



AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY PERFORMED WITH STUDENTS: STAGE DESIGN FOR A THEATRE PLAY

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Abstract

Theatre which is defined as the art of narrating human to human in a humane way is a stage art in which people express their feelings, thoughts, and opinions about public events. Theatre, past of which is dated to ancient times and therefore has existed for a very long time in the history of humanity, left the place of its stages defined by its audience to stages converted into defined spaces. These spaces which develop and change from past to present converted from outdoor theatres in ancient ages to magnificent spaces in middle ages and finally to modern performance buildings. The design of these spaces varied and developed according to time but the fact that stage designs play an important role in accurately conveying the idea to be transferred has not changed. Correct design of a stage in which a theatre play is portrayed contributes in the indirect or direct reflection of the message that is aimed to be given by the play, integration of space and story strengthens the cogency of the story.

The study is the term project made under the scope internal space design lesson in Çukurova University Architecture Division. Students were requested to design a stage for a theatre play, which they will select by themselves. Aim of the project is to express the dreamed/created stages of the selected theatre play by space setup. In stage design, the aim was to be creative so as to support the feeling aimed to be given by the play spatially. In order to strengthen the applicability and practicalness of the study, students were requested to use an existing theatre building.

Under the scope of the study, students selected the below pieces of art.

- "Cyrano de Bergerac" play written by Edmond Rostand
- "Hisseli Harikalar Kumpanyası" a musical play written by Haldun Dormen
- "Diary of a Madman" single person play of Nikolay Gogol
- "Victim" play written by Güngör Dilmen
- "Hans was Heiri" by Zimmerman & de Parrot and
- "Robin Hood" classical play.

Students handled the stage as a 3D space and used light and shade elements as design input. In this experimental study performed with the students, the aim was to express a theater play with 3D and create the internal space setup and to develop the fictional space design skill of students for an existing story.

Keywords: Theater Stage, Stage Design.

1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture includes principles becoming integrate with theater in the association of art, design and architecture. For this reason, the space-stage contextual design relation between architecture and theater, which is the art of animation, constitutes the main starting point of the study. By this study performed with architecture students, it was aimed to ensure the architecture student comprehend the relation between this kind of art branches and architecture/design education and manage to define design data in this context. With the design of the stage of theatre, which is a stage art, where people express their feelings, thoughts and their social events-related ideas; it is expected to ensure the story that is intended to be told in the play, to be expressed correctly and effectively. In this empirical study performed with the aim of upskilling of design development that will satisfy a particular problem, the stage design was made for the theater play that architecture students selected personally. information analyses about the theater concept, description, history, stage design was primarily made in the study, subsequently, the stage designs that the students made were criticized in the scope of the game context.

2. Theater Concept and its Emergence

Theater is defined as the art of visualization of events that exist or likely to exist in human life, in a particular space, in front of a particular community, by the way of living, analogy, and emulation. The art of

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theater, which is an analogy of life, is one of the most colorful and interesting ones in fine arts, due to including motion, liveliness and dialogues from human properties. Besides, theatre is regarded as a comprehensive art integrating art branches such as theater, literature, music, dance, painting and architecture (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207). The theater word is derived from the words "theastai = to see and theatron = sight place " in Greek. While Theatron is the name given by Greeks to the hill where audiences sit on, the meeting place of two foothills; in our day, this word includes not only audience sitting area, but also stage, change rooms, briefly all theater spaces (Sözbir, 2010, p. 127).

Theater emerged in the 6th century in religious ceremonies in ancient Greece for the first time, and have become a type of art. Over time, it has turned into a "game", being evaluated with aesthetic criteria, not with religious or practical criteria (Yıldız, 2005, p. 425-442). The emergence of the theater art is based on the festivals organized in the name of Dionysos, entertainment, and fancy god. Theater art first started as a tradition, in which people tell funny and amusing stories that come to their mind during these entertainments. Over time, this narrative has been acquired for some people as a profession, and thus, one-man plays (monologos) emerged. The number of people in the theater which existed as a single player for a while increased to two, and thus, dual conversation (dialogos) began to occur. The theater has reached to an artistic level with the inclusion of trio conversation (trialogos). Particular audience areas were allocated for audiences in theaters, is located in the areas called agora in ancient Greek and being staged on stages elevated half a meter from the ground, and audiences occupied around this stage (Leacroft, 1973, p. 354).

