

**“ALLEGRETTO ALBANIA”- STEFAN
CAPALIKU'S SERIOUS COMEDY UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF ALTIN BASHA**



Theatre

Keywords: drama, theatre, director, Albanian theatre, postmodern play, grotesque, tragicomic.

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Abstract

“Allegretto Albania” is the only Albanian drama with the largest number of performances in different parts of the world¹. “Due to its originality and finest composition in the dramatic treatment of an acute topic of Albanian society,” Stefan Çapaliku, the playwright of this play, won in 2007 for the third time the award as the Best Dramatic Author in Albania with the serious comedy “Allegretto Albania”. In 2008, “Allegretto Albania” has its premiere at the National Theatre and the same year, the author is nominated for “Europe” prize, for Theatre Innovations. “Allegretto Albania” is a serious comedy, which, as we see in her title, combines the grotesque paradox, as well as the irony. Her fable is about a family which is isolated, for a crime which none of the members have done, while in this country, since the state does not act, the citizens address to an old primitive Kanun to put order. In the mean time, it is organised an extraordinary concert season with guests from abroad, “Allegretto Albania”, to give the idea of a developed European country. This serious comedy is putted on stage by the director Altin Basha, who is characterized for his experimental spirit, theatrical research and alternative aesthetics, expressed those especially in the Albanian dramaturgy. The performance of this play is constructed through a laboratory process, where the playwright was an integral part of it. “Allegretto Albania”, in June 2010, attended the Wiesbaden Festival in Mainz, Germany, and this year, Stefan Capaliku was awarded with the “Critics Award” at the Biennale Theatre in Germany for its originality of the themes, sarcasm and construction. This comedy conveyed a new form of theatre, where Albanian language comes with a stylistic fund and high-spirited tools that are traversed by irony, and these are reflected also in the show, which was on its hand, an interconnection of scenic symbolism, tragicomedy and grotesque, giving us a postmodernist creation on the theatrical scene, both in textual and directorial approach.

1.1 Allegretto and Çapaliku

The first drama of the playwright Stefan Çapaliku (1965), “Invitation for dinner” (1995), if for the author represents the end of the first phase of “great²” themes, for the Albanian dramaturgy of the late 20th and -early 21st century, marks the beginning of a new phase. Almost 25 years have passed since the creation of his first play, and by this author, the so-called “*a miner ofparadoxs*”³, we have 25 plays which have been added to our dramatic fund⁴. Through his dramatic texts, Çapaliku, during a quarter century, has made a visible transition

¹ The world premiere “Allegretto Albania” was performed in 2007 at the National Theater of Skopje directed by Alfred Trebicka, than was represented at Ohrid International Festival that year. The second production was in 2008, at the National Theater of Tirana directed by Altin Basha. In June 2010, this theater with “Allegretto Albania” represented Albania for the first time at the Biennale “New plays from Europe” in Wiesbaden and Mainz, Germany, where it won the first prize from the International Criticism Forum. The third production of this drama was performed by Odeon Theater in Bucharest in 2010, under the direction of Cristian Dumitru. In November 2011, American director Joe Martin hosted the fourth premiere of this work at the Ambassador Theater in Washington DC and on April 15, 2014, it was set for the first time in the Podgorica, Montenegro. Read: <https://sot.com.al/kultura/drama-shqiptare-%E2%80%9CAllegretto-albania%E2%80%9D-n%C3%AB-sken%C3%ABn-teatore-t%C3%AB-malit-t%C3%AB-zi> Retrieved on 20 January 2019

² Capaliku, Stefan, *Pesë drama dhenjëkornanglez*, BotimeIdeart, Tiranë, 2003, p.6.

³ Shllaku, Primo: “Two words about Stefan Çapaliku’s drama”, Çapaliku, Stefan: Five Bloody Comedies, ShBFishta, Lezha, 2010, p. 8. Read: *Absurd is the notion of pre-existentialist philosophies, which includes deep illumination of the meaning of human life, the problems of the individual with society, etc. Our case covers the word “paradox”, which comes from the sphere of logic and is generally characterized by its content by the diagonal combination of cause - effect relationships. The body has its instances of dramatic senses in the paradoxical garden. It gives you the idea that the most common thing you can find in the Albanian world after the stones are the paradoxes. This abundant “miner” has directed the author’s dramatics in question and he can be called paradox miner.*

⁴ “Five dramas and an English corn”, 2003, Three Love Songs, Invitation for Dinner, The Tower of Babel, Utopos, Shoes. Allegretto Albania, and other drama, 2006, seven dramas: Allegretto Albania, Dumplings, Last Minute, An Angel on the 11th Floor, Balkan Express, I’m From Albania, Keep the Door Open, Five Bloody Comedy. Polygraphed Office “Fishta”: 20 years, 2 weeks and 2 days, XXL TV, St. John the Baptist, A History of Losses and Beer, Nail and Soap. Denmark, Our Land, made in Albania, Dome.

from *the dead moral of socialist realism*⁵ to a contemporary conception, approaching it with the latest trends in the world dramaturgy.

