

## And yet, the theater stands

### English transcript:

**Aulone:** Hello everybody, thank you for joining us in our next Konteksti podcast episode, I am very happy that we will discuss theatre together with Adrian Morina, who is an actor and acting artistic director of the National Kosovo Theatre, and Jeton Neziraj, who is a playwright, but also the director of Multimedia Centre in Kosovo. Thank you for joining me, thank you for being with me.

I'll start with a question, which maybe is a comment but may initiate discussion, maybe you both have passed your lives in the theatre and maybe not even in our wildest imagination we will not be able to imagine a situation so dystopic in the world nor a show or a movie maybe. It didn't find the theatre not well, but it seems to me that it has deepened the theatre situation in Kosovo even more. Maybe the question, through which I'll start with Adrian to continue with Jeton. Where is the theatre today, after a few months of the pandemic?

**Adrian Morina:** Usually the theatre is known as behind the theatre, as an address there for a few years now. You said that it found the theatre not in a very good condition. I believe that naturally it's a great worry, but this situation, or the pandemic has found each social sector in a very bad shape and I believe that it's found the sector the worse, which should deal today most with people's lives, which is health - a damaged sector, never developed as much as it should be, with great consequences, which we are seeing every day.

And of course it didn't find the national theatre blooming greatly to say that it stops our growth. Naturally, these past years, I have been inside the National Theatre for about 5 years now, as an actor. And always these troubles of the post war period which have accompanied the theatre with changes in management, changes in the board of directors, mainly political boards, which then have often brought political people inside the theatre as well, but for the last five years I can say there has been a sort of stability, a type of working culture.

There is an ensemble of resident actors, which previously has been very poor, or almost nonexistent. Now the National theatre has about 23-24 resident actors there and we have had a repertory, I can freely say, during the past years, and I am proud of the work that has been done there from this past management that has been there. Yes, of course that even this management has also been accompanied by some political firings again, which always hinder the regular repertory, then the temporary replacements, such as me, have to intervene mainly in a quick deadline, with no long-term vision, they are always hard because they are actually patches, they are not complete visions, where you have a 4 year mandate and you know for 4 years what your goal is, what you want to achieve.

So in this aspect even the KNT (Kosovo National Theatre) has been cut short, since I have taken over my role at the end of November. We expected for job openings to be published, to

get new directors. The ministry dragged them, with the ideas of always naming the boards, in which they bring political directors, almost always.

And we have built a repertory, quite ambitious, with five plays in the big scene, four in the small one, with a naming as a memory theater, where we dedicated the entire repertory to the figures who gave so much for the theatre, starting with Professor Petrovci, to whom we dedicated a project, Beqir Musliu to whom we have dedicated as well as a playwright, then Muharrem Qena a text with a message. So the entire concept was a type of a memory theatre for all the people who have given an extraordinary contribution, but who we always forget and we believe that everything starts with parties, that everything starts with us, we came, history starts with us, civilization, everything else.

So this has been a type of an ad-hoc concept which we have built together with the board of directors. This concept was stopped but the pandemic, from March, we failed and with the showings of course because we were closed.

We tried to hold a closed premier in May, but we were unable to because the institutions did not open. We then held the first premier for the year, "The Wake of Spring" on June 12, and it was semi-illegally, how to say, half in the dark we held the show. But we wanted to. To return a sort of will to the community and the public as well and we held it as a first premiere and then it dragged on, almost further on, especially this part, I did not believe it that much. But considering that our collective work was very hard to hold the repertory alive because we have actors and theatre workers that have been infected with COVID.

First, it is completely impossible to have a play without one actor. Second, it is immoral to replace an actor because they are infected, and I am saying it has thrown us all over the place, especially in the second part of the year with showings. But we are trying to keep it alive. But to tell you the truth, I am not really mad because if the other institutions were functioning as they should, like a Zwiss watch, I would be mad because the theatre is not functioning. But since from the government and down, almost all institutions are in this condition, the National Theatre is there as well.

Jeton Neziraj: Without repeating all these issues and challenges that Adri just evidenced, for me there have been two consoling elements in all the drama surrounding the pandemic. The first, the fact that in reality however much the whole situation surrounding the theatre has been very dramatic with cancelled plays, with repertory which could not be realized. When we look back to the past, we understand that theatre in Kosovo has passed through such dramas, meaning, the blocked theatre and the impossibility to function because of the pandemic, but the inability to function because of different issues; be it politic, meaning I know that a few years ago not long after the war, maybe one year passed when the theatre did not manage to hold a single premiere or showing, or there were months in a row without showings for different reasons, such as a lack of a director, lack of authors, uncolisitated ansamble, and the same with the theaters in the other cities.