During the early period of the theater, two main theater types were staged. The first one of these types, based on two contrasts in the lives of people, is a comedy, which means laugh and humor, representing happiness and joy; and the other one is a tragedy, which means cry, representing pain and sadness (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207) (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Komedya and Tragedya Mask in Greek Art (Url 1)

The Turkish theater started to appear in the early ages through religious ceremonies, it started to be staged for entertainment purposes in Seljuk period, getting beyond a religious item. However, the theater elements still retain their existence in the religious ceremonies in the Mevlevi and Alevist cultures of the Islam religion in the Turkish geography. In the Ottoman period, the most popular type of the theater was "ortaoyunu", and only one folding screen and one seat are needed to stage the play. Another theater type that is common in this period is "The Karagoz-Hacivat" game called shadow game (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207) (Figure 2).



Fig. 2.(a) Karagöz Hacivat (Url 2)



(b) Ortaoyunu (Url 3)

As a result of the theatre -oriented increased interest, and of the interest of the Sultan Abdulmecit for the theater art in the Ottoman period; a theater was built in Dolmabahçe Palace. The theater education spread around the country with the opening of community centers in the Republic period, State Conservatory was established by order of Ataturk. in 1936 (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207).

3. Brief History and Transformation of the Theatre

In prehistoric times, the theater was defined as a place that was instantly shaped by the presence of actors and audiences. With the emergence of the concept of “theater building” for the first time with ancient Greece, the theater space became stable and perceived as a “building”, and began to be an urban, monumental, and social value in the agora (Yıldız, 2005, p. 425-442). Theaters in ancient Greece were not only the places where tragedy and comedy plays were displayed, but also, were multifunctional spaces used as a meeting and visual training areas, at which announcements, festivals, celebrations, and feast were held (Sözbir, 2010, p. 127). Open-air theatres appeared in this period emerged with the development and being adopted by the theater as an art and has reached the capacity to address very large masses. These spaces which are defined as amphitheaters, are theatrical buildings that can reach a capacity of twenty thousand people (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207) (Figure 3).

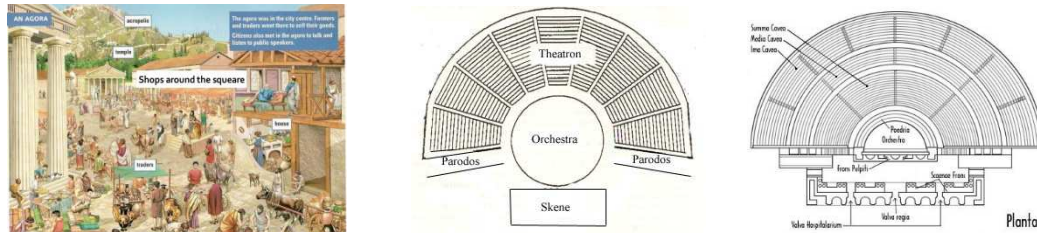


Fig. 3. (a) Agora (Url 4);

(b) Greek Amphitheatre Plan (Url 5);

(c) Roman Theatre Plan (Url 6)

The theater existed in Rome as a commercial phenomenon based on only entertainment, not a social institution unlike Ancient Greece (Yıldız, 2005, p. 425-442). In Roman theater plays, in contrast to the Greek period, rather gladiator plays based on power and war were exhibited (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207). The Roman theater buildings which are located singularly within the city evolved from Greek theater buildings architecturally. Roman theater constructions have quite advanced features. Three times higher stage side, designed so as to allow exhibition of more complex scenes, constitutes a background suitable for action. Moving panes that will help to gain the third dimension, elevators that will raise actors and animals existed in terms of stage design; moreover, the stage space could be filled with water for the portrayal of naval battles (Di Benedetto, 2012, p. 222).

The middle ages' scholastic thought building also influenced the art of the theater, the church forbade the art of theater for over a thousand years. But, the church also paved the way for the recreation of the art although forbade it. Religious propaganda dominated in the middle ages theatre, and with the support of the church, religious subjects were staged to ensure people to comprehend (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207). Theater plays in the middle ages were played in spaces such as churches, town squares, courtyards and feast halls. Stage designs were divided into two groups as moving and stable. In both cases, middle ages stages existed as temporary stages. Stable stages consisted of courtyards and temporary staging areas established in urban squares, and the moving stages consisted of a mobile stage-setting built on a horse carriage (Di Benedetto, 2012, p. 222).

