

TRANSFORMING FACES, TRANSFORMING ROLES: MAKEUP AND MASKS IN SILVIU PURCĂRETE'S *THE SCARLET PRINCESS*

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BIO

Minela Popa is a leading make-up artist on the Romanian stage, with extensive experience in theatre and film. Collaborating with renowned directors such as Silviu Purcărete and Robert Wilson, Popa's artistry has enriched the visual dimension of major productions and accompanied diverse theatrical aesthetics. She has had a long-standing career at the "Marin Sorescu" National Theatre in Craiova and serves as a faculty member in the Department of Arts – Theatre and Music at the Faculty of Letters in Craiova.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformative power of makeup and masks in Silviu Purcărete's staging of *The Scarlet Princess*, with a focus on my practical experience as a theatrical makeup artist in the production. The article examines how makeup functions not merely as a visual accessory, but as a crucial dramaturgical tool, shaping character identity, supporting rapid role transformations, and amplifying the symbolic and emotional dimensions of the performance. Through detailed analysis of the characters' physical configurations—including gender reversals, archetypal roles, and the embodiment of universal symbols—the study highlights the interplay between visual design, actor movement, and narrative meaning. By documenting the techniques used to create both male and female transformational masks, the research situates Purcărete's visual dramaturgy within a broader tradition of symbolic and expressionist theatrical aesthetics, while also addressing the challenges of adapting Kabuki conventions to a contemporary Romanian stage. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the collaborative relationship between makeup, performance, and visual storytelling in contemporary theatre.

KEYWORDS

stage makeup, mask, character transformation, kabuki theatre, gender reversal

CITATION SUGGESTION

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For about three decades, numerous publications, bachelor's theses and doctoral studies have debated various topics related to the artistic work of the well-known contemporary Romanian director Silviu Purcărete. The object of our study will be the faces of the characters in Purcărete's plays, with the argumentation based on several plays staged in post-December Romania that had a major international impact.

Director Silviu Purcărete has staged numerous plays in which visual images reinforce the drama, often suspending the text. The precision with which he approaches the resolution of the action on stage and the attention he pays to the set design elements, which function as perfectly as a Swiss watch.

The mask, as is well known, is the symbol of theatre and has travelled through the centuries to fulfil its purpose of artistic creation. Masks made of different materials or objects placed on the actors' heads, make-up applied with cosmetics or other materials used to transform the human face, are symbolic technical elements of Purcărete's artistic creation, which shape the character by eliminating the realistic human identity in his inexhaustible work.

The play directed by Silviu Purcărete, *The Scarlet Princess*, is a performance that combines the director's deeply symbolic style with many elements of humour and irony from classical and traditional Japanese theatre. The non-conformist approach, which combines visual acting with an alert choreographic rhythm and an atmosphere charged with meaning, makes the director's distinctive style easily recognisable. He often combines modern, experimental elements with classical texts to amplify the message of the plays and create new and fascinating theatrical experiences. The play *The Scarlet Princess* is based on a dramatisation adapted by director Silviu Purcărete from a kabuki play and features Princess Sakura in the title role, who is the symbol of a superstitious society, her behaviour defying traditional royal rules causing a series of conflicts and contradictions. The show is full of black humour that encourages the audience to reflect on morality and the idea of

power in the state or the difference between appearance and essence.

The production of the play *The Scarlet Princess* (2018) at the Radu Stanca National Theatre in Sibiu brought together a large team of theatre creators: director Silviu Purcărete, set designer Dragoş Buhagiar, composer Vasile Şirli and Nakamura Kanzaburo XVIII, an important artist and great connoisseur of traditional Japanese Kabuki theatre. The idea of staging a Kabuki-style performance in Romania had long been a concern of Mr Constantin Chiriac, the theatre's general director, who sought to bring together artists who could make this project possible. The study of the immense original text and experimentation with traditional theatre techniques, as well as the creation of the stage space, took approximately three years. The first success of the show was the creation of a stage representing a space similar to that of the Kabuki theatre at the Culture Factory in Sibiu. Set designer Dragoş Buhagiar designed and built the stage with a double-direction turntable, the performance hall is organised in such a way that there is a *hanamichi* or "flower path"¹ which is the part of the stage where crossings to other stage spaces are made, with sloping seats positioned like those specific to traditional kabuki performances. In the set design by D. Buhagiar, we find many components of the traditional Japanese theatre structure, but also many modern set and costume elements that continue the symbolism of Purcărete's performances. As Ion M. Tomuş argues:

