



SECRECY AND CONFESSION OF SILENCE IN PERFORMANCE

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***Abstract:** The creators of art play with the polarity of shown and hidden to attract the receptor of art in the alchemy of their opera. Crossing the borders of the words to the "unknown", to the silence of the non-verbal performances, the public becomes connected with a spring of energy and significance that reveals a hermeneutics of silence in which we could find ontological insights. Starting from the scene "The Hands" from Isabella Drăghici's performance "Silence" ("Printre tăceri"), we explore a number of specific spiritual and theatrical aspects of silence on stage from contemporary or old theories, practices and perspectives, such as: consciousness studies, Rasa Theory, Lecoq's vision, David Le Breton anthropology of silence, Jung's theory of unconscious, and the non-verbal theatre language of Dan Puric. The theatrical expression of silence on stage (body movement, dance, gesture, mime, visual effects) is investigated in a bipolar context: secrecy and confession.*

***Key words:** silence, performance, pantomime, Printre tăceri (Silence), șanta rasa.*

Performance and Silence

Out of darkness, lights come up on two hands, still at first, then moving independent of each other, slow, undulating movements. The indicator finger of the hand on the left ever so gently touches the knuckle of the indicator finger of the still hand on the right. The touched hand remains still for a second, then moves and in turn touches the left hand with thumb and indicator finger. An intricate exchange of movements between the hands ensues, culminating in the hands as if flying off together. Then the hand that initiated contact fetches a piece of string, winds it around the other hand, and the hands struggle, the one on the left in control, and the one on the right increasingly aware of, and uncomfortable with being bound, and increasingly desperate to get free. Towards the end of the scene that lasts



two minutes and twenty-three seconds, the bound hand is motionless, presumably “dead”, and the attempts of the hand on the left to revive it fail. The hand on the left lifts the motionless hand up and out of sight (out of the light) - with that movement the scene ends.

This is a brief description of one episode, entitled *The Hands*, of Isabella Drăghici’s 2015 performance *Printre tăceri* (*Silence*). In this article, Isabella Drăghici and I take this performance as the starting point to explore the value of silence in performance, from the perspectives of reception (Part 1) and creative production (Part 2). We all tend to live in terms of stories. Many of those watching the performance of *The Hands* live or on video will see those two hands telling us a story. No verbal language was involved, nobody said a word, but we are so keen on stories that we see stories, hear stories, and perceive stories through all of our senses.

We will analyze the value of silence in theatre and performance through its capacity of unveiling and revealing knowledge. We use the case-study of the scene *The Hands* from within the play *Printre tăceri* (*Silence*). Our theory comes from consciousness studies, defined as “the study of how we think, feel and act, why we think, feel and act as we do, and what it feels like to think, feel and act as we do” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2013a: 11). From the wide range of approaches to consciousness studies, from cognitive psychology to physics, we have selected the one that focuses on spirituality. That term needs definition.

Part One

The Spectator’s Perspective Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe

I saw a video recording of *The Hands* first in summer 2015. In this section of our article, I discuss my experience of that scene. I do not claim that other people will have had the same experience, because I am not engaging in audience research as my methodological approach. Instead, I situate my approach within the context of the development of first-person approaches within consciousness studies. I recently described this approach as follows:

“The conventional paradigm of science, with its predominantly positivist and materialistic contexts, seeks to exclude the subjective by definition. As a result, the methods and concepts of science have been unable to capture the subjective, and have therefore ruled it out in favor of objectivity. Nonetheless, in recent years, science has begun to incorporate subjectivity in the form of first person approaches, especially in the context of consciousness studies (Varela and Shear 1999). A number of new research methods have evolved to emphasize the value of alternative, participatory modes of knowing, *e.g.*, Intuitive Inquiry, Organic Research, and Heuristic Inquiry



(Anderson 1998, Clements 2004, Moustakas 1990). Tart advocated the development of *state-specific* sciences, suggesting that non-ordinary states of consciousness are likely to yield new insights not accessible by conventional methods (1972). This development owes much to the emphasis on subjectivity in non-Western traditions, and on the basis of research into that dimension, the recognition that subjectivity has existed in the Western context as well, making the alleged and assumed West/non-West binary opposite obsolete.” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2017: 199-200).

