



DIGITAL COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN ROMA THEATER AND DRAMA

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Roma From the Duvet or Enter the Majority

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(excerpts)

It is dark, the music starts and while the music plays, he lies in bed. When the opening song ends, he rocks like a little child and sings a song:

Good evening, A ship sailing into the unknown,

Captain...

So, stay a little longer, stay a little longer.

while you have friends here

úúú ... you have friends, úúú... you have friends.

Good morning, wake up, open the windows, air out the stink, get dressed and go for breakfast! Who doesn't come to the dining room in fifteen minutes, will go without breakfast! And don't even think of coming again!

I could not have imagined a morning in the foster home without those sentences. Until I got used to it, they bothered me, but then I started to enjoy them. I have been waiting for a caregiver to come and shout the miraculous sentence: good morning, wake-up call, get up, open the windows, air out the stink!

The biggest cleaning was always on a Saturday. I hated it. Sometimes there were seven of us in the room. The room was 4 x 4, how stinky it was! We used to move furniture a lot. Many times, quite pointlessly. For example: we moved the large, massive wardrobe in front of the window, so we prevented natural light from entering the room. Or we moved the big bunk bed in front of the door, so entering the room was almost impossible. The biggest cleaning was always on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and I hated it. But later I did it loosely, so I have always been done by 9:15 a.m.

Until a time ago, I did not know how I got into the foster home. I thought I was born there. I just did not know which of the caregivers was my mother. Then I learned that neither of them was my mother, at least not my biological one. Later, I met my biological mother, but I will talk about it later.

Pause – he shakes the duvet and continues

When I was a little boy, they say I was pretty fat. I loved sweets! All I had to do was pop my eyes out like Garfield the cat, and I had it all. There were sometimes seven of us in the room, so I had enough sweets... that I stole. But when my roommates found that out, I got a slap or two, and the matter was settled. But, since I was a favourite of the caregivers, I yelled and screamed intentionally until one of them came in. Let me go! Don't hit me! Leave me alone! Auntie, they beat me! And suddenly I was in her arms. She punished my roommates and I cried cheerful tears as if nothing had happened. And why was I such a favourite? Well, because I was so tiny, so black, with big black eyes and, chubby.

Pause - music – he moves the rack and the bed to the piano, when the music ends, he sits at the piano singing a song

What a strange animal is that,
which has big and beautiful ears,
Elephant, elephant, elephant, he is our friend.

What a strange animal is that,
which has big and beautiful ears,
Elephant, elephant, elephant, he is our friend.

He has a big trunk up, cheerfully plays with us,
Elephant, elephant, elephant, he is our friend.

He has a big trunk up, cheerfully plays with us,
Elephant, elephant, elephant, he is our friend.

I would sing this children's song to anyone who was there. To mums, dads, grandmas, grandfathers, children, mayors, politicians, but first and foremost to

artists. Well, yes, the artists. When I was seven years old, I met a great actress: Helena Růžičková. What an actress she was! I worked with her for, like twenty years. We worked together in Slovakia and abroad. Once, when we were in the Canary Islands with Helenka Růžičková, we were lying by the pool on sunbeds. Mine broke under my weight. Helena began handing out advice:

Helenka: Listen, Franta: I do not want to stick my nose in your business, but what do you have with that girl?

Fero: Well... Nothing, we are dating, we love each other.

Helenka: I do not want to stick my nose in your business, but I can very well tell if someone is a whore, and this whore certainly is a whore. Get away from her, she will just take advantage of you.

I did not expect so much honesty from her. Of course, I told it to my girlfriend right away. But she just waved her hand as if nothing had happened. Two days later, she slept with my best friend on the beach.

A short pause – he finds a letter under his pillow and reads it aloud

Love in the foster home – what a great adventure! You could not just walk hand in hand in the hallways of the foster home. No way! They figured it out right away. Once the younger foster-homers, little shits, were telling on me that I was kissing my girlfriend. Of course, they were right. And they were also telling on another couple. The headmistress heard about that. She called us to the dining room, just before dinner, and gave us a verbal reprimand:

Mimics the headmistress

Headmistress: I do not want to hear that you were kissing again! You are too young! You still have enough time for that!

I am like: Time? What time? Am I supposed to kiss on my deathbed? Thereafter she told the first couple to take off their trousers. And they humbly took off their trousers and were completely naked. The headmistress walked over to them and

slapped their naked butts. That is when I realized that, for God's sake, she would do the same to me. Right in front of my girlfriend and the others. But it was as if the headmistress had heard my thoughts. So, I got away with this. Apparently, it would not be appropriate to beat the ensemble's soloist on his bare ass.

