

Treasure Island – Between classics and Virtual reality

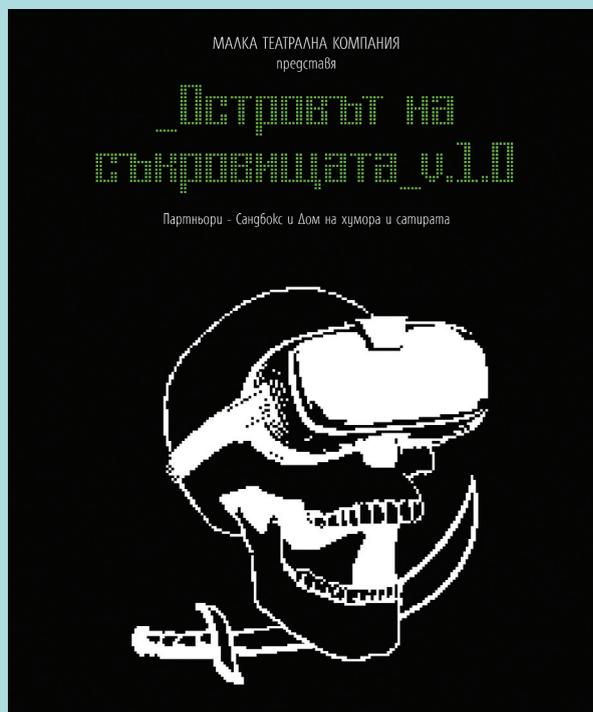
Mihail Baykov

“**Treasure island v. 1.0**”, Small Theater Company, House of Humor and Satire, Gabrovo

Dramatization and direction – Emil Yordanov; 2D/3D design – Arto Chividzhiyan; software development – Lyubomir Rusev; composer of the main theme – Georgi Strezov; sound design – Lyubomir Goshev; puppet workshop – Georgi Tenev. Cast: Georgi Tenev, Alexander Mitev, Dessislava Yordanova, Silviya Teneva, Emil Yordanov.

Small theatre company (STC), as the name suggests, is in fact a small theatre company, founded by four friends, three of whom graduated from “Puppet theatre acting” in the class of Prof. Jeni Pashova and the fourth one – graduated from “Puppet theatre directing” in the class of Prof. Slavcho Malenov. In 2013 the *puppet quartette* decided to create their own theatre subject, which would help to fulfill their puppet theatre ideas. In this way the following shows were created: “What the old man does is always good”, “From the tower”; several creative workshops – “Vegerionettes”, which helped children and parents to elaborate their own marionettes; “Puppets from the tower” – a workshop directed at elaborating puppets from waste materials, by complementing the show of the same name, which was focused on recycling and protection of environment; “Puppet Farm” – a workshop for creating puppets made of fruit, vegetables and other natural materials, which draws children’s attention to those healthy products, while they were playing with them. All of these social projects with deep reasoning and attitude stood out before the mere necessity of someone’s acting and showing in front of an audience. And this is the history up to 2017, when the Company reached a crossroads and had to decide what to do. After having listened to a lecture of Guy Kawasaki about business innovations and their importance for the development of each enterprise, Small Theatre Company concluded that technology was becoming bigger and bigger part of the creator’s world. That is why they asked each other the question: how can we

“Treasure island v. 1.0”
Photo
Alexandra
Shindova



introduce technology harmoniously in a puppet show? After a period of seven months for tests and investigations, this exploration led them to the choice of a *mixed reality*, i.e. technology, which they could manage to use in the production of their next project – “**Treasure island v. 1.0**”. That was the first puppet show, using mixed and virtual reality (MR/VR) and played in the House of Humor and Satire in Gabrovo.

Let me say a few words about technology world. Physical reality is the real environment that we inhabit. We can speak of a virtual reality (VR), when environment and objects in it are created as entirely artificial. In mixed reality (MR) we have virtual objects, fixed in real space, and we have the possibility of interaction with them. Augmented reality (AR) is the best well-known subtype of the MR, in which virtual objects populated real environment.

Having an idea, conception and a team, Small Puppet Company chose to present the classical novel of R.Stevenson in a totally non-classical way. How was this possible? The mixed reality they chose had several important advantages. Its perfection had been worked for years, there were existing instruments for its creation and besides it allowed a collective experience, so typical for the theatre. This could also lead to the fact that each modern smart phone should have this integrated module of augmented reality. That is why they cleared conceptually the way realities mixed. As a start, the real play of actors and puppets was caught by the camera of the smart phone. In real time the camera shots were complemented by virtual



decors and objects, by means of a mobile application, specially created for the show, and after that the ready mix had been shown on the display. In order to create a more impacting experience, Small Theatre Company decided to combine the smart phones with AR/VR headsets, which covered all visual field of the spectator. The additional advantages of these devices were the stereoscopic picture, which managed to achieve a better sensation of volume, depth and perspective. This was also how the stereo headphones contributed by providing the opportunity for a more serious effect of the sound for the viewer. The use of AR/VR headsets let the team present scenes from both mixed and virtual reality in "Treasure Island". In this way the viewer had different points of view for the happening on the stage and also a different grade of experiencing the action. In the scenes of mixed reality he observed the characters in a passive way, by standing on their side. In the scenes of virtual reality the viewer was standing next to the main character Jim Hawkins and started to see and feel on his own. This gave the audience a much more active role and a possibility to feel the tension in the scene

and the fear of all the characters much better.