Stefan Çapaliku creativity offers the originality of a style, which combines both grotesque and surrealism context and uses them to give a different perception of the national reality: *Among from the elements that associate with Albanian reality, he raises surreal situations, which are indeed surreal; and we percept a strong symbolism that works within them. They really move under a somewhat gruesome contradiction and thanks to the author's parodic situations, also as constructed methods, beside the modernist drama, and rarely of anti-drama. "There is a strong spirit of opposition to the social and moral that suffers the lives of mankind, which makes it tragicomic and grotesque"*⁶. On the other hand, Primo Shllaku, in "Five Bloody Comedies" points out that: *"In Capaliku's drama, processing and searching of various themes imitates and replaces, sometimes the philosophical quest. Circumstances and characters, "ordinary wonders", but also with the "normal paradox" give the works of Capalik, the status of a consciousness that has decided to resist the epidemics of the century."*⁷ In its first decade of creativity, in his plays, prevail existential problems with philosophical grades, while at the beginning of the second decade, he enters on a new phase, where obvious changes are noticed: the new theatre of Çapaliku has passed through a tactical metamorphosis, which aims by linking the existing levels of the sensitivity of the spectator to the high probability of the experiment. *Our author enters into this endeavour with enthusiasm that is probably not as new as his experiment, but that, in its own primitive ambition, add to him and to the troupe, a notable European prize*⁸.

Stefan Çapaliku won for the third time in 2007, the prize for the Best Dramatic Author in Albania, for the play "Allegretto Albania", after receiving this award in 1995 with "Invitation for Dinner", and in 2003 with "Three love songs."

In 2008, *Allegretto Albania* was putted on stage at the National Theatre and this year, the author was nominated for the prize "Europe" for theatrical innovations. Both the author and the director Altin Basha agree that *the cultivation of Albanian drama and theatre is the only and proper way for the national identity in drama and theatre*⁹. This creative duo, collaborates for the first time in 2008 with the serious comedy "Allegretto Albania" and then in 2017 with the drama "Made in Albania". In June 2010, "Allegretto Albania" participated in the Wiesbaden Festival in Mainz, Germany, and the same year, Stefan Çapaliku is awarded with the "Critics Award" at the Theatre Biennale in Germany for the *originality of the subject, the sharpness of ideas, sarcasm and form of construction*.

1.2 Postmodernity in Dramatic Text

"Allegretto Albania" is a serious comedy, as it is dictated by the word itself, which deals with a dramatic text, where humour and seriousness are intertwined. The playwright himself states that: *The theme at Allegretto Albania is in itself an absurdity of Albanian life, so it is not an ethnographic topic, I do not deal with Kanun, i deal with the fact that others benefit from the disaster of locked people, and with the fact that this civil society makes projects for them, that in return gives them a lot of money, and then they abuse with it. This*

⁵ Papagjoni, Josif, "Era" Çapaliku, Gazeta Shqip, 15.08. 2007 p25.

⁶ Papagjoni, Josif, "Era" Çapaliku, Gazeta Shqip, 15.08. 2007 p25.

⁷ Read: Shllaku, Primo: "Dyffjalëpërdramatikën e Stefan Çapalikut", Çapaliku, Stefan: *Pesëkomeditëpërgjakshme*, SHB Fishta, Lezhë 2010, p. 8.

⁸ Shllaku, Primo: "Dyffjalëpërdramatikën e Stefan Çapalikut", Çapaliku, Stefan: *Pesëkomeditëpërgjakshme*, SHB Fishta, Lezhë, 2010, p 8.

⁹ <https://www.voal.ch/teatri-i-ri-modern-dhe-performatist-i-regjisorit-basha-dhe-dramaturgut-capaliku-nga-mexhit-prenci/> retrieved on 20 January 2019

gives both the tragic and comical aspect at the same time. "Allegretto Albania" is a black comedy where laughter stems from the sadness, not as in classical comedies, but here tragicomedy and comedy come close to each other and they simply pass from one to another."¹⁰

In this play events occur within a family that is locked for blood feud. The head of the family is locked up with his wife and his two sons, since the victim's relatives have menaced that they will avenge the best of the tribe. The head of the family, after a detailed analysis of the other members of the tribe, has concluded that the best of the tribe is he himself. All this happens when in the city, outside the home, has started a classical concert season "Allegretto Albania". Among the members of the family, there are also two other characters which represent the missionaries of charity associations that are supposed to give psychological and economic relief to this family. Incidentally, they bring in, some instruments of the orchestra Allegretto Albania. In the meantime the killer is free. The locked family watches him on television, returning from a peacekeeping mission from Iraq. In the end of the play, it is the murderer himself who proposes and solves the issue, *a deus ex machina solution*: an outbound plan for Greece.

What is noticed in the works of Çapaliku's in general, and in Allegretto Albania in particular, relates with a special form of creating a distinct, original, lineage within the genre of postmodern tragedy.

