

Chapter 6

Enacting Justice: The Role of Dah Theatre Company in Transitional Justice Processes in Serbia and Beyond

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Dah: Breathing, Creating and Embracing

Dah Theatre (Dah) was created in Belgrade by Dijana Milošević and Jadranka Andjelić in 1991, at the beginning of the fall of ex-Yugoslavia. At the time, Milošević and Andjelić were driven ‘perhaps subconsciously, to oppose the destruction with creation; to create, in the midst of a world falling apart, a microcosmos of theatre’¹. They envisioned that their theatre would last for fifteen to twenty years, but twenty-two years later, Dah is still engaged in vital cultural work.

Although much has changed in the former Yugoslavia in these two decades, many challenges remain the same—a lack of financial support for the work of theatre, for instance, and a determined denial of war crimes committed by one’s own ethnic group. At the time when Dah was founded, there was no tradition of independent professional groups, no cultural understanding of what these groups were about and no financial support to enable their existence. Dah was a genuine pioneer in Serbia: it introduced many radically new ideas, including a theatre laboratory, theatre workshops and actor’s training. At the time, a civil war was raging in the former Yugoslavia—a war for which the Serbian government of the time had an enormous responsibility. The circumstances in which to develop artistic projects could not have been less favourable. Paradoxically, it was precisely those circumstances that made the existence of Dah intensely meaningful and culturally essential—the theatre’s performances acted as a way of opposing the violence that engulfed all of us living in the region at the time.

¹ Dubravka Knežević, ‘Do poslednjeg daha’, *Scena* no. 5/6, Sept/Dec 1995.

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The first Dah project, *This Babylonian Confusion*, was a street performance named after Bertolt Brecht's poems. Dah recognized the relevance of Brecht's vision to its own work and used his words (but not characters) to describe the situation in Serbia. In this way, through Brecht, the troupe members could highlight the public silence about the wars raging in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) and Croatia—wars that the Serbian government had wholeheartedly denied. *This Babylonian Confusion* was the first play to speak publicly about what was happening in the region. Dah took to the streets with its performance to inform the citizens of Serbia that there was a war waged in their name. One of Brecht's poems, 'When Leaders Speak of Peace', mirrored the situation in Serbia particularly closely, acting as a startling reminder that the nationalist war and slaughter were, in fact, waged *in our name*:

When the leaders speak of peace
The common folk know
That war is coming.
When the leaders curse war
The mobilisation order is already written out.²

The words of Bertolt Brecht had been carefully chosen by Dah to describe what was happening in Serbia: the Serbian government 'talked' about peace while 'preparing for' and 'engaging in' the war. Such was the resonance produced by Brecht's work, and such was the relevance of his words to the situation in Serbia that many people in the audience asked Dah if they had written the text for performance themselves. Brecht's poem spoke directly to the situation in Serbia, in which there was no narrative about the war because Serbia was not 'officially' at war and the media, controlled and censored by the government, did not report it. Yet, at the same time, the government was issuing drafts for mobilization: overnight, young men were drafted and forcibly conscripted to join the war effort. And at this time too, people began receiving news from their friends and relatives about terrible crimes happening in BH. In this context, Dah believed that it was fundamentally important for people of Serbia to have the war publicly spoken about and acknowledged in public forums and spaces. Dah was the first theatre in Serbia to say out loud what many people denied and did not want to hear about—'we are at war'.