I thus justify the use of my own experience in the context of these developments in science. I contextualize my experience a range of frameworks that have been central to my academic writing over the last two decades: the role of the arts in general, and performance in particular, to enhance well-being (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 1996, 2005), philosophical concepts that takes its origin in India (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2013a), and the philosopher German geo-biologist Hans Binder¹ (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2013b, 2016, 2017).

From the earliest history, the arts have been associated with a beneficial impact on those exposed to it as makers or receivers. In the West, Aristotle in his *Poetics* wrote about the cathartic impact of theatre, while in the East, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the ancient Indian text about drama and theatre, which also includes music and dance, relates how dance/drama were created by Brahma, the creator, in response to the request of the Gods for him to create an art form accessible to all human beings and with the explicit purpose of restoring the golden age to humankind (Ghosh, 1950). The use of the arts in therapy (drama therapy, dance therapy and so on) confirms the validity of such early claims of the beneficial impact of the arts on humans in terms of increased well-being, as does research into that impact.

This role of the arts in improving our lives has been contextualized further in the fields of religion, philosophy and consciousness studies. The high currency of contextualizing the arts in these fields is reflected in academia in the emergence and continuing success of the ‘Theatre, Performance and Philosophy’ working group within the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA), the working groups ‘Performance and Consciousness’ and ‘Religion and Performance’ within the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR), the ‘Performance Philosophy’ working group within Performance Studies International (PSI), the network ‘Performance Philosophy’, and the recently founded journal *Dance, Movement and Spiritualities*, as well as, in the context of consciousness studies, *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts* (refereed online journal,

¹ Hans Binder had a successful career in reinforced concrete construction and horticulture before turing full time to geo-biology. The range of his services and activities now includes detection and elimination of interference from underground watercourses and similar disruption, and subtle-energy profiles for individuals, partnerships business. As he does not speak any English, all his philosophical writing, underpinning his practice, exists only in German and it is published to his clients but not in the public domain.



book series with Intellect and Brill | Rodopi, and biannual conferences since 2005). For most of these contexts, spirituality, explicitly or implicitly, is central, and in many, the term and concept of *spirituality* has been understood in a trans-religious way. It is this understanding that forms the basis of our article, with the implication that “spirituality culminates in the full development of mind”, and “any move in the direction of this fullness can be called spirituality” (Malekin and Yarrow, 1997: 90).

What I saw in Drăghici’s *The Hands* was the non-verbal rendering of a love story. According to Hans Binder, whose philosophy I used as the basis of my 2013 book *Observing Theatre*, we can differentiate distinct kinds of love: interpersonal love, love in a partnership, and universal love of the heart. The love reflected in *The Hands* is love in a partnership. Here, loving someone else means seeking to own him or her. He or she must not love anyone else, and if they do (seem to) love someone else, we are hurt—because we believe we are not good enough, that others are better than we are. What is hurt is our ego, representing our demand for possession. In contrast to such common, but superficial, love, universal, *universal love of the heart* has developed beyond the ego; it is true freedom, allowing the other, the beloved person, to be free to do what they like without feeling hurt, because from that level of love we do not interfere with the beloved person’s private sphere. This development of love can be understood in parallel to the development of the appreciation of beauty proposed (experienced and then told) by Plato: from the appreciation of an individual’s beauty all the way to perceiving and appreciating the very form / idea of beauty. Universal love of the heart extends to all aspects that make us who we are, inward and outward, and once we have developed it to a level of stability (as opposed to glimpses or bursts of shorter duration), we perceive ourselves and others against this permanent and direct experience. We can accept ourselves and others without prejudice and intellectual judgment, which includes the ability to forgive. The experience of universal love of the heart goes hand in hand with the experience of being balanced, of resting within our centre or inner core, and of observing the environment as if we were watching a film—sufficiently involved, but yet securely distanced. Together with, and in some way at the basis of all activity, the experience of universal love of the heart is one, according to Binder, of absolute silence, which is not a lack of consciousness, but pure consciousness (conceptualized as pure unitary consciousness in Christian mysticism, or Nirvana in Buddhism, or Samadhi in the Vedic tradition of India).

