

**“BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF THEATRE AND TELEVISION
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND FILM**

AURELIU MANEA – A THEATRICAL DESTINY

**PHD THESIS
ABSTRACT**

Doctoral Supervisor:

PROF. UNIV. DR. DANIELA GOLOGAN (MIRUNA RUNCAN)

Doctoral Student:

PINTEA NARCISA ADRIANA

2016

CONTENTS

Preamble	5
----------------	---

PART ONE

THE THEATRICAL LANGUAGE OF DIRECTOR AURELIU MANEA

Introduction.....	12
-------------------	----

CHAPTER I

A MEASURE OF PERSONALITY AND THEATRICAL LANGUAGE

I.1. On the diversity of Aureliu Manea's directorial style.....	13
I.1.1. The actor's body and the magic of performance	13
I.1.2. Rituality and expressive simplicity.....	16
I.1.3. Distancing and controlled affectivity	19
I.1.4. Diversity and uniqueness.....	22
I.2. The relation between text and performance	23
I.2.1. Dramaturgy – performances, dichotomy or syncretism?.....	23
I.2.2. Arguments on performance	27
I.2.3. Cooperation and cohabitation	32
I.2.4. Paratextual constructivism	34
I.2.5. The cinematic model and theatrical oneirism.....	36
I.3. Conception and creation	38
I.3.1. Ideational arguments and performance themes	38
I.3.2. Surpassing limits: stage imagery	44
Findings – Theatrical language and the mark of the creative self	48

PART TWO

THE ART OF IMAGES IN THE PERFORMANCES DIRECTED BY AURELIU MANEA

Introduction	51
--------------------	----

CHAPTER II

AURELIU MANEA AND STAGE IMAGISM

II.1. Modern scenography – historicity and perpetual renewal	52
II.1.1. On stage objects and their theatrical significance	52

II.1.2. Scenography – a synergistic component of 20 th -century theatrical art	56
II.1.3. From Bauhaus to the Romanian School of scenography	59
II.1.4. Piscator, Brecht and the rationalistic option.....	62
II. 2. The setting: a symbiotic element in Aureliu Manea’s works	70
II.2.1. Sobriety and depth	70
II.2.2. <i>Theatre within theatre</i> – rationalism and convention	76
II.2.3. <i>The reality effect</i> or the image of fickle time	82
II.2.4. The setting and the notion of the <i>atmospherics</i> of the performance space	85
II. 3. On the art of costume, lighting and music	88
II.3.1. Costumes – historicity and atemporality	88
II.3.2. Lighting – from the need for relevance to the chiaroscuro	92
II.3.3. Music – poetry and dramatism.....	96
Findings – Stage image and paratextual discourse.....	100

PART THREE

AURELIU MANEA AND THE DIRECTOR-ACTOR RELATIONSHIP

Introduction	102
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER III

AUTOCRATISM OR DEMOCRACY IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

III.1. The principles of working with actors	105
III.1.1. Self-control and emotional communion	105
III.1.2. The labyrinth of quests for the self	109
III.1.3. Theatre direction and professional secrets.....	112
III.2. Inspiring models of working with actors.....	114
III.2.1. Stage performance or controlled freedom	114
III.2.2. Challenge and sacrilege.....	119
III.2.3. Thought in action	124
III.3. The director-actor relationship, from the perspective of the Romanian Theatre School	127
III.3.1. Multiple collaboration and the synergy of efforts.....	127
III.3.2. The director’s vision and the ideal performance.....	131
III.3.3. The new meaning of the concept of teamwork	135