A short pause – he sits down at the piano as if he wanted to play, but suddenly something changes his mind

My girlfriend and I only had a single conflict while staying in the foster home. It bothered her terribly that I spent more time at the piano than with her. In fact, she once gave me an ultimatum.

Girlfriend: Hey, Fero! Listen. Don't you think you spend more time at the piano than you do with me? So, do you know what? Decide! Either me or the piano!

Of course, I opted for the piano. I do not even remember why.

Pause – music – he rearranges the bed and piano, lies in bed wrapped in the duvet, holding Beckett's book, the music stops, and he continues

I never knew what high school I was going to go to. The caregivers decided for me. They say I was pretty clumsy, things kept falling out of my hands, I stumbled into something all the time. Well then - a hotel school. At that time, a bartender-course opened up. At that time, I used to go to a family in Bratislava. We had a good relationship. Once when I visited them, my “uncle” fortunately asked me something at dinner.

Uncle: Well, Ferko, how's school going?

Fero: Well, good, good. Lots of new subjects, learning, new people... And do you know what? A bartender's course is opening up at school, but probably it will not be ...

Uncle: And why?

Fero: Because the course costs 3,000 crowns and the foster home has no money for it...

Uncle: No problem, we will pay that for you.

They gave me three thousand crowns. Four days later, when I was back in the foster home, I went quickly to the headmistress.

A short pause – he goes around the piano, knocks the piano, and continues

Fero: Morning!

Headmistress: Hello, Ferečko, my little sweetheart, what´s going on?

Fero: Well, there is one thing. A bartender´s course is opening up at the hotel school. But I do not think it is going to work.

Headmistress: And why? Ferečko, my little sweetheart?

Fero: Well, because the course costs 3,000 crowns and the foster home has no money for it...

Headmistress: And by when do you have to pay for it, Ferečko, my little sweetheart?

Fero: Around the end of the week.

Headmistress: Well, then we will figure something out. Ferečko, my little sweetheart.

Two days later, she called me in again.

Fero: Morning!

Headmistress: Well, hello Ferečko, my little sweetheart. Here are the 3,000 crowns you got from the foundation, go, and just pay for the course.

Suddenly, I had 6,000 crowns in my hands. I invested 3,000 crowns in a bartender's course, and I had pocket money of 3,000 crowns. At that time, we had fifteen crowns pocket money a month in the foster home. After completing the bartender´s course, we went with our band to sing at a ball. I suggested to them

that I was not going to sing that year, I would rather do an exciting bartender show. In a few days, I received a call from the secretary of the faculty.

A short pause - he picks up his phone and imitates the walk of the secretary

Secretary: Hello Ferko. I have heard that you will not be singing at our ball this year and that you will have a bartender show instead, which is a great idea! Please tell me so I can write down whatever you need.

I dictated to him everything I needed. When we got there, I already had a table ready. Expensive spirits, syrups, glasses, an ice bucket full of ice cubes. The show had begun. They started the music and I started tossing and spinning the bottles and, suddenly everything started falling out of my hands. One bottle after another, all shattered to pieces. There was nothing left on the table. The whole show did not last even two minutes. The guests looked at me wondering if it was intentional, or was it just my crazy idea to put on a bartender show? And I quickly grabbed the microphone and all I could say was "and now here's a song." The music started and I started singing, hoping they would forget everything as soon as possible. Not only did they forget the bartender show, but they soon even forgot about me. A few days later, I got another call from the secretary

A short pause - he picks up his phone and imitates the walk of the secretary

Secretary: Hello, Ferko. We will transfer your pay of 3,000 crowns to your account, as agreed. But Ferko, would you please consider that it might be a clever idea to repeat the bartender's course.

Pause - he goes to the piano and starts singing

From an early age, I hear I will never be good for anything,
that I have big black eyes and that my eyes are not honest,

Hey, but I told myself I would be a great gentleman,

Hey, but I told myself I would be a great gentleman.

I have already mentioned that I had often visited a family in Bratislava at that time. Once my uncle suggested:

Uncle: Ferko, you are soon going to turn eighteen. We would be happy if you moved in with us, for good.

Well, I told myself, why not? I handed over all the textbooks at the hotel school earlier. The teachers were not too thrilled. They wanted me to take the graduation exam first and only then move to Bratislava. The headmistress called every other day and tried to convince me. But when she saw that I had already decided, she gave up, so, I handed over the textbooks, packed my stuff and went to Bratislava. Everything was fine, everything was okay, the big city of Bratislava. But suddenly my uncle said:

Uncle: Ferko, it is time to look for a job.

I was like ... a job?