This Babylonian Confusion was the only anti-war street performance to be staged in Serbia at the time. Yet the authors of the play did not intend to create an anti-war performance. At the time, the Dah troupe was working through their deeply personal need to oppose the ubiquitous violence around them. *This Babylonian Confusion* was a scream of rebellion against the silence of the people, the media blockade and the apparent indifference to the suffering of our closest neighbours in BH. It was a scream about the things that everyone knew were

² Bertolt Brecht, 'When leaders speak of peace' in *Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975), 133.

coming but no one wanted to talk about. This performance was groundbreaking in both a personal sense and professional sense for Milošević:

It [the play] marked the way for my theatre and concurrently kept me in the country, because I realised, due to the reaction of our audience, that there is an enormous need to break the silence and to talk about things that were happening. I realised that people around us needed our work and this was an incredible privilege for a young theatre group – to understand, in the very beginning, that its work was indispensable for someone.³

This was the beginning of Dah's work on truth, justice and reconciliation. Dah rejects any attempt to be categorized and does not see itself as a representative of an exclusively documentary, feminist or political theatre. It defines itself as a contemporary theatre which draws on the tradition of theatre laboratories and, as such, uses a variety of resources it considers useful—documentary and dramatic materials as well as their own texts—to give the fullest expression to the subject matter they are engaging with. As a troupe, Dah is interested in everyday life; Dah's members use the stage to work through the themes that preoccupy them. History is very important to Dah: its performances seek to create a full-blooded relationship with historical events. While Dah has been established by women and majority of the troupe members are women⁴, it does not define itself as a feminist troupe. It also does not define itself as documentary theatre, although two recent performances that engage with the question of our responsibility to the past—*Crossing the Line* and *The Story of Tea*—draw extensively on historical facts and documentary material. In *Crossing the Line*, documentary material is used, for the first time, throughout the entire performance, while *The Story of Tea* incorporates documentary material about the real-life war crime committed in Štrpci.⁵

This chapter is based on Olivera Simić's interview with Dijana Milošević conducted in Belgrade in December 2011, as well as participant observation, email correspondence between the two authors and a series of informal conversations that the two authors have had over the past few years about Dah and its engagement with the themes of transitional justice. In this chapter, we focus on two of Dah's recent performances, *Crossing the Line* and *The Story of Tea*, which take on questions of accountability, truth, past war crimes and reconciliation. Through these two performances, we analyse the role of Dah in transitional justice processes—its work with survivors and the general community, as well as its possible contribution to the ongoing state court war crime trials for past injustices.

³ Personal interview, Dijana Milošević, Belgrade, Serbia, 12 December 2011.

⁴ Dah has four women and one man in its troupe.

⁵ Members of the Revenges (Osvetnici) military unit, commanded by Milan Lukić, with logistical support from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, were responsible for the abductions and then murder of nineteen men on the Bosnian territory. Although Lukić was sentenced to twenty years of imprisonment by ICTY, his indictment did not include the massacre of nineteen men. Women in Black state that this situation exposes the limits of ICTY. Only one person has been charged and accused for this crime, see Dušan Komarčević, *Kreatori zločina i dalje na slobodi*, E-novine, 27 February 2012, available at, <http://www.e-novine.com/drustvo/59890-Kreatori-zločina-dalje-slobodi.html> (accessed 1 February 2013).

The role of Dah theatre in transitional justice processes.⁶

According to Milošević, dealing with the past is an essential prerequisite for healing and transformation to take place. Theatre plays a powerful role in this process of reckoning with the past, since artists have the power to speak out—and to be heard—in the public domain. As Milošević puts it, ‘I feel that we lend our beings and our voices to the people whose voices we do not hear. I think that it is a huge responsibility as well as a privilege to work on these issues’. The Dah ensemble frequently gives interviews to local and international media, and as a result, its members have many opportunities to talk openly about what happened to *us* in the past and what is happening to *us* in the present. As Dolan argues, a theatre has very specific, material consequences, which, combined, produce a political intervention in an effort towards creating cultural change.⁷ This cultural change, in turn, comes from people taking responsibility and holding themselves accountable for the events around them. Coming from Serbia and being of Serb origin,⁸ the troupe wanted to talk about what was happening around them because of the personal urge felt by its members, but also because Serbia’s government had initiated the war. As Milošević points out,

In our name the most unspeakable atrocities have been committed regardless of the other sides’ responsibility for the war. To us, this performance [*Crossing the Line*] was a path towards self-healing and reconciliation with our own people and with people from our former homeland. We are those, who were vulnerable, who felt guilty and who transformed our feeling of guilt into a feeling of responsibility. We are the ones, who lived here and did not support what was happening, but our voices have not been heard. We had an enormous need for our voices to be heard in the name of all those people who had not agreed to and who didn’t support what was happening. It is the power of theatre to give that voice, to give voice to the voiceless.