Do you know that Gjilani was without a repertory for a long time? You had the other theatres that barely functioned. So, this type of dystopia that we are mentioning now, which was created from the pandemic, is a type of a replay, a more extreme type maybe but it existed in the past as well. This has been a consoling element for which I cannot say that has found us completely unprepared. We have been prepared for 20 years in this situation. Prepared in the sense that we have passed through this.

Second, the fact that the pandemic has been globally spread and the idea that this situation is not happening only here has been consoling. So, when you realized that everywhere in the world it's a similar situation, even more dramatic in some other places. When the repertory of a theatre in Germany is stopped, it then destabilizes three upcoming years. This year we had two important projects with two theatres in Germany. One of them which would have happened this year was cancelled, was modified, and turned into something digital. The other was supposed to happen in a year, they wrote to us and told us it had to be cancelled; When we asked why, they said the pandemic, but the pandemic is happening now, what problem is there in 2021? They said that the system was completely destabilized.

So, if we are experiencing current issues and consequences, they will happen today, eventually tomorrow, but they will be repaired in 2021 because of our lack of planning, while the other European theatres plan long-term and this has disorganized their system completely, and truly they don't know what to plan.

In addition, a positive element, because these days we have greatly evidenced issues, but another important element is that us here, or the majority of the repertory that we have had in the previous years, we have turned to the archives and there was a great enthusiasm from the public to see those plays. A sort of ritual started: Now it's 7 o'clock, let's see a play, either from the National Theatre or from the other theatres.

So it was a good compensation of the pandemic situation, while a large part of European theatres, as much as they turned to digitalized theatres, they tried to have online plays, they were trapped in legality issues, meaning author rights, or some tried to add payment and did not have the same flexibility that we did in Kosovo. The other part has to do with the clandestine nature through which we work here in Kosovo, and I believe in the region as well. The fact that we have even worked illegally some times, Adri mentioned one premiere...

Adrian Morina: I believe that it was maybe the premiere, maybe at that time, the only premiere in Europe which was shown illegally, in the dark, but our great will to continue with the theatre, the great actor will, even a sort of responsibility toward the people who have been involved, and that are mainly independent artists with works contracts. They pushed us to often work in the dark.

We worked in the same way in another project, The Return of Karl May. We continued with rehearsal even during the month of June, the month of August, with the hope that we will reopen, the measures will be moved. While we continued working, we can freely say in the dark. Nobody questioned us, the theatre workers came to work almost normally, but all this kept us

alive. A sort of wish, a great will of ours, of the community for this work and naturally the online part as well. I am surprised, because the initial idea was that maybe this pandemic would not last more than two months and starting with the idea that we might run out of show, let's allow the public to come and watch them in person, since we created them for theatre and if they see them at their homes, I am saying in brackets, maybe we are spoiling the public and they will not come to the theatre. On the contrary, something completely different happened. There are many people who contacted us, at least through the page of the National Theatre, "Hey this is the first time I am watching a theatre play (laughs) because..."

Aulonë Kadriu: That was going to be my next question. I have noticed earlier, and you have talked about it Adrian, about the online theatre and how maybe this is an ideal way of organizing things at the theatre. But, that it has given access to people who never got to come to KNT, especially knowing how difficult it is for theatres to function in other cities, or not.

Adrian Morina: Not only in KNT, but they never have never seen a theatre before, and they saw it as a very good opportunity. Lets not forget that one of the most viewed plays, about 67,000 people watched it, *I ligu per mend* (Imaginary Invalid). And if we look at the total of all plays, since we, together with the city theatres, Multimedia Center, Etno theatre in Kukaj, have realized about 56 showings within two months, there were over 1 million watchers, and imagine reaching 1 million people in such a short period.

Jetoni: We deserved our 13th wages. I wanted to say that for the actors and the theatre people, non-engagement is traumatic, while non-engagement during such a long period while doctors have been engaged, journalists regardless of the challenges could stay active and in contact with their profession; the state's bureaucrats, for them it's been ideal because it's ok to stay at home, not go the office, I believe, maybe I am exaggerating, but for actors it's a traumatic event not to be in contact with the scene, so even this that Adri is saying, the illegality came more as a necessity, simply because real people were on the edge of normality, or heading to Shtime.