I have argued elsewhere in detail that performance can lead the performer and the spectator to this level of consciousness (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2005). Silence is one of the characteristics of that level of consciousness. For me, Drăghici’s *The Hands* is a performance that had that effect on me. Such performances have the power of facilitating the development of another characteristic of that level of consciousness besides silence: universal love of the heart to develop. Performance in general has the potential of allowing the spectator’s mind to reach a level at which silence and universal love of the heart represent part of the norm. It is an experience that is open and beneficial for everyone. Performance is one, very enjoyable, tool to facilitate and achieve this experience. That



level of silence can be considered as a secret in so far as it has been known predominantly, so far, to only a few people in specific knowledge traditions. Performance lifts that experience of silence out of its position of secrecy, limited to a few people within specific knowledge traditions, and makes it more widely available.

For performance to serve as such a tool, the performer may have reached the goal, the permanent experience of universal love of the heart, already, or should at least be on the path to that goal him/herself. In performance that is aimed at serving the purpose of sharing the experience of universal love of the heart, the performer will open up to allow the audience an insight into their innermost core. For the performer on the path to the permanent experience of universal love of the heart, such confession brings with it a certain level of vulnerability for the performer. That vulnerability represents a challenge for the performer not to relapse into experience governed by the ego, but at the same time, if the performer handles it well, can become a vehicle for the spectator into the performer's core, the absolute silence of the experience of universal love of the heart. The performer who can perceive not on the path towards, but from within that silence of universal love of the heart, leads his/her audience to share that experience more immediately and directly—because vulnerability is no longer an aspect of their experience, it will not become one of the experiences of the audience.

Performance as a form of art has the potential of leading the spectator's experience to the absolute silence of universal love of the heart, and performance without words can perhaps achieve this even better than performance with words, because words can hold attention to the intellectual level, which is important for human life, but is by far not the same as the level of pure consciousness, the level of absolute silence, the level of universal love of the heart.

It is this level of consciousness that is silent. It is secret, in so far that nobody can fathom the consciousness of another person on this level of silence. At that level of consciousness, the level of pure silence, of pure secret, confession is complete: there is nothing to hide, we have come to accept all of what we are, and have transformed all wounds and reintegrated all lost and found parts of the soul.

Performance of silence is central to the oldest theatre form of India, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*; it is central to the work of Peter Brook, and of Robert Wilson. It is central to the *Passe-Partout Dan Puric* Company from Romania, to mention only a few examples. Silence in theatre is not new. Its experience is not new. What is new is my interpretation of it in terms of consciousness studies. That interpretation, or explanation, of how silence "works", does not take away from its impact. On the contrary, while much success of silence in performance so far relied on a "trial and error, hit and miss" approach, now silence can be employed more systematically with a higher success rate. On that basis, we can study its impact further, and broaden the scope of such impact.



Part II

The Artist's Perspective Isabella Drăghici

The Hands is a scene of the performance *Printre tăceri (Silence)*¹ which tells us a story using the language of silence. I created this performance at the end of 2014, and I have played it a few times until now on different stages in Romania (Bucharest) and Italy (the festival *TeatROmania_Emmersioni Sceniche*, 2015, Accademia di Romania, Rome). It is a one-woman show, in which I play the role of a woman returned from death to re-live relevant sequences of her life and to meditate over them. In the online announcement for the Bucharest performance of *Printre tăceri*, I explained that

“[...] the performance speaks about the challenges of life and love, about the human being's efforts to understand his/her destiny and fulfill it. The story of this woman could be the story of everyone. It operates in the concrete register of the evolution through the life cycle, and in the symbolic register, showing mutations which have a reflexive nature: only face to face with his/her self and with his/her destiny, a human being can understand the ephemeral nature of his/her human condition.” (Isabella Drăghici, 13 June 2015, <http://www.teatrularca.ro/event/printre-taceri/>).

