

### **The Spectator's Cognitive Substitution of the Absent Performer's Phenomenal Body**

This paper provides an interpretation of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* (*Feng šus v gledališču brez igralca*). The play's distinct characteristic is the absence of the performer's phenomenal body. The author thematises, using Erika Fischer-Lichte's typology of the performing bodies, a unique relationship between the present semiotic and the absent phenomenal body of the performer on the one hand and the present phenomenal and semiotic body of the spectator on the other hand. In addition, he also uses elements of Eviatar Zerubavel's cognitive sociology (meaning as a social relation between signifier and signified) and Tim Dant's theory of material culture (the significance of an artwork as the mediating object in the communication process). The author describes and explains how during the play, the spectator cognitively makes a substitution of the absent performer's phenomenal body using her own phenomenal body, which gives new connotations to Edward Gordon Craig's visionary statement about the theatre without the use of a written play or actors.

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# The Spectator's Cognitive Substitution of the Absent Performer's Phenomenal Body

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In a short and concisely written introductory essay on the relationship between culture and performance in the modern globalised world, Erika Fischer-Lichte addresses the bodily co-presence of performers and spectators in theatre as an “old-fashioned”<sup>1</sup> art form (*Interweaving* 293–294). According to Daphna Ben Chaim, this old-fashioned art form enables spectators “an intensification of emotional involvement, empathy with the characters (as in realistic plays)” and “an intensification of awareness of the fictionality of the whole” (7). For the average spectator, the fact that the bodies of the actors, dancers, singers and performers perform a play on the stage is, due to persistent cultural conventions, not only self-evident and an unavoidable fact but a constitutive element of any theatrical performance. Such a spectator would be fundamentally wrong, because theatre without performers is, nevertheless, possible. Namely, an assertion that theatre without performers is not possible could lead to the reduction of theatre to a relationship between spectators and performers. In reality, theatrical space is not occupied only by human bodies but also by various inanimate material objects (stage properties and scenography). It would be unrealistic to believe that material objects are not capable of functioning as a substitution for the bodies of performers when possible and necessary. Just imagine, for instance, marionette or shadow puppetry. Are they not an excellent example of the “absence” of the human body, that is, the situation in which the physical body of a puppeteer is carefully hidden behind the scenography away from the spectators’ gazes?

What I actually refer to is a theatrical play in which spectators are present in the auditorium, while on the stage, every other element of a theatrical play such as the scenography and stage properties are present, but there are no performers. It has been proven several times, although this type of theatre is indeed very rare, that such theatre is actually possible (take, for instance, Samuel Beckett’s *Breath* or Vlado R. Gotvan’s *Luftballett 2.2*). In one case, such theatre was performed when a group of Slovenian theatre makers put on the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* (*Feng šus v gledališču brez igralca*) in 2011 in Španski borci Culture Centre. The play consists only of scenography, stage properties, music, text and various visual and sound effects. The only people present were the spectators sitting in the auditorium who were watching the show and the technicians and creators of the play behind

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation marks are Fischer-Lichte’s origin.

the scenes. The issue here is how to elucidate and theoretically frame the absence of performers not only as a lack of what used-to-be-an-essentially-constitutive element of a play but also as an element that is possibly no longer in relation to the spectators in the theatre's auditorium. To give an interpretation of theatre without performers, especially the role played by the spectators' performing bodies, Fischer-Lichte's and Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre in combination with the elements of Tim Dant's and Gabrielle A. Hezekiah's theories of material culture will be applied.

