

THEATRE THERAPY-METHODS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY A PART OF A COMPLEX PROGRAM FOR RESOCIALIZATION AND DELIMITATION OF THE PLACE BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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Abstract

Theatre therapy involves passing through a complex program of specific activities which involves the stimulation of expressing of the feelings, an aspect that leads to the recognition of the human potential in each person and the development of a culture of dignity and respect. Theatre develops social abilities, abilities that contribute to personal development, thus, "the actor managing to progress in his discover of himself and to become more human, more empathetic closer to social reality.

Keywords: theatre, social abilities, mental health

Introduction

Theatre is that thing which makes us to understand the necessity of change. It has the capacity to get over the reality and transform it. In the past, is conveyed the opinion that the means by which the scenic message is transmitted is more important than the message itself or even that the message is ultimately reduced to the mean.

"Content impresses our consciousness less than the intensity of communication" (Dort, 1968).

Our social life is in a continuous change, the means of communication were multiplied, so the theatre became a place where the people can expose their own existence. The actor becomes the link between the scene and the public, makes the character and then he exposes this character to the public's judgement. The spectator is thus invited to recognize himself in the character, to accept or reject him.

Theatre is therapy. It belongs to the large family which is intitled art-therapy. Art-therapy is anchored in a therapeutic practice for more than half a century and it struggles to delimit its place between mental health services, despite the fact that it produces unquestionable results and has a well-developed methodological apparatus.

Theatre helps to self-understanding and the releasing of the anxiety and tension which were accumulated, to development of the communication abilities and the practice of them, it optimizes the individual communication skills in both children and adults. We can say that the theater contributes to the elaboration of strategies for solving the conflicts.

In a society where the communication tends to go more in the virtual space, where people begin to forget to interact directly, to express their feelings, to forget to like the pleasure of a theater performance, a remedy, a reparative action is absolutely necessary. Theatre therapy belongs to this category and it was defined as "technique of releasing tensions, but also of clarifying the own state of confusion and pain of the one who plays, animating a certain character, in a given situation, in fact, playing one's own experience with its meanings and experiences" (Pașca, 2018).

Theater therapy is a part of occupational therapy. This is "the art and science of directing human participation for the performance of certain tasks, with the aim of restoring, sustaining and enhancing performance, facilitating learning of these skills and functions essential for adaptation and productivity, to diminish or correct pathological and to promote and maintain health" (Preda, 2003).

Social skills are those that are developed and especially the expression of feelings is easier. Social skills are the most important abilities of the human being. This is because man is a "social being", and the lack of mentioned skills leads to a lonely life, contributing to the emergence of anxiety and depression. Social skills lead to a good relationship with other people, to getting a good job and career progress.

The most important social skills are:

- the ability to be relaxed or to maintain an adequate level of anxiety. In situations of maximum nervousness, you cannot manage to be understood and the ability to listen is impaired. Moreover, non-verbal language will clearly convey the true state of mind. This will damage your relationship with others.

- ability to listen;
- the ability to give and receive attention, affection or help;
- ability to build a relationship;
- the ability to know how, when and how much to reveal about your own person;
- ability to maintain proper visual contact;
- ability to express needs, feelings and rights in an acceptable way;
- ability to communicate effectively.

Theatre reveals the true character of a human being, it helps them to discover both towards themselves and their peers. It promotes the free expression, encourages relationship management and the ability to respond to all life challenges. Theatre therapy has a human educational aim and it is a space where the participants can receive guidance for managing their relationships. The result of the effort made by those who participate in this form of therapy is presented to the public, but the most important part is the educational effectiveness of the artistic act performed by "actors".

A fundamental objective for those who are involved in therapy is to reach a full awareness of the potential and their limits, to achieve the performance of expressing themselves better and to communicate effectively. The first progress is represented by the experimentation of each aspect of its own physique, of knowing its own body and its expressive potential. To achieve this goal, participants are involved in activities that aim to raise awareness of their corporeality.

This is how the stage, the light of the spotlight, the audience can form the non-formal space in which people can develop social skills. "The theater is a court, where you must present visible and tangible evidence in order to be believed" (Guyau, 1991). Thus, the worker offers the beneficiary the opportunity through combined arts to interpret his own role thus stepping into the therapy through the theater.

"The worker through combined arts offers stimulation/development services through movement, art, music, play, theater, promoting and respecting the rights of the beneficiary, giving him value as an individual human being and helping him to gain self-confidence. The worker through combined arts, performs, monitors and evaluates activities of stimulation, socialization, communication and relationship in order to achieve personal and social autonomy" (**). When it comes to the combined arts, we should mention that theater is part of the large family of art therapy that groups painting, music, choreography into a single whole. The art therapy mastered by the worker through the combined arts is "a form of expressive psychotherapy that uses artistic creation to enhance the emotional state" of the beneficiary (Grigore, 2018).

The development activities through the theater are:

- *forum theatre*;
- *puppet theatre*;
- *theatre of shadows*;
- *theater with masks*.