As I said before, *Printre tăceri (Silence)* is a theatre performance without words, but full of signification. Its structure presents eleven emblematical scenes, with the first and the last one mirroring each other – death-life and life-death. The key-language, silence, has a suggestive theatricality, combining non-verbal language, pantomime, dance, stage movement, and gesture. I remember the reaction of an old Italian couple who came after the show to congratulate me and who told me they understood everything, even if they did not hear words on stage. They said this performance is about us, about our life, the life of everybody. They seemed enchanted. Also another person told me that after this performance you can draw a line below your life and you can ask yourself: “What have I done with my existence? Who am I?” This was my idea; indeed, this is the theatre in which I believe: we need to see and to create plays or performances which should wake

¹ *Printre tăceri* is a title in the Romanian language which cannot be translated exactly into English. I adopted the translation *Silence* for *Printre tăceri*, but the Romanian title involves a multitude of significances which are lost in English. We have the plural of the noun *silence (tăceri)* and the dynamic preposition *through (printre)*. The suggestion is that we pass, in our life, through essential moments (represented by silence) which speak about the necessity of our spiritual awakening. It is a metaphor of our inner journey through the events of our life. The performance is inspired by my first book of poems, with the same title (Isabella Drăghici. 2014. *Printre tăceri*, București, Ed. Tracus Arte).



up ourselves, eliminate our social masks, and reveal deeper layers of our inner core, leading us to spiritual knowledge. As a professional actress interested in reflecting fundamental philosophical issues on the stage, I have created this performance as an experimental field, using my experience and training with the Romanian actor and stage director Dan Puric¹ in his theatre company *Passe-Partout*. The theatre plays or performances of Dan Puric, appreciated world-wide, have a composite and innovative nature. Let us remember only a few of them: *Vis (Dream)*, *Toujours l'amour*, *Hic sunt leones*, *Don Quijote*, *Royal Fashion* etc., many with European and international tours. At rehearsals, he speaks about a quantum transmission of this theatre language, which emerges from the heart and mind and goes directly to the heart and mind. Reconstructing pantomime techniques in which he is a master and creating the perfect illusion of things, Dan Puric asserts a spiritual development through theatre. Sure, I will not analyze his vision here, this is not the aim of this article, but I cannot ignore the relevant contribution of Dan Puric School of theatre, as he likes to refer to his theatre company, to the development of my acting skills in the non-verbal theatre language, and to my academic research.

The moment I presented in the scene *The Hands* is a story about human love which covers all its phases: falling in love, happiness of love, the climax, the attachment and the egoism destroying the relationship, and the death of love. It is a pattern in which the partners do not understand the aim and the value of a couple. Inspired by an outstanding scene from *Vis* by Dan Puric, my story with the hands communicates the condensed experience of love. Starting from this story, in this article we explore some relevant theatrical contribution of silence's secrecy and confession in performance.

As we know, the art of theatre is a vehicle to communicate knowledge. The arts use stories in their own ways for different purposes. Independent of whether it is with or without words, theatre needs stories. Sometimes, when the word becomes excessive, silence and body language can be more expressive and efficient to share a message. The narrative under the auspices of silence in performance could be placed in a bipolar context: secrecy and confession. *Secrecy* can be seen in connection with what is untold, with the symbolic dimension of the story, with *the poetics of "to feel"*; *the confession* means exteriority, visibility, action or intention of action, *the language of "to give" or "to offer"*. This game between the contemplative states (secrecy) and the dynamics of the confession reveals the capacity of silence on stage to recreate a natural cycle of life.