If we refer to the postmodern elements in a dramatic work, summarized in Ridvan Dibra's book "A Game named Postmodernism", we find many of these elements in "Allegretto Albania". In the following list, the elements in italics are the elements of postmodernism encountered in this play:

antiquity or myth and mysticism,
the cross-text or text entry,
Playing with the symbols, images and stylistic structures,
thematic parallelism or parallel treatment of two or more topics,
irony in the system throughout the literary work, which is present in the treatment of history and postmodernity, is often associated with cynicism,
editing, copying, collage, the latter although the category of visual arts becomes characteristic of the postmodern literary work,
archaisms or exploitation of archaic discourse structures
regionalism or frequent use of a dialectical provincial discourse,
memory and play with the reader's memory,
tribalism or giving tribal, ordinary, ordinary elements,
bible, detail or scroll from the Bible and other sacred books,
quotation and metatext, which means obtaining a new text from using a previous text,
the presentation of the ritual in the postmodern literary work
parodies where the past and previous practices are treated from the perspective of parody,
lyricism and the presence of lyric elements in the literary text,
the retaking of old-styles and their alternation with new style,
childhood (infantile) as an expression of sincerity¹¹.

The cross-text or text entry, in *Allegretto*, we first observe part of Shakespearean discourse, precisely from *Macbeth* tragedy:

¹⁰ Interview with the playwright, Professor Stefan Capaliku, Tiranë 2019.

¹¹ Dibra, Ridvan, Petro, Rita, *Një lojë me emrin postmodernizëm*, Tiranë, ShB Albas, 2007, p. 58.

Father: (To himself) Tell the lady when she has the drink ready, to ring. You go to sleep then.
The oldest son: Shakespeare. Makbeth's last monologue before Dulkan's assassination.
Father: Well done. (*the elder son*) Look how good he is. You did not do it
The elder son: I'm sorry if I was absent minded. Is this my hand? ¹²

Playing with symbols, images and stylistic structures, regionalism or often the use of a dialectical discourse, retrieval of old-styles discourse and their alternation with new styles, pervade during the whole text. We find it being repeated, chapter by chapter, article by article, paragraph for paragraph of "Lekë Dukagjini Kanun":

Father: CHAPTERTWENTY-TWO.ARTICLE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN... Paragraph eight hundred thirty-eight?

The elder son: They are entering without finding a lurk position, have a coffee, eat and take with them the bread from a strangers house, went to lurk and murdered someone, the victim's relatives are searching the house that gave them bread, to murder them for blood.

Father: Nice. Famous article. Paragraph eight hundred thirty-nine. (to the elderson) You the other one?

The youngerson: "the bread and the gun given consciously to the murder, brings the blood of him who had given them."

The father: Well, that is important.

The Mother: Satedinwill have a bad luck.

The Father: (to his wife) Good, good. We got it. We continue! Chapter 1, one hundred and twenty-two, OF THE THIRD COUNTRY. Trust Paragraph eight hundred and sixty-nine.?

The youngerson: "If someone is threatened to blood, he will be obliged to escape and hide himself."The Father: Good.Chapter 1, one hundred and twenty-four. Blood. Paragraph eight hundred and eighty-six?

The elder son: In Albanian Kanun, all sons born cannot separated from each other.

The Father: Listen to me, my wife. Listen: "All the boys born are considered good and do not differ from each other."

The Mother: No, you have to listen to me"They have no distinction from each other. So, there is no one better or worse »

The father. Yes... Paragraph eight hundred and eighty-seven?

The youngerson: The price of man's life is equal for good and bad ones.

The Father: Paragraph eight hundred eighty-eight?

The elder son: Everyone consider himself good and he says to himself: "I am a man" and they say, "Are you a man?"

The father: Good.

The younger son: Finished?

The father: No. a little.

The elder son: uff

The Father: Chapter 1, one hundred and thirty-four, blood reconciler.

The elder son: Paragraph, nine hundred and sixty-five. Blood reconciler is someone who tries to reconcile the blood.

The younger Son: Paragraph, nine hundred and sixty-six. If the Blood reconciler manage to reconcile the blood, he will have a pair of shoes.

¹² Çapaliku, Stefan, *Allegretto Albania dhe drama të tjera*, Enti Botues Fishta Lezhë, 2006, p.20.

The mother: Enough now, I will tell the last two. Paragraph nine hundred and sixty-seven. The shoes of the bloodreconciler must cost 500 pennies. Paragraph, nine hundred and sixty-eight. The shoes of the blood reconciler must be paid by the family of the person who will be murdered. (to her husband) Are you happy now?
 The father: Yes, I am. We have finished the review for today¹³.

Irony throughout the literary work, which is present in the treatment of history and postmodernity, is often associated with cynicism¹⁴.