One of the most important set-design details has to be especially singled out: the stage is configured in such a way that it decomposes the theatrical and dramatic conventions. On the left, there are small make-up tables and tools, together with the usual mirrors and lights. These elements are a special path to the 'bowels' of the Western-like theatre production machinery: the conventions are presented in a very subtle and discrete

way, yet the effect on the audience is strong. It is an excellent option to expose the artificiality of a specific cultural environment, together with its general rules. The procedure is Western but the world it creates and depicts is Japanese. This makes the distances melt and the rules' limitations fluctuate and be malleable.²

Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, in their study on the material culture of the actor, *The Five Continents of Theatre* (2018), note that there are many similarities between traditional Japanese theatres and their history and structure, but that their evolution has been different. The stages of Nô and kabuki theatres originally had the same structure, namely the construction of the stage represented the model of a house positioned outside, in the garden. All the essential elements of the structure were similar and were used in the same way in both theatrical styles: the wooden pillars representing the delimitation of the playing spaces for the first and second actors, the central stage, the curtain, the space for musicians, the mirrored spaces where masks were changed, the painted pine tree behind the stage, the wooden staircase positioned in the centre of the stage, and the spectators who were seated on the ground around the house. Starting in 1741, kabuki theatre reorganised its stage inside a building, keeping the original stage structure and adding a *hanamichi* walkway to make it easier for actors to get on stage, as well as for the staff who served the audience with their famous teas. The location of the theatre in a covered space also required the creation of two galleries for high-ranking samurai and women. Serving tea during the intervals of kabuki performances was of great benefit to the theatre, as the tea houses (*chaya*) brought in significant profits, which meant that the financial development of kabuki theatre led to multiple improvements to the buildings and stages. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo (1910) was designed and built in reinforced concrete, inspired by the Italian theatre model, and the

stage was structured in Italian style with high arches in front of the stage, with side boxes, the *hanamichi* was built perpendicular to the stage, boxes and, as a novelty, a double turntable. The musicians were seated in the pit in front of the stage, like orchestras on Italian stages, which was unusual in traditional Nô and kabuki theatre, where they were seated on stage near the actors. The construction by D. Buhagiar is similar to that of the Imperial Theatre, which also became a model for modern Japanese theatre.

Putting on a kabuki performance in Romania is difficult, as director Silviu Purcărete explained during rehearsals for *The Scarlet Princess*, for the simple reason *that we do not know how to do Kabuki theatre*. The techniques and methods of interpretation are different and belong to centuries-old traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. The origins and first manifestations of kabuki dance and music are known to be the open-air performances on the Kamo River valley in Kyoto, where Okuni, a priestess forced to maintain the sanctuary, gathered around her a troupe of women from different social backgrounds, whose fame grew rapidly. The troupe was called kabuku. "Later, the word was written in Chinese characters ka-bu-ki: 'sing-dance-skill'. This is how kabuki was born, which established itself as the most popular form of entertainment in Japan"³.

The troupe of women did not last long and was replaced by men and young people who played female characters. Japanese kabuki theatre companies, formed in the 18th century from members of the same families, continue to develop and perfect the traditional style in their own communities. In Japan, there has never been a special form of education for training pupils or students in the field of theatre. Actors in traditional Japanese theatre are trained by a member of the company, generally only for a role that they play throughout their lives and usually inherit from a family member. Acting and dancing techniques or quick transformations remain secrets over time. Japanese actors are revered by the public precisely because the uniqueness and mastery of their work remains

a mystery. The symbols of movement, costumes and masks in traditional Japanese kabuki or Nô theatre are studied by many artists from different fields, their aesthetics being remarkable.

In Kabuki theatre, each type of character has a special costume and make-up that represents the character's identity, inherited in form and colour. The authors of the book *The Five Continents of Theatre*, Barba and Savarese, explain how to apply "traditional *kesho* face make-up"⁴.