Dah sees itself as a theatre that can open doors to victims to seek justice; it is also a space where people can reconsider their views. As a theatre, it employs techniques that allow the crossing of borders between the rational and the irrational, and between reality and metaphor: these techniques inherent to transformational and devised theatre can at times open up a much larger space for potential reconciliation than formal justice mechanisms. Through its work, Dah crosses not only ethnic lines, but also more insidious lines that divide people, who hold opposing or antagonistic views on a range of crucial matters. Dah’s aim is to maintain direct contact with its audience. For this reason, its audience, as a rule, is positioned in a circle or in a way that makes members of the audience mirror each

⁶ Siddiqui et al. and McNamee chapters in this volume both directly address the role of theatre in transitional justice: the former as a policy issue and the latter as a marker of a form of cultural expression that ties form to affect.

⁷ Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 2.

⁸ We would like to emphasize that both authors became aware of their ethnic origins in the beginning of the 1990s with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. As many Yugoslavs, we were raised in communist families where ethnicity was not discussed or in any way celebrated.

other—as in *The Story of Tea, The (play)*. Dah creates a shared space and a specific way of communicating with its audience, where people with different ways of thinking can meet and explore the same issue from different perspectives. Dah does not use the language of political propaganda; it seeks to problematize issues and to explore contradictions within them. Milošević sees Dah as fundamentally a truth-seeking mechanism:

One of the most important functions theatre can perform in the context of transitional justice is to inspire and encourage empathy and solidarity. In Serbia, according to Milošević, many people do not feel empathy towards victims of the recent past. In that sense, theatre can call out directly to peoples' emotions and, as a result, can help people accept what had happened: there is no genuine acceptance of the past without empathy for its many victims. *Crossing the Line* is a good example of the power of theatre to reach people. As Milošević explains,

I think that the majority of people in Serbia do not accept the historical facts with respect to the wars of the 1990s in the way they have been documented in countless books, articles and media coverage. Yet these same people were deeply affected when they saw our performance. They understood that the stories we told on stage were true stories and that it did not matter who the victim was and where it came from, because the victim is a victim and the biggest victims in all wars are women. The fact that we are a political theatre, but not a member of any political party, and that we represent human stories, places our audience and the people who do not want to face the past in a defenseless position.

While the courtroom may use a theatrical form to show how justice should be carried out, any judicial system must look for clear-cut causes and consequences in order to reach its aims. The theatre, unlike the judicial system, does not seek resolution. It, by contrast, raises questions by presenting facts as well as different views and complexities inherent in a particular situation. Theatre does not offer any resolution, nor does it declare any 'verdict'. Theatre has the power to create a space where people meet other people, frequently with opposing views of history and the present moment. In this space, audience members are free to express and share their feelings and thoughts about the performance and about the traumatic past. In such a physical space, there is no hierarchy, contradiction can coexist and different views can be heard and respected. It is a space for open dialogue, not for preaching to the converted. The time and space that an audience shares in theatre is radically different from the time and space of the courts: in courts, people tend to assume predetermined adversarial positions with no possibility for meaningful interaction or communication. Time in the judicial context is linear; it is viewed as flowing sequentially and chronologically. In contrast, time is frequently not linear in the theatre, but multidirectional. Theatre can look simultaneously to the past, the present and the future; it can travel through temporal frames vertically or horizontally. Theatre can also predict certain future scenarios by drawing on intuition and the prophetic language of symbols and dreams; such tools and mechanisms are not recognized as legitimate in the courtroom.