Allegretto Albania in the title carries the paradox of grotesque and ironic: while in this country, as the state does not act and the citizens address an old primitive Kanun to put order, an extraordinary concert season is held with the guests from abroad, to give the idea of a developed and European country. Also, the whole story fades over irony, starting from the fact that the family's imprisonment occurs for a nearly infantile¹⁵ treatment that becomes one of the Kanun articles that forces the "best of the tribe" to stand day and night with Kalashnikov in hand. Likewise, a cautiously irony goes through the treatment of non-profit associations, which "come to the aid" to resolve the conflicts of families confined to blood feuds, but meanwhile use the circumstances to benefit for themselves. *The situation becomes absurd, while the purpose and the initial mission (of these associations) passes into a moral change.*¹⁶

Another ironic and equally paradoxical fact is the solution of the fable, by the murderer himself, who, after having influenced in locking the family, also brings them out of the house. All this situation, as Papagjoni calls it, gets a serious note at the end. Regarding to the game with symbol, its frame becomes evident at the end of the show when the characters are now back in the instrument, accompanied in the background by the TV gigs *Allegretto Albania* (a silly parody this full of subtexts of the pier within, for the post-communist Albanian reality that rips utopia and cheating¹⁷...) As we listed above, *Allegretto Albania* summarizes lots of elements of a postmodern play.

2.1 The Direction of Basha

Altin Basha is characterized by his experimental spirit, theatrical research and alternative aesthetics expressed especially in Albanian dramaturgy, and through a rich theatrical language, as critics Mexhit Prenci claims, *in every of his show, it is obvious that Basha is Basha.*¹⁸

In the first period of the Albanian professional theatre, there were evidenced directorial individualities who had completed studies abroad. (Kujtim Spahivogli and Pirro Mani, Esat Oktrova, in the Soviet Union, Mihal Luarasi, Hungary, Serafin Fanko, Czech, etc.) Each of them brought theatrical experiences from the respective countries, which undoubtedly raised the Albanian theatre to a new professional level. This level would be impossible to achieve if there wasn't the influence and appropriation of the methodology they followed, which, as we know belonged to the east camp.

Altin Basha, a post-communist theatre director, brings another experience in the Albanian theatre space, the English one. He is specialised at the BADA-British American Drama Academy (1994-1995), after

¹³ Çapaliku, Stefan, *Allegretto Albania dhe drama të tjera*, Enti Botues Fishta, Lezhë, 2006, p.21-22.

¹⁴ Papagjoni, Josif, *Teatri dhe dramaturgjia shqiptare*, Shblu, Tiranë, 2011, p.207.

¹⁵ Ibidem

¹⁶ Papagjoni, Josif, *Teatri dhe dramaturgjia shqiptare*, Shblu, Tiranë, 2011, p.207.

¹⁷ Papagjoni, Josif, "Era" Çapaliku, *Gazeta Shqip*, 15.08.2007, p.25.

¹⁸ http://www.arkivalajmeve.com/Teatri-i-ri-modern-dhe-performatist-i-regjisorit-Basha-dhe-dramaturgut-Capaliku.1047970660/The_theoreticians_of_the_literature_Velek_and_Uroren_would_say_Basha_is_Basha. Retrieved on 20 January, 2019

completing studies at the Academy of Arts, in the Dramatic Faculty. He created a lab with the students of the Academy of Arts, which later led to the creation of one of the first theatrical companies after the 90-s –“The Oaz Company”. Such performances as “Love in the Van”, (2000) "Vita Brevis" (2001) are indicative of the result of a lab work, giving him the name of - *the director of the youth*.¹⁹

What is evidenced in the work of Basha is a fusion between the simplified theatre and the Brechtian theatre. *I prefer Brechtian aesthetics, because I'm fond of the theatre, which breaks the conventions*.²⁰ This is evidenced not only in his directorial concept that he embodies to the whole spectacle, but also in the directing the actors towards the characters. He uses this aesthetic to bring out the maximization of his idea, thus, creating an infallible authenticity.

If the structure of a dramatic text, as Çapaliku points out, *in its entirety (event, intrigue, argument), is the skeleton of a dramatic work, while "texture" (meter, dictation, syntax) is its skin*²¹, then the directorial concept through dramaturgical text and stage elements, is its flesh and blood.

At "Allegretto Albania" show, we see lots of elements that speak out for this concept. This begins with the work of actors towards the characters and the by interweaving them with the place of action through a special style of the language, we get on *stage, a dynamic conditioning, which does not quit, even as spectators, they are part of the 'show', part of life and human luck*²². All this creates a special interactivity with the public by pushing them to achieve an individual understanding of the event, typical of a post-dramatic theatre.

2.2 Allegretto Albania - A Laboratory Process

In Albania, the laboratory process recognizes its beginnings with Spahivogli with its Youth Laboratory Theatre in the early 1970s²³, followed in the 1980s by the creation of a theatrical laboratory in the theatre Migjeni by director Serafin Fanko²⁴. Altin Basha applies also a laboratory process alongside with the playwright Çapaliku and the actors in the serious comedy, *Allegretto Albania*.