A longer pause

Me? I thought I was just going to play golf. That is why I lied to them. I told them all the jobs were already taken. But they took matters into their own hands and found me a job through their acquaintances. In a kind of confectionery. It was terribly hot there. One of the employees asked me:

Gay man: Hi, can I ask you something? Where are you from?

Fero: From Prešov.

Gay man: Well, and there, in Prešov, are they all that black?

Fero: What?

Gay man: Are you gay?

Fero: No...

Gay man: I see. Well, that is unfortunate. For you ... because then you will not stay here long.

A few days later, the owner showed up, paid me 3,000 crowns, and sent me away. Saying I would not fit on the team. I spent the money in a relatively short time. But my foster father who took me in, then came up with another idea:

Uncle: Ferko, it is time to find yourself an apartment-to-rent that you will pay for yourself. To finally become independent – in-de-pen-dent, independent...

I was like - just wait a minute, the deal was that I would pass my graduation exam in Bratislava.

Uncle: A graduation exam is no longer important today.

So, I came up with a story that I had to go back to the foster home to get my new ID card and pack up the stuff I had left there. The headmistress called me every other day.

I ended up staying in the foster home, passed my graduation exam and continued my studies at the Roma Conservatory in Košice. It was there that I began to realize that I was Roma.

Pause – he is spinning on the chair

At that time, the final exam also had to be taken in the Romani language at that school. But I did not speak Romani at all. About ten minutes before the exam, I saw the chairman of the examining committee sitting in the hallway. He was a Roma, a very educated Roma, a friend. So I went to him.

Fero: Hi. I want to tell you that in ten minutes you will be examining me in Romani. But I do not speak the language at all.

Chairman: *(breaks out in cough)* What?

Fero: I do not speak the Romani language at all

Chairman: *(pause)* But, you are a Roma!!!

Fero: Of course, I am. But I never got in touch with the language.

So, I quickly explained my situation to him, and he understood.

Chairman: (*pause*) I see ... well, I did not know that about you. Well, what do we do with you? Listen, do you know a song, a Romani song, it would be best if it was unknown.

Fero: Yes, I do.

Chairman: Well, then I will ask you the questions in Romani, and you will answer them with the lyrics of the song.

Fero: Okay.

The graduation exam has started.

Pause, he sits down on the chair, clears his throat, and says:

Chairman: So, Mr Balog, your question is: Šaj mange phenes vareso pale romaňi historiĵa? (What can you tell us about the history of the Romani people?)

Fero: Well... Niko nadŵanev, kataro roma aven. (No one knows where the Romani people came from.) Dŵa vonsa sa vore, hoĵ amen roma viĉinen. (All we know is that everyone calls us Roma.) O dŵivipen, baro le romenge, aven amenge. (The life of the Roma is hard, as you can see.) O dŵivipen, the baŵavel the gilaven. (Life is a game and a song.)

Chairman: Thank you, Mr Balog. Does anyone have any further questions? If not, thank you, Mr Balog. You can leave. You scored A+.

And I graduated...

Pause, he turns the piano, starts playing and singing

Niko nadŵanev, kataro roma aven,

/No one knows where the Romani people came from

dža vonsa sa vore, hoj amen roma vičinen.

/All we know is that everyone calls us Roma

Niko nadžanev, kataro roma aven,

/No one knows where the Roma came from

dža vonsa sa vore, hoj amen roma vičinen.

/All we know is that everyone calls us Roma

O dživipen baro leromenge, aven amenge,

/The life of the Roma is hard, as you can see.

O dživipen, the bašavel the gil'aven,

/Life is a game and a song

O dživipen, the bašavel the gil'aven.

/Life is a game and a song

During my studies at the Roma Conservatory, I found myself a girlfriend. She was a Gadge girl, but it was love. We once had lunch with her family and, shortly after lunch, everyone left somewhere and only I and my girlfriend's father stayed at the table. And her father says to me: Listen, Ferko! I do not know about you, but I would take a nap. I said why not, I will take one with you. He got up and walked up the stairs. They had a two-story house. I went after him. He started taking off his shirt and I wondered what he was doing. Then he turned around, noticed me, and said: Listen, Ferko, are you really going to take a nap with me? I was like - well, you said you were "taking a nap" and that I was taking one with you... He looked at me in surprise and said: Listen, Ferko! Do you know what does it mean to "take a nap"? Well, it means that we are going to have a drink.

So, he put on his shirt, we went down to the living room, he told everyone what had happened, and we drank until morning. Since then, whenever I go to visit them, the first thing he asks me is: Well, Ferko, are we going to "take a nap"?

