

SUMMARY OF HANNA RASZEWSKA-KURSA'S DISSERTATION
COMICALITY IN DANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHY ART
IN POLAND IN 21ST CENTURY

Doctoral dissertation *Comicality in the dance and choreography art in Poland in the 21st century* has been created under the supervision of DSc Danuta Kuźnicka, prof. of The Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, in 2016-2021. The dissertation analyzes strategies of building comic effects in selected Polish choreographic works and examines their impact on the audience. The analysis of the studied material is the starting point for an attempt to develop the systematics of comicality functions in stage dance and for a broader view of the potential of the art of dance and choreography in terms of negotiating and shaping worldview attitudes. Thus, the dissertation considers **comicality as an artistic tool** that grows out of the culture represented by the creator, and **as a cultural tool** that can exert positive influence on the culture in which the work functions.

In the introductory chapter, the author discusses **the methodology** based primarily on the practical methodology (Ewa Domańska's proposition), that is, starting from the analysis of research and not from hypotheses; taking the path from the material to conclusions and not verifying assumptions made earlier, as it happens in more traditional methodologies. Chapter II presents the **transformations of stage dance in Poland** in terms of dance theatre and new choreography and the crystallization of these forms in the 21st century. Chapter III discusses selected **approaches to the issue of comicality** and the mechanisms of its impact, which the author organizes into three groups: emotional (psychological approaches), biological (behavioral approaches) and social (sociological approaches). Chapter IV is the core analysis part: the author analyzes here **twelve Polish spectacles and performances in the form of dance theatre and new choreography from 2008-2017**, focusing on revealing the comic strategies that were used by creators.

Then the choreographic research material meets the research tools: in chapter V the author applies the perspectives derived in chapter III (from considerations on comicality) to strategies of the discussed works (analyzed in chapter IV). She introduces a distinction between **general comic strategies** and **specific domain comic strategies** related to the strictly movement aspects of dance and choreography art. She also pays attention to the application of specific domain comics strategies of other arts in stage dance. When analyzing

the impact of comic interaction on the audience, she distinguishes **seven functions of comicality**: the function of recognizing reality (non-artistic message concerning actuals), the function of scale regulation (non-artistic message concerning universals), the reflective function (reflection on the message), the worldview function (preserving or revising one's worldview), the interventional one (postulate), the entertainment one (mood uplifting) and bond-forming function (instilling or strengthening solidarity and empathy).

As one of the essential features of art – including stage dance – the dissertation considers **self-reflexivity**: the fact that art, growing out of a specific culture (drawing from it or questioning it), at the same time exerts influence on it. One of the peculiarities of the art of dance and choreography is the fact that it is perceived through an **integrated mental-somatic channel**. Stage dance in a special way takes into account and engages, as well as the mind, physicality – constitutive for the body on stage, and through kinesthetic empathy activated in the audience. Dance, among other arts, is therefore particularly close to the mental and somatic way of human functioning. This makes it uniquely, among other arts, suited to making changes in the world. In other words: the dancers and the people watching the dance communicate in a special, highly empathetic way. **Empathy** (defined as understanding) is at the same time an essential feature of any comical interaction. Insofar as **comicality** is brought in an **ethical** manner (i.e. not harmful; when empathy is also understood as compassion), it becomes a stimulus for the empathetic functioning of individuals who laugh and that makes them laugh.

The perception of stage dance as a self-reflexive element of culture and the isolation of its specific feature in conjunction with the understanding of comedy as an empathic interaction lead to the key hypothesis of the dissertation: **because empathy significantly increases the possibilities of humanity's survival, and ethically applied comedy – similarly to stage dance – creates a specific training field for it, the use of comicality in stage dance is one of the important tools of strengthening its culture-forming potential, including supporting the chances of overcoming the multidimensional (ecological, economic, social) crisis that humanity is currently facing.**