Numerous theatrical experiences, especially in the recent years, have become a norm, and we see how the text begins as a small script, and through a close collaboration between the author, director and the actors, takes at the end a genuinely scenic structure²⁵. However, we encounter two experiences: one is the Frenchman F. Zhemje, according to whom "It is author's right and not the director's, who with his clutches tries to replace the essence of the text"²⁶, and the other, that of a Frenchman, theatre theorist Antoine Artaud, who

¹⁹ Interview with the director Altin Basha, in relation to this subject. Top Channel, Tiranë, 2019

²⁰ Brehti, although from an ideological point of view, has some limitations that the modern world today does not fit, from the standpoint of values in the acting methodology as well as dramaturgy in essence, is quite modern. Although very little in Albania, I like to follow this author and for the simple reason that he has been Shakespeare's worshiper, he relied heavily on the Elizabethan theatre, organic realistic theatre, theatrical theatre, with outdated theatrical impostures. I am against a bombastic set-up game, which is often *encountered in our theatre even after the collapse of the communist system. This has come to be the legacy of the theatre before the '90s, where there were also some reminiscences of the time when Albanian theatre was still nonprofessional, remaining stench. I have tried to attach my work to Brecht's aesthetics to make the theatre more organic and more direct. Interview with director Altin Basha, about this topic. Top Channel, Tiranë, 2019*

²¹ *The form of a dramatic work can be "structural" or "textural". The first is of great magnitude and concerns the issues of arranging the elements of the work, while the other is of smaller dimensions or narrowly linguistic matters. If we made a comparison with the hope of a greater concretization of what we are saying, then the structure will be recounted, "in its entirety (the event, the intrigue, the argument) is the skeleton of a dramatic work, while "texture" meter, dictate, syntax) is her skin.* Çapaliku, Stefan, *Libri i vogël i dramatikës*, ShBLU, Tiranë, 2010, p. 39.

²² Abdullah, Zeneli, *Alegoria Allegretto Albania*, Gazeta Shqip, nr. 112, Tiranë, 26.4.2009, p.29.

²³ Spahivogli, Skënder, *Jeta e njeriut si tingujt e kitarës, Kujtim Spahivogli*, Uegen, Tiranë, 2007, p. 253

²⁴ <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/serafin-fanku-regjisura-deshira-endrra-jeta-dhe-dhimbja-ime?r=pop5s>

²⁵ The latest event is the 2019 Best Comedy in London Home, "I am darling", by Laura Wade. Thanks to the laboratory process that lasted nearly 6 months, where the author, director and actors helped fill in the full theatrical text, turning it into a very successful work. (translation D.D) received from Wade, Laura, Home I am darling, Oberon Books, London, 2019, p.5.

²⁶ Zhemje, F. *Teatr, Bjesjedi, sobranije Poljem Gzeljm, Gosudarstvjennoje Izdatjelstvo Iskusstvo, Moskva, 1958, f.91 taken from Oktrova, Esat, Probleme të mjeshhtërisë së regjisorit, SHB Afërdita, Tiranë, 2002, p. 17*

"rejects the superstitions of the theatre with the text and dictatorship of the writer"²⁷. Meanwhile postmodern theater recognizes another valid relationship that of the author's close relationship with the director and actors during the rehearsal process. This lab process reinforces the idea that drama can only be written in theater (on stage). The presence of the dramatist during the process of the rehearsals is a necessity and exactly this form of work was used to raise the spectacle of "Allegretto."

*Çapaliku was always present and very attentive, to follow the actors even during the improvisations on the stage and then everyday he came with new completed materials*²⁸. It was during this process, that the initial text of this serious comedy received a new rating. Several monologues as well as certain scenes were added. Precisely during the rehearsals, the director and the author themselves highlighted some important moments. These moments emerged from this process, which the author then reworked by turning them into new scenes, which completely framed the play. These moments will be highlighted below through various elements of the show.

2.3 Scenography and Direction as a whole

Basha uses since at the beginning of the show a symbolic detail: a line of shoes set at the beginning of the scene, while the characters stand behind in bare feet. *Shoes come to life in the moment the characters come to wear them*²⁹. This detail is used also by the director at the end of the show, but in inversion. Characters leave the house, leaving their shoes there. The shoes originally come to us as an element of the presence of a human being as well as the desire to go somewhere. In the end, they come as an element of the presence of someone who was, of a human being who used to wear these shoes. And by remaining there, they come as an element of memory that these characters once lived in this home and now they are not.

The director's image begins with the scenic treatment where the symbol is very evident. In unity with the dramatic text, directing and acting, is also the visual image. These elements, all together, by following a unified language, give the show its original style. Elements of symbols as a continuation of postmodern genre are seen also in the scenographical design. The director has a clear conceptual of the text which is reflected throughout the scenography. In "Allegretto Albania" it is difficult to distinguish where the director's vision ends, and where that scenographer starts, but we can say for sure that the fusion of the ideas, turns out to be successful. For this reason, the scenography, especially in this show, can not be taken apart from the directorial image. Each director tends to build a scenography that is not illustrative, but that creates metaphors, without returning in a purpose to itself, - underlined Basha, - "*but always using a metaphorical language in the function of the idea of the show*"³⁰. The scenographer Ilirjana Basha, who is also the costume designer of the show, on one hand has best illustrated the director's concept and on the other fulfills what we can call the style of the çapaliki drama.