Oshiroi is a white cream or foundation that is applied all over the face, under which facial expressions disappear. Pictorial makeup is done by drawing coloured lines, often similar to the patterns on Nô masks. To enlarge the small face and enlarge the eyes, the eyebrow line is drawn much higher than normal. The intensity of the white layer also depends on the age of the character. There is a standard makeup that can be used for many characters, but for negative characters representing villains or a category of heroes, makeup called *kumadori* is used. The lines drawn reinforce the harshness of the face and can be extended down the body to the tips of the feet, and the colours applied symbolise different states. Dark red - anger or passion, war; Black - fear, death; Pink - life, youth. Light green - calm, tranquillity.

The famous author of the kabuki play *The Scarlet Princess*, Tsuruya Namboku IV, wrote a large number of plays in which he tells the story of the beautiful princess Sakura and her. *Sakura, or cherry blossom*, is the flower of a Japanese ornamental cherry tree and has a scent similar to vanilla. The cherry blossom is the symbol and flower of Japan, and the moment of its blooming is considered by the Japanese to be a metaphor for nature. Cherry blossoms are also common in Japanese art, such as rituals, performances, films, cartoons, kimonos, fans, and ceramics.

Princess Sakura has been the heroine of many plays written for kabuki theatre since the 17th century, but the most important versions are believed to be those by the author Namboku, which made him famous.

The show staged by director Silviu Purcărete is based on a script written by him and is inspired by *Sakura Hime Azuma Bunsho*, by Tsuruya Namboku IV. *The Scarlet Princess* seems to be a fairy tale in which the characters experience repeated love stories, murders and reincarnations, curses and revenge. The show contains numerous symbols and expressive means specific to Purcărete's directing style, with themes and actions that straddle the line between light parody and self-irony, between Japanese Eastern tradition and European culture. Kabuki theatre performances generally feature numerous visual images resembling painted pictures, closely linked to the moment of the action, which increase the audience's interest in watching. Also, the music and harmonies used live during the show add to the intensity of the strong emotions in kabuki theatre. These two components, visuals and music, are noticeable in all of Silviu Purcărete's shows as essential artistic elements. The combination of the two styles, that of the director and that of traditional oriental theatre, in a Romanian performance based on the story of a famous princess written by a Japanese playwright in the 18th century was a big gamble won by the management of the National Theatre in Sibiu, and the success of the performance was recognised internationally. A dramatisation of a play written for kabuki theatre staged outside Japan would be impossible because the training of actors and acting is done in a personal and traditional oriental way. The preparation of the show, as well as the costumes and masks, have been studied for hundreds of years without revealing many well-hidden secrets of the techniques of execution or interpretation.

The director's biggest challenge in staging the play is changing the genders of the actors in the roles they play, which is justified by his decision to take into account the history and present of kabuki theatre. This is not the first time in Silviu Purcărete's productions that female roles are played by men and male roles by actresses. There are many examples, such as productions staged by the director, including *Phedra* after Seneca and Euripides, *Oresteia*

after Aeschylus, *Ubu Rex* after A. Jarry, *Faust* after Goethe, and . However, in the production *The Story of the Cross-Eyed Princess* after Nakamura Kanzaburo XVIII, the characters had to be configured taking into account the combination of the two styles, the transformation, and the context of the production. In fact, as Tomuş points out: “The men play the female roles and vice versa, as the travesty becomes one of the most important pillars of the show, with the director’s intention (completely assumed by the cast) to insist on the grotesque elements in the spiritual universe of the characters.”⁵

Actress Ofelia Popii was entrusted with the two male characters, Seigen and Gonsuke, two brothers who had completely different occupations. Father Seigen, known in his youth as Shimizu Kiyoharu, lives a beautiful love story with his disciple, Shiragiku, played by actor Iustinian Turcu. Shiragiku’s suicide makes it possible for the young soul to be reincarnated in the newborn body of Princess Sakura, from the Yoshida clan, daughter of Lord Koresada, played by the same actor. Gonsuke, Father Seigen’s brother, is a name given to him to hide his identity for the atrocities he committed. Shinubo Sota was his real name, and his profession and the way he dressed made him unrecognisable. The murder of Lord Koresada and the seduction of the young princess were part of the plan to take over the leadership and the royal seal. The story of the young princess Sakura has been the subject of many Japanese literary works, and the word *Sakura* means *Japanese cherry blossom*, which is the national symbol.