Adrian Morina: We are very close to crossing that line

Jeton Neziraj: And now we really started a new show. Actors are super enthusiastic. An emotion I had not seen before, from someone that comes to rehearsal with such will. It was like *thank you for us being here*, that we are starting work.

Aulonë: Can this potential illegality, because I think KNT is cursed to function illegally - could this illegality be a stance against the complete neglect, especially for a long period since the pandemic came in March, until about a month ago, it was not talked about the theatre or the culture, or if gatherings are allowed, or if cultural life is allowed. It was talked about gyms, they are all important, of course, but nothing about the theatre. It was a type of information quiescence.

Jeton Neziraj: If you ask me, the first part of the pandemic, when the measures and the lockdown started, the fact that it was the same for all people, there was really good

understanding. Meaning the Ministry officials are people like us. Even they didn't have access to the institutions and it was not expected that "we stay at home" and some of them are going to work and produce documents and draft strategies.

However, this situation continued and our mobilization came when they started reopening different sports, gyms, the shopping centers/ malls, and empty words, so then it was understood that okay, there is no attention and the other thing is that you are living here and you know that the culture never had attention. So, we started to mobilize and to pressure and the theatre was reopened after the pressure. Whether it was a great or small pressure, it had a voice, which was united.

It was not only the National Theatre or the theatre of Gjilan, or the Multimedia Center, but it was a large group of theatrical institutions, which functioned and communicated their articulated requests, the same requests for the government, and in this direction, that campaign was successful. A few days ago, a Frenchman wrote to me that now there is a similar campaign, he asked me what tools we used, for reaching our goal.

Adrian: We could go and train them.

Jetoni: No, I gave him some ideas, for the rest I told them to please write to me officially. There is a fee.

Adrian: There is a fee. Not to say that I was worried about the right since the beginning. I had a personal experience. The pandemic found me in Switzerland working on a project, I had just gone there the previous week, Jetoni wrote the text with a team of mixed artists from different countries of Europe. I was coming back from a completely different experience there, where the contract that we had signed one year before, they accomplished within a week, they stood by it. Even though it was very weird to me, we worked for a week and we are not used to that, I expected to be called in the morning and be told: Thank you very much, XXXX

Jetoni: And the next moment you had 18,000 EUR in your account.

Adrian: What even are 18,000 euros?

Aulone: Without getting dragged at all.

Adrian: It was unbelievable. And when I came here we had just started a few projects at the National Theatre for which we had contracts and that the state says that no, it says in the contracts that when the project ends, the people are paid. It was unbelievable the lack of responsibility toward the entire cultural community and wherever I had the chance, I am saying even personally the responsibility falls on you as an artist, because we are in KNT however, we have a monthly income, as much as it is, but you feel bad for the people who did not generate any income for 4, 5, 6 months and it is unbelievable and unacceptable. There are about 90% of the people who live on contracts based on projects, and they are not hired within institutions and

morally we were pushed to work half illegally to finish the contracts, to finish the work, to hold the shows, even with closed premiers, simply for people to get the means for which KNT has pledged. This was an additional motivation that pushed us to pressure the MCYS (Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport) to reopen, to start the cultural life. Add to this that naturally you as an artist when you do your work you feel useless, you feel you have no contribution, you feel... And it's even worse in a place like ours, where you feel worthless always because you never have the institutions' attention.

Jeton Neziraj: But even when you have attention, you cannot make it... These institutions do not manage to understand that you are an artist, you have created some sort of a reputation, you have given your contribution and now there is a moment, a dramatic situation, an unusual situation when you need support. Now you notice even in the MCYS open call, they had an open call for support of the cultural scene and that of independent artists, however, it requires for them to produce something because they are scared that the state will say they're giving someone free money. They are supporting the artist as if they are supporting a foreign artist. Build roads or companies, build roads when you have money, and all the while they have no idea that they are treating the artist as a sort of a loader who should work, be engaged [Adrian: like a factory], produce something to deserve the money.