At the middle of the scene, we can see the watchtower, formed from two stairs, which made together the skeleton of a tower. By this skeleton the director symbolizes exactly what is left of this society. The walls of the tower have been removed and in the middle of the scene lies the remaining skeleton of this tower. This scenography even though large in size, almost in realistic dimensions of a tower, also gives a grotesque meaning. The walls of the tower are opened, and in them is written Kanun and their position creates a siege. These come also as heavy walls which separate this family from the world.

²⁷ Oktrova, Esat, Problemet e mjeshtrisë së regjisorit, SHB Afërdita, Tiranë, 2002, p. 17

²⁸ Intervistë me regjisorin Altin Basha, në lidhje me këtë temë. Top Channel, Tiranë 2019.

²⁹ Ibidem

³⁰ Ibidem

Iliriana Basha at the first glance, builds a scene with realistic objects, filling it with everyday elements such as plates, pots, spoons, as well as modern elements, such as lap-top and projector. An effective element, which comes at first as a dramatic finding, and then as naturally as a element of scenography, is *the rheumatic apparatus, a kind of discovery to the bone marrow of each of the characters of the show*. A figurative DNA of old this old wound (the locking) since centuries³¹.

But the scenography combines a mixture of elements as realistic as symbolic: *the walls are written not with the slogans of an absolute political power, but with the articles and paragraphs of the Kanun of a country, of a time, and of inadequate people; even though as absurd as: clean sheets drying (because even the most extreme conditions, the everyday life continues), and these sheets also create the big screen, the small screen, the monitor that serves as the "link" between the two towers*.³²

The detail of the television set in front of the public is another novelty of "Allegretto". Basha gives this facility a metaphorical approach by treating the TV as a cupboard, an idea that comes from what television represents for Albanians: a primary food.³³ The cupboard bread, is an everyday reminder to us, a place where food stands. He uses the TV as a metaphor that carries the first information. The director compares the TV with the bread cupboard, ironizing the importance of it has for Albanians, as much as the bread. Television occupies a dominant position in postmodern Albanian culture, and our strong relationship to it, is related to the lack and the limiting timetable of programs during the communist era.

This cupboard is quite functional as it creates the opportunity for the presenter to enter and exit as needed, as Basha really inserts the TV element, but the news are not recorded, as is commonly found in other shows. He brings a new detail, putting the actress under the screen and from there she gives the news.

The ease relocation of objects, such as the TV screen, as well as the bottom of the screen and the presenter, or the washing line in the middle of the house where the clothes are opened to dry do not hinder, but on the contrary affect positively to the proper timing of the show.

Despite the numerous elements we mentioned, the scenography has managed to create the proper stage space, that identify the style of the show, but also a good use of all scenic plans, both vertical and horizontal.

2.4 Personae and Actors

In "Allegretto Albania", the grotesque is not only evidenced in the dramatic text and in the visual conception of the show, but we notice these elements even in the treatment of the characters. The names of the characters are another innovative detail. Capaliku avoids naming the characters, and the individual characterization of each of them, is made through musical instruments. Musical instruments go pretty well with the archetypes of each character. Characterization according to musical instruments is another artistic finding that the playwright makes.

The Father or Contrabass
 The Mother or Violoncello
 The oldest son or Basstubo

³¹ Abdullah, Zeneli, *Alegoria Allegretto Albania*, Gazeta Shqip, Tiranë, nr.112, 26.4.2009, p.29.

³² Ibidem

³³ Interview with the director Altin Basha, in relation to this topic. Top Channel, Tiranë, 2019.

The elder son or Flute
The Teacher or Korno
Pajtimja or Violin
Satedini or Fagot

Only two of the characters are identified by the names: Pajtimja (from the reconciliation that she must do). She works for the Reconciliation Association, and Satedini, who is an ex-killer.

The characters are divided into two groups: On one hand the captive family, which consists of the father, the mother, the elder son and the little boy. On the other hand, the teacher, who is also the CEO of the association of the confined households, and the TV presenter and Pajtimja (these two roles are played by the same actress), the CEO of the reconciliation association. Both represent the "interest" of the society to "mediate" with forms in power such as the media, civil society organizations and others. In this group is Satedini who is the cause, the consequence and the "solution", the cause of the murder, which has consequently led to the persuasion of the family and the one who brings them out, even though he leaves them homeless.

The father or Contrabass is a man on his fifties, a critical musician. This role is played by Mirush Kabashi. With a high-plastic performance, he brings together a mixture of comic and tragic feature. At certain moments, he will identify the Head of the house. Metaphorically speaking, this character has its own Kanun in the brain. The misinterpretation of the Kanun, isolates his family. He is the one who keeps the family locked. Finding himself in an unusual situation, he is not certain if he is the one who will be deceived, as much as he thinks he is not. He believes that being the best of the tribe will make him the target to get the revenge, or maybe not. This is the beautiful finding that conceives this serious comedy, a dramatic special finding. Kabashi embodies with such naturalness the character that involves a tragic and comic conflict.