We all live in the era of communication. David Le Breton, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Strasbourg, states in his book, *Despre tăcere (About Silence)*² how the silence is stigmatized today because its capacity of internalizing:

¹ Dan Puric is a famous personality of the Romanian theatre, an actor at The National Theatre in Bucharest. He created a "meta-language" of theatre using refined pantomime, dance and visual theatre to transmit relevant ideas, in a mixture of comical and sensitive scenes. He received many artistic and cultural awards for his special contribution in theatre.

² I used the Romanian translation of *Du Silence*, entitled *Despre tăcere*.



“The imperative of *to communicate* means impeachment of silence and also eradicates any interiority. This imperative does not leave place for reflection [...]. Communication in the modern sense of the word leaves no place for silence, it constrains [...] to confession because “communication” is offered as solving all personal or social difficulties [...]. The communication ideology assimilates the silence with the void, an abyss within the discourse; it does not understand that sometimes the word is a lacuna of silence. More than loud noise, the silence is for *homo communicans* the declared enemy, the domain of his mission. The silence involves really an interiority, a meditation, while creating a distance from turbulent things, an ontology that does not have time to make an appearance if you do not give it due consideration.” (Le Breton, 2001, 14 – our translation).

Silence in performance reiterates this status as described. We are the prisoners of words. Theatre is openly integrating the language of silence, especially starting with the second part of the 20th century, but I think the ontological value of silence on stage, the one which can generate an immersive experience in our consciousness, was not very well understood. The discursive mind, when you create silence inside yourself, could be stopped, assert Indian philosophies. The performer, even if he does not know these theories, by his inspiration, prepares his interiority in similar ways. Based on the silent preparation of his mind, body and spirit, the actor of silence creates a special relationship with the receiver of art: they can be brought together more easily in the alchemy of the work of art. On the other hand, when the receiver of art assumes the hermeneutical approach of silence on stage, he becomes a co-creator through his interpretation. The aesthetic experience achieved here could lead the recipient of art to experiences of philosophical knowledge. The theatrical modality of speaking without words, only with body and gesture, with stage movement, visual effects, dance or mime, delivers a simple but deep message: when the language of the discursive mind is close to be stopped, we can be more easily pervaded by the content of our unconscious; the archetypal level is “opened” and we are able to access it more easily. Silence in performance creates a bridge with what is deep in ourselves and in others. Through a process of consonance, empathy, and a feeling of freedom generated by silence on stage, the recipient “touches” his and the actor’s sensitivity, and develops non-verbal mental associations which can improve his intelligence and creativity. If the word in performance represents the text, then silence is the meta-text. The words are books, silence is the library.

Jacques Lecoq, the creator of physical theatre, emphasizes in his theory the value of silence on stage and its impact to the world of actor’s imagination:

“Since the reformers of the theatre, Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Copeau, theatre pedagogues have developed silent improvisation, seeking to return sensitivity to the perception of the body for the performing actor, eliminating real



objects in order to perceive them better. But to recreate an action, an object with illusion (action mime) allows the imagination to invent what does not really exist, to change its dimensions, its weight, to overturn gravity and to play with the infinite possibilities that allow the actor-mime to take flight towards other worlds, wherever the imagination might lead them.” (Lecoq, 2006, 73).

The gesture as an avatar of silence in theatre represents at the same time a secret and a confession. The verbal and the non-verbal language on stage from which rhythms, ideas, and emotions emerge have the silence as their spring full of potentialities. Lecoq established a theoretical frame of mime and theatrical gesture, postulating the major role of silence in this context: “It is from the silence that the quality of the gesture and the word are born. In this melting pot the trajectories and impulses are prepared and organized. In the inner space, rhythms urgently emerge.” (Lecoq, 2006, 70)

Le Breton, quoting mystics from different spiritual traditions, such as Grigore of Nazianz, Saint John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart or Rumi, states: “The silence is the language of God because it contains all the words; it is an inexhaustible reserve of significations” (Le Breton, 2001, 186). Silence in performance could lead to silence of the mind through renunciation of thinking in a linear way, and through enabling access to the natural language of the body and its unexplored wisdom. Silence could open the door to the full development of the mind and could lead *beyond* the mind: “Silence opens the way to the depth of the world, necessarily leads to metaphysics by extracting things usually surrounded by murmurs and thus releasing their concealed bridge” (Le Breton, 2001, 165).

