

УДК 792.2 (476.5)

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ADAPTION OF UKRAINIAN THEATER EXPERIENCE IN BELARUSIAN THEATER IN THE XIX – EARLY XX CENTURY

The article defines the story of acquaintance of public and theatrical figures of Belarus with the peculiar properties of Ukrainian theater in the XIX – early XX century. Based on a wealth of factual material, the author reveals the peculiarities of Ukrainian stage of practice, most influenced the development of the Belarusian national theater, in particular, the genre and thematic focus of the repertoire, ensemble performance and emotion, folk flavor, melodic language, saturation of action song and dance elements, the synthesis of painting and music clearance.

Keywords: *Ukrainian theater, the Belarusian theater, the interaction of cultures, synthetical works, drama, stage practice.*

Fundamental researches on the history of the Belarusian theater have analyzed the repertoire and performing skills of many theater companies, which performed in the largest cities of Belarus in the XIX – early XX century [4; 7; 13; 14]. Relying on extensive factual materials, we can determine how the performances of Ukrainian companies influenced the establishment and development of the national theater in the period under analysis and solve the problem of how the adaptation of stage experience by other nations was manifested in the formalist components of Belarusian theatrical productions.

Since the mid-1840's, as part of a theater reform in Belarus, there was a gradual transition to the Russian-speaking theater, and Polish actors, who mostly performed in Belarusian cities, solved the problem of lack of original Russian and translated plays by referring to the Ukrainian drama. In particular, theaters in the Belarusian provinces presented a comic opera in two acts *Natalka Poltavka* (a box-office hit) and a vaudeville in one act *Moskal'-charivnyk (The Muscovite-Sorcerer)* (with one of the main characters speaking Russian) by Ivan Kotliarevsky, comedies *Shel'menko-denshchik (Shelmenko, the Orderly)*, *Shel'menko, volostnoi pysar (Shelmenko, the District Scribe)* and *Svatania na Honcharivtsi (Matchmaking in Honcharivka)* by Hryhory Kvitka-Osnovyanenko (companies of Ya. Chekhovich, I. Fedzetski, V. Drozdowski, etc.) [9, pp. 34-48]. In the 1850's, entrepreneurs most often included Kotliarevsky's *Natalka Poltavka* and *Moskal'-charivnyk (The Muscovite-Sorcerer)* in the repertoire of companies performing during fairs. Some vivid examples are short roadshows in Ludza and Rēzekne (Vitebsk province) [10, pp. 2-16], as well as in Zelva and Svislač (Hrodna province) [6, p. 18].

Considering the fact that after the rebellion of 1830-1831 local authorities on the Belarusian territory were instructed «to allow performances only after consideration of each play separately, lest nothing objectionable or obscene, and especially in the political sense, can be found in them» [11, p. 20], the inclusion of Ukrainian works (plays, and variety entertainment songs) indicates a high level of their moral values.

Obviously, the performances in the Ukrainian language were very close to the Belarusian perception with their emotions and restoration of the national flavor. Unlike other performances of Polish (and later Russian) companies with many vocal and dance scenes, Ukrainian-language theatrical works awakened interest in folk life and the folk roots of art. This echoed the aspirations of understanding domestic national traditions in the Belarusian society. The first acquaintance with the Ukrainian theater coincided with the formation of national consciousness of Belarusians, introducing and learning folk creative heritage, which was of great interest to the society, while in the XIX century it was extremely difficult to produce plays dealing with issues of ethnic identity and understanding Belarusian traditions.