## The play *Feng Shui in the Theatre Without an Actor*

According to the authors of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* Barbara Bulatović,<sup>2</sup> Aleš Mustar<sup>3</sup> and Jaka Šimenc,<sup>4</sup> their intention was to replace the fourth theatrical wall with a mirror in which spectators could recognise their own permeation by two ideologies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: consumerism and Feng shui. On the one hand, people are obsessed with material consumption in everyday life. Modern capitalism coerces individuals to buy and collect material goods beyond their bodily needs, in a manner "recommended" and "approved" by society, which, as such, becomes an indication of their social and economic status, power, religious orientation and so on. People constantly negotiate over what to buy or gather and what to sell or discard. To do that, they develop different culturally based strategies for handling the problems of the material aspects of modern life. The mixture of mystical and practical ideology of Feng shui, the Chinese system of geomancy, represents one of the many "useful" cultural tools to solve an individual's psychological problems related to excessive consumerism.

The story of *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* is an everyday life tale of two ordinary people, who come together, fight to stay together, but in the end, give up on their relationship. The story is plain and a lot is left to the spectator's interpretation. It is obvious that both are working hard on several elements of their relationship, which produce certain anxiety in modern relationship: arranging their home, planning to have a baby or perhaps fight some severe illness. The detailed story remains unknown to the spectators, as does the plot, except for a feeling that the spectators are witness

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Bulatović (1964) is a prominent Slovenian puppeteer. She graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette (ESNAM) in 1990. Later on, she continued her study at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (AMU). She has been working as a theatre director, dramaturg, stage designer and puppeteer since 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Aleš Mustar (1968) is a Slovenian poet and translator from Romanian and Macedonian languages. He received a PhD in Romanian literature (University of Bucharest, 2000). He has published several books of poetry and occasionally works also as a dramaturg.

<sup>4</sup> Jaka Šimenc (1973) is a prominent Slovenian lighting and stage designer. He was the technical director of Španski borci Culture Centre. He was one of the founding members of sonorous theatre in Slovenia and is interested in theatre without the performer. Currently he works as a freelance lighting and stage designer.

to a never ending process of seeking equilibrium in a human relationship. The identity of the protagonists is unclear all along the play. Even their gender is hidden from the eyes of the spectator. So, almost anyone can step into their shoes. The city or town where the story takes place is also unrecognisable, and the situation can be placed somewhere between the suburbs of a city and a small town in the countryside. The time frame is evidently the present.

The play starts as an introduction into the basic principles of Feng shui; from the significance of wind and water in establishing an equilibrium of Yin and Yang to the application of different basic colours and shapes in everyday life. The introduction to the play is delivered by a voice, the origin of which is unknown to the spectators. Not only it is anonymous, it is bodiless, and it seems not to belong to an existent narrator. The voice is tender, soft, reassuring and competent. It provides the spectator with some basic knowledge about the philosophy and the unique nature of the play. The music that accompanies the voice is gentle, harmonious and almost unnoticeable to the spectators. It functions as a background. The scenography is primarily based on video slides projected onto a screen placed at the back of the stage. Slides appear sequentially, one by one, at a slow pace. Other elements of the scenography include the exterior and interior of a house (a bedroom and bathroom). Movements on the stage are limited. Because there are no performers on the stage, the only objects that occasionally move across the stage are stage properties, for instance, a carpet, a small garden dwarf, shoes lined up, a toilet seat (which at the end of the play comes to take a bow in front of the audience instead of the absent performers), books, pieces of underwear and so on. How these objects are moved is unknown to the spectators.

Communication between two invisible and physically absent protagonists, whose names and identities are not revealed to the audience, is mediated through the use of modern communication technology, namely a mobile phone and a personal computer. The messages transferred between the protagonists are displayed on a big screen as a part of the scenography. In contrast to the equilibrium of the context, designed and shaped through the use of the principles of Feng shui, the messages inform the spectators that the relationship between the two individuals is severely troubled. The spectators do not learn what is actually wrong, or what might be the essential cause of the conflict between the physically absent individuals, but it is obvious that their relationship is about to end. This eventually happens in the course of the play. It is obvious that the same pattern is reproduced repeatedly: individuals who are incapable of solving their own everyday problems and seek all kinds of solutions for their private crises beyond their private world, even by using the principles of Feng shui.

