



# The components of the theatrical performance and their importance in children's theater

<sup>1</sup>Touria MOUKATE,<sup>2</sup>Mounia BENAMEUR

<sup>1</sup>Doctorante,<sup>2</sup>Professeur de l'enseignement supérieur,

<sup>1</sup>Laboratoire Langage et Société,

<sup>1</sup>FLLA Université Ibn Tofailr, Kénitra, Maroc

*Abstract : A successful play is one that is well-constructed and in which all its components complement each other, making it easy for the audience to assimilate and appropriate the message.*

*In this contribution, we will present the different components of theatrical performance, and in particular that intended for children. Elements which are part of other related arts, and which are essential to the creation of a successful play.*

**IndexTerms - Component,formatting,style,styling,insert.**

## INTRODUCTION

Theater is the mirror of societies. It reflects their ancestral cultures and identities, transmitting their customs, principles and values. Theater has always been used as a weapon to shed light on social issues and defend noble causes.

Like any performing art that influences the audience and, through it, society as a whole, children's theater, if well thought-out, can convey ideas and values, as well as impart knowledge, life skills and attitudes.

Nevertheless, the primary function of theater, and the one that makes it so appreciated by audiences, is to entertain. Indeed, if theatrical performance is to succeed in touching the feelings and emotions of the spectator, it must take into account its different components, especially when it comes to young audiences.

What's special about theatrical texts for children? What are the different components of theatrical performances for children?

## 1. THE THEATRICAL TEXT

Theater is an indirect means and tool of communication. It transmits universal messages. And its discourse is imbued with social reality. It encompasses several elements, including the theatrical text, which must be written in such a way as to allow the ideas conveyed to flow smoothly. It's important to bear in mind that it's not written to be read, but to be interpreted in such a way as to touch the sensibilities of the audience.

Unlike literary texts, theatrical texts have the particularity of being an art of listening: they are both spoken and listened to. It is this interpretation that brings it closer to the audience. To guarantee the success of his text, the writer must target his audience and take into account certain realities, such as :

- The psychological aspect: the audience's emotional state, so as to appeal to their sensibilities.
- Cognitive aspect: age range.
- The social aspect: the target audience's social class.

### 1.1. Theatrical texts for children

It's true that children's theater has a positive impact on children's learning, by transforming school curricula into cognitive games played by children in a dynamic way, with the aim of developing the different language skills related to each school level. Nevertheless, the role of children's theater goes beyond the transmission of knowledge. It plays a major educational role. It's a mediator that prepares children for adult life in society.

It's a micro-society in which children are equipped with tools and skills that can help them in their adult lives. Within and through the theater, children discover themselves and their environment, learn to listen to others, express themselves and defend their ideas, integrate into the group, find their place and solve group problems with the group.

Values are also implicitly taught through the situations dealt with, without having to inflict traditional lessons on learners based on memorization. Seeing a hero helping the disadvantaged has more impact on a child's behavior than a long speech.

### 1.2. Making a success of a children's piece

A successful play for young audiences must meet a number of aesthetic requirements.

Creating a play for children requires a great deal of work and preparation, both in terms of content and interpretation.

The content must emphasize ethical, religious or universal values. The age of the child must also be taken into consideration when choosing the content to be conveyed. Indeed, the piece must meet the "*age of interest in the content*". (Lecucq & Cardinaud, 1995, p. 8). Childhood is a vulnerable period. They don't yet have all the tools they need to analyze information and form their own opinions. They can be easily influenced. As a result, all content, whether socio-cultural, educational or cognitive, aimed at children needs to be supervised.

As far as interpretation is concerned, the particularities of this age group need to be taken into account in the aesthetic drafting of the text and the choice of other arts or components that form part of the theatrical art.

## 2. THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

### 2.1. The chosen topic or theme

Children, like adults, tend to be drawn to fascinating stories and exciting tales. The playwright must keep to this point to ensure the success of his text. The text intended for children must be clear, simple and easy to grasp, and suspenseful. When choosing a subject, care must be taken to ensure that it meets the following conditions:

- The right choice of subject: a dynamic subject
- Close to the child's age and interests
- Clear and easy, far from complex
- Attractive and funny, with a few riddles to stimulate the child
- The language level corresponds to the target age group.

The language used must be easy to understand, with a lexicon close to that of children and corresponding to their linguistic abilities and psychological and cognitive needs, to facilitate communication and a communion between the content, the characters and the child spectator.

### 2.2. The characters

Characters should be dynamic and different from one another, with specific features, characteristics, costumes, make-up and language to make it easy for the child to recognize them, follow the events and adventures and take a stand.

The number of characters should be kept to a minimum. It is also preferable to highlight the main character to help the child grasp the idea or value targeted by the presentation or show. The hero should be positive: courage, kindness, perseverance and sympathy to positively influence the child and transmit these values.