Adriani: Yes, approximately, I have also followed the part about the open call and it has bothered me as well. It's good that some extra means were found to support the independent scene but in the paper they have requested... This is the same as giving away a tomato greenhouse and to ask them to produce tomatoes in the winter [Jetoni: yes]. You cannot win the grant because regardless that we are helping you, you have to bring us the tomatoes, or the grapes, I don't know. That's what they did more or less, excluding the Municipality of Prishtina, in their open call, I was curious to look at it and I saw that the application was much more simple and they shared the means for the number of artists as much as they could without having to return them because in reality for each other society category, even for the retirees, and they were right in doing so. There was even an increase, even for those who were unemployed or were in lockdown during the pandemic, they were given an extra wage from the state. The only category which in reality was not thought about at all were artists.

Jetoni: Adrian should we use this moment to request extra wages, the 13th pay.

Adriani: I am always a syndicalist at heart, it is a good moment for the 13th pay.

Aulonë: Freely.

Jetoni/Adriani: We will use this moment, we call for all local and international institutions...

Adriani: It is a good chance to start now and preserve this tradition.

Jetoni: Let's preserve the tradition of the 13th pay and bonuses.

## K2.0

Adrian: We'll get the 13th pay now with the Trust.

Aulone: You haven't received it yet?

Adrian: Not yet, we're waiting.

Aulone: They knew that you are artists.

Jetoni: We're waiting, I'm trying every second.

Aulone: Somethin else, when we woke from the Spring sleep, what was interesting was that the theatre was mentioned in the media as well, it came to the discourse, because it has never been and it was exactly that the theatre is organizing plays in the midst of the pandemic. And then the Municipality of Prishtina open call was mentioned as well, it was a sort of a societal chaos how we are supporting art when everything else is going to hell. It is hard to operate in a system that considers culture and art as a tertiary need but is fed on it, you know?

Adrian: They are fed on it every day. It is true, I remember the part about the Municipality and Bufi was attacked about how he gets 700 euros to share jokes from his home.

Jetoni: Jokes from home. He told a part of the jokes from his balcony.

Adriani: To justify the honorary.

Aulona: We should add a kilometre of asphalt.

Jeton: The good, the bad. The good in this bad is the fact that we live here so naturally you expect reactions of this nature and you expect people lack the awareness to reach such conclusions that in fact you work with art, that people who are engaged in artistic projects are an asset. We noticed, and we talked about the first period of the pandemic when everything was almost paralyzed and the only access to cultural events was through theatre plays and we saw what type of demand there was. So imagine if that one year period would continue with no cultural activity, the people could not even notice the need. I do not expect to stop every person in the street and ask them: does this society need theatre? 90% of them would reply that we have other issues. But it is our obligation to raise awareness, not to go in the streets to do so, but simply to raise sensibility through our work, through activities, because I do not know another way how this society or any other society could be rescued.

Adrian: However, it is interesting that people, regardless of the fact that we are a small community, the people are following us and especially the part of our income or the wages which became a big deal why they were given to the artists. I remember when we were on a strike, a year and a half or two years ago, to raise the wages of the artists hired in cultural institutions, it's not such a large number, maybe 270-280, there was no person who did not talk



about the idea that we were on a strike, congratulating us, for the pays, wages and everything else.

Jeton: Do not touch Albanians there.

Adrian: Only there. What is true, to be completely correct, it was really the first time that we have been united as a community. Even the artists themselves see this to some extent from the prism of the public.

Jetoni: Wages unite us!

Adriani: Wages unite us! Therefore, with the slogan "Wages unite us", all together for the 13th wage!

Jetoni:

Aulone: They unite us, but the hard working conditions at the theatre are a big problem as well, correct?

Jetoni: I'll talk because I have a lot to say. It is a completely ruined theatrical structure. When I say ruined, I am talking about investments that these past 20 years have been in minimal amounts. So, the entire investment in theatrical infrastructure is reduced to the steps of the theatre, the small wood panels inside the theatre, and eventually sound and lights. These are very small investments and are similar in other theatres as well.

In the meanwhile, most rooms and scenes in the theatre are in horrible conditions. So, the security issue is not well-cleared, the theatres have no heating, most of them. If you have to go and hold a play somewhere and if you have the good luck of actually having electricity at the time, you have to put electric heating beforehand to warm the air. If you do not have the luck, you have to perform in the cold.

The National Theatre has found some sort of solution while the other theatres really spend big money. The Theatre of Gjilan, I found out, is managing to use fuel for heating. But the budget then has to be allocated by the theatre, the theatre pays the amount that goes up to 10,000 euros because of the long winter, and there are many more expenditures but the money still comes from the program.