In the Renaissance period, which means rebirth, Ancient Greece was dominantly returned in thought and art. It was paved the way for the creation of stress-free artwork in the Renaissance period, opera and ballet art emerged during this period (Marlalı, 2004, p. 207). Roman theaters were started to be built in Italy by translating the work of the Roman architect Vitruvius entitled “ Ten Books on Architecture” into European languages. The 'Olimpico Theater' in Vicenza, the product of these studies, designed by the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio and completed by Vincenzo Scamozzi in 1585, is the oldest extant closed theater in Europe. Renaissance design, in general, is based on the invention of perspective rules and their application to architecture. Accordingly, Renaissance's pictorial approach was influential in the design of the theater stage (Yıldız, 2005, p. 425-442). Increased interest for machines and striking effects in the 17th century increased the use of illusion, and light began to be used as an important design element (Di Benedetto, 2012, p. 222) (Figure 4).

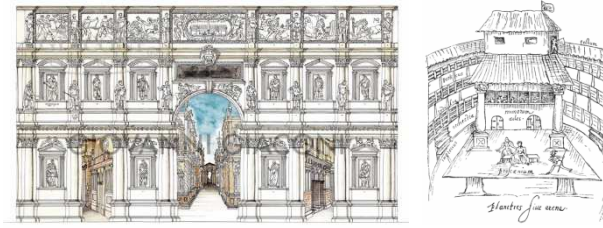


Fig. 4. (a) Olimpica Theatre (Url 7.) (b)Rönesans Theatre Stage (Url 8.)

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the influence of classicalism, romanticism, and realism trends was respectively seen in the stage space design (Yıldız, 2005, p. 425-442). The stage elements which were generally used as paintings on boards until the period of realism, were begun to be used as three dimensional in this period, thus, the approach of using the scene as space became most common in this period (Otto, 1966, p. 967).

With becoming widespread of the concepts of standardization and mass production in architecture, modular and interchangeable stage formation emerged in the 20th-century modern stage design (Sözbir, 2010, p.127). In theatrical buildings turning into contemporary performance buildings in our day, stage designs have been at a quite advanced level about sound, light, space transition and mechanical equipment by means of using the facilities of technology.

4. Stage Design Criteria and Relation Between Architecture and Stage Design

Stage design showed difference and development over time, but, the fact that stage designs play an influential role in correctly delivering the thought that is intended to be transferred. The correct design of the stage in which a theater play is exhibited makes a contribution to the directly or indirectly transfer of message intended to be given to audience by play, thus the integration of the space with the story strengthens the credibility of the story (Edmond J., 2004, p:69).

In stage design; stage transitions, accessories, decorations, sound, costumes and lights are perceived as a whole, and these visual components are targeted to tell a story. Space setup in stage design consists of the components such as line, shape, size, position, color, value, texture, etc., and get integrated with costume, lighting and sound design. There are common points between stage design and architecture. Important items of both art branches are concepts and materials.

The standard measures of stage dimensions that must be followed in stage design vary according to the type of theater and play. The stage dimensions of a chamber theatre and the dimensions of a theater in which a comprehensive opera is exhibited differ in size. In this study made by students, students were asked to make the stage designs as if the theatre plays they selected would be exhibited in a theater stage that exists in real life. Thus, the stage designs of the selected theater buildings were made in the framework of the stage measures.

5. An Experimental Study on Architectural Design Education: Stage Design

The study consists of term projects made in the scope of Çukurova University Architecture 2016-2017 Fall Semester MİM 277, Interior Space Design lesson. Students were asked to design a stage for the theater plays that they would select personally. The goal of the project is to express the imagined/created stages of the selected theater play with space setup. The stage design was targeted to have such quality and creativity that it would be promotive for feeling that is intended to emit by play. The students were asked to use an available theatrical building in order to strengthen the applicability and realism of the study.

The study was proceeded, considering the evaluations of the jury. With this experimental study performed with students, it was tried three-dimensional expression of the theater play, and the creation of interior space set up, the development of students' fictional space design skills for an existing story.

Within the scope of the study; the theater play named "Cyrano de Bergerac" written by Edmond Rostand, the musical show named "Hisseli Harikalar Kumpanyası" written by Haldun Dormen; the solo named "The Diary Of A Madman" written by Nikolay Gogol; the theater play named "Victim" written by Güngör Dilmen, "Hans was Heiri" created by Zimmerman & de Parrot and theater performance named "Robin Hood", classic were selected by the students. The students considered the stage as a three-dimensional space and used the light and shadow components as design inputs when designing the stages of the selected plays (Table 1., 2., 3., 4., 5., 6.)