Findings – Aureliu Manea and the common existential perimeter.....	138
--	-----

PART FOUR

AURELIU MANEA AND THE DIRECTOR'S RELATION WITH THE AUDIENCE

Introduction	141
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER IV

AURELIU MANEA'S THEATRICAL WORKS AND THEIR ARTISTIC- EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

IV.1. Spectators and the means of communication in stage art.....	143
IV.1.1. Aureliu Manea and the empathy of the theatrical act.....	144
IV.1.2. The mystery of creation and <i>Ariadne's thread</i>	148
IV.2. Scenic image and its communicational impact.....	151
IV.2.1. Theatrical fiction and the spectator's sensitivity.....	151
IV.2.2. The theatrical ritual, dramatizing and undramatizing social life.....	155
Findings – The theatre and its formative influence on social consciousness.....	159
Conclusions: Aureliu Manea and the continuity of performing arts.....	165
Performances with broken wings.....	173
Annexes:	
Annex 1 <i>Memories of Rică</i> , an interview with actress Anca Neculce Maximilian ...	180
Annex 2 Manea among the scenes, an interview with actor Vladimir Brânduș	185
Annex 3 A provoked monologue of actress Mirela Cioabă	204
Annex 4 My career as a scenographer, with Clara Labancz	206
Annex 5 Manea, reverberations, with actress Raluca Zamfirescu	209
Annex 6 Manea vs. Medeea, with actress Nina Antonov	213
Annex 7 A moment's nostalgia with actor Marcel Iures	215
Annex 8 Remembering Aureliu Manea, confessions, with writer Gabriela Leoveanu	217
Annex 9 Theatrical fragmentations evoked by writer Viorel Știrbu	220
Annex 10 A Beacon of Light for the Romanian Theatre, according to the scenographer Paul Salzberger	224
Annex 11. Statement of activity: Aureliu Manea.....	227
Annex 12. Album	231
Bibliography	279

Keywords: innovative spirit, the art of images, paratextual constructivism, surpassing limits, rituality, diversity of style, text-performance relation, performance language, reality effect, the atmospherics of the performance space, stage imagism, artistic vividness, scenic indeterminacy.

PHD THESIS ABSTRACT:

Aureliu Manea¹ was a tutelary figure for the art of theatrical performance in Romania during the last decades of the 20th century. A disciple of director and Professor Radu Penciulescu, he surprised audiences through the dauntless spirit with which he approached dramatic texts, being considered a leader of his generation. He was trained and he defined himself as an artist in the 1960s, in a period marred by the impediments and restrictions imposed by the communist ideology, which severely encumbered the culture and the art of the time. Without waging an overt battle against censorship during those years, he embarked on a tacit, albeit permanently displayed attitude of “artistic dissent” in his creative expressions. “The fight against censorship and a certain theatrical insurgency constantly marked, especially during the years of communist dictatorship, the competitive spirit of artists in the theatre domain.”²

Through his presence on the firmament of Romanian theatrical culture, Manea legitimized a true spirit of competition, raising the bar of artistic excellence. When Aureliu Manea made his debut as a director (BA Degree performance: *Rosmersholm* by Henrik Ibsen, the State Theatre in Sibiu, the 1967-1968 season), Valentin Silvestru, a great theatre critic of the time, predicted that he would develop as “a personal artist, who has his own conception about theatre.”³ Silvestru’s assertions acquired referential value, as his verdicts were sometimes defining and axiomatic. “An examination taken by director Aureliu Manea in Sibiu, with Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm*, brought over echoes of current concerns on other meridians, practising a cruel and violent theatre.”⁴

¹ Aureliu Manea was born in Bucharest on 4 February 1945. He graduated the Institute of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, the Department of Theatre Directing, in the class of Professor Radu Penciulescu. He was a colleague of the future director Andrei Serban, being mutually attracted to each other’s directorial discourse. From 1991 on, Manea lived in the Neuro-Psychiatric Recovery and Rehabilitation Home from Galda de Jos, Alba County. He passed away on 13 March 2014.

² Marian Popescu, *Oglinda spartă*, București, Editura Unitext, 1997, p. 79.

³ Valentin Silvestru, “Tineri regizori,” in *Spectacole în cerneală*, București, Editura Meridiane, 1972, p. 139.

⁴ Valentin Silvestru, “Contribuția regiei tinere la formarea conceptului actual de teatralitate,” in *Spectacole în cerneală*, București, Editura Meridiane, 1972, p. 29.

