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Two Worlds, One Story. The Comparison of  
the Storytelling Process in Surinamese Fairy  
Tales and in Improvisational Theatre\*

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Dwa światy, jedna opowieść. Porównanie procesu opowiadania  
w bajkach surinamskich oraz w teatrze improwizowanym

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**Abstract.** The article aims to show similarities between the Surinamese fairy tales cultivated in oral form and improvised theater performances. An analysis, using poststructural and comparative methods, aims to compare the form and structure of two oral (literary and theatrical) performances,

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proving that irrespective of the (geographical, ethnic, aesthetic) roots of the emergence of both forms of art, the core and the order of specific elements during complex oral presentations is repeatable and depends on the needs of artists and recipients, which is successfully presented during the analysis. The material used contains a series of performances by improvised theater groups and a (written) record of oral performances by Suriname storytellers made by Willem Campagne.

**Keywords:** Suriname, fairy tale, structure, orality, improvisation, Willem Campagne

**Abstrakt.** Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu wykazanie podobieństw między kulturowanymi w formie oralnej bajkami Surinamu oraz występami teatru improwizowanego. Wykorzystując metody poststrukturalistyczne oraz komparatystyczne, dokonano analizy formy i struktury dwóch wystąpień oralnych (literackiego i teatralnego), dowodząc, iż niezależnie od korzeni powstania obydwu form sztuki (geograficznych, etnicznych, estetycznych) rdzeń oraz kolejność konkretnych elementów w trakcie złożonych wystąpień oralnych są powtarzalne i zależne od potrzeb artystów i odbiorców. Jako materiał wykorzystano szereg wystąpień grup teatru improwizowanego oraz zapis występów oralnych (improwizacji) surinamskich opowiadaczy wykonany przez Willema Campagne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Surinam, bajka, struktura, oralność, improwizacja, Willem Campagne

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although the oral literature is a wide, well explored field of the literary studies, not every aspect has been checked yet and not every perspective in the analysis has been met. Following the principles of the postcolonial and literary deconstruction (Burzyńska and Markowski, 2007), we want to compare two seemingly apart existing spheres of literary and performative acts – the improv theatre and the performative oral Surinamese fairy tales.

An attempt to find similarities in these two genres may lead to a (yet another) confirmation of the common need of human all around the globe, regardless of the race, culture or society, to participate in a storytelling-based performance (Mietlinski, 1981; Finnegan, 2005). The article provides also a firm introduction to the basic rules and history of the improv theatre and the act and the festive character of storytelling in the Creole society of Suriname.

In order to show the most basic, the most common sense of a need of storytelling in a society we need to compare not only these acts and these performances that we know will show a correlation. The thing that needs to be done is to look for such examples of storytelling, existing end developing with no relation to each other, and yet showing similarities. Also, the description of both similarities and differences may lead to an enrichment of both analyzed types of performance. The aim of the article is then not only to show and confirm the statement that the act of storytelling with some basic similarities will appear in different places of the world, but that it can simultaneously develop comparative verbal or nonverbal elements

of storytelling, that may be understood and re-used by other ethnical or cultural groups. We do assume, that with showing these elements some of them may be reimplemented (at least in the improv theatre) to enrich the spectacle.

## 2. ORAL LITERATURE

As the term “oral literature” will state as a base for the definition of the fairy tale in general, and is of a key meaning in case of the Surinamese fairy tales in specific, it is needed to give a definition of this field of literature. The definition we are basing on comes from the Internet website of World Oral Literature Project by Yale University of Cambridge:

Oral literature is a broad term which may include ritual texts, curative chants, epic poems, musical genres, folk tales, creation tales, songs, myths, spells, legends, proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters, word games, recitations, life histories or historical narratives. Most simply, oral literature refers to any form of verbal art which is transmitted orally or delivered by word of mouth. (World Oral Literature Project [access: 01.07.2019])