A special moment in dealing with the show is when the father confesses to his two sons, a scene that has been added - as the director says - during the laboratory process. In this scene, we have a personal confession moment, where the father speaks to his sons about his past. *Through this monologue, he tells that he was a young man like them, and he did things like everyone else, things that boys may find impossible, such as masturbation*³⁴.

An anthological father, this musical critic is identified with one song, which is transformed in the leitmotif of the show "For You Homeland", a well known Albanian song, that the actor himself, found during the rehearsals.³⁵

Through Kabashi's skillful actorial method, he goes to a high-level that it is almost impossible to think of another actor in this role, just as it is impossible to think of another actor except Olta Daku in the role of the Mother.

The Mother or Violoncello is a woman at her forty-fives, an ex-economist, but now a housewife. This character is played by Olta Daku. Since the Mother's first presentation, we see the relationship with a special stage object: the axe. Detachment of axle holder comes as an element of self-defence, as well as to protect her family if it is needed. The relation with this object comes organically from Daku and on the other hand conveys a grotesque note. We see how this cold weapon turns into a close friend during the everyday work, such as the roaching of potatoes, this routine ritual, with which starts the show after the characters wear their

³⁴ Interview with the director Altin Basha, in relation to this topic. Tiranë, 2019.

³⁵ Ibidem

shoes. The frying of potatoes in a well-fried oil, live, is a detail thought by the playwright Capaliku, to bring the feeling of cooking in the presence of the public, thus making participant even the sense of smell in the show. Daku brings the wise woman, and in every phrase is clearly read the subtext that evidences even more the absurdity of the situation in which they are. "Thanks" to her husband's Kanun, she has to do not only the housekeeper, but anyhow, she tries to maintain a kind of balance in the family. Her interventions, at the right time with the relevant action, such as when it is present in the dialogue or not, speaks out of a sharp actor ear and of a highly professional stage behavior.

Basha directs this somewhat more attracted figure, with masculinity, for the fact that it is surrounded by three males and is constantly in their service. Her distant rapport gives us the idea of a human being who is there more for the houseworking than as a mother. To give another plan of this figure, during the lab process, a monologue was added, which was not at the beginning of the dramatic text. This monologue conveyed with great skill, breaks down the mother's character, and in return, enriches the complexity of this figure. Daku follows a very different moment of the character, a fragment from childhood and adolescence, thus representing a soft and fragile side. This very emotional moment comes as a counterpoint to the course, as we see during the whole show, a bitter mother who uses lots of irony, and here and there lots of humour.

A detail to be highlighted in the *Olta Daku* play is the dexterity of the stage moves, the pace with which she does her daily work, her ability during the process of opening and collecting clothes on the washing line she has placed in the middle of the home that creates the metaphor of someone who "spends her lifetime washing and wiping clothes". In *Allegretto Albania*, the role of the mother is played by an actress who manifests a complete psycho-physical unity.

The elder son or Basstubeis played by the actor Gazmend Paja. He is a sixteen years old boy, who although committed no crime, right in the age of exploration of the world and of himself, finds himself locked up. This character is conceived as an individual without personal identity, but who finds that identity through the images he sees on television. The adolescent boy succeeds in conveying Robert De Niro's role model in the Taxi driver. This is done visually, through his dressing and hairstyle, but also the way he behaves and how he speaks. He fails to build a normal dialogue with the other characters.

Just as the mother holds the axe, he does not leave for any moment the gun, by creating a relationship with it that begins to define his character. *Playing with the gun, most of the time, as a ritual and compulsion, with actions that function without interruption, violates him, as someone's else gun violated them and obliged them to be seized there ... to waste the painful time which is manifested by the mimicry and plastic gesture of actors*³⁶. As well as for this character has been added a moment, which the director underlines as a very hard scene of this character. In this monologue he conveys the whole relationship with the world that he builds as a relationship of violence: *Is it Me or you*³⁷!

Treating this character in this form, the director underlines the idea of how Kanun influenced the deformation of these characters. The elder brother has become aggressive and his little brother has become obese and sedentary. - emphasizes Basha.

The little boy or the flute is about thirteen years old and is played by Xhejni Fama. This character is visually the opposite of a Flute, which is evidenced by its overweight. With a smaller, almost episodic role, the little boy who needs to be alert all the time, even when he eats up to the top of the tower, he observes and reacts

³⁶ Abdullah, Zeneli, *Alegoria Allegretto Albania*, Gazeta Shqip, Tiranë, nr. 112 26.4.2009, p29

³⁷ Interview with the director Altin Basha, in relation to this topic. Tiranë, 2019.

at the same time, realizes a good character. Although an actor in his beginnings, his scenic responsibility is felt in each scene. Through a very concrete way, he succeeds in synchronizing quite well with other actors, as well as with the whole set of performances, bringing a new, tragicomic physiognomy that fits well with Kabashi and Daku.