Dah believes that there is space and time for cooperation between formal and informal justice mechanisms—between courts and theatres. Peru is a good example of such cooperation—there, the state's Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (TRC) invited the theatre group *Yuyachkani*, to create a performance about the political violence that occurred between 1980 and 1990 in their country.⁹ After this performance, many common people, peasants and workers, who did not want to be witnesses in courts and did not want to testify even to the TRC, opened up for the first time to the assembly and spoke about their experiences. In that sense, it was important to document their testimonies and they gave these testimonies to the director of the theatre and its troupe after watching a performance. Dah had a similar experience with their play *Crossing the Line*. At the end of performances, people often felt compelled to tell their stories to the members of the troupe.¹⁰ The importance of these stories is multifaceted. As Milošević puts it,

We have an enormous respect for people, who tell us their stories after the performance, and these stories have significance to all of us. These stories give us lots of incentive to continue with this performance and with our work in general.

The Belgrade's city council, state institutions and relevant ministries do not want to finance *Crossing the Line*; their reactions to it have been negative and polarizing. Some state institutions told Dah that the theme of war and women survivors was 'not relevant any more', while others thought it was 'still not time to talk about these things'. The government does not want to turn to the past and crimes committed in 'our name'. The play was made with the support of a non-profit organization 'Reconstruction Fund for Women' (Belgrade) and a small grant given by Pro Helvetia (Switzerland). With this performance, Dah has never been invited to any of the state sponsored theatre festivals in its own country, although *Crossing the Line* was performed at various festivals across the world.

Violence Against Women: *Crossing the Line*

'In the dark time

Will there also be singing?

Yes, there will be singing. About the dark times'.¹¹

Crossing The Line (2009) was written after an invitation from Women in Black (WiB), a feminist activist organization from Serbia. In 2007, WiB published a book titled *Women's Side of War*. It is an anthology with one hundred and twenty testimonies, notes and reminiscences written by women about the wars that were

⁹ *Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani* is an activist theatre group, performing in reaction to, and in defiance of politics in Peru. The group has been established in 1971. See, <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/cuaderno/yuyachkani/group.html>.

¹⁰ While Dah has not documented these stories so far, its members are reflecting on how they could do so in the future, but do not yet have a clear strategy regarding this material at the moment.

¹¹ Bertolt Brecht, 'Motto to the 'Svendborg Poems' [*Motto der 'Svendborger Gedichte*] (1938).

raging in former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1999. The book encourages reflections on specific forms of women's suffering and their courage to overcome trauma and to reclaim normal life, as well as on the value of solidarity with women beyond the ethnic and religious boundaries and divisions. After reading the book for the first time while it was still in a manuscript form, the actors and Milošević agreed that, at the end, the primary victim of any war is a woman regardless of her ethnic or other affiliations. While preparing this play, the troupe dealt with questions of their country's and their personal responsibility for the atrocities committed by their fellow Serbs on orders from their political and military elites.

The performance of *Crossing the Line* posed many of the questions that were first articulated in *This Babylonian Confusion*. What is the responsibility of artists in relation to the terrors committed in 'their name'? Do artists have the moral right to perform while people around them are suffering terribly? Can theatre be a way of creating peace and bringing justice to the victims of war? The particularly pressing concern during the creation of *Crossing the Line* was whether the troupe had the right to speak on behalf of women who survived tragedies and who witnessed the darkest of times. While Dah uses a variety of methods in their plays, such as the language of symbols and metaphors, in this play the troupe used narrative form because they were dealing with authentic testimonies from women survivors about their experiences with war.

