Organisation of Social Art in Performance Art Organisations

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Abstract. Art as a social action in the public space is becoming more popular in various forms, especially in the digital space, and especially after the recent events that have had an effect on the whole world. However, theatre as art is changing its forms of accessibility not only due to global events but also due to the changing society from various aspects, i.e., psychological, social, economic, political, etc. The article provides a comparative analysis of the concepts of social art actions and performance art, presents the features of social art actions organisation in performance art organisations in Lithuania and abroad, determines the impact of social art action on human health from the psychosocial and spiritual point of view as well as in a community; it also provides a discussion of similarities and differences of performance as not only theatre but also performance art and social art, social art actions as performance art. Moreover, the article analyses how performance is compared to social art performance, how spectator and participant audiences manifest, what inclusion of performance art as a social art action into human spiritual-psychological space provides. The article provides an analysis of how performance art cooperates with performance art organisations.

Keywords: *performance art, performances, social art actions, organisation, community, inclusion.*

Introduction

Art as a social action in the public space is becoming more popular in various forms, especially in the digital space, and especially after the recent events that have had an effect on the whole world. However, theatre as art is changing its forms of accessibility not only due to global events but also due to the changing society from various aspects, i.e., psychological, social, economic, political, etc. The article provides a comparative analysis of the concepts of social art actions and performance art, presents the features of social art actions organisation in performance art organisations in Lithuania and abroad, determines the impact of social art action on human health from the psychosocial and spiritual point of view as well as in a community; it also provides a discussion of similarities and differences of performance as not only theatre but also performance art and social art, social art actions as performance art. Moreover, the article analyses how performance is compared to social art performance, how spectator and participant audiences manifest, what inclusion of performance art as a social art action into human spiritual-psychological space provides. The article provides an analysis of how performance art cooperates with performance art organisations.

Performance art in Lithuania can be presented from the following three points of view: historical, ideological, or (non-)institutional; formal-aesthetic. These aspects are intertwined. From the historical point of view, the development of performance art in Lithuania can be divided into the following 4 periods: 1987–1992, 1993–1988, 1988–2005, 2006–2012, and 2012–now. In Western Europe, the USA, South America and some Asian countries, the sociocultural or neo-avant-garde breaking point occurred during the 50s–60s of the 20th century. When the Cold War began, there was a need for new means of expression, and radical avant-garde trends that gave birth to many more reasonable neo-avant-garde movements, new styles were created; there were changes in the area of arts institutions. These transformations of culture and art can be described using the concept of performance. In the Lithuanian field of art and culture, similar processes to the Western European neo-avant-garde breaking point started only in the 80s of the 20th century when the Soviet Union began its politics of "Perestroika and Glasnost". When Lithuania restored its independence (1990) and opened its borders, the country received a new wave of historical, archival and then art information. This was the time of transformation, and this environment have birth to Lithuanian contemporary art. The period of 1988–1992 can be called a period of decentralised non-institutional performativity. In 1988–1992, a young artists' group *Žalias Lapas* (Eng. *Green Leaf*) operated, and in 1990, *Post Ars* was founded. The activities of these groups

can be described as a spontaneous manifestation of intuitive creative activities and attempts to adapt the Western *performance*, *happening*, *action*, *installation*, *videoart* without creating a Lithuanian style. 1992 is an important year for the performance art development when the Contemporary Art Centre was established in Vilnius. It was institutionalised, acquired a neoliberal ideology and began actively participating in the forming art market ecosystem.

Relevance of the topic.

Performing art has recently become more and more popular both in Lithuania and abroad. Performing arts campaigns are also held in the theatre, and its social problems are also adapted and solved.

Level of problem investigation.

The art of performance is explored as an art action. Research has been conducted on how performative art is applied to solving social problems. Yet performative art intertwined with social actions of art, the similarities and differences have not been fully explored.

Scientific problem.