The closeness of cultures of the Belarusian and Ukrainian peoples was also manifested in the musical forms of folk theater and in the indigenous musicality and imagery that are typical of folklore, which was most clearly reflected in folk songs and rituals. As a proof of an organic mutual understanding of theatrical art of Belarusians and Ukrainians, a known domestic theater scholar U. Niafiud quotes the lines of a poem by Yanka Luchyna dedicated to Minsk in 1889 and 1891 tours by Starytsky's company:

«Thank you, brothers, dear sisters,
For your excellent folk songs,
For your rural speaking,
For the truth so bright, the truth so new!» [12, p. 12]

One can say that the Ukrainian plays with extensive music and dance scenes resembled the performances of Batleika theater, which was extremely popular at the time in Belarus, that, to a great extent, consisted of musical and dramatic episodes. Batleika performances were based on the principle of a sequential combination of various genres: a comedy scene was followed by a song, the song – by a satirical monolog, the monolog – by dancing, etc. [3, p. 21]. Therefore, a small band and choir were actively involved in the action. The latter uniquely combined the role of a narrator and, at the same time, (if needed) embodied from the first-person point of view the verbal score of a particular character. The repertoire of Ukrainian companies, just like Batleika performances, clearly manifested Slavic mentality, a rational world outlook with the leading role played by the folk «common sense», a unique national flavor, as well as sparkling folk humor inherent both in Belarusians and Ukrainians.

So far, there is no evidence of a direct impact of Ukrainian works on the form of domestic plays and performances of the first half of the XIX century. But comparing a comic opera *Idyllia (Peasant Woman)* by V. Dunin-Martsinkevich with Kotliarevsky's *Natalka Poltavka* helps see the typological similarity between them: both works depict rural life in typical circumstances of the time, the audience can see vivid images of Belarusians (or Ukrainians) belonging to different classes, the artistic structure of both works is imbued with elements of popular culture (sayings, proverbs, lyrical and comic-satirical songs), they emphasize the love theme, and the finals in both plays are similar.

Of course, almost the same characteristics can be given to French and Russian works of the same genre. However, *Natalka Poltavka* and *Idyllia (Peasant Woman)* demonstrate an exceptional strength of simplicity, truth and, most importantly, love for the people, which «from the authors' hearts switched to their works». This is not a coincidence. There are parallels in the life and work of I. Kotliarevsky and V. Dunin-Martsinkevich. Both came from the impoverished gentry, one worked as a teacher in gentry estates, the other bought a farm in Liucinka in 1840. Therefore, they had an opportunity to thoroughly study the language, life and customs, folk poetry, often disguised themselves to participate in folk meetings and games. I. Kotliarevsky became director of the theater in Poltava, while V. Dunin-Martsinkevich – organizer and director of a theater group.

In the second half of the XIX century, Ukrainian visiting companies, too, in a certain way, influenced the theatrical life of Belarus. Every summer, a few Ukrainian companies worked in the cities of the region. Their performances enjoyed great popularity among the audience. The audience could see the first-class works of Ukrainian classical and contemporary drama, and tried to transfer the samples of skillful acting to the amateur stage. For example, Starytsky's company toured in Minsk in 1889 and 1891, M. Krapivnytsky's theater performed here in 1892, 1893, 1898 and 1899. In Vitebsk, a large part of the public in the summer preferred performances on the stages of local gardens *Europe* and *Yelahi*, which were frequented by Ukrainian companies. In 1898, the city was visited by the Company of Russian and Ukrainian artists under the direction of A. Vitvitskaya. The eight performances shown during one week were marked by ensemble, «sincerity» of performing and Ukrainian flavor. Each time the critic praised the acting by Bobrov-Bondarenko: «He is a typical Leiba, a wonderful captain and lyricist, the actor simply lives on stage, and it comes to life with his appearance» [16, Nos. 46–49]. The makeup and costumes of Ukrainian actors starring in Marko Kropyvnytsky's *Dai sertsiu voliu, zavede v nevoliu (Give the Heart Freedom and It Will Lead You into Slavery)*, according to the reviewer, matched the performance in the best way [16, No. 47]. Thus, the mentioned productions of Ukrainian works reflected the tendencies of strengthening the realistic trend in repertoire practices.