In the process of configuring the characters, the first step was to reverse and find the transformational forms of the female characters played by male actors, and the male characters played by female actors. The first transformational make-up test also required the use of costume or wig elements to achieve credibility. The creation of the female character, who represented a lady from Princess Sakura’s entourage and was comically named *geisha*, was based on the classic makeup model of a female character in kabuki

theatre, a character played by male actors. The wig that helped transform the face did not follow the references of the traditional style, but the shape created completed the proposed image and the veracity of the metamorphosis. In the case of the transformational makeup of the male characters the reference model was not very well defined due to the lack of the necessary materials used to create a male character in traditional Japanese kabuki theatre, namely the male wig fixed on a metal support, a beard or moustache shaped specifically for the character, and, above all, the choice of an actress with fine feminine features that bore no resemblance to the face of an Asian actor. The transformational makeup involved the elimination of feminine elements, such as blonde hair, covering it with a hair net under a male hat, filling in the eyebrows and structuring the face. Even though director Silviu Purcărete was not new to the transformational composition of an actress into a male character, this time the combination of his own mask style with the traditional oriental mask had a different way of being realised and conceived. The director’s positive opinion in the creative process and execution of future masks that would bear his already established signature made it possible to continue the configuration of the thirty-five transformational masks that had different types and characters.

Only one character, named *God of Theatre*, played by actor Cristian Stanca, did not undergo a transformation into a female character, but the make-up tests took longer due to the authentic traditional costumes worn by the actor throughout the performance and the different interpretations in the two parts of the show. The show opens with the “host” of the performance, actor Cristian Stanca, wearing a regal gala costume, whose mask is similar to the makeup mask of a samurai from the Edo period presenting himself before his superior. His face and neck are painted with intense white foundation, his eyebrows are covered, and his lips are painted red in the shape of a smiling face. His eyes are well outlined in black, giving the impression of a strong, all-seeing gaze. The head is

covered with a red-orange feathered helmet, a combination of the Japanese royal helmet and the deluxe helmet of the Roman soldier. The white mask worn by the performer is neutral, but the red-lined mouth has slightly raised corners in a gentle smile, the actor's face conveying a barely perceptible irony. In the second part of the show, the God of Theatre participates in the stage action, and his character transforms into a more powerful, protective, but more warlike god. The face created for him, wearing a warrior samurai costume and playing a male character similar to that in kabuki theatre, was made using the same technique as in oriental theatre but without the traditional wig. The face was covered with a dense layer of greasy white foundation, thick enough to allow the drawing of various lines, such as outlining the eyes in black, shaping the eyebrows into sharp angles, drawing parallel black lines over the mouth to visually thin the lips, or adding two small red semicircles at the inner corners of the eyes. The makeup is part of the basic makeup category in kabuki theatre, but the interest was not in creating a character of their type or a well-defined character. The addition of half a wig styled in the manner of men's wigs in kabuki theatre and a painting imitating human hair similar to Japanese samurai haircuts in continuation of the makeup creates the face of a highly theatrical character that justifies the actions of the acting. The physical resemblance to the two types influenced the acting, according to the statements made by the actor himself. The character's configuration with the help of the costume and mask was in good harmony, constituting an indisputable theatrical aesthetic form, and their influence was evident. The mask made for this surreal character is part of Purcărete's large collection of masks.

The characters of *Father Seigen and Gonsuke*, *Father Seigen's brother*, were played by actress Ofelia Popii, which was normal for an actor in Edo-period kabuki theatre, but unusual for an actress. There are countless male roles played by actresses in Silviu Purcărete's productions, but casting Ofelia Popii in the two roles was inspired, as the director knew the actress's adaptability and

