present (Kricskovics, Novák, Györgyfalvay - folk dance) were brought into the world of stage dance. I found the experiments in folk dance significant, as this is the base of Horváth's practice and although he is not choreographing folk dance pieces anymore, his roots can still be recognized in his work. During the 1980s, thanks to the political consolidation, new forms could appear (e.g. contact improvisation) and old forms were revived (e.g. mime) in the alternative dance scene of Hungary. These all drew the attention to the expressive nature of the body and practitioners (for example, Nadj and Regős) aimed to mingle movement-based and word-based theatre. Therefore, it can be argued that practitioners coming from both, theatre and dance, aimed to get the two art forms closer to each other. A "body-centred theatrical thinking" (Fuchs, 2017: 36) gained a foothold in the Hungarian theatrical scene.

This research made me discover that although the notion of physical theatre did not really appear in the Hungarian theatrical language until the 1990s, this did not mean that the practice itself was not present in the country. Many practitioners, both from theatre and dance, paid attention to the expressive use of the performing body on stage. The appearance of the notion of Movement Theatre (e.g. Meeting of Hungarian Movement Theatres at Szkéné Theatre) also proves that an approach was present on Hungarian stages where the text started to lose its dominating role. However, the scope of this thesis did not allow me to

get into detail and analyse the work of all of the practitioners who are important in this respect. Therefore, I argue that exploring the different approaches to the performing body from the 1960s until the 1980s in Hungary is an area which requires further research. Additionally, another interesting area of further research could be the role and presence of devising in Hungarian theatre practice, especially in relation to the genre of physical theatre. Murray and Keefe highlight in their book (2016) that the method of devising is strongly linked to the practice of physical theatres in the English-speaking countries. In contrast, in Hungary this link is not that evident. I made some reference to it when I discovered that some of the practitioners' working methods contain characteristics of devising (e.g. in the case of Attila Soós's production of *Anna Karenina*). However, it was beyond the scope of this thesis to do a more comprehensive research on how/ to what extent the method of devising and the genre of physical theatre meet in the Hungarian theatrical culture.

The change of regime brought important changes in the world of dance and theatre. The control over what could reach the country from abroad and what could be put on stage suddenly disappeared. This resulted in an explosion in the number of companies, both established theatres and independent companies. It is important to note, that companies working outside of the official system of established theatres became accepted and recognized. From the 1990s on, the notion of professional theatre practitioner changed: you did not have to work in one of the established theatres, be on a state-funded payroll and be a graduate of the University of Theatre and Film Arts in order to be acknowledged as a professional theatre maker. The opening of the borders towards foreign influences brought the most significant change to contemporary dance. In the 1990s, this was the area of performing arts that developed the most, which meant that dance finally gained its place amongst the contemporary art forms (Péter, 2019: 19). The proportion between text- and movement-based performances started to even out. At the beginning (in the 1990s), the accelerated exchange of information and knowledge was very inspiring for everybody on both sides of the Iron Curtain. However, as of today these differences have evened out, the trends are very similar and there is not much delay in the appearance of them in each country. As Horváth (2020) argues, "in most of the cases, Eastern European artists adjust to the Western European trends". At this point it is important to suggest that an area of further research could be to position Hungarian practices in European context. The framework of this thesis did not allow me to explore in depth the current practices of physical theatre in surrounding countries and in Europe as a whole. Such an investigation, would allow a

comparison of different practices and aid the placement of Horváth's and the Hungarian practice in a wider European context.

Although there were performances that incorporated or were heavily based on movement already in the 1970s and 1980s (see for example the International Meeting of Movement Theatres, a festival organised by Szkéné Theatre from 1979), the notion of physical theatre only appeared in Hungary in the early 1990s. According to my findings, it had been added to the Hungarian theatrical language around the time of DV8's first guest performance in 1992 (*Strange Fish,* at Petőfi Hall). However, I argue that it finally became legitimised in the Hungarian theatrical scene with the foundation of the physical theatre director course at The University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest. Moreover, as Horváth became the head of this course and simultaneously worked with Forte Company, which claimed as an aim "to create a homogenous language with bodies, sound, dance, music and text" (Forte Company's old website), Horváth's and Forte Company's names became inseparable from the genre.

I pointed out that while the hardly definable nature of this notion in English comes from the fact that it is used to describe a wide range of works, in Hungarian *fizikai színház* can sound foreign because it is a metaphrase of the English expression. In Hungarian, *fizikai* is more often used in relation to science (physics), than in relation to human body. Though, it is important to point out that all the practitioners whom I interviewed seemed to agree with Horváth's statement that "The notion of physical theatre, […], incorporates everything and does not exclude anything" (Horváth, 2020). Thus, this suggests that all theatre is physical as live bodies are performing on stage (see: Murray, Simon; Keefe, John (2016). *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction.* Routledge.).