In agreeing to their book to be turned into a play, the WiB requested that Dah would not change any part of the text, that is, the Dah was required to use the authentic stories, faithfully recreated, in the play. The WiB condition posed an enormous creative challenge: to turn documentary material, which, as such, did not necessarily meet the criteria of a compelling dramatic text into living, breathing theatrical material. It was important to avoid falsifying the essential truth of these stories of women's suffering and courage and to avoid falling into hopelessness or

Fig. 6.1 Dah Theatre, original scene from *Crossing the Line*. Photographer Sarah DeLong. Reproduced with permission of Dah Theatre. Actresses: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Maja Vujović and Ivana Milenović Popović



into an overly stylized theatrical text. Minimalism turned out to be the only possible solution: only what was necessary, what had to be said and shown, was left in the play. After all, Dah was speaking in the name of women who either did not have a public voice themselves or could not reach many people through the public telling of their stories. It was important to Dah to perform this play across the entire region, but particularly in Serbia. In Serbia, the play functions as a direct confrontation with the past: a way of confronting the audience with what had been done in 'their/our' name.

It is important to note here that in Dah's performances, the spectators are not just anonymous audience members whom performers address from the stage. In many of Dah's performances, the audience members are also narrators and survivors of the stories that actors portray. Dah often organizes conversations with their audiences after a play. As the play has been performed in front of different audiences, including war veterans, Dah has never been able to predict the audience reaction. Yet, so far at least, audiences have invariably been supportive and emotionally affected. The common initial reaction is silence and a shared feeling of numbness. People seem visibly shaken by what they have seen and often stay in their seats for a few minutes without speaking before slowly moving around and engaging with others.

In December 2011, the first author, Olivera Simić, was in the audience watching a performance of *Crossing the Line*, which was staged as part of a regional festival, being mounted for the first time, called the 'Off Frame Festival of Socially Engaged Theatre'.¹² After the performance, the audience and actors gathered for a glass of wine and snacks provided by the Dah. Olivera found herself standing next to Novica, a war veteran from Serbia, who was conscripted by the Serbian government and sent to fight in BH. He was visibly shaken by the performance. Over the glass of wine in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, Novica whispered to Olivera: 'It was so difficult to watch this performance. I feel terrible that some of my comrades may have committed those crimes. How can anyone do this? I have a wife and a daughter too'.

Milošević recalls that in one of their performances in the south of Serbia, there was an older man in the audience who was shaken by the play. After the play was over, the man addressed Milošević in front of the audience. 'I am shocked by these stories', the man said. 'Who were these monsters who did such terrible things—rape, torture etc.?' Milošević replied, 'I am sorry but I have to tell you that these people were your and my neighbors'. Despite the confrontational nature of the play, audiences have not responded negatively: no one attempted to intimidate the actors or to argue that the stories Dah used in the play were propaganda and lies. Dah believes that this was so because among the stories that were told were Serb stories too—stories of Serb women and their suffering. Dah sees their play and the

¹² The 'Off Frame Festival' has brought together organizations and authors who focus their work on socially engaged theatre in Serbia and the region. The festival aimed to create a space for discussions about life in post-conflict environments. 'Off Frame Festival', December 4–10, 2011, www.off-frame.org.

Fig. 6.2 Dah Theatre, original scene from *Crossing the Line*. Photographer Milan Petrović. Reproduced with permission of Dah Theatre



audience reaction as a form of public healing, and a vital step towards public recognition and acceptance of the crimes committed in ‘our name’.

According to Milošević, the performance had a particularly cathartic effect on audiences in BH. The pain and loss experienced by the people in BH were publically recognized through this play, and to Dah, this process of shared recognition was of the utmost importance. Milošević’s *commented* about her emotional experience with the play *Crossing the Line* when it was performed in Bihać, BH, December 2009:

I realised at one moment that the whole audience was weeping. I was very distressed and asked myself whether we are re-traumatising people or healing them? However, once we finished the play, we received standing ovations and talked to the audience. I realised then how important it was for them to publically hear their stories and in that way be acknowledged in their suffering.