availability. During rehearsals, the actress requested, as she herself stated, that the faces of the two characters she was playing be created, as she was unable to see the physical connection between them, plus the rapid transformations required by the actions of the play. The creation of the faces began by taking into account the fact that the two are brothers and have a common thread with the first appearance of Father Seigen in the exposition of the play. The basic make-up was done according to Purcărete's mask principles, in which the actress's face was covered with a thin layer of white foundation set with white powder, her eyebrows were covered with foundation and straight ones were drawn above them, as in the case of a neutral mask, and by using anthracite grey eyeshadow on the mobile eyelid and in the inner corner, the eye was made to appear larger. The same eyeshadow was used to draw shadows representing expression lines such as dark circles, corners of the mouth and facial structure by shading the nasal fossae or deepening the areas of skin formed at the junction of the zygomatic and mandibular muscles. The parts of the actress's body that remained without costume items, such as her hands, feet, neck and even part of her scalp, were painted with a white body solution to blur the colour of human skin and reinforce the surrealism of the character. Priest Seigen's first appearance was at middle age, and the director's proposal was for him to wear a grey beard covering only the middle of his chin, of medium size, similar to that of a middle-aged Christian priest. His head was covered with a grey silk stocking, which is worn under a wig to gather the hair, and together with the makeup, a basic mask was achieved without reference to kabuki theatre, but with a clear reference to Purcărețian makeup. This was followed by the creation of the character of Father Seigen in his old age, which actress Ofelia Popii created by following the text and what she felt, as she says, in all the states of sadness and suffering left behind by an impossible love. The acting and the covering of the head with a shabby hat conveyed the image of a decrepit old man with a few long strands of hair hanging from his

chin and eyes sunken into his skull. The actress had only 10-15 seconds to change characters, as she also had to change costumes and cross the stage from the outside, which made the transformation impossible under normal technical conditions. The shadows of the eye sockets were drawn using the index fingers of both hands dipped in anthracite colour, and the drawing was done in 2 seconds, and the long grey-white beard was prepared with double-sided adhesive tape, with a 2 cm base that stuck instantly.

Gonsuke is the second character played by actress Ofelia Popii in the show, and she says that he is a much funnier character than Father Seigen, a political character, similar to those of today, courageous, a motorcyclist whom she loves very much because *he metamorphoses and disguises himself*.

Even though she really liked the character dressed in a men's leather coat and motorcycle helmet, she didn't feel like herself because she didn't know what he looked like. She needed a strong masculine sign to give her the strength to transition from an old character to the liveliness and strength that characterised Gonsuke. The addition of a long, braided ponytail attached to a grey stocking worn on the head brings to mind a former samurai, which is what he is, stripped of his rights, having fled after killing Lord Koresada and disguised as an ordinary citizen. The addition of a blond-grey moustache gives the actress a fitting and convincing embodiment to complete the character, along with the much-desired image. The transitions from one character to another during the show are multiple and very fast, which required the moustache to be attached with double-sided tape, which became very painful when several shows were performed in a row. After numerous attempts, the fastening systems were replaced and the transformations were executed on time. The actress told us in an interview that during rehearsals she needed makeup or other elements that referred to a strong man, and everything became clear to her when the moustache, stockings with tails and large leather boots appeared, an image that confirmed her beliefs and shaped her character.

Regarding the remarkable interpretation of male roles by actress Ofelia Popii in Silviu Purcărete's staging of *The Scarlet Princess*, Monica Andronescu notes in her review published in *Yorick* magazine: "In the role of the priest Seigen, he has a dull, bitter glow of death that he carries with him, and the loneliness of a life lived in guilt and remorse flickers in his eyes, but also a strange mixture of scabrousness and sadness"⁶.

The character of Princess Sakura, an important figure in Japanese tradition and culture, is played by actor Iustinian Turcu. He also plays the character of Shiragiku, disciple and lover of the priest Seigen. The beginning of the show brings us the image of the two lovers, Father Seigen and Shiragiku, their story being revealed through their appearance on stage in a symbolic pose in which the character Shiragiku is naked, without priestly clothes. The information that he commits suicide and is reincarnated as Princess Sakura gives us clues about the common image of the two characters. The configuration of the two characters has the same basis, the fragile, white, delicate body of the princess is identified with the body of the beardless Shiragiku, but also with that of the young actor, very well cast, Iustinian Turcu. Since the two characters are approximately the same teenage age, even though they are of different sexes, the physical resemblance is very great, the external difference being achieved by simple means given by a few elements of costume, wig and make-up. The white makeup applied all over the body is part of the common basic line of the two characters (the fragility and beauty of the body) and is in line with the surrealist style of director Silviu Purcărete, but it also has significance in relation to the royal character of Princess Sakura. From an aesthetic point of view, the actor's painted body worked perfectly, and this white liquid foundation formed the basis of the pictorial makeup that shaped a female character with a rather fragile constitution. The basis of the face makeup was the face of the young Shiragiku and was more like the neutral mask or base mask used in traditional Japanese kabuki theatre, but the materials (makeup) used were

special professional cosmetics for theatre. The intensity of the products applied was similar to the reference, achieving uniformity and matting of the facial features.

