

Advisor's review of Sumin Sung's bachelors thesis

Experiencing humor in performance

MgA. Kateřina Daňková

Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy, DAMU Prague, September 4. 2022

Sumin's original idea to engage in the fantastic phenomenon of humor filled me with enthusiasm and questions. What a topic. Humor in performance. How do you want to approach it? What exactly? I became a bit confused about the area of research and kept asking what is it that you are interested in specifically, what is your aspect and why? Then I asked about the history of the very interest and Sumin spoke about her previous theatrical experience she gained through her political activities in Korea and that that is the moment she started researching about humor. This was for me somehow the key moment I was able to see her point little more clearly.

In the opening story in **Introduction** Sumin describes a situation she was mistreated by a Czech sales person. Her worries were pressing, she felt all kinds of frustration – was afraid she was mistreated because of race, frustrated with not being understood, of being an outcast, being vulnerable, she felt fragile and down. She was also afraid of sharing this story but got the courage to make it into a stage scene and managed to deliver it in such a bold yet open way a vivid picture with its multilayered implications unveiled in front of our eyes. The audience could identify themselves not only with what Sumin was going through but also among other things with the reality of how we treat each other here in the Czech Republic. The strong reception gave strength and inspiration that it is humor (since the effect of how the situation was presented came out humorous) that helps overcome struggle and illuminates the world we live in.

The first chapter of this thesis gives a brief and fairly concise summary of the accents different thinkers put on humor, how each one of them perceives the phenomenon. How the aspect of seeing it moved and evolved through history. (The eclectic choice of studies stemming from previous research to current one made during studies at DAMU.)

In the second chapter examples of works of drama are given in chronological order from ancient to contemporary extending and illustrating the thoughts of the first chapter.

The third chapter contains research done among students of KATaP DAMU based on interviewing performers about the effects humor had on them selves as performers during their authorial performances, how they experienced the exchange between the audience and stage and how they perceived audience response to their performance.

The conclusion summarizes the key moments of Sumin's research: questions about the source of humor, its role in performance, questions about distancing from a topic. It mentions the role of irony, personal insight, paradox and the potential of the energy and esprit humor can bring.

It seems Sumin is interested in the moment when the sore is exposed on stage and by theatrical means people can heal or get strength. That's actually the foundation of ceremony a.k.a theatre. Her academical approach is quite bare nevertheless it is appealing for its enthusiasm and aspiration. The attempt is appealing.

Regarding it is a bit difficult to read and understand the point, I feel there is a deeper content and interest hidden behind the presentation. The theoretical frame and choice of authors makes me feel that Sumin may want to get a closer look at grotesque and absurd and circles over the topic

searching how to tackle that and the magical potential it has.

Many questions remain. The topic is quite a slippery one. Very broad it branches wildly. I still miss the very point of this work, what are we trying to prove? Are you interested more in the methods of distancing or in the therapeutic effect? I believe though the search for the right question is valuable and the journey is more important than the goal here.

I am recommending this thesis for defense with the grade of B.

Questions from the advisor:

- 1) How to get distanced from the topic, what kind of play, what worked for you personally?
- 2) Do you have any further thoughts on the environment in which humor can grow, on the sensitivity and courage of the performer, what could be the conditions in which humor can be accepted cultural-wise, space-wise or other (maybe even through film)?
- 3) What does it mean "to make one self a clown"?