So it is a type of a backward system that has become even more backwards as the years pass. There are, as Ardian mentioned, about two or three years that there has been some sort of movement, some type of artistic community mobilization to clear up some things, but it is important for the state to invest in infrastructure, to create some conditions, I am not saying commodity, but normal functioning.

Adriani: I find it banal but last week we had a guest play at the Gjakova theatre. We had only held the premier a week or two before that, and while talking to the theatre there, they said that



they cannot host a reshooting because they do not have heating or rooms. The Asim Vokshi Culture Center with 800 seats was too cold for the team, the director, the actor, they barely showed the premier and I asked them to come over and organize it here quickly. And when the actors came, they said that you have phenomenal conditions, it's warm here, phenomenal. I told them not to get too excited because we only got heating this year.

Jetoni: Banal problems, but...

Adriani: It's considered a big deal that we have central heating. Imagine this, 20 years after the war.

Jetoni: Just to conclude, 3-4 years ago we were implementing a project at different cultural homes and libraries with an Englishman I think. Everywhere they had issues with seats "here are 5 more seats, take 5 others from the school, find them somewhere...". He asked if we could organize a national campaign, one chair for one Albanian butt, so each person has a place to sit. The problem is banal, take one there, find another one, what even is this problem?

Adrian: Do you see that the chair problem is not only confined to the Assembly?

Jetoni: Existential problem

Aulone: I remember before Karl May, you published something about heating. I even made a sort of a sad sarcasm, the time has come to pull out the winter clothes, because for us as a public it is always expected that when we go to the KNT we will be cold, and it's so well-expected and we just accepted it, we got passive in this aspect...

Adriani: Yes, the National Theatre is mentioned because the other theatres up until lately have been inexistent. The National Theatre has always been the address, otherwise during the winter season when we went to other cities, they told us beforehand to pay 150 euros for the fuel. So not only do you go to show a play, you organize it, you also have to pay for the fuel to allow you to play at the theatre.

Jetoni: At the warm theatre.

Aulonë: The smaller ones are easier to warm up using radiators.

Adriani: In Albania it happened that we had to play with a heater, with the neon ones, we played with four heaters...

Aulone: How we call them, *grialica*...

Adrian: With four pieces and when the lights got turned off to change the scene, the scene was completely red, there was no way to change it, so this is an Albanian problem, it's not only ours...

Jetoni: Any actor who had a scene near the heater, enjoyed it for about 10 minutes... monologue.

Adriani: That was a way to bake the character.

Aulonë: Even in Karl May, Jeton's play, Karl May, where you play Ardian, you mention that I don't know in which theatre if you light a cigarette the firefighters come, if you shoot a gun, the psychologists come.

Jeton: You said it wrong, Ardiani's play which I wrote.

Adriani: National Theatre's, which Jetoni wrote.

Aulone: Semantics;

Jetoni: Ardiani's play, the actor's.

Aulonë: Both of your play, we'll leave it to the Theatre.

Adrian: Talking about security, at the time when we had issued because almost every year at the National Theatre, even though it is said that there was a river, right at that part, from Dodona which has flown and then they ruined it and the National Theatre was built...

Aulonë: That's why they don't love you, you covered the river...

Adriani: No, if we had the river it would be phenomenal there, imagine the ambiance. A theatre surrounded by a river, it's the same in Macedonia...

Aulonë: Imagine someone falling...

Adriani: No, the idea is that the water enters... and it is said that...

Aulone: Falling is a luxury...

Adriani: That's nothing at all, if the water overtakes you, that's a problem.

Jetoni: Why are you not acting right? Because the water has entered us...

Adriani: It is said that in the year 82' a person was killed by the current in the National Theatre, but at the time when this incident happened they hid it because it was another system and they did not make a huge deal out of it, but usually every winter we have water entering the theatre, over 1 meter and we actually play on top of the scene...

Aulonë: Wearing boots.

Adrian: Endangered. Our heating system was not even connected to the city system. One of the showings was cancelled by the actors of the play because the sewage started smelling, there were no conditions for the play and the past management fought with the actors because mainly nobody cared about the health of the people who work there. But what's important is for the system to work, for the showings to take place, and we as a union have called KIPH at the time while they were not dealing with the pandemic, we called them there. They came and they made an analysis of the situation and they said: "look, we did not write it down as very bad because otherwise we'd have to close it down tomorrow, and we feel bad for you. You have no place to play, because we would shut it down". Imagine the fire extinguisher, they have to be serviced every 6 months. The ones at the theatre were from 2004 and imagine the smallest fire which could occur at the theatre, what could happen. But maybe it wouldn't be that bad if it burned down because we would build a new one.