Preparing the actor for the painting of his face and body required a period of time during which he was washed and dried. The young man's mask began with an attempt to remove his hair, to give the impression of baldness, by gluing his hair to his head with a strong gel and dyeing it with liquid foundation for the body. The colour, thickness and cut of the hair were a great help in creating an optical illusion, a necessary theatrical convention. The eyebrows were removed by covering them with a solution of mastic ether (which has the property of sticking only to human skin or latex), special eyebrow wax and a high-coverage, skin-coloured foundation. This was followed by covering the face with a professional white foundation called *Supracolor*, used for makeup on large theatre stages, in a fairly thick layer, just enough to be able to draw or paint the following lines. The foundation was set, in the first stage, with white powder, which reinforced the mattifying effect and, after application, also protected the face from any perspiration. The eyebrows were drawn parallel to the iris of the eyes, about 2 cm above the covered eyebrows. This gives the impression of a neutral mask which, with slight movements, creates expressions that can convey joy or sadness. What differentiates this mask from a traditional oriental one and leads us to the symbolism of director Purcărete is the pictorial format of the eyes, which needed to be enlarged, but also a three-dimensional correction in order to bring the actor's eyes, positioned deep in the eye sockets, as far forward as possible. This was achieved by drawing a somewhat rectangular triangle with black ink over the mobile eyelid, which had a slight right angle towards the outer corner of the eye, close to the concavity of the covered eyebrow, and the three-dimensionality was achieved by the two sides of the triangle that followed the concavity or convexity of the mobile eyelid, as well as by accentuating the actors' eyelashes with mascara. The eyes thus contoured were ready

for the rest of the makeup needed to transform the actor into a female character representing a symbol of Japanese nobility. The lips were covered with white foundation, an aesthetic technique signifying that the character was speaking on stage, but at the same time preparing for the very quick change to the next character. The finalisation of this character consisted of painting the neck, hands, feet and bust with professional white liquid foundation, specially designed for the body and which can be applied with a device called an airbrush, brush or makeup sponge. After application, all the products used are fixed with a fixing spray that has the property of making the makeup more resistant over time. Even with all these fixatives, body makeup needs to be constantly reapplied due to the stage actions involving body movements specific to the director's style. The actor's transition into the character of Princess Sakura was studied at length due to the rapid changes, the addition of many feminine costume elements, and the transformational pictorial and make- s similar to the female masks used in traditional Japanese kabuki theatre. As the director's instructions regarding the characters' faces indicated that *they were not really from kabuki theatre*, the reference for Sakura is, in fact, a geisha from the samurai period, when feminine beauty was perfected. At the director's request, two concentric circles were drawn on each breast on the well-painted body, giving the illusion of protrusions representing the young princess's breasts, over which elements representing her femininity were added, such as red gloves, a fan, a silk bodysuit covering the body, and a black wig with long hair falling down the back, typical of young women, not only Japanese. Following studies on the relationship between hair colour and personality, various researchers have estimated that around two-thirds of the world's population has naturally brown or black hair. People in this category have strong self-confidence and are intelligent, with a logical way of thinking. Choosing a black wig was a good solution from all points of view, taking into account the aesthetic component, as the princess's appearance was absolutely fascinating with her floating

gait, as if she had come from another world, from another time. The way she was wrapped in a paper dress like a cocoon, the character's face transformed into a princess, were exceptional achievements. The actor's transformation took a maximum of five minutes, during which time he moved from one side of the stage to the other, picked up his costume elements, applied his make-up, wig and enormous paper dress. After painting and redoing the body make-up, a white stocking was applied to the head, which served as the base for attaching the wig. Red blush was applied to the white areas around the eyebrows, the upper eyelids and the entire space formed by removing the eyebrows up to the drawn ones, restoring the beauty and femininity of the face.