Theater Forum has appeared in Peru in 1973 as an ensemble of theatrical forms and techniques that the Brazilian director Augusto Boal called the Theater of the Oppressed. It is a tool for social intervention, it is a form of interactive theater and it focuses on the idea that change can start primarily from ourselves.

In Romania Theater Forum is in the years 2004-2005, and the first ones that applied this method of non-formal education were Concept Foundation, Chance for Life Association and A.R.T. Fusion. Those involved, regardless of what social environment they belong to, whether they come from the rural or urban environment, whether they are free or incarcerated citizens, or have the status of victim or aggressor, come to be confronted with their own problems and manage to identify solutions for those ones.

Theater Forum "uses or can use all the resources of all the known theatrical forms, adding to them an essential feature: the spectators - whom we call spectators - are invited to enter the stage and, acting theatrically, and not just using the word, to reveal their thoughts, desires and strategies that may suggest to the group to

which they belong a range of possible alternatives, invented by themselves; the theater must be a rehearsal for the action in real life, and not a purpose in itself " (Boal, 2017).

Therefore it is a participatory method that aims to find ways in which the audience can develop their empathy towards certain disadvantaged categories, to exercise their understanding and tolerance towards their peers. It transcends reality, cuts off a portion of the reality that people live some communities are socially disadvantaged and present it to the public, so that it is sensitized. It convinces people, convinces the audience to move beyond this role and to enter the spectator-actor and to step on stage and change things so that reality becomes another. Therapy consists on the fact that man understands that he can produce change, he can be a small creator of another dimension, he understands that change can come from each of us.

Puppet theater is a means of communication between children and adults, when direct verbal expression is more difficult. It has the capacity to increase the power of the imagination and is a means of communication where anything is possible and which stimulates the creativity and imagination of those involved.

The art of handling dolls and puppets is an art that we have practiced, without wanting, since we were children. We made our own little shows, we used any objects around to create our own universe. Regardless of the material possibilities, the stories which were created, had a huge force, and during those hours of play, they became reality, capturing us completely, enjoying us deeply.

The doll handler must identify with the respective object, to be transposed into his problem. It can only come to life if it is given to it, therefore the handler must cancel himself as corporeality and transfer his thoughts and reactions to the object.

It creates a story, a stature, a look, a whole system of thoughts and desires, a voice, a past, a present, whatever it takes to be a seemingly self-contained being.

To do this it is necessary for the actor to live with the object, to work in tandem with it, to try to eliminate as much as possible the differences between it and that object, the identification must be complete. This is necessary because the reactions have to be authentic and alive, and the character have to be able to transmit that extraordinary energy that only living beings have.

The differences between the play of a doll handler actor and that of a dramatic theater one are great. The intentions and the interpretation are the same, except that from a technical point of view, all the reactions and emotions are not the natural ones, the ordinary ones to a man, but they are transmitted to the doll.

The animation theater is a playful theater par excellence. The dolls can live in any kind of world, where the rules are completely different from the ones of the reality. The freedom to create is huge. The doll can be magnified, it can fly, swim, travel around the world, it can decompose, etc. In other words, it can go through all sorts of ways. Characters can be abstract shapes or even concepts, such as loneliness, wind, love, etc. Or ordinary, everyday objects, garbage, forks, birds, eyes, etc. Therefore, the puppet theater is a theater that allows anything. It lets the creator go as far as his imagination allows.

The game, in general, has therapeutic qualities. It relaxes, it takes the mind out of trouble, it even opens it and releases it. To transpose into someone else's skin means to give up on you, that is to give up all your person's worries, problems and thoughts and to embrace the new, to completely understand another perspective completely separate from yours. When you do that, it's like taking a vacation, detaching yourself.

The puppet theater has excellent therapeutic quality because the doll acts as a mask behind which the actor can hide, providing a comfort zone.

Another asset is the huge imaginative world that it opens, unleashing creativity, relaxing the mind and letting it fly.

It is even done psychotherapy through the puppet theater. It is a side of the therapeutic branch that is called drama therapy. In this type of therapy, theatrical, dramatic techniques are used to alleviate the symptoms of various disorders, for psychically emotional integration, in other words for personal development. It uses methods such as puppet theater, role interpretation, improvisation, storytelling, masks and, in general, play. This type of therapy has the effect of solving different problems, such as autism, dementia, sexual abuse, self-harm, depression, etc. It can be done individually, as a group, as a couple and in the family. It is widely used in the

treatment of children.

Shadow theatre is a form of animation theater, a non-formal method where the message is transmitted with great responsibility and where communication plays a complex role. It is also known as the "Chinese shadow theater" and is a first animation process. India would be the first place where it has appeared, and was later taken over by the Chinese and developed from a technical point of view.

Initially it appeared from the desire to make the Buddhist gods appear in temples, in less illuminated places, to impress those who crossed their threshold. The process consists on the interlayer of a puppet between a light source and a semi-transparent silk screen. The puppet represents a man, a god, an animal, objects, etc. It is handled by an animator by means of axes. The initial light source was the fire, but with the evolution of technology in modern society, light and its various sources of propagation appear, and the puppets have acquired as varied shapes as size and color.