For victims and survivors, the play offers the direct possibility of healing: seeing and hearing the stories becomes a public acknowledgement of the often unacknowledged and therefore dangerously invisible, crimes. And, of course, the play and the theatre troupe itself come from Serbia—which symbolizes the empathy felt by certain Serbian people towards Bosnian victims of war as well as their solidarity. Dah performed—and is still performing—beyond the Balkans. In other parts of the world, the play is perceived as a universal protest against the violence inflicted on women. The reactions outside of the Balkans are also

emotional, but audiences, especially women, relate the stories less to the particular historical and geopolitical context, and more to violence against women more generally. While touring the USA, in Dah's conversations with youth after the play, the audience shared stories about domestic violence, rape in student campuses and violence against women. They saw the play as a voice against violence against women. What fascinates Milošević about playing this performance abroad is to see 'how *our* local story which is so rooted in our region, politics and history has become universal by using the language of theatre and art. It has cross inter-continental borders and became a unique story in that sense'.

Dah has no support from either city or the regional authorities to develop their play further or stage it more widely across the region. *Crossing the Line* has been performed in Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, the United States, Slovakia, but not yet in Slovenia. Significantly, it is only very recently that Dah was invited to perform in Kosovo. Prior to that invitation, Milošević had shared her thoughts with me as to the reasons that *Crossing the Line* had not been welcomed to Kosovo:

Our Albanian sisters from Kosovo were not happy with our performance because we gave more space to the Bosnian stories and because we perhaps did not emphasise more the horror they survived. However, we do not measure victimhood; it is not our aim. We tried to organise a performance there, but we have never been invited with this performance to Pristina because it is still probably not the time for us to go there and because we are in that sense incorruptible. We do what we believe in and we think that if people in Pristina had a chance to see the performance, many of them would open their hearts to the possibility of a dialogue.

However, to Dah's pleasant surprise, in May 2013, Milošević and Dah were invited by Kosovo theatre director Zana Hoxha Krasniqi, the organizer of the *Femmes Fatales*, the First Regional Female Artists Festival for Human Rights in Kosovo.¹³ Zana has directed her own theatrical version of the WiB book *Women's Side of War* and at the festival, and it is planned that both performances will be played together. This development is regarded as a step of enormous importance and meaning for both directors since it heralds a new willingness to open the Kosovo space to a troupe from Serbia to perform a play of their own creation.

Facing the Past Together: *The Story of Tea*

The Story of Tea (2006) deals with issues of confronting the truth and how we react to someone close to us committing a crime. Dah used Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as a dramatic template for their play—Chekhov's main theme in *Three Sisters* is the missed and lost chances in our life. *The Story of Tea* brings together true stories from the region with the Chekhovian themes in order to speak

¹³ The Festival is held from 27–30 May 2013 in Oda Theater, Pristina, Kosovo.

Fig. 6.3 Dah Theatre, original scene from *The Story of Tea*. Photographer Jovan Cekić. Reproduced with permission of Dah Theatre. Actresses: Sanja Krsmanović Tasić, Maja Vujović, Aleksandra Jelić and Jugoslav Hadžić



about the treatment of truth and the chances squandered by the Serbian society. One of the true stories incorporated in the Dah play is the abduction of nineteen Muslim men of Yugoslav nationality from the Belgrade-Bar train at Štrpci station at the border of BH, Montenegro and Serbia. The men were kidnapped and murdered because they had Muslim names. Later, the murderers were caught and put on trial, but Serbia never issued a statement of condolence, which might have been seen as a way of apologizing to the families of people who were abducted and killed. The questions often asked by the audiences after seeing *Crossing the Line* are raised in *The Story of Tea* by the actors themselves: (Fig. 6.3)

What kind of people could take out the bones from fresh graves and re-bury them again?
 What kind of man could sit in a dredger and take out somebody's bones? Where are all those people who did that? Where do they live? Are they possibly our neighbours?¹⁴

The question of the ongoing denial of past wrongdoings is prominent in both plays. A sense of disbelief that the people who tortured, raped and murdered were 'our people' has been strongly emphasized by both the audience and the actors. According to Logar and Bogosavljević, surveys conducted among the Serb population have highlighted three segments of society: the first group uncritically believes that all blame lies with the 'other side' and that Mladić, Karadžić and Milošević are victims of a global anti-Serb conspiracy¹⁵; the second group

¹⁴ Dah Theatre, the line from *The Story of Tea*. Full transcript of the play on file with authors.