These texts, later possibly adapted, retold or translated may function also in the sphere of written texts, but should not be considered as the final (or “the only”) version of a story. The written adaptation is merely an idea and an interpretation of an oral version of the text. What is more, the base for the written adaptation is determined by the prism of just some oral version of the story, most likely not all of them, what may not give the whole spectrum of the base texts (Oosterhout, 2013). The true beauty and uniqueness of the oral texts lays in their creativity and flexibility, their ability to change through the context of time and space, depending also on the orator and the audience. Among the various Surinamese fairy tales (the folk tales, magic tales, animal tales) we see a strong bond with the oral performance of the storytelling. Not only because of the sociological aspect of the origin of the stories (brought by the slaves from Africa, mixed with the local stories), but also because of the strong need of the participants of the Surinamese storytellers to participate in the culture of their ancestors.

The main aspect of any folk tale is the text told – as treated by folklorists, structuralists, etc., but unfortunately these analyses base mostly on a written (“standardized” or “classical”) form of the tales, focusing on the plot, characters and cultural elements (Burzyńska and Markowski, 2007). The idea of the orature in this article is to focus not on the texts *per se*, but to look into the structure of how a story is being told (performed), comparing it to the structure of storytelling in the improv theater. Both of the storytelling forms – the Surinamese tradition of fairy tales gatherings

and the improv shows – make a similar starting point of avoiding being adapted in a written form and realizing (mostly) a simple, intuitive storyline (Ong, 2005).

The role of the storyteller has also firmly changed in the last century. Taking the Surinamese fairy tales as an example – there is no need to introduce the history of the land and to teach children (and adults) about basic moral laws anymore. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have an access to the libraries, television, the Internet, etc. – we do not need the storytellers in the teacher-function anymore. We need storytellers that will keep us amused, that will introduce us to the unknown, literary, artistic world. The key aspect of it focuses then on a festive-like sphere, a storytelling event. An event, that is being led by an interaction between the orator and the audience (Lwin, 2010). What is more, with the introduction of different (written) languages in Suriname some of the stories may have changed their meaning or has been fully deleted (or recreated) due to changes in the imagining of the language and the verbal connotations (Ong, 2005).

### 3. SURINAMESE STORYTELLING AND FAIRY TALES

In this part we will be considering primarily the oral construction of Surinamese fairy tales: events and folklore elements that tend to introduce and accompany fairy tales storytelling performances. The literature-theoretical cases of the Suriname fairy tales will be marginalized only to the crucial statements as an introduction to the main case of this part.

The definition of “Surinamese fairy tales” is mostly based on a region-specific characteristics of oral texts that appear there. The Surinamese fairy tales will be than divided into three subgenres, basing on the characters that may occur in the stories. Melville and Frances Herskovits specify three sorts of fairy tales: animal tales, animal tales with human characters, fairy tales with only human characters (Dubelaar, 1972). The first group will be certainly the most characteristic for the Surinamese fairy tales, as in these texts occur also Anansi Toris, a characteristic type of fairy tale with Spider Anansi as a protagonist trickster character. Those fairy tales may be found not only in Surinamese texts, but in all former colonial regions that imported slaves from West Africa (Illes and Meder, 2010). The coming of the West-African society to Suriname began in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Kempen, 2002). With that we may be speaking about the development of the storytelling culture of fairy tales that stays in the more or less unchanged form up to this day. The stories were slightly modified during the next decades due to the changes in economical and sociological fields (Kempen, 2002).

Because of the popularity of Spider Anansi it is common to name all the Surinamese fairy tales as Anansi Toris (Dubelaar, 1972). An alternative name is also *negersprookjes* and it is bound with the main language of the Surinamese fairy tales. These texts are commonly narrated in Negerenglish (a language of the sociolect of (ex)slaves of Suriname), based on English and Dutch with elements of German, French and Portuguese (Donicie, 1952). Other languages that may be used to express Surinamese fairy tales is Sranantongo, the most used language of Suriname (Diepeveen and Hüning, 2016), and Dutch as an official language of this region (Diepeveen and Hüning, 2016).