## Scenography and stage properties as a vehicle for the semiotic body of the performer

The attempt to “exile” the performers out of theatre can be transformed into the old dilemma of what to do with the real body of a performer. One of the possible solutions to the “problem” of unintentional disclosure of the real body of the performers in theatre, unless it is to be accepted as an important and significant element of theatre, is to accentuate the role of scenography and stage properties at the expense of performers, as is the case in the production of *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*. Or, to substitute the performer’s body with a material object. Hans-Thies Lehmann, for instance, points to the fact that the live body of an actor can be transformed into an “object”. Although he does not have in mind the replacement of performers’ bodies with material objects, he rightly, to our convenience, points to the fact that the bodies of the performers are as well material in their character. This characteristic enables the “replacement” of their bodies with material objects and the use of them as a vehicle for symbolic meaning during communication exchange in theatre between the “performers” and the spectators. The scenography of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* is made up of a set of several material objects (the façade of the small house, the interior of the house, a huge screen and so on) together with other theatrical elements (stage properties, like for instance, a toilet seat, a dwarf and various other everyday objects that one can find in almost every home), in such a manner that they function not only as a theatrical environment in which the play can be performed, but a substitute for the absent performers.

Using Tim Dant’s theory of material culture, it can be said that the scenography of *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* is important for two reasons. First, on the level of content, it represents the idea of the home, an idea which is also crucial for the understanding of the practical dimension of the philosophy of Feng shui. “The home,” says Dant “is a site for material expression by people that is unparalleled elsewhere in their lives”. People do not necessary express their thoughts and feelings in public, yet they certainly understand their home as a place where the expression of the most private life can come to realisation. Not everyone is professionally involved in work in which one can and is allowed to develop one’s authenticity. However, when people find themselves behind the walls of the home, they are in a position of free engagement in whatever they like. Their agency is oriented towards themselves and the people with whom they share the space of their homes. “Domestic work is directed towards ourselves and those with whom we share a home,” Dant concludes (70). It is exactly because the home is the place built and possessed by human beings that the absence of the body of the performers in the play is even a more significant and sensitive issue, because the human body is an essential element of every home. The dwelling-place is a place in which an embodied individual seeks shelter and private nurturing (Moeschl 286–300).

A short comparison between two different, though related forms of art – body art and the theatre without an actor – on their problematisation of the idea of home, might reveal an interesting distinction. In contrast to body art, in which the idea of the home is many times literally reduced to the performer’s body, that is, to the body-home (Krpič, *Medical* 36–43), the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* reduces the idea of home to inanimate material substances, namely, to the scenography and the stage properties, because the realisation of this particular play on the stage, in fact, does not need actors, dancers, singers or performers. While many times body art is merely nothing more than a body artist’s body in a relation to physical objects (hooks, knives, needles and pins and so on), the theatre without an actor abolishes the very same carnal body, which is so proudly displayed and evidently tortured for the purpose of body art’s artistic effect.

Second, on the level of art form, the scenography used in the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* is an artwork in itself, and as such, says Dant, is necessarily a mediating object *per se* (155). It is true that, when speaking about the unique mediating character of an artwork in terms of communication, Dant does not have in mind theatre as a distinct artistic form, but paintings, sculptures and installations. However, his statement that a communicating artwork affords “a sense of co-presence between creator and viewer that gives the viewer the sensation of being both here” is consistent with the definition of theatre as an “old-fashioned” art that presupposes the co-presence of spectators and actors, dancers, singers or performers (Dant 155). However, due to the “old-fashioned” nature of the theatre, the co-presence of spectators and performers in theatre is not only a single-layered, but as a matter of fact, a double-layered relationship. Firstly, the co-presence of the performers and the spectators in theatre is a carnal, physical, spatial and time-limited phenomenon. The performing body of theatre is a doubled body. On the one hand, performers practise one type of performing body, and on the other hand, spectators practise another type of performing body. Sometimes the line between the first and the second performing body is indeed very thin, sometimes the performing bodies “switch” positions, sometimes the bodies even dissolve into one another. Secondly, the co-presence of actors, performers, dancers and singers and spectators allows the construction of a medium of symbolic communication, which creates an additional sensation of co-presence about which Dant so convincingly speaks in his book (151–54, 158). As a consequence, co-presence in theatre has a stronger effect than in other artistic forms.