### 2.3. The dialogue

It is a support for the theatrical text, the dramatic dialogue is generally

*"It's a verbal exchange between characters. Other dialogical communications are possible, however: between a visible and an invisible character, between a man and a god or spirit, between an animate and an inanimate being. The essential criterion of dialogue is that of exchange and the reversibility of communication." (Pavis, 2006, p.p. 88-89)*

It's the communication tool through which the writer conveys the ideas and events contained in the text. It helps the viewer discover the specific traits of the characters. It should be neither too short nor too long. Lines should be delivered in a way that makes them easy to understand (tone, intonation, flow), and important points should be emphasized through repetition. A successful dialogue respects the following conditions:

- Be close to the child's language level;
- Use simple, easy language;
- The length of the lines should correspond to the child's age, so that he or she can memorize them;
- Contain paraverbal language, movement, gestures and mime to keep children entertained.

Nor should we stray from the theater's objective of entertaining. It's an artistic text. We must avoid turning it into a crude discourse in which advice is dictated directly.

### 2.4. Staging

The first step is to transpose the dramatic writing of the text into a stage script to be performed by the actor. It is *"the concretization of the text, through the actor and the scenic space, in a duration experienced by the spectators"*. (Ibid, p. 210)

The staging must be integrated into the theatrical text and clearly written, mentioning every detail relating either to each character or to the play as a whole. Thus, the text must contain indications and information on character relationships, movements, gestures, tones and intonations, feelings and so on. To this Copeau adds

*"By "mise en scène" we mean: the design of a dramatic action. It is the totality of movements, gestures and attitudes, the harmony of physiognomies, voices and silences; it is the totality of the scenic spectacle, emanating from a single thought, which conceives it, regulates it and harmonizes it. The director invents and creates this secret, invisible link between the characters, this reciprocal sensitivity, this mysterious correspondence of relationships, without which the drama, even performed by excellent actors, loses the best part of its expression"*. (Copeau, 1974 : 29-30)

Theater is a complex, "interartistic" art (Lesage, 2007). In a theatrical piece, several art forms (dance, song, music) come together with theatrical practice to create an attractive mise-en-scène, making theater a complete art and often referred to as the father of the arts. Veinstein presented two definitions of mise en scène

*"In a broad sense, the term designates all the means of scenic interpretation: decoration, lighting, music and acting [...]. In a narrow sense, the term mise en scène designates the activity that consists in arranging, in a certain time and in a certain performance space, the various elements of scenic interpretation of a dramatic work"*. (1955 :7).

All these elements are just as important as the text, as they help the actors in their interpretations to ensure the success of the work.

## 2.5. The music

Children, like adults, have a memory that can be auditory or visual. The use of sound and music in drama can develop their ability to listen, observe, analyze, understand and express themselves.

Using music that is close to the child's age and tastes, and above all that reflects the character of the characters and their feelings, helps children to understand events, explain them, and understand and decipher behavior that is new to them, as children tend to imitate any new and successful example or behavior.

For example, happy music can accompany positive behavior, and sad music can accompany negative behavior.

## 2.6. Lighting effects and decor

Set design is an important part of visual communication. It must be sufficiently close to the theme of the theatrical text, and correspond to the events of the drama, effectively translating the ideas of the theatrical text into something concrete, visible and observable. *It « must be useful, efficient and functional. It is a tool before being an image, an instrument and not an ornament..<sup>1</sup> » (Bablet, 1960 : 123) cited by Pavis , p80 .*

The set creates a living environment whose purpose is to prepare an atmosphere and conditions that help the actor in his performance, something that will lend credibility to his acting.

Children are always attracted by color. The set is therefore a great asset for attracting their attention and activating their imagination. In the theater, colors often refer to the genre of the play. Dark colors are used for dramas and bright colors for comedies. The spectator receives these cues as soon as the curtain rises.

Set design is closely linked to lighting effects, which help children to relate what they see to different elements, objects or landscapes in real life.

## 2.7. Costumes and accessories

To create a successful theatrical presentation, the use of props and costumes is essential. Hats, masks, princess dresses, dragon costumes and so on. All these elements fill children with wonder and transport them into the world of the story. They help develop the child's imagination.

They also provide information about the character: age, social class, time of day, season, occasion, atmosphere, links between characters and personality traits.

## 2.8. The song

Children enjoy songs and canteens because they give them a sense of pleasure and joy. They are excellent tools for conveying universal, national and religious values. Used in theater, they guarantee the involvement of the children, who react by participating in the singing. Songs are also easy to memorize.

When accompanied by music, songs create a harmonious atmosphere between the actors and the young audience, enlivening the presentation and bringing it to life.

The chosen song must be part of the dramatic action; in other words, its introduction must be essential to the performance, so as to harmonize with and complement the other components of the play.

It's an effective tool for conveying knowledge and meaning, and is likely to enrich the child's lexicon. By singing, the child systematically appropriates the ideas and values conveyed.

## CONCLUSION

To make a success of a children's play, it's important to introduce the various arts associated with theater. First of all, work on the text and formulate dialogues that are close to the children's language. Then set up a staging that will capture their attention, with the right choice of costumes, sets, props and lighting. And optimal integration of songs and music.

The right combination of these forms and effects has a considerable effect on children. It helps him to react to the play, trying to find links between what is conveyed in the play and his knowledge of social reality. The child's ability to grasp the meaning of situations and take a stand in relation to them develops throughout his or her experiences.

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