Princess Sakura's face is completed by painting her lips red, reducing the size of her mouth by drawing the outline of her lips in the shape of a strawberry, and covering the remaining areas without makeup with thick white paint. To create the princess's mask, a combination of the three shades of makeup used in the first makeup and masks in history was used: white, red, and black. The perfection of their combination remains valid in the creation of the faces of the other female characters, except that, in order to avoid monotony, different colour combinations were used, while still maintaining the original colour scheme.

Regarding the director's instructions for the final scene of the play, after going through all the devastating states and actions of an abused woman, she tells of the princess's association with the character Rosalinda from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, a female character played by a man, whose disguise is ultimately revealed, which makes the interpretation difficult, but also highlights her mastery. At the end of the play, the indication was that the actor Iustinian Turcu is exposed, no longer wants to play the role of a woman, takes off the wig that represents the symbol of femininity, angry and upset to play the whole story of this princess, who has gone through all the difficult situations of a deceived and abused woman. The actor also confirms that the revelation by removing the

wig is achieved when the character receives the information that there is a possibility of Shiragiku's reincarnation, as well as the ambiguity given by the duality of the characters. The physical vulgarity of the character Sakura is achieved by replacing the beautiful black wig with a red wig and bright red lipstick to exaggerate the lips. Naturally, there are very few people who have naturally red hair, but this colour is very common among people who dye their hair in different shades of red, simply because they are perceived as more seductive, mysterious, romantic or powerful and passionate beings. The body is scantily covered with a slip that highlights beautiful physical features, but presents us with the typology of a prostitute. The masks created in Purcărete's performances connect the visual form of the characters with the theme of the performance, becoming part of the story. Sometimes makeup can support inner psychological transformations. Regarding the actor's artistic achievement, Monica Andronescu writes in her review published in the online theatre magazine that "Iustinian Turcu, in the role of Princess Sakura, creates a character of terrible strangeness. An extraordinary grace in every movement, a delicate beauty that shines through in every gesture, a natural nobility that is so naturally played and assumed"⁷

It is well known that, in Silviu Purcărete's performances, makeup plays an important role in constructing the unique theatrical universe, but also the atmosphere necessary for his visual symbolism style. In the play *The Story of the Cross-Eyed Princess*, makeup intensifies the dramatic meanings, accentuating the symbolic side of the characters and enhancing the surrealism characteristic of kabuki theatre. The transformations undergone by the actors take on symbolic dimensions, with the characters representing not only individuals in a well-known story, but also universal meanings. The director creates several couples who, through their closeness and configuration, are charged with universal meanings or symbols. Father Seigen and Shiragiku, Gonsuke and Princess Sakura, Irumo Akudoru and Gengo Sadake,

Shichiro and Lady Oju, or the priest Zangetsu and his secret mistress Nagora, who, as in other cases, use makeup to emphasise certain human traits, but highlighting their caricatured or grotesque, character. By forming couples that reflect forbidden desires such as royalty, cruelty or erotic fantasies, his characters become archetypes, creating universally valid forms and entities.

The method of applying transformational male makeup is roughly identical for all female performers in the show *The Scarlet Princess*, with differences being determined by the actresses' physiognomies and the characters they play, which are more or less caricatured or archetypal. The group named by the director as *the priests at the temple* consists of 15 actresses dressed in classic men's costumes with hats and glasses without lenses, a configuration that has succeeded in creating an image close to transformation. The number of members in the group is the same as that of the standard ancient choruses used in Sophocles' time, which allows us to attribute all the roles and actions of the tragedy to them. As in ancient theatre, where the chorus played an essential role in commenting on and emphasising the actions and morality of the play, the group of priests sings, talks to the audience or intervenes concretely in the dramatisation of the actions. Compared to the members of ancient choirs who wore masks, the members of the group of priests were configured with a mask made of makeup to create more symbols of communities, an element that emphasised the way of communicating and understanding with the audience, but also helped to change the roles of the actors.