Another similar approach to the mediation issue of artworks was delivered by the phenomenological scholar Gabrielle A. Hezekiah (12) using Vivian Sobchack’s (11) interpretation of film as a material base for the perception and expression of the experience of film makers and spectators as a starting point. Hezekiah says that film (and we can expand her argument to the phenomenon of theatre as well) “as an instrument

of mediation [...] serves as an interface between the bodies of artist and viewer, making a material connection which brings towards us a specific, embodied perception of the world" (Hezekiah 12). The scenography and the stage properties together with the other elements of *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* can be, according to Hezekiah's model of mediation, understood as a unique set of signifiers of which a bridge of mediation between the bodies of the performers and those of the spectators may be raised. The spectators, sitting in the auditorium, assign distinct meanings to the elements of the scenography and the stage properties because those elements function as a set of symbols that produce the symbolic language of the play. It is expected that the audience will invest a significant proportion of their effort in deciphering the symbolic language coming from the stage.

How to address the absence of the performers in the case of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*? If there is no theatre without a performing body of the performers, is this still theatre? Or, could we, despite the absence of the performers' performing body, still find a sensible explanation of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* within the frame of theatre?

## The phenomenal and semiotic nature of the performing body of postdramatic theatre

Fischer-Lichte is among the few theorists of the postdramatic theatre who recognise the body dichotomy once described by the now-classic sociologist of the body Bryan S. Turner (16), according to which every person is a body and at the same time has a body. An individual may use his or her own body as it would be an instrument with which the mind relates to the material world. However, at the same time, the individual feels and understands that he or she is one with the body, and that his or her existence depends on it. Both bodies exist simultaneously and are in reality inseparable. While sometimes one can find traces of this body dichotomy even in the works of others, Fischer-Lichte is willing to ascribe the same dichotomy to the spectator; not only to the performer (*Show* 253). She sees the body dichotomy as essential for understanding the model of alternation of the phenomenal and semiotic body of the performer in postdramatic theatre.

In her book on postdramatic theatre, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, Fischer-Lichte elaborates a theory of the performing body, which appears on the stage, as well as in the mind of the spectator, in the form of two dissimilar bodies: the phenomenal and the semiotic body. The first, the phenomenal body, is the performer's carnal body, made of flesh and bones (129–186). The second, the semiotic body, is a complex system of meanings ascribed to the phenomenal body of the performer. In a more traditional

sense, the semiotic body is a role performed on the stage by the performer as defined and described by the play. The phenomenal body is evident to the spectator; however, during a play in a theatre, the spectators forget about the phenomenal body of the performer and focus their minds entirely on the semiotic body. The phenomenal body of the performer “pops out” when something goes wrong, for instance, when an actor mistakenly speaks wrong lines or when he or she accidentally stumbles and falls instead of performing a graceful entry. On such occasions, the spectators are reminded of the fact that the play is just a fiction and that there is “reality” beyond it. Or, in the case of postdramatic theatre, says Hans-Thies Lehmann, who in his theory on postdramatic theatre applies a dichotomy of the real and aesthetic body, the real body of the performer is delivered to the spectator on purpose (257). However, while in modern theatre the appearance of the real body is understood as an actor’s slip on the stage, in the postmodern theatre, says Lehmann, the real body pops out as a result of an intensive physical effort of the performer. Like scenography and stage properties, the real or phenomenal body of the performer is a vehicle for a distinct symbolic language, namely that of the aesthetic or semiotic body.