If inner silence could be considered as a path to transcend polarities of the mind, to access our and the collective unconscious, using the concept of Carl Gustav Jung’s theory, silence transformed in art on stage could mean to stay aware on the edge of your being as body, mind and spirit. The silence in performance, where *the idea* is primordial and not *the word*, has not only a power of denotation, but also or especially a *power of revelation*. This idea is an extrapolation based on the reflections of Abhinavagupta, the famous medieval Indian scholar, who speaks, in his commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, about the *power of revelation* assumed by *words* in poetry and drama. If silence forms the background, or represents the substrate of words, then silence is closer to the source of revelation. Can we consider that silence still has a power of “revelation” when words have lost it?

Actually, human language is deprived of its magical power because of the secularization paradigm of our times. Silence keeps the magic, it is the root of *words*, and could be considered a spring of creativity and knowledge which can lead to transpersonal experiences. We can discover a double flux: from silence to the transpersonal level, and from the transpersonal level, evoked by silence, to the *presentification* of knowledge related to the *actualisation* of ourselves. I used here the expression *presentification* of my professor Viorel Cernica, from the Department of Philosophy, University of Bu-



charest, because it emphasizes very well what I am thinking. I understand this concept in relationship with the “materiality” of knowledge felt through the actor’s play (that uses the theatrical silence on stage).

Performance that uses silence, the performance which gives up words, that plays with secrecy and confession, needs still more theoretical contextualization. I will present briefly another perspective which comes from the theory of *rasa*, the main Indian aesthetic theory with a huge influence in all the Indian arts, claimed by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NS), the oldest Indian treatise on drama. While we do not have the scope within this article to explain this theory in detail, will present briefly the major aspects related to our topic. By its polysemics in the Sanskrit language, the word *rasa* means taste, juice, flavor, or essence etc. The most common sense of *rasa* in the NS, used by academia today comes from Raniero Gnoli’s research (1985): *rasa* is the *aesthetic experience*. The NS speaks about eight *nāṭyarasa*: the erotic, humour, fury, compassion, disgust, horror, the heroic, and amazement. In some variants of the treatise we can find the ninth *rasa*: *śānta rasa*, the aesthetic experience of peace which leads to spiritual liberation. This is relevant to our topic. The term *śānta* was translated by Gnoli with *silence* or *tranquility* (Gnoli, 1985, xxxvi). We adopt here *silence* as a synonym for *śānta*. The most important commentary on the NS, *Abhinavabhāratī* (ABH), realized by Abhinavagupta (10th – 11th century CE), places *śānta rasa* as the “queen” of all *rasa*. Considered to be the ninth, in addition to the primary eight *rasa*, *śānta rasa* has a history that is not very well known. Some scholars argue that the ascetic milieu introduced this concept later within the treatise because the idea of spiritual liberation which could be obtained through *śānta rasa* is not proper to the period when the book was written (2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE). A relevant passage of the NS reads:

“That which finds its origin in the spiritual liberation (mokṣa) and in the Supreme Self (ātman), linked with the knowledge condition of Reality and leading to the supreme bliss that is *śānta rasa* [...]. Every emotion starts from silence [...]; after it attains its purpose, it fuses with silence.” (NS, 1997, 120 – our translation from Romanian to English).

This is an extremely important passage for our topic. The cosmic illusion, *Māyā*, that which veiled our possibilities to be one with the Absolute, *Brahman*, is a layer-idea of Indian philosophical speculations. The connection between theatre and the experience of *unio mystica* (*unio mystica* as the final aim of the human being), reveals a paradox: *theatre creates illusions but it has the capacity to lead to the ultimate Reality*. How can we understand this paradox? Through illusion to metaphysical knowledge... It is like a mirror. Discovering yourself in the narrative of the play, and being at the same time detached (you are in the audience) is similar to the exercises practiced, on another level and with other instruments, by yogis/ascetics. This reflection culminates in a form of revelation about what you really are. Silence is the key. The analogy between silence



and the ultimate Reality is obvious. The actor is a master of emotions. As Brahman is the ocean and ātman is a drop of this ocean, a metaphor well known in Indian tradition, silence is the foundation of our emotions and the ocean of our thoughts.