The shadow theatre was brought to Europe quite late in the eighteenth century. He quickly entered the theater and was easily assimilated by both spectators and artists alike. He also created the way to make cartoons.

The shadow theatre is used not only for artistic purposes, but also for educational and therapeutic purposes. It is used as a game technique in stimulating people with emotional and relationship problems, with groups with special needs. Its purpose is to improve communication between beneficiaries and others.

Theatre with masks is usually used within Romanian customs and traditions. The masks are made of different materials and express certain characteristics, feelings, human qualities. "A mask is an object normally worn on the face, typically used for protection, disguise, performance, or entertainment. The masks have been used since ancient times for ceremonial but also practical purposes. They are usually worn on the face, although they can also be positioned for a particular effect on other parts of the wearer's body"(***)

According to the ones which were said above, the first use of the mask was to protect the face from the cold. In the case of the Pharaohs, there were mortuary masks, which had the role of preserving the image of the deceased person and keeping it intact for the remembrance of posterity. Another role would be the warrior mask for those who went to battle and had to intimidate their opponent. The examples can continue, however, returning to the role of the mask in the therapeutic theater, it is used in the puppet theater, being a way of expression in the realization of some characters existing in the story. The puppets now use modern techniques of mask making, the most common being paper machete, giving up the popular ways of making them. Mask is a process of expression commonly found in all doll handlers. The mask can also be found in classical theater, being used in theater since ancient times.

The mask has become ubiquitous in people's lives and has a special role in achieving the theatrical effect, it "marks a transformation of the actor-individual, who, by wearing the mask, becomes a force vehicle. In all the theatrical forms that adopt the mask (tragedy and ancient comedy, commedia dell' arte, the Japanese no), it marks the disappearance of the individual man behind a role or, rather, a figure" (Ubersfeld, 1999).

In the theatrical events we have 3 types of masks: total mask (covering the whole face), semi-mask (harlequin) and makeup masks. Another classification of masks is made according to the way they are used. They have different functions: social, religious, funeral, therapeutic, festive and theatrical.

The mask creates characters, outlines the character that wears it. Masks communicate through their symbolism, but the man behind them is the one who born to the characters. The mask is an object with character value, and the character is born with the help of the actor.

It is said that the mask was worn by the actor because of the need to mask the emotions and vulnerabilities. Spending time in the mirror to familiarize yourself with the mask ensures the actor a good identification with his character.

Other forms of therapeutic theatre

a. Theatre as rehabilitation is used in the institutions of deprivation of liberty (centers for minors, penitentiaries) and is a means of relieving the negative tensions of the delinquents). It is a form of dialogue

between offenders and the supervisory staff, which leads to the identification of new solutions for integration into society.

b. Theater of life - talking therapy - is a way that can be transmitted through words, through talking, anything. There are free meetings and discussions. Hospitals are chosen as the venue, and those affected are the chronic patients. The age of the patient is irrelevant, the emphasis is on communication and interpersonal relationships, it does not have a pre-stability scenario. The most important aspect is that it brings hope and joy to the patients' wards (Pascha&Banga, 2016).

The theater placed at the service of psychotherapy

"The theater was put at the service of psychotherapy and the processing of human relationships in the form of a method called psychodrama" (Sadock, 1985). As psychodrama is the expression of JL Moreno's work, from the etymological perspective, it is "the method that, by definition, gives authenticity to the soul" (Moreno, 1965), and from a therapeutic perspective, it consists on "developing a system of methods that allows the doctor and the auxiliary egos to enter the patient's universe, in the attempt to populate it with internalized images, which have the advantage of not being totally illusory and not belonging totally to reality" (Ibidem).

Also called "therapeutic theater" or "sociodrama", psychodrama is considered to be defined as "a method of group psychotherapy, which through psychodramatic play explores interpersonal relationships, conflicts and emotional problems, for therapeutic purposes" (Ionescu, 1995).

Conclusions

The beneficiaries of the theatre therapy acquire the skills of independent living, they learn the art of conversation, they are masters and safer themselves. Getting on stage and being applauded by the public is an act of great courage. Increases self-esteem. Imitating some actions, they get to learn them (eg the classical exercises in the theater, which teaches you to cross the stage with a glass of water, without spilling it). It is a huge achievement when such an exercise succeeds a person who has physical difficulties. Or when an emotional person can speak on stage.

The big test is not the rehearsals with the group, but the appearance in front of a room full of people, in front of who you have to talk, to express yourself, in the context in which you have a great fear of this thing. The "actors" are required not only physically, but also psychically and emotionally.

Being able to convince someone who hates physical contact to embrace and embrace is a great accomplishment. It is insisted on self-validation and increasing self-esteem. Man learns to be happy in the therapeutic theater.

Psychodrama can be used as an adjunct to other psychotherapy methods or as part of a complex resocialization program. The applications of psychodrama envisage some training programs in the field of human relations, in which people learn effective methods of functioning in real life situations. It allows the knowledge and learning of a wide range of behavioral skills necessary for harmonious integration in different social groups.

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