Anansi (or characters similar to him that may be found in the Surinamese fairy tales) is a typical trickster hero (Illes and Meder, 2010). Using his wit he is always able to trick other characters – even if it may cause life threatening harm to his antagonists or even his family. The Spider represents not only the original thought of the slaves to survive just one more day gathering food for every cost. He is also a representation of our childish (animal?) behaviour common to people of the whole world, but also all the traits that we keep deep in our minds out of other people. The destructive side of our soul (Slany, 2016). With that it is easier for the audience of every origin to understand Anansi and live his story with him, making him a variety of the Everyman (Réthelyi, 2017). This realizes the case presented by Walter Jackson Ong indicating that the characters in the oral stories have to be vibrant and memorable (Ong, 2005). The problematic of the appearance of a trickster character in the performative oral literature (or in performative culture in general) can be seen as an interesting topic, especially in the context of the fairy tales from the postcolonial regions of Mid and South America. Unfortunately, there is no place in this article for this aspect of the stories, but let this be a sign for other scientists, that this may and should be done.

To begin telling the Surinamese fairy tales we have to meet some circumstances. The work of Cornelis Nicolaas Dubelaar provides us with a decent list of situations in which those text may be told, dividing them into culture-specific events of two groups: Creole people and Marrons. The Surinamese fairy tales told by the Creoles are then used to put children to sleep (although this example is being today out of date), at times there comes a well-known fairy tales teller to the village or district, at night after hard work, on the eighth day after one's death (Dubelaar, 1972). In the Marron society the fairy tales are bound with the death rites – dependently on a specific culture group the stories may be told strictly after one's death, month after the burial or at times with other death-bound ceremonies (Dubelaar, 1972). Moreover, due to their sacral character, the Surinamese fairy tales are present in the Surinamese society only in the oral form. All the written texts that are labelled as Surinamese fairy tales are made mostly by the researchers from the European (or American) culture circle

(Kempen, 2002). What is also important, such written fairy tales are often lacking in translation and transcription the unique elements making the Surinamese fairy tales so original in consideration of fairy tales as a genre itself (Oosterhout, 2013). These elements are also the main case of similarities between the oral tradition of storytelling in Suriname and improv theatre in the Western cultures.

While telling a (fairy) tale in Suriname we need to meet some particular sacral-like elements. Without them the story would be incomplete. First of all, the storyteller is obliged to tell one or more jokes as a form of warming the audience up (Dubelaar, 1972). Before the story starts the storyteller has to make sure, that his audience is listening to him. He makes that with opening phrases like *Er tin, tin!* with an answer from the crowd *Tin, tin tin!*. Alternatively, he (or she) may call *Kri, kra, all men on their kra-kra!* (Herskovits and Herskovits, 1936). Then the story may begin.

The storytelling being performed naturally has to follow some recognizable storylines. But because of the performance-like character of the Surinamese fairy tales, in every story told, even if it was meant to be the same as told before, may occur something new. This may be caused by interactions with the audience. The storyteller (*toriman*) chooses one person from the crowd that is the direct listener (*pikiman*) (Dubelaar, 1972). His task is to react on everything the storyteller is portraying. He (or she) can nod, simply say that the story is true or even ask for more details about an element of the story. The storyteller has to react to such request, he has to be more flexible than a parent reading out loud a story from a book. What is more, the whole audience may even interrupt to start a song or a dance as an element of a fairy tale (for example, to emphasize an element or an event in a story). They can even stop the storyteller with words as *Kri 'kra* or *Bato*, so they can continue telling a fragment of a story for him (or her). The audience, just like in the improv theater, and what will be mentioned later, does not function only as a one common being living through the (oral) story. The participants of the events willingly break the barrier between the two sides of the stage (the real one or the imagined one) (Havelock, 1986).

Just as the opening of the story, the end of it also has to be done with specific words. If the storyteller has nothing more to say and the audience is pleased with the story (so they do not want to add more to the fable), he (or she) may end the fairy tale. In this case, the storyteller claims *A kaba* or *Na tori komkaba*. That means nothing more than “the story came to end” or, to find a more religious equivalent, “amen” (Herskovits and Herskovits, 1936). When the storyteller is done, someone else starts the process from the very beginning.