The teacher or Korno, is a retired, volunteer of the reconciliation association. The actor Ahmet Pasha conveys a very detailed figure that brings the intellectual, as well as he does not pay attention to the situation in which two young boys are locked in. *The teacher is the transition teacher, the "charity" teacher who reduces the pain with that light that he needs to give under conditions and circumstances that he also has, but ... he must carry out the mission for what is paid.*³⁸

This character portrays another moment so comical and also ironic of the show, a scene this created also during the rehearsals. Pasha describes with great certainty the propagation of frogs, creating grotesque between content and form. This lecture addresses two youngsters who are locked in. The director highlights this moment to ironize the Albanian education system, which gives unnecessary knowledge. *These are unnecessary knowledge for children living in freedom which becomes even more unnecessary for the children locked in. Society though is formally presented as sensitive to them, does not give what is needed, the first condition: that of being free*³⁹.

Pajtimja or the violin

This character brings the president of the Association of Reconciliation and Assistance, a representative of the numerous transition non-profit associations and is played by Klea Konomi. The same actor also plays the role of the public television presenter passing skillfully from one character to another, *as a speaker that combines the scene between the scenic "montage visualization" and the extra-thematic narrative that is conceived within the role of a media spy and message of the reconciliation association*⁴⁰. Engaged in these two roles, she gives the distinctive character, staying within the conception of the whole show. From the speaker who feels nothing while the news is being, she rushes to the chairman of the Association of Reconciliations, Pajtimja, but she does not do any reconciliation. It is Pajtimja who confuses the "humanitarian" aids, with the musical instruments. This trickery is itself the quintessence of Allegretto Albania.

Satedine or Fagot is Mother's aunt's son. This character is played by Vasjan Lami. Satedini, a former assassin, who helps in the creation of the conflict, a prototype "representative" of the crime, but who knows how to swim in any situation. *The conclusion that gives the show rudiment, a new beginning, when it is in the end. A cycle, or concentric circles of the same vital ritual.*⁴¹

The actors, who follow each of them their individuality, have captured the essence of the respective figures, Mirush Kabashi, by playing with naivety and sincerity, Olta Daku, through a subtle irony, spells on the authenticity and interpretative features of a tragicomic postmodern play that is rarely seen in the Albanian theatre scene.

³⁸Abdullah, Zeneli, *Alegoria Allegretto Albania*, Gazeta Shqip, Tiranë, 26.4.2009

³⁹Intervistë me regjisorin Altin Basha, në lidhje me këtë temë. Top Channel, Tiranë, 2019.

⁴⁰Enver, S. Morina, *Shpërfytyrimi komik i situatave nëpër kohë*, Gazeta Lajm, 8.4.2009

⁴¹Abdullah, Zeneli, *Alegoria Allegretto Albania*, Gazeta Shqip, nr. 112, 26.4.2009, p29

A detail to be noted in treating the characters together from three generations of actors is *the mixture of Brechtian style with Stanislav's style, where the actor-character not only experiences the figure but also keeps a distance from it*.⁴² All these elements speak out about the clear directorial style of Altin Basha.

The costumes of Iliriana Basha are in tune with the other elements of the show. The dresses of the characters are all kept in a realistic style, creating the types according to the archetypes they represent, but where there are no combinations of elements, as we saw in the scenography.

The music composed by Endri Sina also gives a special display values. Working with the actors vocal and highlighting the right musical moments, accompanies the whole show without straining. The song "For You Homeland" is well-known and very significant for the show. This song is sung by the Father, even under certain circumstances, undergoes in modifications, thus framing as grotesque, absurd, and humorous, and makes music match the style of play. "For your homeland" was also a source of group work, *Mirush Kabashisang it by chance and it remained*.⁴³

"Allegretto Albania" is a show where all the elements merge into a symbiosis with the scenography and the concept of the director.

This show, as a consequence of the prejudice that Albanian drama has faced in the last decades, had, when it first appeared, not a large interest, but when this show went abroad, it was estimated not only by criticism, but won seven prizes. The result of this success is the laboratory process of, which Basha underlines: *Albanian drama can only be written in the process. Even the dramatist alike, as the scenic construction of a show is a matter of process. The best works of dramaturgy have been created during the lab process*.⁴⁴

Allegretto Albania is a good sample of a close work between the playwright and the actor, the director with the playwright, the scenery with the actors, the composer with the director, the actors and the author, in the end, it can be said that this was a group that embraced this process work and the result showed that it worked successfully.

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⁴² <http://www.arkivalajmeve.com/Teatri-i-ri-modern-dhe-performatist-i-regjisorit-Basha-dhe-dramaturgut-Capaliku.1047970660/> retrieved on 20 January 2019.

⁴³ Mirushi asked the composer Endri Sina to find another song, but no one fitted as "For You Homeland". Interview with director Altin Basha on this topic. Top Channel, Tirana, May 2019.

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