The double nature of the body of the performer is brought to its full effect in postdramatic theatre. Not only that the postdramatic theatre no longer cares and worries when the phenomenal body of the performer “pops out” in front of the spectators; it deliberately stimulates and nurtures its appearance on the stage. When at the end of her performance *Lips of Thomas*, Marina Abramović lay on the cross made of ice blocks, and the heat from the infra heater reopened the self-inflicted belly wounds in the form of a five-pointed communist star, thus producing a semiotic body, and bled again, the spectators who were present realised the reality of her bodily condition and by creating a feedback loop some of them by intervention removed her carnal, that is, phenomenal body (and, of course, her semiotic body as well), from the ice blocks. In postdramatic theatre, the appearance of both forms of performing bodies alternate in a sequence of events on the stage. The consequence of this alternation is the spectator’s realisation of an epistemological gap between the phenomenal and semiotic bodies, from which the meaning of performance is painstakingly carved in the spectator’s mind. The faster the alternation of the performing bodies from one to another, and back again, the more quickly the spectators realise that, in postdramatic theatre, they alone are the constructors of the meaning.

Fischer-Lichte’s model of the performing body is important for the interpretation of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*, for by using it, it might be revealed to us that the actor in the play is not really fully absent, but only partially. Yet before we proceed, we should raise the next question: Is it by any chance possible that the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* is in fact “merely” an example of a play more akin to puppet and object theatre?

## About puppet and object theatre in comparison to the theatre without performers

What has been said about *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* by now may sound like just another example of a play delivered to the audience just as in puppet and object theatre. Like the more “traditional” form of theatre, the puppet and object theatre usually has pretty much the same structure; the audience on one side and the performers on the other. However, the distinction stems from the (partial) substitution of the performers’ carnality with various material objects, that is, with puppets. The difference does not originate so much from the unique artistic form, but more from the cognitive investment of the spectators in their interpretation of the process of acting in the puppet and object theatre. Although spectators know that a puppet on the stage is not alive, and that there is a puppeteer who manipulates the puppet, the spectators consider the material body of the puppet as the real performing body, presented to them as the semiotic body. For the spectators, the body of the puppeteer is not the performing body; it is merely a supportive element, a generator of the puppet’s movement, without which the puppet and object theatre cannot exist. Or as a puppeteer Bruce D. Schwartz once said, “I’m asking people to come into my fantasies with me by cutting me out.” (Jenner et al 463) The body of the puppeteer, although nowadays in puppet and object theatre often visible, sometimes through the process of building or destroying a puppet, is thus mentally invisible to the spectators. As such, it could be the “ideal” phenomenal body of the puppet, because in the eyes of the spectators, it cannot be the source of a puppet’s mistakes. However, the body of the puppeteer is separated from the real, phenomenal “body” of the puppet made of different materials, and as such it cannot be its ideal phenomenal body.

In the theatre without performers the situation is the opposite. Not only is the phenomenal body of the performer absent, the stage properties, for instance, a garden dwarf which crosses the stage in one of the scenes, cannot substitute it, as the spectator does not recognise them as puppets. They are not considered puppets because material objects that, when placed inside the context of puppet and object theatre, would be considered puppets are introduced to the spectators in the theatre without performers as stage properties. There is an element of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* that makes those material objects recognisable as stage properties and not as puppets. An explanation about the nature of the play is given to the spectators in advance. Namely, the title of the play and the anonymous and bodiless voice at the beginning of the play both explicitly instruct the spectators that they are about to see a play in which there will be no actors performing. Although the anonymous voice does not say that this is not puppet and object theatre, the audience learns that this will be a play like any other – except that there will be no performers

on the stage. So, despite the existence of elements of puppet and object theatre in the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*, they are successfully cognitively hidden from the spectator's recognition.

In general, the line between puppet and object theatre and performance/acting theatre is sometimes very thin, and can be crossed very quickly. Some artists have shifted over time from being puppeteers to performers, while others just do not find themselves comfortable playing only one role (Jenner et al 463). However, the appearance of the phenomenal and semiotic bodies in both cases are in diametrical opposition: in puppet and object theatre, phenomenal and semiotic bodies of the puppet and puppeteer can be visibly present at the same time on the stage, while the phenomenal and semiotic bodies of a performer in postdramatic theatre, in contrast, alternate. They visibly appear on the stage in sequence as two alternating performing bodies.