Jetoni: Those who say that Prishtina had a river, they seem like those who believe that the earth is flat. Some religious believers...

Aulonë: That Santa exists after the holidays...

Adrian: Water is entering there, I do not know if there was a river because I am not from Prishtina, but water is taking over the theatre every year.

Jetoni: It's the rain...

Aulonë: Adrian you mentioned, a theatre which got ruined in Albania, the space of Multimedia Center was closed. Can we blame the pandemic for facilitating this process, at least a little bit.

Jetoni: Actually, yes and no. In the case of the National Theatre in Tirana, the pandemic only allowed the ruining in a more clandestine and quicker manner, and it made physical protests of the people impossible, even though there were some protests there. So, they only used the moment and the hard period to commit such a barbaric act.

While in the case of the Multimedia Center, we were aware that that was a private space, the owner made us pay rent every year, and he warned us that he wanted to sell, which was his legitimate right. So, because of this situation we expected that at any moment the negotiations we had started with the Municipality of Prishtina would result in an alternative space. So, if you see the cultural view, there is no cultural organisation that doesn't believe that they need and they deserve a cultural space, even the smallest one. However, in the case of Multimedia Center, we are really talking about the field of theatre, I don't know if in Kosoo, or even in the region, that there is any organization that is more active. Let's say we have reached some successes.

Hence, we started the communication with the Municipality, in cooperation with Foundation 17 and CHWB, organisations that deal with the preservation of cultural heritage. We found and we

located a space near Kacallart, so a half-ruined object, with an amazing garden, and in the yard there were two other old houses. When we went to visit one day, we barely got to the second floor. I remember Ajete and Nita of the Foundation told us that we will see a fantastic object from the window which we have to try and preserve. When we climbed, the fantastic object laid with bricks and ceramics was half fallen, a car washing salon nearby had ruined it. We got alarmed and we went straight to the Municipality to notice them to come and see the object as it was being ruined, but they naturally knew that there were objects nearby and as a result the other object fell, got ruined. However, we said okay, the main one, the larger one which we hoped to turn into a performative space, we will preserve that one and we will take it for use. We signed a memorandum, for a year, it was left only on paper. They took a picture, before the elections, I felt quite ashamed to be a part of it, but because of the theatre cause...

Adriani: Of course, the theatre costs...

Jetoni: The theatre costs. We said okay let's make this sacrifice but nothing happened. We have a provincial mentality of spite, why this person? Why the other? I do not know. As a result, that memorandum was never implemented. In time we started a collaboration with Oda Theatre, and we said okay, now we have a space which is faced with a sort of financial crisis. Oda has been preserved for 20 years, and it has been left as a space with the good and the bad, but it is there. So, let's revitalize it and let's functionalize it together.

At Oda Theatre, the conflict with the Municipality restarted because they themselves suggested that the Municipality could cover the rent costs which are enormous for a cultural organization, but these are still empty words and there my despair started. Not because I had any real faith in the Municipality or in the mayor Shpend Ahmeti. But a type of a real despair that in reality it is not possible or it is completely impossible to operate and to hold normal cultural activities in this country. Now we are in the situation we are in, the pandemic, it was like the carpet that covers and the shames and the defects, even those of the culture. The pandemic has put a lid on each problem. The answer is that yes we are in a pandemic situation and we are waiting. And this endless waiting is like the string that you can pull until infinity...

Aulonë: Until it breaks.

Adriani: I remember a joke from a Yugoslav movie of the time, one of the characters was cursing the state that builds schools, while having such small prisons. And on the way to Batllava, I was struck because I saw Dyz. We mention Dybydyz but I never knew. Dyz is apparently a village, the prison of Dyz. And on the way to Batllava, on the top of the hill, can you imagine what space, what an object, you'd imagine it's a castle, like a sort of a kingdom was built there.

And I remembered the idea of a small theatre like the one you asked for, the space in fact. A small theatre, that gigant space that went on for kilometers, the road went there, you cannot believe how it looked. Unbelievable. I said what a state, building all these prisons, all these investments and is not able to build in a small municipality, with a symbolic investment, a

cultural space what Multimedia Center is supposed to be. Or a gallery, or something similar. But it seems that the priorities here are put everywhere else other than on culture. It feels even worse when you know that we have a mayor whose father was an actor, and at least... but it seems like the syndrome of all these artists is similar to an artist in Albania who ruined the theatre, I am talking about Edi Rama.