By resorting to the forms of cruel and violent theatre, Aureliu Manea's debut re-actualized Artaud's aesthetics, so much invoked in the 1960s-80s, during those fertile years for the entire theatrical establishment. Manea's art,⁵ influenced by the innovative trends of the time (*La MaMa, Happening, Living Theatre, Open Theatre, Performance Group*, etc.) and by the level of excellence of the great Romanian directors (Liviu Ciulei, Lucian Pintilie, David Esrig, Radu Penciulescu, Vlad Mugur, Lucian Giurchescu, etc.), bore the seal of visionarism, triggering emotional thrills and constantly challenging reason, which was perhaps too detached, too analytical and overly critical. Through his creation, Aureliu Manea fought against the aridity of conventionalism and the complacency of obsolescent traditionalism, rebuilding and redefining an artistic world that was engaged in a constant quest for self-identity: "Aureliu Manea is among those chosen few. Cătălina Buzoianu considered him a genius, surrounded by the scintillating aura of genius."⁶ This statement exacerbates the exceptional talent of this director, highly acclaimed but sometimes misunderstood by the others. Director Radu Penciulescu, a professor at IATC, was seduced by "Manea's ability to synthesize" influences, by his creative resources, which enabled him to have unusual approaches (which did not always comply with the aesthetic and ideological demands of that time) to extremely diverse texts, staged in small theatres.

During those years, theatre made reference to ancestral formulas, to the Greek (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides) or the Roman originary models (Seneca, Plautus, Terence). Attempts were made to reframe the scenic expression of Shakespearean theatre and, in general, of Elizabethan Theatre. The directions of the Russian School were in high demand (Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Tairov, Vahtangov), as were those of the German School, represented and renewed by the Bauhaus "model" or by directors like Fuchs, Reinhardt, Piscator and, especially, Brecht. The directors who placed their indelible "seal" on this period included Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, and Tadeusz Kantor. During those years, the act of performance developed along imagistic lines, resembling the idea of artistic theatre, an aesthetic formula that was also present in the portfolio of another important Romanian director of the 1960s-1980s, Valeriu Moisescu: "For Valeriu Moisescu, artistic theatre cannot be imagined in the absence of what he calls active directing."⁷ This imposed the importance of dynamism, by enhancing visual means, or even by using shock images, so that theatre could return to original, initiatory truths, to the cathartic rituality of Antiquity. Being

⁵ His directorial works are mentioned in the Annex to this doctoral thesis.

⁶ Justin Ceuca, *Aureliu Manea. Eseu despre un Regizor*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2007, pp. 5-6.

⁷ Valeriu Moisescu. "Regia de teatru ca regie activă", in George Banu (ed. Mircea Morariu), *Teatrul de artă – o traducere modernă*, trans. from French by Mirela Nedelcu-Patureau, București, Editura Nemira, 2010, p. 532.

influenced by all these ideas and trends of the time, Aureliu Manea's creative consciousness was to be defined by his bold approach to the act of performance, by his innovative spirit, which no longer reduced theatre to its simple dramaturgical dimension, but steered it towards the path of the director's artistic authority: "The other path that stands out is that of the author of performance, a complete, autonomous creator."⁸ This new fictional universe, which captivated Aureliu Manea, imposed itself through the artisticity of images and through paratextual constructivism, these elements legitimizing a genuine guiding aesthetic, which had been haunting the passionate minds of art creators for several decades. The rules of the newly created "game" envisaged, according to Gordon Craig's visionary projections, "the absolute authority of directorial art, exercised over all the other elements, including the text."⁹

It was in this cultural-historical space that Aureliu Manea's distinctive artistic personality was formed and defined. He was a theatre director with an aesthetic of his own, with a style that was more or less to the liking of the "general public", but who opened the perspective to the future of the Romanian theatre. Constructively adopting the artistic influences of that period, Aureliu Manea entered a pleiad of outstanding directors, along with other contemporary young creators: Alexa Visarion, Dan Micu, Iulian Vișa, Andrei Șerban, Cătălina Buzoianu, etc.

All the young directors mentioned above valorized their potential. We have opted, however, for analysing the work of Aureliu Manea in our doctoral research. In his case, the force of communication through visualisation evinced a kind of uniqueness and boldness that bordered on rebelliousness. His art alternated strenuous effort with humour, with the pleasure of the performance, with fantasy; he endeavoured to move beyond appearances, searching for essences. Like other young creators in the 1960s, Manea preferred dramatic writings with incandescent experiences, which he expressed through rough gestures, radical actions and violent communication. Emotion was forged through rituality: "Aureliu Manea's performance of *Rosmersholm* represents a suggestive example."¹⁰

The reforms and transformations of thought and deed in the theatre of those years exerted an impact upon Aureliu Manea's works. Like the other innovators of the time, Manea upheld the idea that theatre as a performing art should have autonomy and that the stage