Controlling the focus of an audience is vital to making mask theatre work. Quite simply, the audience should know where to look at any one time. Split focus occurs when the audience are trying to look at something when they shouldn't be! Sometimes it is part of the action – a visual chord – that we ask the audience to take in several things at once. But generally, we

*want them to follow a flow of thought, of non-verbal communication and conversation around the stage.*⁸

The group represented the community as a "character", a construction that appears in all of Silviu Purcărete's performances, through which the opinions and feelings of the community are reflected. The separation of the group by different stage spaces by the main characters or by the stage space in which the dramatic conflicts take place demonstrates the direct inactivity of the group and the importance of the existence of eyewitnesses in the action of the story. Like all groups, such as the chorus, created by the director in most of his shows, this group plays the role of observer of the actions and witness to the events. The eyes must be highlighted with black eye shadow, but in the context of masculine transformations, the pencil outline had to create a stronger image of them, without accentuating and emphasising feminine features. By casting actresses of similar stature and age, dressed and made up in roughly the same way, a compact group was created whose image suggested a group of Asian actors participating in events taking place at the beginning of the stories in kabuki theatre. The individualisation of characters' faces achieved through transformational male makeup was influenced by the character types established in American silent films or recognisable caricature types. Covering the head and, implicitly, the hair with pieces of white, black or beige silk stockings was a technique used to highlight the surrealism and symbolism of religion and its social reflection.

As in many of the performances by the famous director Silviu Purcărete and in the performance *The Scarlet Princess*, masks and make-up play an important role in creating the atmosphere and universe specific to Purcărete. His visual directing style has long been established, as has the way he combines images representing the physical or aesthetic aspects of the characters in the story of the play. In this production, the surreal atmosphere characteristic of

stories written for kabuki theatre is also achieved through the use of make-up that emphasises the symbolic side of the characters or intensifies the visual effects that highlight their specific caricatural nature. Costumes and makeup are used to suggest themes of religious or mythological rituals, often succeeding in creating archetypal figures of superior entities. In this context, the creation of different masks with the help of makeup becomes an important artistic tool in creating the external forms of characters that can convey many emotional states and profound configurations of the human species.

Similar to the great international directors, Silviu Purcărete's directorial style is also marked by the importance he gives to masks and makeup created in a personal style as justified dramatic tools, not just aesthetic accessories. The use of make-up for many characters is a way of finding identities or transforming characters, but it is most common in performances where the relationship between fantasy and surrounding reality becomes possible. One can speak of a specific, unmistakable line of makeup in Purcărete's performances, which contains an essential symbolism that helps to deepen and understand the complexity of his productions.

Through the use of makeup and masks, Silviu Purcărete multiplies actors' identities and emphasizes the duality of characters, while creating a fantastical universe where identity can be concealed or fragmented. Caricatural or exaggerated makeup intensifies emotional states and highlights the symbolic dimension of the characters. Transformational makeup allows performers to embody archetypal or universal figures. Purcărete's visual style is reinforced by extreme gestures and movements, with masks contributing both to audience impact and to actors' expressive freedom. In this way, masks connect the visual form of the characters to the thematic structure of the performance, becoming an integral part of the narrative and, at times, externalizing inner psychological transformations.

ENDNOTES

1. Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Five Continents of Theatre. Facts and Legends from the Material Culture of the Actor* (Brill, 2019), 121.
2. Ion M. Tomuş, "Redesigning Multiculturalism or Japanese Encounters in Sibiu, Romani, The Scarlet Princess, written and directed by Silviu Purcărete, inspired by Tsuruya Namboku IV's Sakura Hime Azuma Bunshô", *European Stages*, vol. 13, no. 1 (14 June 2019) <https://europeanstages.org/2019/06/14/redesigning-multiculturalism-or-japanese-encounters-in-sibiu-romani-the-scarlet-princess-written-and-directed-by-silviu-purcarete-inspired-by-tsuruya-namboku-ivs-sakura-hime-azuma-bunsho/#:~:text=The%20Western%20viewers%20are%20not,on%20the%20audience%20is%20strong.>
3. Barba, Savarese, *The Five Continents*, 57.
4. Barba, Savarese, *The Five Continents*, 230.
5. Tomuş, "Redesigning Multiculturalism"
6. Andronescu, Monica, "Silviu Purcărete's The Scarlet Princess and the 21st-Century Spectator," in *Yorick. Ro*, online theatre magazine, Bucharest, no. 410, 28/06/2019 <https://yorick.ro/printesa-deocheata-a-lui-silviu-purcarete-si-spectatorul-secolului-21/>.
7. Ibid.
8. Toby Wilsher, *The Mask Handbook: A Practical Guide* (Routledge, 2007), 62.

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