

ABSTRACT

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This research paper addresses the theme of the configuration of the theatrical character's face and emphasizes the fact that the theatrical mask formed by the stage makeup represents a dramatic instrument – as an aesthetic and symbolic form in artistic creation. Stage makeup – a field that is assimilated to the theatrical arts – is perceived as a practical one. The paper represents a theoretically justified study through which the stage makeup used in the creation of theatrical masks becomes an art with two specific axes: practical and creative.

The configuration of a theatrical character's face through makeup imposes two forms of influences that serve to achieve the final goal: external influence (imposed artistic, historical or technical data, which is transformational) and internal influence (emotional state and character construction).

Approaching this topic from a theoretical perspective has required the study of historical data, fundamental concepts of theatrology, aesthetics and symbolism of theatrical non-verbal communication, and the practical application has – as an underlying part – a rich personal experience as a make-up artist for important theatrical productions. The starting point of this study is the actor's facial expressions, which represent one of the most important means of theatrical communication and which, through good knowledge of structural physiognomy, can benefit from significant dramatic transformations imposed by stage artists, set designers or directors. Thus, through a technical execution of the makeup corresponding to the intended purpose, a visual artistic component or support could be obtained in outlining the face of the theatrical character. The expression of the actor's face becomes the expression of the face of the theatrical character by transforming or identifying with the physiognomy of the actor-performer.

In many cases, the physical and emotional overlap can be perfect, and the resulting image can offer a real, living character that could constitute a clear, defined typology.

The personal motivation for choosing this topic was driven by the most frequent situation in a repertory theater – where a permanent troupe of actors can play multiple roles, in short periods of time, and in performances staged by directors with different styles. In these cases, the theatrical mask has great importance in diversifying the faces of theatrical characters. Also, a valid reason for this kind of reflection has been my long professional experience as a theater makeup artist. This experience is based on continuous research and imaginative work with the aim of creating as many faces as possible for actors-performers in important shows, staged by numerous world theater personalities over a period of approximately 40 years, as well as the creation of a course support to facilitate the learning of basic elements in creating and designing a character's face for students enrolled in Performing Arts programs.

The symbolism of material masks that have appeared since Antiquity is extremely rich and important in artistic representations throughout time. Their use in contemporary theater performances is less comfortable due to the problems created by a certain difficulty that is induced by the simple fact of wearing them or by the restriction of stage movements. The theatricality of masks, represented by the expressions or symbolism rendered by the pictorial lines, is a necessity in the creative process of the theatrical artistic act. The use of material masks is necessary in the creation of strongly dramatic images in order to create identities with strong artistic impact. Through the natural evolution of theatrical performance, the visual component of stage actions has found its essential importance in constituting images worthy of the modernity and postmodernity of our times. In the current situation, we can discuss an equivalence of the material theatrical mask with a theatrical mask made of high-quality professional cosmetics, with techniques based on those specific to stage makeup, with the maintenance and enhancement of artistic and historical symbolism. In order to solve the different typologies and characters necessary to configure the faces of theatrical characters in accordance with the requested or imposed references, stage makeup must be done in accordance with execution techniques based on professional products, still little known among makeup artists and set designers in Romanian theaters.

The research bases were numerous and from different artistic and practical fields, the research starting from the knowledge of the working basis, which is the human face, to the finalization of the requirements imposed by the references. Knowing the physiognomy of an actor by identifying existing asymmetries is an important step and a necessary study in order to create the face of the future character.

The research data has been extremely large and it has followed different artistic and practical fields, the research starting from the knowledge of the working basis, which is the human face, to the ending of the requirements imposed by the references. Knowing the physiognomy of an actor by identifying existing asymmetries is an important step and a necessary study in order to create the face of the future character. Also, the study of historical references or typologies, as well as that of human characters, represented important points in our research; but the most important basis was the study of some directorial styles that have imposed the emergence of the *Art of Makeup* (C. Stanislavski), the use of material masks as a means of expressing the character's face (Ion Sava), the combined use of makeup and material masks to enhance the visual symbolism of the performances (G. Strehler, Vlad Mugur, D. Esrig), increasing the theatrical aesthetic impact of the characters by creating a perfect puppet (Craig, Robert Wilson) or the use of makeup with the aim of increasing the artistic dramatism rendered by strong images (Silviu Purcărete).

The method used in the research process for collecting and analyzing data was qualitative, based on direct observation and interview – both of which brought us pertinent information to support the proposed research objectives. We believe that the particular approach taken during the research had a strong foundation constituted by the superior artistic quality of the analyzed performances, the interviews conducted, the materials represented by drawings, working sketches, photo collections, but also by the constructive critical spirit of the doctoral supervisor, that has been imposed in order to achieve a selective achievement. Analyzing the importance of configuring the face of the theatrical character from the point of view of the actor-performer, we have asked ourselves the important question: ‘Why do we need makeup or a mask?’ The answer can be found in practical demonstrations

and in interviews with actors or directors. The one who creates the mask or makeup of a character is able to support its necessity and importance. But often, the difficulty of creating a mask in real time, before the show, or wearing it could be problematic: the solution to this kind of problem relies precisely in deciphering the symbolism or its importance in the theatrical performance. The personal belief or the explanation of the mask's creator must help justify the importance of the existence of symbols and the creation of an optical illusion that helps define a theatrical character, most often representing a relevant image in the proper understanding of the stage actions.

To the question 'Why do we need to know so much data in order to create theatrical makeup?' the answers are multiple and the explanations rely in the content analysis of the research paper. We believe that the creation and assimilation of a character's face must be studied from many points of view, because obtaining a face that does not comply with the requests or with the data related to the character can direct the actor to an area different from the proposed one – which can break the mirage created around the character.