All the technologic solutions, used in "Treasure Island v 1.0" definitely give new possibilities for the construction of the scenic narration. The path to them is long, related to lots of tests for achievement of mixed reality, by means of existing software instruments and others, which the team will add in the future, to develop the project. But what matters here is something else. A group of young puppeteers decided to trespass the borders, reserved for the so called "puppet theatre". They decided to pass into another reality and to access the new technology, software which directed integrally sound and 3D design, very typical for computer games, but not theatre. Thanks to the AR/VR headsets they began to make corrections, following the line of the stage setting in the virtual decors and directing actors, puppets and virtual objects. And if we put our virtual glasses at this moment and we see Neil Armstrong alive, he will probably say that this can be a small step for Small Theatre Company, but definitely a giant leap for puppet theatre in Bulgaria. I am about to agree with him, in this reality and in another one too. ■

Translation by Nadia Zhereva

Книга, достойна за обекта си

Никола Вангов

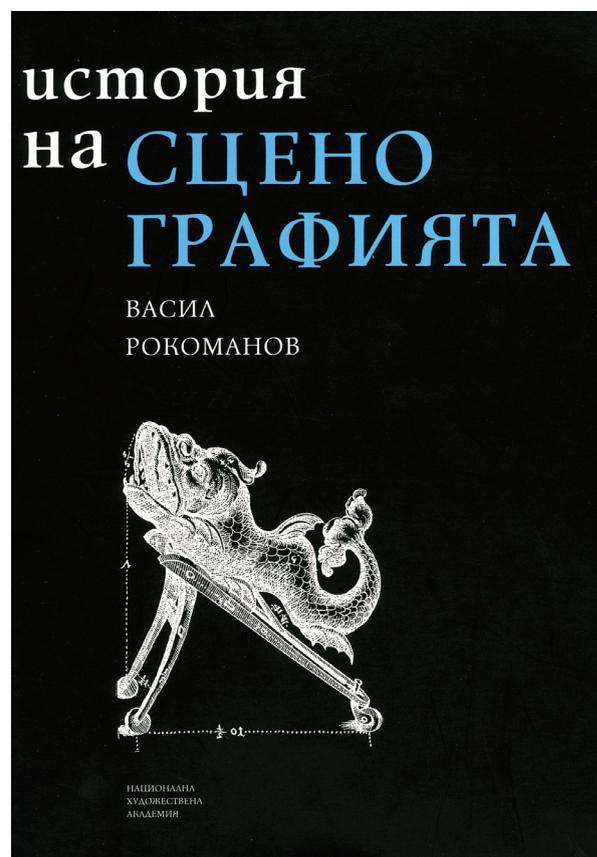
В едно интервю проф. Васил Рокоманов по повод своята книга казва и следното: „...тези 344 страници, които могат да се четат и като обяснение в любов към нашето изкуство“.

„Нашето изкуство“ е сценографията. Любовта е безспорна и дори бих казал – взаимна.

Не ми е работа да пиша за този труд, затова сме готови да публикуваме на страниците на „КуклАрт“ аналитична рецензия за книгата, написана от компетентен автор. Но не мога да се стърпя да не споделя своя неофитски възторг от „История на сценографията“. Това е история на сценографията, но едновременно с това и интересно разказана (и богато илюстрирана!) история на европейския театър от Античността до средата ХХ век. В нея се срещат толкова имена, дати и термини, че само преминаването през тях с бръснещ полет, може да ти помогне да проследиш основното – логиката на развитието на процесите в театъра, както и на връзката им с откритията в науката и материалната култура в съответната епоха. Всичко е свързано – понякога очевидно, понякога някак невидимо – в един криволичещ поток през времето. Проследяването на течението му е онова духовно приключение, което Васил Рокоманов ни е осигурил и в което той е нашият обилно осведомен Вергилий.

Как се пише такава книга!

Тя няма прецедент в нашата книжнина. Съвсем заслужено за този свой труд проф. Васил Рокоманов получи през март 2018 г. на-



градата на САБ „Икар“ в категорията „Критически текст“.

Как да не се гордеем с такъв член на Редакционния състав на „КуклАрт“! ■

Рокоманов, Васил.
История на сценографията.
Издание на Националната художествена академия, С., 2017, 344 с.