It is also important to mention, that although the Surinamese fairy tales are told mostly at night, they are not meant to be scary or thrill, as the atmosphere of the night may suggest (Slany, 2016). Because of the festive character of this

event, all the stories, although often bound with starvation of the characters or the slavery-related topics, are seen just as a relief after work and time of fun. Due to the appearance of songs, dances and carnival-like atmosphere during the storytelling, we see an example of carnivalization of the whole situation. The participants' laughter is growing stronger not only because of the comic tint of the stories or because of the common Anansi trickster character, but also by the simple feeling of the amusing moment (Propp, 2016).

The Surinamese fairy tales are more than clearly performance-like culture spectacles, mixing oral literature with dances and songs, making it one of the most original entertainment forms of this culture. Although the main plot is told by one person, the audience has a crucial role in making "a story" "the story."

#### 4. IMPROV – WHAT IS IT?

Improvisational theatre is a genre of theatre that rejects scripts. Performances are created live, based on momentary inspirations – usually given by the audience. It is commonly present in the form of scenes or exercises. Exercises aim at developing certain skills that are then used in the process of creating scenes (Goldberg, 1991). The scenes are always created without a script. What happens onstage is an effect of an inspiration, which can origin from improvisers' feelings, from the environment of the scene or can be given from the audience.

An improv performance can have various forms, falling into two main categories: short-form improv and long-form improv. The short-form improv consists of several, mostly unrelated scenes, so-called games (Fortier, 2008). They have predetermined limitations and rules that actors must comply to, like, for example, limiting each of their lines to a maximum of three words. Long-form improvisation, on the other side, lets the improvisors construct the scenes more freely. In this case, each scene usually connects to all previous acts somehow, creating one story (Besser, Roberts and Walsh, 2013). The connection does not have to be fabular, though – it may be through a motive, an emotion, a character or through the suggestion given by the audience, etc.

There are various types of improv games (short forms), mainly riddles, pantomime games, scenes with certain restrictions or storytelling games. However, the said restrictions usually exist regardless of the game type, different types of restrictions apply to different types of games – i.e. a pantomime-based game will, naturally, not have restrictions regarding speech (Spolin, 1963).

Every form of art should have its recipients to truly exist. However, in case of the improv theatre, the audience plays a vital role in the performance. They are

not only experiencing the scenes, but, to a degree, setting the course of the scenes by giving the actors inspirations for them. A suggestion can be a place, an object, a person, a relationship, basically anything, depending on improvisers' demand. The word (or a phrase, sentence, etc.) that was taken as an inspiration for the following scene can show up directly in the scene or can generate some collocations that do (Goldberg, 1991).

Before every improv show, there is a warm-up with the audience. Improvisers want them to be energetic, creative and focused on the stage, as it is beneficial to the whole show and amplifies audiences' experience. What is more, it diminishes the distance between the actors and the audience, causing the second to give suggestions more willingly. Warm-ups can be physical (i.e. a classic Mexican wave), oral (i.e. shouting opposites: dog–cat, fire–water, yes–no) or, sometimes, mixed (i.e. a Mexican wave with sounds) (Michelle, 2016; Bair, 2016).

The warm-ups base on creating an interaction between performers and the audience and between the members of the audience. They are always simple and tend to be funny. There are lots of options for a warm-up and there are still new ones being created (sometimes even on the spot). Some examples are:

- telling a prepared story and having the audience make sound effects for it (Bair, 2016),
- having the audience member have some basic interactions with each other, moving them a bit and trying out their suggestions (Michelle, 2016).

Scenes usually end with a phrase “end scene.” There are other ways to finish a game, for example, having one person from offstage run before the actors, letting them know they should clear the stage.