How is performance different from performative art? How does it work? How determines the impact of social art action on human health from the psychosocial and spiritual point of view as well as in a community? Why these aspects are intertwined?

The object of the article is to analyse the possibilities of a social art organisation in performance art organisations.

The objective of the article is to discuss the concept of performance art, study the impact of current social art actions in performance art organisations on society and evaluate the prospects of current social art actions organisation in performance art organisations.

Methods of the article: analysis of comparative scientific literature analysis and synthesis.

1. Performativity, performance and social art action

Performativity is an action that creates and constitutes a certain given identity rather than expresses it (Butler, 2010). The concept *performative* was first used by Austin, J. L. He claims that it is excusable not to know what *performative* means. It is a new word, an ugly word that possibly does not have any special meaning. One thing speaks to its benefit, i.e., it does not look like this word has depth (Fischer-Lichte, 2013). He also adds that the words *performance* and *performative* are derivatives of the verb *perform*: performativity requires performance or manifests and is implemented by publically carried out performative actions (Fischer-Lichte, 2013). The concepts of performativity and performance have been studied by Baltrušaitytė. She concluded that performance is not seen as a part of the art field discourse. Often, the lack of diversity in this type of art events determines the devaluation of artists and their creation in this area (Baltrušaitytė, 2017). Pabedinskas points out that the concept of performativity can be applied to analyse various cultural and artistic phenomena (Pabedinskas, 2006).

Comparing post-dramatic theatre and performance, Surpina claims that performance is a one-time event whose nature is to transfer a certain message. An action does not have any limitations, is open to any external interference and depends on the environment (Surpina, 2020). However, the source of the concept of performativity in various contexts is theatre studies. Etymology supports this as well, i.e., one of the meanings of the English verb *to perform* is *to act* (Gudmonaitė, 2018).

The sociocultural roots of performance have been practically studied by Brazauskaitė and Dikčiūtė in their art-social performances *Pasaulio Sukūrimas* (Eng. *Creation of the World*; 2004); *Katedra* (*Eng.* Cathedral; 2005); *Grožio Kontūrai* (Eng. *Contours of Beauty*; 2007); *Tiltai* (Eng. *Bridges*; 2008); *Dialogai* (Eng. *Dialogues*; 2009); *Portretai* (Eng. *Portraits*; 2010); *Grožio Ontologija* (Eng. *Ontology of Beauty*; 2011); *Veidrodis* (Eng. *Mirror*; 2013); *Ratas* (*En.* Wheel; 2014) (Brazauskaitė, Dikčiūtė 2015:11).

Dempsey describes performance that emerged about 1958 as a sense of release both for artists and spectators that became addictively attractive. As the author suggests, the performance includes juxtaposing of elements, i.e., cooperation of interdisciplinary artists when experimenting is carried out by crossing boundaries. Performance does not have an actor; the action here occurs in real-time, there are no spectators as they become performance and add to the action.

Dovydaitytė analyses social art that includes various social groups in her article "The Possibilities and Limits of Socially Engaged Art: the Case Study of *Šančiai – Friendly Zone* Project" (Dovydaitytė, 2014). She provides the assessment of social art in political, ethical and aesthetical contexts. Social art has come here from the Western democratic countries as a phenomenon of culture and art history; the author emphasises that artists that were not satisfied with the status quo cared about ideas of art autonomy and individualism rather than ideas of political art and collective creation. Social art assessment includes the prevailing political and ethical approaches. In the political approach, an important role is played by the social roots of art and what interaction there is between social relationships. The ethical question arises when assessing the social art process itself because it includes groups of people with different interests (Dovydaitytė, 2014). The goal of social art was to resist the current ideology; however, the analysis of Dovydaitytė's work shows that the main idea of social art is to create projects aiming at specific social change and adding to, for instance, strengthening the identity of community or locality.

