

# The voice of the national's cad – *A stormy night*

---

## Theatre- Chronicles and Essays

Title: Author: Oana Stoica

Date: November 2010

Caragiale is alive and well. The demonstration is made by Alexandru Dabija, in his spectacle from the National Theatre of Iași, „A stormy night”, a picturesque intrusion in the Romanian national specific: caddishness. The lack of manners has been our 15 minutes of fame for centuries now; therefore, Dabija humorously commits himself in doing the inventory of national boors, the little details that make us the rednecks of Europe.

In the show from Iași, Caragiale's play remains as we know it. Nothing disturbs the confused love story between Zița and Rică Venturiano, with the twists and turns that turn upside down the domestic peace from Master's Dumitrache “famely”. The difference is in the way in which the characters make their self-portraits. A gesture, an interjection, a certain glance compose the portrait of the Romanian boor, the one that smacks his lips, munches, burps, chews with a smacking noise, farts, rubs his belly, urinates where he wants and in public, has sex in the same way, is misogynist, rude, slothful, ruffian, sometimes dumb beyond belief, more than perverse, but moral in his speeches, with high principles up to the point where they become trivial while serenely doing the opposite, he is goofy, lewd, pulls up his clothes, shows his underwear and he loudly defecates. The poor taste and poor upbringing compile the synthesis of the national spirit. Dabija identifies defects of our behaviour up to the fifteenth generation, from our ancestors, in an unostentatious demonstration that the Romanian was born a boor.

Stage designer Dragoș Buhagiar is constant with himself, which translates as genius. Caragiale mentioned scaffolds in his text so Buhagiar meticulously recreates them, unstable, dangerously shaky in case of sex at their foundation (Veta and Chiriac), with mortar in the yard (made with the help of Chiriac's incredible urine jet executed with great art), an wood outhouse, used redundantly, lamp electrical pillars, a saw buck with the proper



EDITURA PENTRU LITERATURA CONTEMPORANA

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE PRESS

saw and a drinking fountain. The details are a treat. Everything is dirty with lime, the saw buck has marks from the cutting, the scaffolds are fragile and crude. In addition, the audience is placed on the stage, in the vicinity of the actors, made to peep and eavesdrop in Master Dumitrache “neighbour’s” back yard.

The spectacle is an insanity that shows what “it is not proper” in conformity with our parents’ conceptions, but which “is proper” and is done in real life. Of course, the fake chastity is appalled and the spectators either pout with reprobation, or laugh loudly. Dabija does not give lectures of morals, he just shows us how we have been and how we are. The genes of the vernacular Romanian way are identified in time and passed on from father to son just like Stephan’s the Great Moldavia, to his nephews’ nephews, that is to say to us. The director’s laugh is serene, relaxed, with no trace of accusations.

Caragiale’s play made waves in its time. Nowadays we perceive it as a classic, therefore non-threatening, un-intrusive in the reality of the third millennium. Dabija restored it its cheeky vivacity of contemporary peep hole, with no embellishments, reading the text just like for “the first and foremost time”, as our friend Rică would say. Naturally the reactions varied, from the saint indignation to the slight amusement, because the Romanian spectator can be rigid and superficial. Moreover, the secret of a perfect representation is the assuming of the parts. To play a boor just to the half gives the character a healthy dose of falsity. At Iași, the actors probably feel the need to spare the delicate ears of the spectators. At Bucharest, the home of all Mitică’s, the danger of prudery was far, as such, the inhibitions relaxed. The actors took a plunge in their characters with the enthusiasm of Petra’s Stephan’s Nică hid the linden’s tree popinjay. The feast was complete and the “boorish” Romania showed herself in all her glory, without the troublesome leaf of the country’s brand.

Dabija is smart when he is. Romania not so much.



“Vasile Alecsandri” National Theatre, Iași

“A stormy night” by I.L.Caragiale

Director: Alexandru Dabija

Stage director: Dragoș Buhagiar

Cast:

Master Dumitrache: Călin Chirilă

Nae Ipingescu: Florin Mircea

Veta: Petronela Grigorescu

Zița: Haruna Condurache

Chiriac: Dumitru Năstrușnicu

Rică Venturiano: Cosmin Maxim

Spiridon: Doru Aftanasiu.



Translated by: *Marina Băcanu*  
**MTTLC, Bucharest University**