⁸ George Banu, "Regizorul ca autor", in *Ultimul sfert de secol teatral. O panoramă subiectivă*. Trans. by Delia Voicu, București, Paralela 45, 2003, p.14.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Ileana Berlogea, "Din universul scenei. Trăsături definitorii ale "Școlii regizorale românești" in *Teatrul și societatea contemporană. Experiențe dramatice și scenice ale anilor '60-'80*, București, Editura Meridiane, 1985, p. 232.

should be liberated from the despotism of words and the psychological reactions of performance. He turned psychological theatre into a world of parable and metaphor, with stronger effects on the spectators' consciousness. Aureliu Manea was fascinated by the world of thoughts, by the underlayers of dramatic writing, by subconscious associations, by memories and oneiric projections. In his shows, feelings were experienced at the limit, objects acquired meaning, and stage life was a blend of reality and the characters' emotional echoes.

Our doctoral research aims, therefore, to conduct a pertinent and well-documented analysis of the work of this great artistic creator, Aureliu Manea, who passed perhaps too quickly into oblivion, especially today, when postmodern society, in this ruthless and implacable passage of time, marginalizes and forgets the efforts of those who embraced a spirit of renewal in theatrical art. Aureliu Manea belongs to the category of great theatre people mentioned before, continuing the tradition they established, yet bringing a note of singularity with his creation. We wish to emphasize the idea that Manea left behind the memory of outstanding artistic "happenings" that took place only in the province, as the capital rejected and marginalized him.¹¹ The reasons, easily understandable, pertained to the pride of the creators in Bucharest, who did not wish to risk "competing" with the unique and entirely "different" spirit of Aureliu Manea. The fact that he remained merely a "provincial" director reinforced our idea that his singularity should be restored in the public consciousness. We are referring to the staged performances that brought the theatrical "province" to the attention of exegetes and of the general public, especially considering the significance of the "theatre laboratory from Turda" for the history of performing arts.¹²

We sought to highlight, in our doctoral research, the essential elements that characterize the work of Aureliu Manea and the reasons that led us to tackle such a topic. Our methodological approach or the actions we undertook are a blend of practical investigation, through interviews with directors, actors, scenographers and literary secretaries, and the examination and assessment of reviews, articles, books, the author's books, all of these being

¹¹ There was an attempt at collaboration with the "Lucia Sturza Bulandra" Theatre as regards the staging of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, a project that Manea could not carry through. The performance eventually had a collective of directors. The failure was due either to his lack of communication with the group of actors or to his directorial inconsistencies. Unfortunately, we do not possess sufficient documentary material related to this, but this incident occurred, indeed, and some testimonies to this effect will be discussed in the final chapters. We feel the need to emphasize this because we do not intend to turn our doctoral research into a perpetual *laudatio*, even though the bibliographical sources that we built our arguments on were, without exception, appreciative.

¹² It should be noted that, as part of the artistic team of the Municipal Theatre in Turda, as an actress, what I intended was to highlight Aureliu Manea's creative merits and restore the dignity of BEING to the stage in Turda.

combined with the semiotic analysis of performance. As a means of research, photographs represent the only objective witnesses to the history of the performances directed by Manea: photographs break down these performances into fragments, conveying just frozen moments from the experiences/moods of the characters to whom the actors gave life. Along with posters and printed theatre reviews, photographs remain a secondary form of performance conservation. Part of Manea's ideas and experiences remain rather insufficiently/scantily reflected in his publications, which include a volume about the directorial science, *Energiile spectacolului* [The Energies of Performance] and another about Shakespeare, entitled *Spectacole imaginare* [Imaginary Performances]. An additional dimension concerning the theatrical destiny of the director is brought, in this research, in the form of remembrances, offered by the scenographers Paul Salberger and Clara Labancz, and interviews with the actors: Anca Neculce Maximilian, Mirela Cioabă, Marcel Iureș, Vladimir Brâmbuș, and Nina Antonov. To this day, the only filmed performance directed by Aureliu Manea is *The Portuguese Letters of Mariana Alcoforado*, mounted at the Metropolis Theatre in Bucharest.

In what follows, we shall present the structure of our thesis, which is divided into four parts.