## The spectator's phenomenal body and cognitive substitution

The dichotomy of the phenomenal body and the semantic body of the performer is a useful and meaningful research tool for the interpretation of different types of theatre. However, unfortunately neither Erika Fischer-Lichte nor Hans-Thies Lehmann speak about the possibility of absence of alternation of performing bodies and its consequences, or the possible consequences of the absence of any of the performing bodies. Although both take the spectator and her body seriously, and although they are sensitive to the spectator's performing body, both pay to it less attention than would be expected. More significantly, while they both speak about the phenomenal/real and semiotic/aesthetic bodies of the performers, they are much more modest in their analyses when it comes to the performing body of the spectator. However, their dichotomy of performing bodies still has much potential. Thus, the most intriguing questions at this point are as follows: first, what happens when one of the forms of the performer's body, either phenomenal or semiotic, is missing? And the second, how does the performing body of the spectator, her phenomenal or semiotic body react to the absence, or rather, how does it contribute to its diminishment? Namely, what happens when the phenomenal body of the performer is somehow "banished" from the play or performance, but the performer's semiotic body, for some reasons, persists? As we found in the analysis *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*, the most interesting characteristic of the play is the absence of the phenomenal bodies of the performers, while the scenography and stage properties become the material vehicle for the semiotic body.

Because of the situation of the non-presence of the phenomenal body of the performer, the spectators' understanding of the meaning of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre*

*without an Actor* is in jeopardy. Since the alternation between the phenomenal and semiotic bodies of the performer is not possible, the meaning cannot originate from the epistemological “gap” between the appearances of the phenomenal and the semiotic performing bodies. For the semiotic body of the performer cannot appear on the stage alone, it “searches” for, and in *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* “finds”, another material vehicle for its realisation: the scenography and stage properties. In the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*, the spectators are confronted with the only bodily source of meaning; the semiotic body of the performer. At first sight, the situation is similar to the situation in the (traditional) theatre in which the spectators focus on the semiotic bodies of the actors, while their phenomenal bodies are cognitively “concealed” behind the actor’s roles. However, in the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* nothing is “concealed” behind the semiotic bodies of the actors, because there are no phenomenal bodies present on the stage. The spectators, who are cultivated to expect a performer on stage simultaneously with two different performing bodies, phenomenal and semiotic, are suddenly confronted with a serious challenge to painstakingly carve out the meaning of the play in the absence of the actor’s phenomenal body.

Keeping to Fischer-Lichte’s model of the body of the performer in postdramatic theatre, we should consider that the meaning of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* may just as well appear from the epistemological “gap” between the semiotic body of the performer and perhaps some other phenomenal body, although not that of performer, but of someone else. Can the only phenomenal body available during *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*, namely, the phenomenal body of the spectator, who is sitting quietly in the auditorium, be the substitution for the phenomenal body of the performer? I assume that the spectator, like any other person, also has two different bodies, phenomenal and semiotic. In dramatic theatre, the spectator’s phenomenal and semiotic bodies do not have any significance or direct affect on the play; but the picture in the postdramatic theatre situation is, however, different.

In postdramatic theatre, the spectators are frequently part of the performance. Sometimes the spectator’s involvement or intervention is merely superficial, episodic, and even bodiless in terms of the intervention on the stage. However, in postdramatic theatre, the spectators are taken seriously. They are considered, not only to be a passive “element” of the performance on the stage, but to be its active and thus constitutive element. Both spectators’ bodies, phenomenal and semiotic, have significant roles. First, without the phenomenal body, the spectators cannot be even present at the performance, not to mention particularly that they could not establish their important role in the postdramatic theatre, no matter how modest their role would be. So, second, without the semiotic body, the spectators cannot perform their “roles” in the theatre, that is, the role to be active spectators, for they would not be

in the condition to “load” the distinct cultural meaning in order to communicate aesthetically either with the performers or the rest of the spectators.

