THE PLASTIC PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE AND UTOPIAN

PERFORMANCE IN TOM STOPPARD’S ROCK ‘N’ ROLL

Kelly Hanson

Hanson in her paper is focused more on the band Plastci People of the universe. This paper aims more towards music in Stoppard’s play *Rock’n’Roll* in general. Hanson states that “revolves around the story of the Plastic People of the Universe”, but bigger picture should be considered (Hanson 358). While the band played significant part in the years that led to Velvet revolution and the events this play follows, it was one of many factors.

“Exploring social problems through comic mirror” - we see it on stage and realise it is funny on sage, wrong in life

“Rock ‘n’ Roll offers a theatrical retelling of the Plastic People’s history “ 359

“Czech poet Egon Bondy’s claim that in communist Czechoslovakia, rock

music “still had its initial subversive drive,” whereas “in the West [it] was already

losing its original social significance . . . and becoming only consumer music.” - In RnR Stoppard uses Western instead of PPotU, reigniting western, giving it social significance once again, also using western rock makes the play more easily understandable to western theatre goers, also Stoppard might have said somewhere he used songs he knew instead of Czech ones that he did no understand **- the western audience would not understand either**

Using english text makes sense in this way, but we still shall look at the texts used, there is a lot to choose from so the choices the author made are not exactly random and should build certain atmosphere, certain feelings.

“Each token of Western culture, no matter how silly or schlocky, was scrutinized, assimilated and passed along, a talisman of freedom” in RnR examination of music, in PF? Books? 361

““The Plastic People of the Universe never aspired to martyrdom: they had it forced upon them”362

the biblical Samson derived from his long locks to the political change the Plastic

People could affect by refusing to compromise about their own hair length. 363

Keyboardist Josef Janíček summed up their experience: “We were unwilling heroes who just

wanted to play rock ‘n’ roll.” 363 someone says this during the play?

Plastic People came into existence shortly after he heard the Velvet Underground’s debut album, The Velvet Underground & Nico, in 1967. 364

Drugs, alcohol, sex, excrement, and dark images of worlds without light or hope were prevalent tropes in their lyrics, and their sound became increasingly dark and cacophonous over time.” 365 - can I find this in lyrics of songs used in the play?

Jan initially latches on to the Plastic People because they are rock musicians

and Jan loves rock music, embracing its place in Western culture. As time

goes on, however, Jan supports the Plastics because they challenge the repressive

government” 368 - they change involuntarily, they are just dragged along, Jan and perhaps others actually change course from enjoying music to caring more about politics and being more willing to stand up to the oppressive regime

As an audience member at a February 2007 performance in London, I felt

isolated in the dark space of the cold theatre during these scene changes. The sudden,

almost violent, blackout and blast of music transported me to another space

entirely—one that was both connected to and separate from the drama happening

onstage. As a music fan, I was entranced by the sounds, by the scream of disharmonic

guitar chords and the syncopation of songs that seemed so out of sync with

the play. The music drowned out all other sound in the theatre, and even as dark

shapes moved around the stage to change the scene, the space I inhabited was the

space of the music within the dark theatre—or rather the space of the theatre was

infused by the sound of the music. 369 - personal experience from Hanson, can I use it? It should be fine to use my expereince from watching Czech recording!

To listen to rock music most completely during live performances of Rock

‘n’ Roll, we must listen back through the performance genealogy Stoppard invokes

by situating the Plastic People alongside Western rock bands such as the Rolling

Stones, the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and, of course, the Velvet Underground. 374

“Plays need to be studied with the eye of a directors and not simply as literature” <https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/12590/thesis_hum_1979_hahn_c.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

From RozRazil - page 3, pavel kohout - “[Sir Stoppard b]Byl o generaci maldším pokračovatelem předchůdců, jako byli Heinrich Böll či Arthur Miller, kteří…(nám neochvějně projevovali své sympatie tím, že) nedovolili, abychom upadli v zapomnění a stali se snadnou kořistí represivních aparátů.” **Atributing to Stoppards interest in Czsk in past**

Page 17, Jitka Sloupová - “Jan a Ferdinand používají na českém jevišti poněkud silěnjší výrazy a jadrnější formulace - což jejich české představitele, DP a JH inspirovalo dokonce k několika extempore, která se postupně stala součástí haného textu” evidence to change productions can make to Stopparsd play, further makign it Czech? Can be done to any play?

Page 18, michael žantovský “Stoppardův mimodivadelní zájem o lidská práva v sovětském bloku a o osud československcýh disidentů v čele s VH (mu pak v českých intelektuálních kruzík dodal téměř nadživotní velikost.)”

Page 23, jaroslav riedel, “V londýnském představení ji [Lennonovu zeď] režisér Tr Nunn pečlivě zrekonstruoval včetně přesně citovaných českých nápisů, v Národním divadle se o ní ale jenom mluví.” - In UK production no one could understand what is written there, but the link to Czech enviroment was deemed important. In Czech it wasn’T perhaps necessary, as we know Lenons wall.

Page 35 mentions article “Dirty Linen in Prague ” <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/02/11/archives/dirty-linen-in-prague.html> evidence of Stopppard’s interest in Czsk at that time already

Page 36 mentiones article writen after his visit to Prague

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1977/08/04/prague-the-story-of-the-chartists/>

po této návštěvě začal pracovat na Cahoots Mcbeth - “aktuálnost hry byla pro Stoppards důlezižá; den před premiérou požádal režiséra … aby hru aktualizoval na základě nových zpráv přicházejících z Prahy.” Page 36 Barbara Day, přeložil Kačer

page 75 rozhovor se Stoppardem “V šedesátém osmém například ještě má reakce na “Srpen” nebyla vůbec “česká”, byla to reakce Angličana.” Same interview, apge 76 “Divadelní hra je něco jako zrcadlo, každý v něm vidí něco jiného…” paraprase RaGaD je o dvořanech na ELsinoru, a tím pádem může být I o jiných věcech, pro někoho může být více česká, pro někoho více existanciální.”

Page 78 “Nebylo to tak, že bych si řekl, že nastal čas, abych napsal hru o Českoslovnesku.” Goes on about how he likes to connect ideas that are not related in any way. “Vlastně ani nepatří do stejné hry, ale já je tam pak násilím dám, protože já jsem jejich společným jmenovatelem - spojuje je mj zájem, nic jiného.”

From Lee

At the same time, he was deciding to write “a Czech play.” Chapter 16

Stoppard is well-known for combining many various ideas and topics into one play. Topics, which have nothing in common except his interest, as he says himself in interview with Kačer and Oslzlý. In case of CMB, PF and RnR one of the elements he combined was Czech, then Czechoslovakia. It was not for the love of his homeland at first, as author himself admits, he was “Englishman concerned for what happened in 68” and only later began to care for the rights of oppressed writers in eastern block. Famous for his tedious research of every topic included in his plays, his first did not contain that many details and focused rather on ethics and conscience