Horváth started his career as a folk dancer, however, thanks to the experiences he gained at TranzDanz, Sámán Színház and Közép-Európa Táncszínház, he turned to choreographing. A development in his approach to dance can be observed: he moved away from authentic folk dancing and started to use folk dance as an inspirational source; moreover, he gradually incorporated a more theatrical approach by using literary works as the basic material for his choreographies. He claims that Josef Nadj's and Katalin Györgyfalvay's performances were important influences around this time in his life (Horváth, 2020). The most important

milestone in his career in terms of the subject of this thesis, was the work he started in Debrecen with the production of *Spring Awakening* (in 2007). Here, he started to create a language that incorporates movement and text. He continued and mastered this kind of work with Forte Company and created his own unique language. The specificities of his theatre are: the importance of musicality, the creative use of objects, abstract setting and the expressive use of the performing body (whether that be choreographed sequences, the creation of images or the use of expressive gestures). Being the leader of the university course *Theatre Director - Specialization in: Director and Choreographer of Physical Theatre* at The University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest and thanks to this language that he created in his works with Forte Company, physical theatre in Hungary became one with his work. Therefore, I argue that in Hungary a production is called physical theatre when text and movement, the language of the body, are simultaneously incorporated in a performance.

The transmission of the values that Horváth represents became evident after the university course of physical theatre began. At the moment of writing, it was only appropriate to write about the graduates of the first class as they have been in the profession for 5 years (the second class graduated in June 2020, when this thesis was written, thus they were at a very early stage of their professional careers). Widder, Hegymegi and Soós are the ones from that first class who work actively as directors, therefore, their work could serve as a point of comparison, in order to see how physical theatre develops and moves on from Horváth's practice. When examining the work of these four practitioners, I discovered similarities which are evidence of Horváth's influence on his students. The use of music as a dramaturgical element and the abstract setting of the plays are specificities that can be observed in the work of all four practitioners. The creative and multifunctional use of objects is characteristic of Horváth, Widder and Hegymegi, while Soós's theatre is closer to Poor Theatre[60], where he uses the given space and choreographed movement sequences to convey the story. A difference that I discovered between the three successors and Horváth is their relationship to text. Widder, Hegymegi and Soós seem to start to work from the text. The analysis and the understanding of the material is primary for them, and I believe this is the result of the education they received, which gave them a theatrical and a more analytical mindset. Meanwhile, Horváth, coming from dance, relies more on finding the right kind of

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[60] Grotowski stripped away everything he found superfluous in theatre in order to find its backbone and create a Poor Theatre, where the only thing that matters is "what takes place between spectator and actor" (Grotowski, 1991: 32).

movement language, the so-called 'mortar' of the piece that helps to unfold the meaning in the story. Overall, what is common however, is that all four of them create works that rely heavily on visuality, on the images they create on stage and the associations that those images evoke in the spectators. Therefore, it can be argued that their theatre can be called visual or associative theatre as much as it is called physical theatre. Moreover, as these works incorporate text, movement, music and visuality in equal levels, it might also be called total theatre.

In summary, through my research I found that the creative and expressive use of the performing body on stage already appeared in the experiments of the alternative theatrical scene of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Hungary. This was the medium through which the focus could shift to the possibilities of the performing body from the literary traditions of classical texts. This is why I argue that, despite the fact that this work was not yet called physical theatre, a new thinking about theatre - that in many respects was physical - appeared during this period. This work could set the scene in Hungary for the (official) appearance of the notion of physical theatre after the change of regime when Western trends could easily reach the country and political oppression ended. The aim of this research was to contribute to this field of study by examining the period between 1949 and 1989 through the lens of the performing body, paying specific attention to how this practice could contribute to the appearance and development of Hungarian physical theatre post-1990. In our country, physical theatre is mainly associated with Csaba Horváth's and his successors' practice, and its main characteristics are the incorporation of text and movement and the abstraction of setting and scenography. Horváth's students carry on his legacy; however, they naturally put their own stamp on the works by finding their own voices and emphasising different aspects of the work. Consequently, they broaden the possibilities of what the genre of physical theatre can mean for the Hungarian audience.

Appendix

A list of questions, that I asked of all the interviewees

1) How did you get involved with dance/theatre arts?
2) Were there any practitioner/dance styles/performance experiences that influenced you, that possibly still have an effect on how you think and create as a director?
3) How do you choose material to work with?
4) Is it the form that you have first, or is it the material that brings out the form/the language of the piece?
5) How often does music inspire you in the creation? Or, is a literary text always the primary source of inspiration for you?
6) How/Where did you first meet with the notion of physical theatre?
7) What did physical theatre mean to you when you first met with the notion, and what does it mean to you now?
8) Is there a difference, and if so, what is the difference between dance-, movement- and physical theatre, in your opinion?
9) Would you describe your own work as physical theatre?
10) Who do you see as the forerunners of physical theatre in Hungary?
11) Do you know when and in relation to who did the notion of physical theatre appear for the first time in Hungary?
12) If you needed to choose one of your productions that represents best who you are as a director, which one would you choose?
13) Who, do you think, are the representatives of the genre of physical theatre in Hungary today?

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