The first part of our thesis refers to Aureliu Manea's theatrical language, offering arguments regarding his directorial aesthetic, from three vantage points: the diversity of style, the relationship between the text and the performance, and the connection between conception and creation. In the first chapter, which addresses the stylistic line, we explore several ways of paratextual creativity, through which Manea shaped his artistic universe: body language, which imparts magic to stage performance, rituality, as the antinomy of expressive simplicity, and the analogy between distancing and affectivity. In the second chapter, regarding the text-show relation, we analyse the complementarity between dramaturgy and performance, seeing it as a syncretic or dichotomous rapport. Then, we provide a point of view on the manner in which dramaturgical and directorial ideas work together and cooperate, making reference to the fundamentals of performance constructivism and to the cinematic model that Manea used in outlining his theatrical oneirism. Next we discuss the characteristics of Aureliu Manea's works, predicated on a permanent endeavour for self-improvement: overcoming limits.

Aureliu Manea imparted, through his performance language, brilliance to an era in the life of Romanian theatre. An era that was, in any case, full of brilliant directors. While Aureliu Manea did not reach the status of a genius, he undoubtedly had the sparkle of brilliance, which placed him above all others and, indeed, above the theatrical establishment

of his time. This statement is confirmed by the assessment made by one of the titans of Romanian theatre, Liviu Ciulei: “I got one of the most important – and few – lessons on directing from Manea, from what he had wanted to accomplish in *Britannicus* by Racine.”¹³

Beyond these flattering appraisals, attesting, through the unquestionable authority of the person who expressed them, the place Aureliu Manea occupies in the “Pantheon” of Romanian theatre, it should be noted that what confers specificity and brilliance to his work is precisely this individual “mark” of the creative self: his performance language. This personal language “mediated” the path of his creation from a mere idea to the enactment of that idea on stage.

What is the aesthetic area to which Aureliu Manea’s works belong, in terms of the theatrical language he resorted to? Through their boldness, the performances he directed pertain to the space of the avant-garde, but also to that of a realism expressed with the dynamic impetus of the late 20th century. They display, at the same time, touches of naturalism, acknowledged by the creator in his confessions, and they also feature Expressionist or grotesque elements. There are many arguments for and against each of these aesthetic framings. We consider, however, that Manea’s repertoire and practical approach place his work in the area of eclecticism, in the sense that he englobed all the genres and all the styles of all time. His theatre reconciled “the craftsman’s hand with the artist’s soul,” in other words, he created a theatre “of beauty, but to the measure of man.”¹⁴

Aureliu Manea did not reach perfection, but he endeavoured, with skill and diligence, not to “see” himself in the role of a creator, but to “feel” that he was permanently present in his work. By recuperating and cultivating perennial stage values, he was a partisan of the retheatricalization of theatre, a practitioner of *artistic theatre*.¹⁵ Manea attempted to redefine the rules of performing art, in keeping with universal values, which he cultivated and with which he identified himself: “I always tend to identify artistic theatre with the expression of an aesthetic consciousness that is capable of appealing to and communicating with all the reunited theatrical means.”¹⁶ The pursuits of those who serve artistic theatre do not deplete meaning, but merely define the *movement*, the orientation of the performance gesture. Artistic theatre, in which we find the expression of the imaginary proposed by Manea, is opposed to entertainment theatre, for it attempts to save the performing art from within, through a

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 249.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 243.

¹⁵ *Artistic theatre* was defined thus by Paul Fort in Paris, in 1890.

¹⁶ “Poziții. Xannis Kokkos, Căutați teatrul de artă pretutindeni”, in George Banu, *Teatrul de artă...*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

constant rethinking of its bearings. “In fact, artistic theatre is defined by the desire to retrieve from within the data inherited from European theatre. It does not reject or deny them, but seeks to improve and enrich them.”¹⁷

Aureliu Manea, as an adherent of artistic theatre, did not contest the *essence* of theatre, but its *state*.

As a director, he proposed permanent revisions, successive metamorphoses of scenic expression, based on perennial virtues and morality codes. Artistic theatre was practised by great creative spirits of this genre (Stanislavski, Copeau, Jouvet, Strehler, Vitez, etc.). Like these great predecessors, Manea was committed to the idea of cohabitation with the dramatic text, cultivating a theatre that was, if not targeted at the “masses,” then “intelligible,” at least. This form of language satisfies both the elite and the ordinary spectators. When he was removed from the stage, he wrote “texts deliberately consisting of mazes in which one can lose oneself in complex metaphors.”