Table 1. Cyrano de Bergerac






Play Name: Cyrano de Bergerac		Work Group: S. Ülger- A. Ýnan – B. Gürbüç
		<p><i>Play Type- Story:</i> Chivalric Romance Cyrano with so big nose cannot confess his love to Roxane, his great love. Roxane is in love with another swordsman, Christian. Christian and Roxanne's feelings are mutual, but Christian cannot express himself. The Story is fictionalized on Cyrano's telling his love to Roxane via Christian</p> <p><i>About Design:</i> The starting point in the stage design is Cyrano's big nose. The forms appearing on stage were created, abstracting the nose form. Sharp and hard forms were preferred to strengthen the expression of conflicts. Besides, the deconstructivism movement became instructive in the stage design.</p> <p>In the first part, souffles given by Cyrano and the serenade of Chrstian for Roxane standing on the terrace are told. The terrace design was made on the first stage. The second scene tells Christian's frontal conflicts at war. The war, took place on the bridge, was fictionalized on the second stage. The third stage narrates the death of Cyrano in Roxanne's arms</p>
		
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3

Table 2. Hisseli Harikalar Kumpanyasý

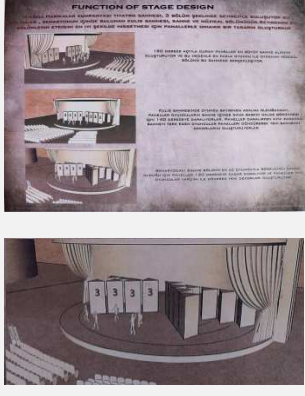
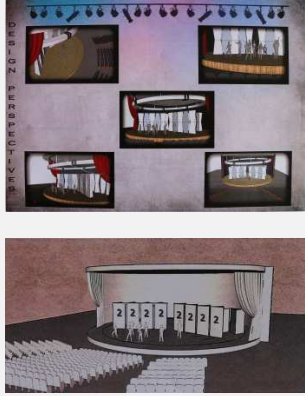



Play Name: Hisseli Harikalar Kumpanyasý		Work Group: B. Özer- Ý. Ekici – N. Hiçykmazer
		<p><i>Play Type- Story:</i> Musical When the star performer of The Joint Venture Company of Wonders that takes place in a tent theater in Anatolia, is transferred to a big casino, urgently a star performer is needed to be found, and when the headman of the village where the company demonstrates gets in love with new star performer, things get suddenly mixed up...</p> <p><i>About Design:</i> The stage can turn around its own axis by means of a system located in the center. Besides scenes can also turn around their own axis to provide stage shifts. The narrator's platform moves independently from the stage, and interior stage and narrator platform move together in the stage shifts. The lighting component is an important input to the design. Movable top hoop and lights used for stage lighting are important inputs of the design.</p>
		
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3

Table 3. Diary Of A Madman

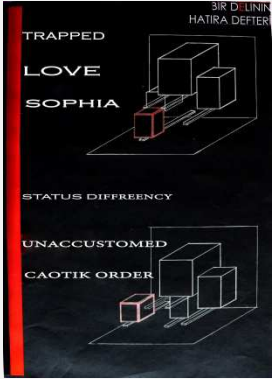
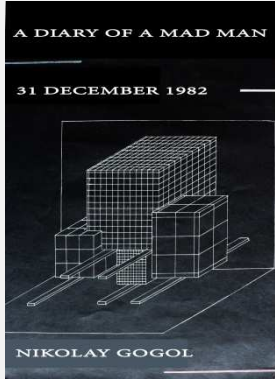
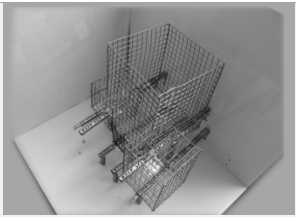


Play Name: Diary Of a Madman		Work Group: E. Eryılmaz - G. Gümüş -
		<p>Play Type- Story: Solo - Dram</p> <p>The play narrates the confine of an ordinary officer who is constantly taunted by his surrounding, to a mental hospital in the direction of his changing dreams after learning that her platonic love, a bourgeois girl Sophia fell in love with a nob.</p> <p>About Design: Four moving cube cages were used in the stage design of the play, taking place in four different places. These cages were shaped according to the mental state of the character in the play. The cube cages move forward in each different place. The emphasis of the play increase with light-shadow plays. Between the designed cube stages, the spaces that player can pass through were defined.</p>
		