Pause, music, he rearranges the furniture, he changes clothes, puts on a shirt, sits down on the edge of the bed, and continues

When I was a little boy, I went to many different families. For example, to Prešov. It was a religious family. They prayed in the morning, at noon, in the evening, and sometimes even in between. One day they came up with an idea: Ferko, today you are going to be an altar boy. And they gave me a white robe.

pause , he pulls the sheet off the bed and spreads it on him

They set me up among the other altar boys and we began to assist with the Mass.

pause, he walks to the bed while mimicking an altar boy´s walk

I did everything the other way around. When I had to stand, I sat down. When I had to sit, I got up. It was all comedy! Everyone looked at me - a Roma altar boy - they found this extremely strange, bizarre. Later I told myself that being an altar boy could be something like travelling on the tram without a ticket. If they find out you do not have a ticket, you get fined. But what would happen if the priest found out that I did not have all the sacraments to serve at the altar? Well, I do not know. Well, I do not know. Maybe he would have slapped me in the face, or slapped my ass, or maybe...

A few months later, we went to sing with the band for a famous man. Suddenly the headmistress called me and said:

a short pause, approaches the rack and continues

Ferečko, my little sweetheart. Can you see that man? The giant one? Yes, the giant one. So, Ferečko, my little sweetheart, when you get to sing the part where you sing: *One day a great friend comes and gives me his hand, I wait till he finds me and says I love you...* So, at that point, Ferečko, my little sweetheart, you go to the giant, grab his little hand, and bring him here to the middle of the stage. Do you understand? Of course, I did. So, I started singing that part of the song, and led the famous giant man to the middle of the stage. And he followed me.

pause, mimics the walking of the giant

Suddenly, all the journalists started taking pictures. I have not seen so many flashes even in a real thunderstorm. When it was all over, the giant turned his back on the audience, shook my hand and put something in my pocket... au! I did not hurt anyone ... Then I quickly went to the caregiver and told her the giant had put something in my pocket. So we pulled it slowly out of my pockets, and all of a sudden - 3,000 crowns.

Pause, the music starts, he sits down at the piano, the music falls silent, he begins to play the piano and continues

After a while, I realized that these stories seemed to smuggle me into the Majority. There were times when it was harder, but other times I was lucky. I believe in my guardian angel. The most effective means of self-realization is motivation. And my self-realization took a concrete form: I passed the state exam at the Academy of Performing Arts.

Pause, he moves his chair over to the bed and continues

State exam at the Academy of Performing Arts: I pull out my question ... Holy Mary! *Masks in the Ancient Theatre*. They saw something went wrong and gave me a second chance. I pull out my question ... Holy Mary! ... *Returning to a ritual and its*

topicality. Explain the concept of theatre of cruelty. I talked about everything, except for cruelty. Suddenly one of the examining professors said to me: Mr Balog, please, be so kind to leave the room for fifteen minutes. So, I left the room. I was nervous since I did not know if they would let me pass the exam. I smoked a cigarette but did not even actually light it. And then they called me in again.

Pause, moves back to his chair

Well, Mr. Balog, we regret to inform you, that you have passed the state exam. Thank you, you may leave. I rushed to the first restaurant and ordered a chicken broth, a Montenegrin and, of course, two half pints. Then I went home.

Pause, music, the stage darkens, after which he returns

Do not let me forget - I mentioned at the beginning that I met my biological mother. My sister contacted me through a social network saying my mother would like to see me. We agreed on the details, I turned on the Skype, and I saw my mother on the screen. She was sitting from her profile. She was smoking. Elegance, a charming lady, grandiosity... and all of a sudden:

Mother: Where the hell is he?

Somebody: Well, he is looking at you!

Mother: What?! (*puts out the cigarette and starts lamenting loudly*) Feričko, my darling, my dearest son.... And, well, do you have a car? Do you have much money? Do you have a girlfriend? Romani or Gadje?

And that was the moment I understood who I had taken after. I found out my mom was an incredibly talented actress.

Pause, goes over to the piano, starts playing the closing song and singing

My mother, a beautiful girl, she had me at 16,

I was already her third child, so she gave me up.

While waiting for the welfare, sniffed a dose of toluene

lit a cigarette.

Ferinko, my dearest son, let me tell you something,

I am a kid myself; you must get out of here.

We are children of the Earth,

everything here belongs to us,

and what we do not possess, we take as if we have found it.

Give me, give me, give me everything I must have,

Give me, give me, give me, I want to enjoy life,

Give me, give me, give me, just we stay healthy,

Give me, give me, give me, the rest will resolve itself.

He plays the last chord, the light goes out, then the light goes on again, the music starts, the actor returns to the stage and bows