Jetoni: Both of who talk about the love they have for art.

Adrian: Both talk about the love they have for art, but in general it seems like the artists had it worse when other artists were in high positions. It is similar to the XXXX of the cultural institutions, it happened at the time when Valton Beqiri was a minister as well. Professor Valton Beqiri is by no doubt a good person, I have no dilemma about that but in reality at all the cultural institutions that are all over the place, it seems that with or without intention, artists themselves are ruining culture.

Jetoni: Well not artists, artists...

Adrian: I mean.

Jetoni: Wanna be an artist.

Adrian: Yeah, wanna be.

Aulone: The more the theatres fall, the more this increases.

Adrian: Now we have built prisons even outside of Kosovo.

Aulonë: If we had a cultural space, which we could visit and have access to, maybe...

Adriani: There would be numbers as well.

Aulone: Not to go there... one less Multimedia Center. One less space. What does this mean, maybe I do not want to open this conversation, but I cannot not ask about the young actors who want to show plays, who do not manage to go to the National Theatre. Where can they find support with so few theatres, this few scenes, where can they...

Adrian: No, if we stop and analyze it like that, we should close the art faculty for the 20 upcoming years, because in reality the number that the faculty of arts produces, which is enormous, I cannot talk a lot because I do not have many informations whether those numbers should be such in proportion with the population and the needs of the market. But if we analyze the market and its needs, I believe that the faculty of arts should be closed for the upcoming 20 years because the number of artists is huge, who have no place where to work, where to exist.

Aulonë: Maybe it's better to build theatres...

Adrian: Of course. Maybe it's better to close the faculty and to open about 20 different theatres and then to invite the people. On the other hand, it is completely immoral to ruin someone's dream. To tell them, I am sorry you have nowhere to work at because we have no theatres to engage you at, and do not become an actor, or a painter because we do not have galleries.

But this is capitalism. This is society, not only ours. Someone manages to find themselves in a sort of market, but the pressure should be larger from the artistic community themselves toward the institutions to create as many opportunities as possible and space and means and everything else. But I have the hope that next year we will have a larger cultural budget. In the Ministry of Culture with 9 million, we hope that it will be even better.

Jetoni: The other problem is that the cultural scene is completely fragmented, divided in bits and pieces. The artists do not function as a unique group which has one voice. We hardly managed to get together for rare causes. What I wanted to say when you asked earlier, is that okay, we mainly focus on Prishtina, and Prishtina is not Kosovo. It is but there's more than that. Take another smaller city as an example. What opportunities does a young person have who finished primary school, or who is going to primary school, or who is going to high-school... What type of opportunities? He goes to school because he feels some sort of obligation, and doesn't go with any sort of will. And the mosque is nearby. There is no library, or if there is it has titles... let's say that it has not been refreshed with new titles and there is no cultural center, there is no theatre play, he cannot eventually travel to another city if he comes from the province, he has two choices: he has the school, and if fate makes him interested in that direction, that of knowledge and good education, but in other cases they go toward other directions; Then we talk about radicalism, then we talk about the increase in crime. Naturally, because you have not invested, if you have not created some sort of space where people can get new experiences, then these are the consequences of what you bring to society.

Adriani: And now while Jeton talks about the offer, they have the right to build prisons, to scare us. You'll either go to prison or to school, pick which one you want. State strategy.

Jetoni: For someone who wants to read, prison is fantastic. Have you seen all the former prisoners who got out...

Adriani: All with masters...

Aulonë: However there is a great solidarity amidst artists. Maybe because we were challenged a little more and we did not have where to turn to so it came naturally.

Adriani: If I were to talk about a positive thing, now I am talking more about the theatre, I can say that the pandemic has made us function in unison. The need to function united made us see that we are stronger. I am starting with the cultural calendar, when we started it, we started it as

KNT and then we expanded to include other theatres, and we saw that even though production, whether good or bad, has an opportunity to offer something to the people.

Also, talking about the mobilization to reopen the theatres, and the petition that was started from the Multimedia Center and that was signed from all, we continued the cooperation with KNT and some other theatres in other cities through a workshop about writing Albanian dramas, for which we will soon have a publication of 7 new dramas so, it has paved a good road for cooperation, which up until now we did not have and I hope that this will not be stopped. Because in the first moment that we open up, separate, go our own ways, I hope that this pandemic will have united the theatrical community and we have actually seen our strength, even when facing the institutions.