## 5. HISTORY OF IMPROV

Theatrical improvisation dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In Italy, travelling theatre troupes were performing *commedia dell'arte* (“the art of comedy”). This art form was created based on frame scenarios or sketches (Rudlin, 1994). Although it lacked a script, it would be a stretch to call it improvisational theatre. Unlike the modern improv formats, *commedia dell'arte* constituted of stock situations and was manned with stock characters. Actors were free to improvise around this plot points, but the general course of the performance stayed unmodified (Salinsky and Frances-White, 2010). This was the theatre of actors, not of playwrights.

Improv had to wait for another couple of hundreds of years for the next big innovation. Around the 1930s–1940s, Viola Spolin – a North American contemporary theatre worker – started organising classes with non-acting children, that



were aimed at unlocking their creativity using playful theatrical exercises. The exercises are now known as improvisation exercises and are commonly used by modern improvisors (Fortier, 2008).

In the late 1940s, her son, Paul Sills, got into the University of Chicago, where he got involved in a theatre project named “Tonight at 8:30.” On July 5, 1955, he, together with David Sheperd and some other actors, performed the first improvised theatrical show. They formed an improv group “The Compass Players.” From The Compass Players emerged another group – “The Second City” – that began to popularize the improvisational theatre in Chicago, Boston, New York and Saint Louis. Then, an international boom for improv began (Salinsky and Frances-White, 2010).

At the same time in London, a second nest of improv started to develop. Keith Johnstone, a director at the Royal Court Theatre, used improv as a tool in order to keep his actors focused and present. He is considered one of the fathers of improv – he is the inventor of countless improv games and exercises (Salinsky and Frances-White, 2010).

Nowadays, there are thousands of groups around the globe, notably “The Second City” (still functioning), “ComedySportz” or “ImprovOlympics.” There are numerous festivals organized in many countries, for example, the Chicago Improv Festival. Improvisation is present in the TV (i.e. *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*) and on the websites. It is also used as a tool for amplifying spontaneity and creativity in business environments. Improvisational comedy becomes more and more popular not only as an art form, but also as a really useful tool to amplify creativity and spontaneity in business, as well as among other social groups. Due to the multiplicity of groups and concepts, as well as to the still developing character of improv, describing a detailed, recent history of this form of theatre is a material for a separate paper.

## 6. STORYTELLING IN IMPROV

Storytelling plays a major part in an improvised performance, as it does in every theatrical piece. Every scene should (basically) have a proper structure – a beginning, a middle and an end. The plot created during a scene is usually the most improvised part, because it develops along with the scene (Goldberg, 1991). A story can be told with words only – like in storytelling games, with underlined emotions and relationships between characters – as in long-form improvisation or by showing the events themselves.

Every scene in improv should be created using the “Yes, and...” rule. It obliges the actors to accept each other’s ideas and building something on top of them. The

rule has its exercise reflection (Milo, 2008). Any new idea that is brought to the table – every plotline – is called an “offer.” This offer can either be blocked or accepted. Acceptance is generally the creative choice (Salinsky and Frances-White, 2010). If the improvisers are complying to this rule, the plot is constantly evolving. It can take unexpected turns and focus on various elements (i.e. characters, descriptions, events). Plot’s development depends on what ideas the improvisers accept and how well they do it. If some ideas get blocked (not accepted), the story slows down (Diggles, 2004). The point should be to create a complete, logical story. It does not have to be realistic – absurd can also be intriguing. Improvisers should, however, focus on building the characters and their environment constructively, so that the whole story is entertaining to the audience while still being sensible (Diggles, 2004).

What is important to remember, improvisers should not plan ahead. Not only because it is against the very idea of improvising, but because it automatically makes the actors block one another with their ideas. That can lead to a situation, in which they fight over whose plot is better, causing the story to stop completely.

The stories born during improv shows are created within a cooperation between storytellers working around the inspiration given from the audience.

## 7. THE ANALYSIS

When watching an improv show, one can find many similarities between what he sees and what a Surinamese fairy tale would look like. As an example from the side of the Surinamese fairy tales we choose a specific event, presented by Antoon Donicie. To give any background: the event was initiated by another folklorist, Willem Campagne, and the story has been told by one of the local participants of the storytelling – Ba John (Donicie, 1952). Unfortunately, we do not know, in which language of Suriname the stories have been told or how long the whole event lasted.