The interpretation of ABH emphasizes the relationship between *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda*, the aesthetic enjoyment and the enjoyment of *unio mystica*, affirms Larson. He cites the ABH:

“*Rasa* is revealed by a special power assumed by words in poetry and drama, *the power of revelation* – to be distinguished from the power of denotation – consisting of the action of generalizing the determinants, etc. This power has the faculty of suppressing the thick layer of mental stupor occupying our own consciousness [...]. *Rasa*, revealed by this power, is then enjoyed with a kind of enjoyment, different from direct experience, memory etc. This enjoyment [...] is characterized by a resting on one's own consciousness, which due to the emergent state of *sattva*, is pervaded by beatitude and light, and is similar to the tasting of the supreme Brahman.” (Larson, 1976, 376).

Conclusion

Coming back to our topic, silence on stage could be a confession of the actor and a secrecy of his interiority; silence is the natural reaction of the audience when the play has satisfied his attendance, and a shared experience, a confession through his emotional and mental participation. We tried to point out the relevant theatrical value of silence in performance through its dual aspect: secrecy and confession. We started with the story of two hands speaking of how love could become a prison, when people do not communicate, when they are possessive or they could not surrender their ego; how ecstasy can become darkness, how death and regrets could not bring us back what we have destroyed. The silent story of these hands puts the issue of silence on stage in multiple contexts and approaches, leading to questions about an ontology of silence in performance. How can we see the existence of the actor/performer who uses silence as his main art? How silence interferes with his professional and personal reality? What are the interfaces between the ontology and the metaphysics of silence in performance? Many questions raise here for other extensive debates.

In a poetical approach, silence keeps here the “secret of love”, and, at the same time, is a confession which could make us meditate on our life. What are we and who are we face to face with love and silence? What we will become? How will this love be after years and years and what does it really mean to communicate? Where are the joints of silence in the economy of performance to obtain the maximum value of the work of art? Condensing the human manifestation of love in its sublime and tragic condition, this short story has led us to understand better the coordinates of silence on stage. Working with this silence, the performance that I have created tries to penetrate the secrecy of



public consciousness, and reveals the inner core of the artist in front of the public. In *The Hands*, silence speaks about the human condition in view of the challenges of love.

The theatre or every performance, every creation is born from, by and through the modulations of silence. Our ideas of creating a play/a performance start in our minds when silence became effervescent. Silence awakening ancestral feelings, ancestral understandings, is our link with our unconscious. We tried to emphasize in this article some philosophical and theatrical aspects of silence in performance, giving some examples and ideas of different theories. It is not an exhaustive study; we have here touched only on some significant roots. If “the word *it is only a wound of silence*, as / the word we breathe” as Romanian philosopher and poet, Lucian Blaga, said (the poem *Psalm* in Blaga, 1982-1997, 105), we should stop here to let the perfection of silence speaks. In the hands of silence, public, actors, directors, researchers are only children learning again and again one more step towards understanding the stage universe and the universe within their selves. We are silence modulated by emotions... Let’s keep silence! Let’s be Silence!

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PRINTRE TĂCERI (SILENCE)

By and with Isabella Drăghici

Photos by Eduard Grigore (1-4) and Alexandru Docze (5)



Isabella Drăghici in *The Field Poppy* Scene (*Printre tăceri*, 2014)



Isabella Drăghici in *Returning from Death Scene* (*Printre tăceri*, 2014)



Isabella Drăghici in *The Hands Scene* (*Printre tăceri*, 2014)



Isabella Drăghici in *The Wires Scene* (*Printre tăceri*, 2014)



Isabella Drăghici in *The Losing Innocence Scene* (*Printre tăceri*, 2015)