Jetoni: Sometimes not much is needed. Change doesn't need an army of people, it requires a few people who share the same opinions and visions and in this case it no longer has to do only with 2020 or the pandemic, but there has been some sort of a good movement surrounding the theatre these 2-3 past years. Even with the case of Gjilani theatre with XXX coming... but also in Ferizaj, a sort of community tradition, the interest about the politics of the theatre have continued. Regardless that the municipal mayors have changed, there was a sort of interest, for the fact that the theatre, for a long time, for many years, has had some sort of success. And in this direction there are simply needed some normal people, who see beyond their interests, they see beyond the interests of the institutions that they represent and they see some longer tracks. I believe there are not any problems we cannot surpass. We are talking about a disappointing situation in the theatre but we have to often look back to see that it can be worse. For example when you see the theatrical scene in Albania you see that it is two steps lower than this of Kosovo.

Adrian: Actually they do not have a theatre at all.

Jetoni: They do not have one at all, black humor.

Adriani: There is a chance to ruin us as well, better not to meet with them.

Aulone: To wrap up with what you said about the theatre, which they have closed at Albania, I hope they will not close it here. Maybe a cliché, where KNT is headed in the upcoming years, because we started with a dystopia, I am not saying to go to a utopia, because we can see that we can be left without a theatre at all. Except where the theatre is headed, maybe also if 2020 and everything else that has happened has changed it, the way you experience making art and how you experience its impact in society.

Adrian: Further on, I continue to believe that even if it seems utopic, I believe in the force that the theatre has and I do not believe that it will ever change its form, this will always be it. I may be wrong, maybe next year we'll see... I continue to believe that theatre will be in this format, always classic, always live, always strong. The National Theatre, or where the National Theatre will be in the future, I believe would be if some people with vision came along since the job



positions are open for managers and for the artistic director. Unfortunately, from past experiences, very few people who we believe that might lead the institutions get near the theatre, not only the theatre, but in general, because of the experiences we have had in the past, with boards of directors and politics, all of these on the other hand, the support and the right is a form of a bureaucracy, a form of legally built stupidity where the people who manage the institutions then are stopped from working in many other institutions and you don't have the right to work. So it often happens that people who have the power to push the theatre forward do not come, do not get near the institutions.

I hope that this time, first of all it will get closed very quickly because we are working without directors for a year and a half. Imagine an institution without a director for a year and a half. [Jetoni: I actually quite like it]. It is functioning. And I believe that some real people will come along who love it and have a vision for the theatre and us as actors who are there will have nothing left to do but to work with the will and the wish which have and to realize as many good works as possible. But anyhow, I have a dose of optimism that we will soon return to normality and that soon we will return to good plays and good production.

Jetoni: Adri, that's why we are friends. You almost said the words that I continually repeat when asked this question, I do not believe that the theatre can or should convert in whichever other variant, or format, neither digital, because then we can call it whatever else, but not a theatre. So, even the test that we made this year, with all these experiments, online shows, has been to say simply an attempt to remind us of the idea of the theatre, a shadow of the theatre but not the theatre itself. In this aspect, I have not started thinking of alternatives, to say in a year if the pandemic continues, we would realize something else.

No, and I refuse to think and I refuse, I would have refused to be engaged in something else that goes beyond the format of live communication, how it was thought for the theatre with a live public and live actor. In that direction, all the hopes are that the pandemic won't continue; If it does, alternatives within that format should be found, a public, and actor, not any other option.

I know there are organizations, there are theatres in Europe that have started to draft plans, to dream in a digital way, but really maybe we are conservative in that direction, but we are conservative because we believe in the power of the theatre for 2,000 years in the way it's going to come to us. Any type of attempt to leave this format, cannot be called work, it can be called engagement, artistic product, but we could hardly call it theatre.

Aulonë: We'll wrap it here. Many thanks to Jeton and Adrian, it was a great pleasure to learn so much about the theatre because little is discussed about it and I hope we will meet again soon.

Jetoni: I'm glad I saw you taking notes, I hope they will help you. But now, I don't know if the last one sounded optimistic, meaning the fact that we refuse to give up from the idea of the theatre is optimistic.

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Adriani: No, no, absolutely, that's how I got it. I even expected you'd say that if the pandemic doesn't end I won't stay in Kosovo...