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3

Table 4. Robin Hood - Revolving Theatre


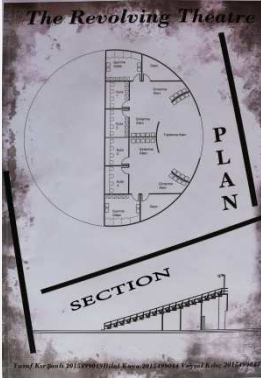



Play Name: Robin Hood-Revolving Theatre		Work Group: Y. Kırpanlı - B. Kaya - V.
		<p>Play Type- Story: Musical</p> <p>Robin, who is sought as an outlaw hides in the forest and gathers people, downtrodden and sought as an outlaw, around to himself. He by force receives the money of those who persecute the poor, and help the needy.</p> <p>About Design: A revolving auditorium is a mechanically controlled seating area within a theatre which can be rotated in order to manipulate the change of scenery and stage sets during the performance. Revolving auditoriums are favored by open-air theatres in particular because they are ideally suited for the use of natural scenery as an integral part of the set. The first revolving auditoriums in Europe were built in 1959 in Finland and the Czech Republic (then Czechoslovakia), respectively.</p>
		
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3

Table 5. Victim

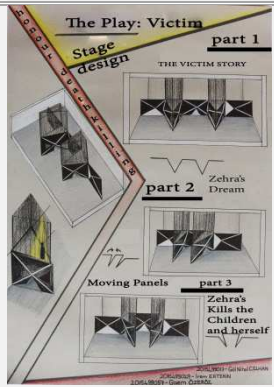
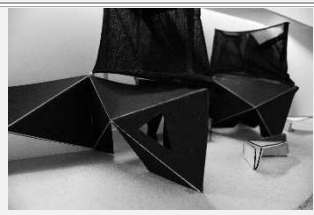
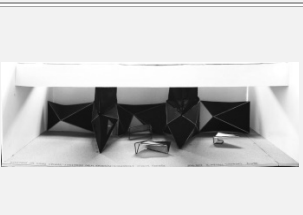
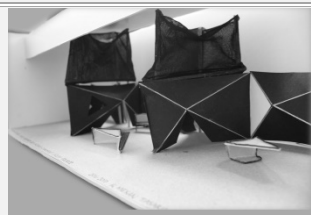




<p>Play Name: Victim</p>		<p>Work Group: G. N. Celhan - G. Özeröz İ.</p>	
		<p>Play Type- Story: Drama In the victim play which features the tragedy of Ancient Greece with its dramatic structure; the resistance of Zehra to morals and traditions, a female figure oppressed under the pressure of male-dominated societies, is narrated.</p> <p>About Design: The game consists of three parts. The first part is the victim stage, the second part is the dream stage, and the third part is Zehra's suicide stage. The stage design was fictionalized through moving panels that can move according to the shift of these three stages. There are gaps, that will allow passage, between these platforms consisting of triangular surfaces Besides, for portraying oppression from outside that is other important factor; an actor's terrace elevated over the stage is available.</p>	
			
<p>Stage 1</p>		<p>Stage 2</p>	
		<p>Stage 3</p>	

Table 6. Hans was Heiri

<p>Play Name: Han was Heiri</p>		<p>Work Group: S. Okşak- İ. S. Kaya - S.</p>	
		<p>Play Type- Story: Drama Hans, Heiri is a tragic story narrating a funny, lively portrait of human relationships with a humorous, natural language. If basic needs and desires are aimed, it narrates distinctively that all people resemble each other over time.</p> <p>About Design: The original of the play contains a four-chambered moving stage scene with shifts between each other. In design, these moving spaces were extended to take place in the whole stage. The boxes can move right, left, up and down with the help of an existing system behind the stage and can turn around its own axis. De stijl movement also became instructive in stage design.</p>	
			
<p>Stage 1</p>		<p>Stage 2</p>	
		<p>Stage 3</p>	

6. Conclusion

The study has the characteristics of the applications that will be performed to increase the skills of students regarding the three-dimensional formation of the story that is intended to be expressed in the theater play, the creation of a temporary/fictional interior space design, and of design skill that will satisfy the specific problem. Thus, by this experimental study, which is included in the design education; the

student's acquaintance with the theater, a branch of fine arts, have been strengthened; has been led in increasing the student's interest in the field of stage design, and the student's fictionalizing design parameters such as shape, color, material, light, motion in the stage design has been provided.

Consequently, to establish the relationship of architecture with performing arts, other architectural art branches, and performing experimental studies in this field during design education will provide student's integrity with different disciplines. Thus, with these kinds of studies to be done with different art branches in design education, it will be possible for the student to do different design experiments.

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