As a practitioner of artistic theatre, he built true imagistic empires through the specific “arguments” of scenic expression: settings, costumes, lighting, and sound.

The second part of our research highlights the art of images in the performances directed by Aureliu Manea. To support our argument, we focused on the elements that shaped, beyond dramatic writing, his universe of image and sound: settings, costumes, lighting, and music. In the first chapter, the scenography of Manea’s performances is seen through the lenses of historical and anthropological models, following several technical benchmarks: stage objects, in terms of their utility and significance; the purpose and role of these benchmarks, from the perspective of 20th-century theatrical thinking; the evolution of the scenographic component (the School of Meiningen, Bauhaus School, the Romanian School of Scenography) and its influence on the performance directed by Aureliu Manea. In the second chapter, we described, succinctly, the imagistic elements used in Manea’s performances: sobriety and atmospheric depth, the *reality effect* and the idea of space *atmospherics*. Then we made reference to the other scenographic elements of Manea’s performances: costumes, as a benchmark of historicity or of timelessness; lighting, which imposed the need for relevance or chiaroscuro; music – the spiritual effect of poetry and dramatism.

Aureliu Manea was committed to an idea, espoused by many artists of the genre, that the truth value of theatre lies in its power of communication. Through persuasive, subtle or

¹⁷ “Introducere. O sută de ani de teatru de artă”, in George Banu, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

crude means, he sought to express both dramaturgical ideas and his own visions, crafting disturbing and unique scenic universes that reinforced the notion that performing art is created with its own synthetic means, offering manifold meanings beyond the conventional nature of this communication. The rationale for this form of art lies precisely in the human meaning it conveys.

It is unmistakable that Aureliu Manea used scenography for the purposes of enriching the space of performance with elements (scenery, costumes, lighting, and music) that outline and enhance a unitary and personal imagistic universe, capable of channelling the visible and hidden meanings of the performance. By infusing meaning into performance, stage objects became a synergistic component of the theatrical act. Through the scenography, Manea the director addressed himself to the subconscious of the beholder who participated in the performance act. What should be noted is his interest in a creative adaptation of objects to the show, by entwining their aesthetic and signification function with the playwright's ideas and the director's overarching theme. All these aesthetic arguments defined his idea of *stage image*.

In Aureliu Manea's works, image has a visual dimension but also a verbal one. Together, they form becoming horizons, in the sense defined by Wunenburger: "Images form, indeed, live horizons that are restructured and transformed, that interact and thereby draw our attention to them, stimulate our emotions and animate our thinking."¹⁸ The emblematic images in his performances have a structure with a totalizing meaning, the symbolic representing the link between the sensible and the intelligible. The interpretation of those images is obviously subjective, since the symbolic imagination is a suggestion and a projection of affectivity, as well as a representation of the cognitive. In Manea's works, images have a special, almost polysemantic magnetic force. The visibility of this force comes from the invisible recesses of the inner world and allows the passage from phantasm to playfulness.

Through his options regarding the scenographic vision, Aureliu Manea sought to meet the need for an imaginary of the theatrical act, the need for providing life to stage objects. Essentially, through "objects" he introduced the symbolism of "aliveness" into the equation the imaginary.

In this second part of our thesis, we tried to present the creative relationship that Manea the director established with the elements that composed the scenographic background

¹⁸ "Introducere," in Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Viața imaginilor*. Trans. into Romanian by Ionel Bușe, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Cartimpex, 1998, p. 11.

(settings, costumes, lighting, music, props, etc.). Outlining, from an anthropological perspective, the history of scenographic art, we wanted to provide a clear demonstration regarding the evolution of stage imagism and to ascertain the place and the role that Aureliu Manea had in the performing arts.

Through the scenography of his performances, Manea rejected simplistic traditionalist solutions and contributed to the process of theatrical art renewal, of identity clarification and of the affirmation of this new self-definition formula.¹⁹ He was a director who urged the collaborators whose artistic trajectories intersected his theatrical destiny to learn how to decipher a dramatic text, to read between the lines and, most importantly, to find the key to the performance.²⁰

The third part of our thesis refers to the relation between the director and the actor, seen through the lenses of Aureliu Manea's theatrical thinking. In the third chapter, we approached the principles of working with the actors, using the following highlights: self-control and emotional communion, the labyrinth of quests for the self, direction in theatre and professional secrecy. We turned to Manea's inspirational models as regards the actor-director relationship: stage performance or controlled freedom, the challenge and sacrilege of the creative work, scenic thought in action. We also approached the director-actor relationship in Manea's case from the perspective of the Romanian School of Theatre.