Earlier during the day of storytelling the information about the event had been spread around the village, so everyone interested could get on time. Before that, everyone interested started the preparations – they cooked and brought corn, cacao, bananas and sweets to awaken a carnival atmosphere of the event. They also brought something to sit on – a box, a chair or a trunk. Then, they started the fire and gathered everything and everyone around it (Donicie, 1952). Improv shows usually happen in one of two places – theatres or restaurants/bars/pubs. Naturally, in order to perform such a show, an earlier notice has to be made as well. Nowadays, it happens mostly on social media. If the place where the show is taking place offers food and drinks (e.g. a bar), the audience is encouraged to order to increase the

feeling of a casual atmosphere. In both cases the sphere of unifying the audience into one being is being created in order to leave the focus only on the storyteller(s) (Ong, 2005). Both events realize the festive character of the gatherings bound with oral traditions (Havelock, 1986).

When everyone was there, Ba John began his art. At first, to gain an attention from the gathered crowd, he starts with some puzzles, the so-called *laitori*'s. They are mostly short, but engage as many people as possible and may be told once, twice or as long as the crowd needs to be awoken and engaged in the story. If needed, the *laitori*'s may be added between stories to reengage the crowd. As an example given by Donicie: What is long in front and long in the back? The street (Donicie, 1952). Then, the stories may begin. Analogically, before an improvised night can begin, there should be an audience-warm up conducted. Without it, the performers cannot be sure if their audience is ready to participate in the show actively. Riddles can be a common denominator here – improvisors try to use audience's gray cells to boost their creativity and feeling of unity and comfort. It is important to unify the crowd into one organism (Havelock, 1986). Sometimes the host of the show explains what improv is and what the show will look like (*Upright Citizens Brigade*, 2012; *This is Improv...*, 2014).

Ba John encourages someone else from the crowd to begin with his/her own story. Soekim, one of the participants, begins then with his fable, but it occurs not to be a fairy tale, but a fable-based history of how the Creole people came to Suriname and the story of their slavery. Without an interference from other participants, the next story begins. The storyteller is Oom Djani that starts with the traditional questions towards the crowd that should be added every time a new story begins. First he asks, if everyone is ready in their places, imitating at the occasion the sounds of crows. When he gets the confirmation, he asks if he can start the story (*A sa go?*), and the crowd has to respond positively (*A sa go!*) (Donicie, 1972).

The real beginning of the story is similar to "Once upon a time there was..." and the story went on with its fable to the moment one of the participants of the event stopped Oom Djani, saying that it is his favorite story and starts to sing a short song (*kotsiengi*) accompanied by other participants to liven up the story with the non-fable elements, similar to ancient Greek chorus (Donicie, 1972). After that, unknown participants stop the song with the sentence "Our voices are still" and serve alcohol drinks to the singers to regain spirit. Then the storyteller continues. The story was interrupted then 2 more times with different songs, more suitable with subject and atmosphere to the part of the story (Donicie, 1972).

In improv, there usually is not a formal start of the show/scene, however, some teams use a countdown to the scene (either a regular "3, 2, 1, Go!" or some modification of it). Before every new bit, however, there is a suggestion taken from

the audience (Banigan, 2013) (*Upright Citizens Brigade*, 2012; *This is Improv...*, 2014). It is similar to having an audience member (Soekim) starting his/her own story – every suggestion choice we make comes from our experiences (because that is how our collocations work). Both cases do imply the appearance of vast structures of the oral impressions of the stories, characteristic of the primal methods of oral performances (Havelock, 1986).

In the next part of the Surinamese storytelling, the *kotsingi*-man helps to illustrate some places of the story, trying, for example, to pantomimically show an entrance to a boat (Donicie, 1972). Unfortunately, we do not know if these elements have been rehearsed with the storyteller before the story ends or if it is just the initiative of the *kotsingi*-man. Sometimes he stands up and adds extra information to the story or reacts as the main participant of the story or a manager of the story, adding “You surely know this character” (a paraphrase – D.O.) or adding a dialog a character of the story could have said, but was not introduced by the storytellers, e.g. “Mom, dad, help me, the boa is going to eat me” (Donicie, 1972).