Reflecting about the multiple ways of creating stage makeup and their influence on the actor, we believe that creating a mask using stage makeup, in accordance with the character's costume can be completed only if certain internal or external factors that can influence or direct the character according to the director's references and instructions are taken into account. The act of reading specialized reference sources, as well as our practical experience, have led us to highlight the most important factors influencing theatrical makeup: the structure of the face and facial expressions; the evolution of masks and theatrical makeup; the history of costumes and theatrical makeup; the study and presentation of scenographies with a significant contribution to the creation of stage makeup; the influence of the stage and scenographic space; the study and exemplification of the influence of the director's style on theatrical makeup; the use of professional products in creating stage makeup.

We have focused our attention on the selection process of all the areas that can influence the creation of theatrical masks by making classifications of the typologies of characters created with the help of makeup in the theatrical performance. The interviews conducted with important actors have demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt the beneficial influence of makeup on the theatrical character.

Given the fact that the study has required multiple references to images, it was necessary to present the work in a visual way and attach Annexes with relevant photographs, graphs, sketches and essential creative drawings.

The corpus integrated in our analysis has required a selection of performances from which has emerged the influence of the directorial style and the observations made on the theme of creation and the importance of theatrical masks in Silviu Purcărete's performances (*Ubu Rex* with scenes from *Macbeth* by Alfred Jarry (1991); *Titus Andronicus* by W. Shakespeare (1992); *Phaedra* by Aeschylus and Sophocles (1993); *Danaïdes* by Aeschylus (1993); *Measure for Measure* by W. Shakespeare (1993); *Faust* by J. W. Goethe (2007) and *The Tale of the Wicked Princess* by Tsuruya Naboku IV (2018). The references made about stage makeup in performances create a strong basis of artistic inspiration for young directors, set designers or actors, fulfilling special, undeniable artistic values, offering an important role in understanding a theatrical character and the perception of symbolism created by the Purcăretian theatrical mask.

The chosen theoretical framework has proved of great help in order to clarify some definitions and terms specific to the activity of artistic creation. The mask represents a notion studied in the field of dramaturgy, theater and reiterates a philosophical, literary or human essentiality. The study includes experiments, data, and analysis about the evolution, equivalence or realization of a contemporary theatrical mask.

The scientific research methodology in the field of Performing Arts was based on a study support that has a rich tradition in the technique of applying scientific methods in the practice of performance. The analysis methods that have been used led to the achievement of the research objectives through semiotic, communicational and aesthetic approaches regarding theatrical makeup.

The main idea underlying this study regarded a desire to achieve an equivalence between artistic makeup and material masks – from a symbolic and physical point of view. The starting point was represented by the goals achieved by both of them and their role of internal and physical protection of the face, the similarity of the pictorial drawing made and the symbolic value of the created image. The making of the particular project and the selected bibliography required numerous theoretical readings that started from the desire to demonstrate the necessity and importance of the realization of theatrical makeup, as well as the influence on the theater actor. K. Stanislavski's books – *My Life in Art* (1951) and *The Actor's Work on Himself* (2013) – have been the starting point of this research, because the need to demonstrate the influence and importance of pictorial makeup has been advocated by the great teacher, director and actor himself. Two reference treatises in the history of universal theater and in the history of universal theatrical anthropology written by Eugenio Barba and Nicolas Savarese – *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (2012) and *The Five Continents of the Theater: Facts and Legends about the Material Culture of the Actor* (2018) – have brought important data in the history of masks or makeup from different cultures and many data regarding the theatrical meanings or symbols of masks. The study of numerous essays, monographs on numerous directors or set designers who have influenced the evolution and symbolism of makeup in theater, as well as the study of specialized books on stage makeup have contributed to the creation of a brief history of makeup and hairstyles.

The paper is structured in three chapters preceded by the Introduction and followed by General Conclusions, Bibliography and Annexes.

Chapter 1, *The Human Face – Object of Study*, includes a complex study of the human head, a basis for study in many fields such as medicine, facial morphology, communication, sculpture, painting, iconography, but also theater – through the creation of theatrical masks or the field of beautification. The history of makeup or hairstyle models from different historical periods represents a database that can form historical references for stage makeup.

Chapter II, *Influences in the Metamorphosis Process*, includes a classification of the factors of influence on the conception and realization of character faces with the help of stage makeup. Considering that apart from the actor's physiognomy, the influence of the director's style is the most significant; studying some important directors who had a substantial, almost essential contribution in the evolution and use of makeup in performances has influenced our own style and way of working. This chapter also includes other technical factors of influence in the process of creation or execution of theatrical masks, which are often neglected, leading to an undesirable result from the director's point of view, one that does not coincide with his/her initial vision.

Chapter III, *Purcărete's Masks*, includes a study of several important performances from the fabulous artistic work of the prestigious Romanian director Silviu Purcărete, based on a dramatic element used in a variety of ways, namely, the theatrical makeup mask. The experience accumulated

during a long collaboration with the great director has given us the chance to collect an important database for carrying out a research paper on the configuration of the face of the theatrical character. Being familiar with many of the opinions of actors and performers about the creation of the face for the theatrical character and its influence on them in Purcărete's performances, I have tried to record some of the personal experiences of the actors who have been working alongside the great director. An important document of the work is a summary of the interview conducted with the brilliant director Silviu Purcărete, who reveals to us the 'little' secrets of the creative work regarding the paradoxical theatrical mask and the importance of presence in his performances.