Insofar as the director-actor relationship is concerned, we can detect, in Manea's case, a tendency to valorise the actor-character alternation, through an intelligent and detached performance, defined by expressive communication. Everything happens in this ritualistic space, in this common existential perimeter, of the director and of the actor alike. Manea's actor combines playfulness with ritualism, hedonism with self-irony, which coexist in a strange melange. Theatrical performance is pushed to the limit between the tragic and the rational. In Seneca's *Medea*, for example, the tragic is treated with detachment and irony, Manea avoiding classical "tragic" approaches, with rhetorical overtones.

The self-ironical dual performance, blending playfulness and rationality, is also encountered in comedies.²¹

“Here the actors are not called upon to impersonate the characters, but to figurate, with usually parodic, ironic detachment, various hypostases of the human, such as stupidity, selfishness, abjection, greed, but also eroticism,

¹⁹ See Paul Salzberger – interview Annex 10.

²⁰ See Clara Labancz – interview Annex 4.

²¹ Vezi the performances Manea directed: *The Game of Love and Chance*, *The Twelfth Night*, *Titanic-Waltz*, *These Hypocritical Fools*.

or the lust for life. The register of interpretations acquires grotesque overtones.”²²

This polychrome interpretative register was created within the framework of the director-actor relationship, where Manea found technical solutions related to speech and movement. Manea was a true artisan of the actors’ signifying and contained movement. Actors with smaller roles, from a dramaturgical point of view, received, in compensation, attributes based on motion (see the officers’ roles in *Three Sisters*). Manea laid emphasis on the atmosphere, created through abrupt, panicked movements (*Arden of Faversham*) or through pantomime and stylized gestures (*Britannicus*).

His mastery granted a temporal dimension to his performances, highlighting the very impermanence of his works and aligning them with the timelessness of artistic memory.

“In any theatrical performance, the actors-characters are distinguished as temporal beings. Timelessness is given by the relationships that are established between them, through an overlap between two types of events, the former belonging to fiction and the latter – to the stage.”²³

Aureliu Manea was a creator who insisted on the coincidence and concordance between dramatic action and the time of representation, raising the directorial art to the rank of a science and practising it with intelligence and responsibility. “Directing is a science and the theatrical act cannot be performed by those who do not have a calling, for it requires tremendous responsibility. We want, once and for all, to emphasize that the Director is a ‘chosen’ individual.”²⁴

We should note that, beyond assuming the idea of responsibility, Aureliu Manea did not attempt in any way to crush the actor’s personality, in accomplishing his artistic goals, but on the contrary, that he considered the actor an “ally” in his fight against the unpredictability of creation. He did not see the actor as a condemned “object.” “In the nick of time, and I say this with great concern, I discovered the Mechanism of the Stage and the technique of conveying information without turning the actor into a condemned object.”²⁵

This is a testimony that grants the actor his due rights, for without the actor, Aureliu Manea could not have taken his work to perfection. “I consider the actor a conscious tool of emotion,”²⁶ he stated, trying to impose an axiomatic truth: that theatre performances are

²² “Componentele formulei regizorale. Actorul”, in Justin Ceuca, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

²³ “Teatrul ca paradox”, in Sorin Crișan, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

²⁴ “Energiiile spectacolului. Știința regiei”, in Florica Ichim, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

²⁵ “Energiiile spectacolului. Regia tehnică și tehnica regiei”, in Florica Ichim, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

²⁶ “Energiiile spectacolului. Cheia clavielor”, in Florica Ichim, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

accomplished through the creators' joint effort. This is what the essence of theatre is.

Aureliu Manea was the creator of true stage masterpieces, achieved through a wise and intelligent co-operation between the director and the actor. On the stage, in this area of artistic cohabitation, where the being of the creators has a joint determination and under the supervision of the director, the actor and the character merge together out of a need for rediscovering archetypal memory. Thus, we can say that Aureliu Manea the director redraws, through the actor, the originary dimensions from the dawn of this art. For him, the art of the theatre was an inexhaustible wellspring of toil and inspiration.