At this point, a question appears: what causes the emergence of the spectator’s performing body in the (post)-dramatic theatre? While performers subjugate their own bodies to various harsh and even unpleasant teaching processes, which can last for years before they gain sufficient mastery over distinct bodily techniques and the body as well, there is no special school for the spectators. We could say, then, that the ability to be an emancipated spectator who understands that the performance is not merely a result of performer’s engagement, but of the spectator’s, too – of which Jacques Rancière speaks so frequently – depends upon a successful combination of school education, the parents’ “investment” into the cultural capital of their kids, and finally, the individual’s own frequent and intensive engagement in the postdramatic theatre’s culture of spectatorship. Nevertheless, it is important to anticipate that every individual is, according to Erving Goffman, already “trained” as a social actor before she even enters the theatre for the first time. And theatre is, after all, deeply social (and political) in its character.

The spectator’s phenomenal body is a carrier of feelings, emotions, thoughts, knowledge and memories of experiences, acquired and stored in the phenomenal body of the spectator over a lifetime and during a process of personal embodiment (McKinney and Ibal 119–123). Only a part of such memories are related to an individual’s experience of being a spectator in the theatre, for most of them come from everyday life. All those traces of past achievements and experiences of the spectator’s phenomenal body stored in the spectator’s mind, when confronted with the scenography and stage properties of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* as substitutes for the phenomenal body of the performer, enable the spectators to construct the meaning of the play, within the framework of a temporary, theatre thought community. The nature of the relationship between the phenomenal and semiotic body in the play is different from the relationship in the postdramatic theatre, as it is understood and explained by Fischer-Lichte. Because there are no performers’ phenomenal bodies present on the stage, there cannot be any alternation between them and the semiotic bodies. Instead a similar alternation appears between the semiotic body of the performer and the phenomenal body of the spectators in their minds.

The spectators of *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* wait in vain for the appearance of the performing bodies of the actors. Although at first they find this rather amusing, they gradually develop a certain cognitive tension and a desire to solve the problem as they realise that the phenomenal, that is, the real bodies of the actors will certainly not show up on the stage. In his book on postdramatic theatre,

Hans-Thies Lehmann describes the situation in which the human sensorial apparatus, due to a temporal lack of sensorial data, starts to search for solutions through various fantasies, connections, relations or congruity (158). The human mind, when socialised to a distinct cultural, social and political area in theatre, recognises an absence of one of the crucial elements of the play or performance, like for instance, the absence of the actors in the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor*. The absence of the actor represents, through the otherwise abundance of other theatrical elements in the play, the lack of sensorial data of which Lehmann so clearly speaks.

Although a spectator who has not yet been in the theatre without the actor might find such theatre interesting and amusing, the element of surprise abates over a short period of time and the spectator no longer finds it amusing. However, the emancipated spectators do not want to miss any pleasure given by the performance by not taking, however limited, a role in the performance (Ubersfeld), and they are therefore not satisfied with the offer made by the creators of *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* to take merely a passive “role” of quietly sitting in their chairs. After all, it is the spectator who is the true believer, not the performer (Krpíč, “Spectator’s” 175). But, the only playground available to them is now their own mind encapsulated in their own bodies, for their role in the play is to be the “traditional” spectators. All they can do is to get emphatically and cognitively involved in the play. So, being spectators of the play *Feng Shui in the Theatre without an Actor* is to be the subjects of a series of alternations between the performers’ semiotic bodies and the spectators’ own phenomenal bodies. In addition, the semantic bodies of the spectator do not play any significant role at all, for there is no one to communicate with on the stage; no one who would appreciate the spectator’s emancipation. We could say that Simon Shepherd is right when claiming that the audience has (finally) got its own rhythm.

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