When analysing concepts, another term, i.e., *social artist*, can be found. This term has been provided as a future profession by Houston, J. Houston emphasises the term *social artistry* and proposes a new profession, i.e., social artist. A social artist is compared with a new profession of a doctor. With regard to social complexity, the role of the social artist is to strengthen human possibilities. With the help of the social artist, a person aims for new ways of thinking and acting in order to solve global problems. The social artist is an agent that helps people and communities to achieve higher goals and focus on the sense of community; it is a process rather than a specific work of art. Houston compares the social artist with a leader who works with other people and aims at attracting attention to the social, civil, economic, ecological situation occurring in a community, country or even the world. In communities, the role of the social artist is oriented towards people rather than a product. Houston claims that the role of the social artist is to remove obstacles that prevent people from being who they can be thus providing them with an opportunity to realise their potential (Houston, 2012).

As Skye, B. points out, a social artist is able to see tendencies and the emergence of new models from obvious chaos. <…> Social artists develop what Carl Jung calls the transcendent function (*The Art of Social Artistry*, Burn Skye). It is possible to assume that the role of a social artist develops from current social, economic and political conditions; social artists nurture the mind and awareness. Skye Burn focuses on educating humankind by asking how we can unite as a community and do something better in the world in order to solve current situations that we all currently face.

To sum up, it can be said that the contemporary definition of performance art encompasses a wider description. Since scientific literature defines performance as interdisciplinary art, it can be stated that performance art is a process of creation that includes both the artist and society-community without a specifically created work of art that has artistic and financial value. This is art during which personal creative transformation, forgetting, and a wish to focus on social, economic, political and cultural aspects of life occurs. The concepts of performance are used for other purposes rather than a form of art as well.

Performance as a social phenomenon

Fisher-Lichte in her book *Performatyvumo Estetika* (Eng. *Aesthetics of Performativity*) refers to a discovery in language philosophy made by Austin that statements cannot only describe circumstances but also perform actions and claims that a performative statement is always dedicated to a community represented by specific participants. Thus, it means public implementation of a social act. Practical performances carried out by Brazauskatė and Dikčiūtė support this. They show that performance is a social phenomenon. Performance is a type of postmodern art where artistic language is interdisciplinary, i.e., fine arts, dance, music, movement, theatre, technologies, etc. Performance is significant as a social phenomenon and is always demonstrated for spectators in order to engage them or have an emotional or intellectual effect on them, i.e., by communicating with the spectator (Brazauskaitė, Dikčiūtė, 2015:11). The authors claim that the form of artistic social performances is close to the art of performance and happening because during a social artistic performance the following two branches of art interact: performance and happening. When creating social artistic performances, the authors used contemporary music techniques that are characteristic of improvisation, i.e., aleatorics (coincidence in time), sonorism

(non-fixed height blocks), modal technique, graphic music, group technique, and intuitive approach – sonar impulses (Brazauskaitė, Dikčiūtė, 2015:23). In 2004–2013, artistic social performances were created.

When analysing the literature, the field of the concept of performative art and social art includes another definition – social practice art. Social practice art (SPA) is described by Vilutytė as a means of art that encompasses the shared artistic activities or artists and social groups as well as their social discourse. The space of such activities is social participation that is not only a part of project work organisation, implementation or continuation but also the interaction between art aesthetics and process participants as well as the development of the creative process (Vilutytė, 2019).

However, the space of social practice art manifests another description, i.e., art as prevention. Art prevention with social risk groups is analysed by Aleksienė and Ambrasaitė. They emphasise that street art projects carried out in Lithuania as a social art practice and preventive criminal behaviour practice help to distract young people from socially unacceptable activities and socialise positively (Aleksienė, Ambrasaitė, 2014:80). However, Survilienė (2012) points out an existing problem: the field of social art practices in Lithuania both in cultural politics and the healthcare and social service sector is not clearly defined; social art practice is often compared to art therapy that is more consistently developed in Lithuania.