“I share the belief that only the actors he worked with are the true beneficiaries of the Theatre lesson he offered, and not even all of these. I understand just how arduous is the pathway that leads one to the joy of creation and how difficult it is to join a Director in this faith.”²⁷

Aureliu Manea completed, through his work, the self's journey of initiation. This journey was accomplished through the actor's live performance. The *artistic life* of the stage is the analogy of life's *live reality*. The theatre he perfected represented an artistic point of view, full of force and expression. His work rallied unrestrained creative energies, whose pulsations we can still sense today.

The fourth part of our doctoral demonstration concerns the relationship between the director and the audience according to Aureliu Manea's conception. In the fourth chapter, we made reference to the elements that compose the performance-spectator relationship: communication, empathy, mystery. We went on to analyse the degree of participation of the spectators in the context of the staged performance: silent or involved spectators; direct or indirect participation. Then we explored several rapports between scenic image and the emotional impact of a performance: theatrical fiction and the spectator's sensitivity; the theatrical ritual as a means of dramatizing and undramatizing social life.

The relation between the director and the audience marked the unmediated closeness of the stage art creators to the *de facto* recipient of the work: the spectator. This closeness is made possible by the presence of communication cues. From the perspective of Aureliu Manea's work, this type of communication is done primarily through “emotion.” Through “empathy” and “high emotion”, the spectator participates in deciphering the theatrical “enigma” and, surpassing his limits, he can understand better his own self and the others.

²⁷ See Mirela Cioabă – interview Annex 3.

*“The spectator is a witness, not a man whose humour is indulged.”*²⁸ Aureliu Manea managed to impose forms of expression that revealed the “idea” of the performance by overcoming any barrier. He took into account the fact that people do not evolve in the same way, even if they are subjected to the same type of cultural education, knowing that there is a diversity of options and tastes among them, regarding the perception of a show.

Aureliu Manea did not regard the public as an abstract notion. The more or less active spectator is, to some extent, a “consumer” of theatrical art, but also a confrère; he enters the performance hall like a public arena, accepting the invitation of the director and his team to begin his ascent towards the ideal.

As a director, Aureliu Manea was highly interested in the dialogue with the audience, as attested by his encounter with the theatre in Turda, the place of his artistic maturity and a fertile ground for studying the relationship with the spectators. This was the place where he mounted performances centred on complex topics, like illusion, heroism or simply on the pleasure of discovering the “new.”

Aureliu Manea consecrated dialogue by questioning existence and the exhibition of the sensitivity or, respectively, by moving the self between the hall and the stage. The spectator looks at the action performed on the stage from a different position than the context of everyday life. The man in the street perceives what pertains to “diurnal determinacy,” while the theatre spectator seeks to understand “scenic indeterminacy.” The gaze of the one participating in fiction is educated, more or less, depending on his cultural background, to separate or to merge the elements of the performance. In his own way, Manea returns to the Platonic truth which claims that “we are what we see.”

In the last part of the thesis, for the sake of conveying the truth, based on the information we obtained through interviews with some of Aureliu Manea’s collaborators (actors, scenographers), we presented, in a chapter-epilogue, also facts that reveal the less pleasant, even painful aspects of his life and creation. We referred to the shows he started but left unfinished, on various theatre stages across the country, some because of his mental suffering, others because he lacked the energy and inspiration to do so and, last but not least, because some of his performances were censored politically.

Even though our doctoral research emphasized the idea of the continuity of his work, we believe that, in light of the information we have obtained through the interviews we have recently conducted with those who were part of Aureliu Manea’s theatrical destiny and for

²⁸ “Enigma spectacolului”, in Aureliu Manea, *Energiile spectacolului*, Cluj-Napoca, 1983, p. 38.

the sake of respecting the integrity of the truth, we discussed, at the end of this thesis, the theatrical occurrences that generated discontinuity in his creation. We would like this chapter to be considered an epilogue of our analytical foray.

The subchapter includes references to the performances Aureliu Manea started to mount on the stages of various theatres across the country, but could not finish: some because of his illness, others because they were obstructed by the censorship, even though they would have had the necessary energy to be completed.