¹⁵ Svetlana Logar and Srdjan Bogosavljević, *Vidjenje istine u Srbiji*, REC 62(8) 15 (2001), available at http://www.b92.net/casopis_rec/62.8/pdf/005-034.pdf (accessed 12 January 2013).

believes that crimes were indeed committed by the Serbs and that the nation has to confront their reality and legacy; the third group thinks that the blame lies with the international community rather than Milošević. Members of the third group remain undecided about what truly happened and about the nature of the Serbian culpability.¹⁶ This culture of denial is reflected in mainstream political discourse, where denial of war crimes is promoted as a normative and acceptable way of dealing with the legacy of the Serbian past.¹⁷ To reflect on this culture of denial, at the end of the performance, all of the actors speak the following words in unison:

If I open my innards to
 this truth recovery and
 let the world listen to
 the thrum of blood in my
 heart, the gush of bile
 in my spleen, the
 susurrations of air in my
 lungs, the drip, drip,
 drip of urine in my
 kidneys, the clatter of
 corpuscles and platelets
 in my arteries, when I
 sound them all from deep
 inside where the dead
 reside, will I be healed?¹⁸

The whole performance takes place in the space between spectators, who are sitting in such a way that they face one another. At the beginning of the play, the audience is served nineteen cups of tea. The number of cups symbolizes the number of people abducted and murdered on the train in Štrpci. At the end of the performance, actors put the candles in those cups. After the actors leave the stage, the audience often stays in the theatre, sitting still, in the complete darkness, illuminated only by the nineteen candles, which nineteen people hold in the cups. In this way, Dah has created a space of memory, resembling a wake. The fact that people stay behind sitting, remembering and reflecting is important, as it signals the beginning of the potential healing (Fig. 6.4).

¹⁶ Ibid. at 32.

¹⁷ Jelena Obradović-Wochnik, *Strategies of Denial: Resistance to ICTY Cooperation in Serbia*, in *WAR CRIMES, CONDITIONALITY AND EU INTEGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS* 29, 34 (Judy Batt & Jelena Obradović-Wochnik eds., 2009), available at <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp116.pdf> (last visited March 1, 2013).

¹⁸ David Duggan, a playwright. The text is a part of his play 'AH 6905'. Reproduced with permission of Dah Theatre.

Fig. 6.4 Dah Theatre, original scene from *The Story of Tea*. Photographer Jovan Cekić, Reproduced with permission of Dah Theatre. Actors: Sanja Kršmanović Tasić, Maja Vujović, Aleksandra Jelić and Jugoslav Hadžić



Inscribing the Present with the Past

Both performances, *Crossing the Line* and *The Story of Tea*, emphasize the role of art to memorialize the past: its ability to inscribe the present with tangible marks and traces of the past and to ensure that remembering, both public and private, is understood as an ongoing and indispensable cultural process. They both engage with the understanding that memory is elusive and tricky and that people often remember specific things and that they remember different things at different times. In Serbia, the audience and the troupe members grew up in the same country and have a shared history and, for the most part, very similar childhoods. However, as Milošević points out,

but what you remember about that country is probably different from my memories. Art makes it possible for these different parts of memory to be documented. There is no such thing as only one truth and only one possible memory. There are many memories that coexist simultaneously and can all be truthful in that sense. Art can put these different remembrances in the same space next to each other without saying ‘your memory is more worthy than mine’.

Dah has experienced ongoing threats because of its work. Twice, while touring with *Crossing the Line* in 2010, Dah’s offices were burgled. Dah has received threatening letters and there was even an attempt to burn down the theatre. Despite these obstacles, Dah believes wholeheartedly that ‘with our lives and voices we are demonstrating that it is possible to live a life with more humanity and dignity. We would like to see that our work can contribute to a better society’.

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