In improvisational theatre, there are usually no props. It is almost a tradition to use only a couple of chairs for all of the scenography and to pantomimically present the rest of the environment. Sometimes this rule is bent (e.g. by using door by the Upright Citizens Brigade). The pantomime is clearly and plentifully seen in Jacob Banigan’s (2013) solo show. He also introduces a direct narrator, describing behaviors of the villagers or the current environment of the scene. Naturally, he also acts out all of the dialogues between the characters. Using real, physical objects in an improvised environment, has a number of consequences. First of all, it demasks all of the mimed objects (if I can have a real mug, why should the audience believe in my fake gun?). What is more, it strips the audience of the possibility to imagine every bit of the scene by themselves – this way every member of that community has his own version of details of the story. Additionally, it can limit the actors’ imagination as to what they can use in the scene. If every prop is left to imagine by the audience, the whole performance is more fairytale-like to them – they can imagine everything exactly like they feel it (both in the improv theater and in the spectacle-like elements of the Surinamese stories).

When the story in Suriname ends, the storyteller sits down and announces that the story was decent and gave people a good time. After that a one more story is being told by an unknown participant, but there is no record of this one. We may assume, that the structure of the process of the storytelling is similar, as both stories focused on Anansi tales (Donicie, 1972).

In some improvised shows, there is only one story told, stylized for a movie or a theatrical piece (Banigan, 2013). In others, there are many stories, told one after another (*Upright City Brigade*, 2012). The passage from one storyline to

another is then less sophisticated than in Surinam, although it is clearly visible and understandable to the audience. Although the oral text is mostly based on words, both the Surinamese fairy tales and the improv theater make use of pantomime in the same aim, as the text itself – to evoke emotions and to re-live the story and the created sphere (Havelock, 1986). The main goal pantomime achieves is freeing the storyteller(s) from a certain reality of the scene. They, along with the participating audience, can take the scene (the story) anywhere they feel like taking it. It is most beneficial for the fabule, because it can make unexpected turns and evolve freely. If all you have is your imagination, the only thing limiting you is yourself.

The story of Ba John was not an Anansi story, but an *ondrofinni-tory*, a tragic story about people-characters. It was also the last story of the night, as the main idea of it was not to make people laugh, but to enjoy it on a higher emotional level, to live a tragic story. According to the description, both the crowd and the storyteller during the story were so moved they started crying in the middle until the end of the story. After that, everyone went home, thinking about the life, its cons and its end. We are not provided with any specific elements of introduction or ending of the story, but it is confirmed, that the story has been interrupted with songs accurate for a sorrowful story (Donicie, 1972).

However improvisational pieces can be (and most of them are) comedic, there are no rules saying they cannot be dramatic, reflectional or anything else. Even the show performed by Jacob Banigan was not only laughable, but touched the topic of traditions, aspirations and interpersonal relationships. Imagination is the only limit that is set to an improvised piece.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The two presented performative art forms do show a similarity in the storytelling process, emphasizing the festive character of the event. The story so told with the cooperation of the audience always results in a unique cultural, oral and/or nonverbal (literary) performance.

The similarity between the storytelling of the Surinamese fairy tales and the improv theater is bound with their simple story structure with the evoking of common emotions as the main point of the whole story. Both art forms were growing apart from each other and therefore no evolutionary link between them can be marked. In this case it can be stated, that the performative form of realization of Surinamese fairy tales and the improv theater is not bound with one specific culture, but with the natural need of men to evoke and participate within emotions (re)produced during the festive events of storytelling.

Once again, we may also confirm that the (re)production of stories is one of the elements that states about being a human. The created oral culture stated as a base for any human culture grows and lives within different societies, with different traditions and with different level of participation in the global cultural changes, though sharing the need to act and to live within what ancient Greeks called *catharsis* (Jaworski, Bernacki and Pawlus, 2002).

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