It can be said that the area of social practice art is different from performance art or art therapy. Both the artist, and the spectator participate in a performance; they submerge in the creation and do not create any tangible physical work of art; this is just an action, and art therapy by not creating any work of art also aims at engaging the spectator spiritually and psychologically by means of action as a performer of the art.

2. Cooperation of performative art and performative art organisations

When analysing possibilities of performative art expression in the public space and social institutions, it can be said that performative art is a growing and expanding form of art that has tendencies to spread as an art-entertainment, and social-preventive form of art reacting to current national and global problems. However, when analysing the cooperation of performative art with performative art organisations, it can be said that this occurs rarely or is not discussed enough. Research of performance manifestation in the theatre institution, there are isolated cases when performance art is adapted in the space of theatre as an institution. One of such is the mini Theatre of Senses performance *Prieš Išvykstant Šviesą* (Eng. *Before Seeing the Light*; directed by Žernytė, K.) in the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre. Another performance was presented in August 2020 by artist and choreographer Vilkaitytė in the performing arts festival *ConTempo* called *Atvanga I* (Eng. *Surcease I*). This is a non-traditional play performed every year in Kaunas City Chamber Theatre. Director Vilkaitytė emphasises the importance of the performance space and focuses on a certain space. Another performance *Room-19 | Performance SOS*, i.e., a performance that occurred for the entire day dedicated to people with different psychological problems; it also focuses on the current global pandemic that has an even greater effect on psychological problems. However, these performances have not been studied by art critics.

The organisation of performative art manifests clearly when the artist cooperates with creative industries to create innovation. In order to create innovation and develop creativity, creative industries development is important; the development of art incubators adds to this greatly and is developed in Lithuania as well. Isolated artists, however talented, do not become important centres of collective creativity and innovation promotion in the agenda of creative industries; these are mixed teams that include different knowledge sustaining interdisciplinary abilities and leading to a specific result; namely, this can be a company or art and creativity industries incubators or creative clusters (Černevičiūtė, 2013).

What prevents performative art development? Vilutytė claims these are organisations that are not ready to include artists into long-term activities in order to implement changes in certain communities. She claims that fund grant creation processes usually raise several social tasks and tend to prioritise isolated artists or formal organisations, production of clear art products and short long-term change results deadlines (Vilutytė, 2019).

To sum up, it can be said that cooperation of performative art and performative art organisations is implemented sluggishly because art organisations are not ready for long-term contracts with artists. However, performative art is a growing form of art that has tendencies to spread as a form of art as well, i.e., art-entertainment, and social-preventive by reacting to current national and global problems.

Conclusions

Performative art, social art action, performance, art social performance – these concepts are intertwined. Performativity is usually applied to describe an art performing act. However, these concepts have their differences. In performance actions, participants are not just spectators but also creators. One similarity that all these concepts share is that during an artistic action, several disciplines interact when there is no requirement to create any physical work of art from the evaluation point of view. During both performance actions and artistic social performance, social actions, the aim includes relaxation and engagement in the creative process.

The organisation of social art can be dedicated to the following: art for a consumer of services and supplier of services, art for community and art for environmental humanisation. Currently, art for the healthcare and social service consumer/supplier is emphasised.

Art can be divided into perceptive art/artistic activity and participatory art/artistic activity. Perceptive art/artistic activity encompasses usual art events (e.g., exhibitions, concerts) and is organised in usual art event spaces or there are conditions to organise these activities in healthcare or social service institutions. Art activities can be distinguished into art activities with the basis of engaging the spectator. The social or cultural problem being solved depends on the level of spectator engagement.

Possibilities of performative art expression in the public space are high, yet they are not developed enough in the space of social institutions. Performative art is growing and has tendencies to spread as a form of art – art-entertainment, and social-preventive by reacting to current national and global problems. However, cooperation between performative art and performative art organisations is not carried out often as these organisations are not ready for long-term contracts. In Western Europe and the USA, this interdisciplinary art was formed in the 2nd half of the 20th century, while it is still developing and looking for specificity in Lithuania.

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