The tour was almost immediately followed by yet another Russian company, the Company of Russian and Little Russian Artists under the leadership of Vasilenko and Sabinin. For a month, the public, despite the bad weather, came to the *Europe* garden. The repertoire was dominated by the works of Kropyvnytsky, Starytsky, Tohobochny, Manko, Zakharenko and Vanchenko. «The vehemence and passion of performance by Ukrainian actors» differed from the «calm, natural, exaggeration-free acting by Sabinina». Every time the critic focused on the performance of diverse roles, slashing fellow Dmytro, batman Fedot, deacon Akaki and landlord Epifan [16, Nos. 52–60]. Part of the works were full of melodramatic effects, others (*Midsummer Night, Crusaders For Dreams, or Cain and Abel* and *Jewish Vykrest, Bohdan Khmelnytsky* and *Taras Bul'ba*), in contrast to many stenciled

Ukrainian plays, had «no endless hopak or howling, they radiated the truth of life», they brightly displayed typical representatives of the Ukrainian village [16, Nos. 52–60].

At the end of the XIX century, a number of performances by the Ukrainian company of M. Matusin were shown on the stage of the Vitebsk Yacht Club. Those were the most famous works of Ukrainian drama, *A Zaporozhian Cossack Beyond the Danube*, *Natalka Poltavka*, *Midsummer Night* and *Nyashchasne kahanne*, which were again praised by the critic for a high level of artists' ensemble [15, Nos. 61; 72].

In the early XX century, the inclusion of Kropyvnytsky's plays *Po revizii* (*A revision*) and *Poshylys' u durni* (*They Made Fools of Themselves*) in the repertoire of the first Belarusian company led by Ihnat Buinitski did not appear a random choice. We cannot but agree with the opinion of the Belarusian theater scholar U. Niafiud who said that they were close in spirit and clear to the Belarusian audience. In fact, the images and events were perceived as born in the local soil. Therefore, it appeared so simple to replace in the translation Ukrainian names, city names, proverbs and sayings by Belarusian ones [12, pp. 48, 50]. A operetta *Poshylys' u durni* (*They Made Fools of Themselves*) is full of songs, which were fully used by I. Buinitski. In addition to singing and musical elements, the famous theatrical figure also included dances, which he himself performed with great skill.

During this period, due to a ban on Belarusian-language productions, many amateur clubs (following the example of Buinitski's company) started adapting Ukrainian plays. For example, in 1909 the peasants of the village of Klioniki, Hrodna province, performed in the town of Bielsk a play *Rozumnyj i Duren'* (*The Clever and The Fool*) by I. Karpenko-Kary. The selection of the dramatic work corresponded to the abilities of inexperienced performers. «The acting was very good, and everyone liked the comedy. Now they say in my village: «Although we are peasants, but we can read books and do the theater, just like the gentry and officials» [8, p. 4]. A year later, Hrodna theatergoers could see an amateur production of Kropyvnytsky's *Po revizii* (*A Revision*), and the play was «repeated on the following day due to the great success» [12, p. 101].

It should be noted that the familiarity with the Ukrainian theater culture strongly influenced the work of the actor and leader of the First Partnership of Belarusian Drama and Comedy Flaryian Zhdanovich. In his youth, he most of all he loved seeing Ukrainian artists play in Minsk. One might think that their performances *A Guest from Steppe*, *Death, and Happiness is on the Threshold*, *Hireling*, *Natalka Poltavka* fascinated him greatly [2, p. 12]. He became a big fan of the theater, and at the age of 18 he graduated from the Warsaw Drama School and began working in Polish companies. Interest in the Ukrainian theatrical art was manifested in his work in the period of activity of a drama club he founded: one of the first works put on in the village of Staroje Sialo near Minsk was Kropyvnytsky's comedy *A Revision*. In 1911, influenced by the performances of Buinitski's company, the amateur team led by Zhdanovich significantly increased its activity. The repertoire, in addition to Belarusian works, included another Ukrainian play *Gypsy Aza* by M. Starytsky, which, after being translated by the head of the group, ran under the name of *A House Outside the Village* [14, p. 408].

The work of another famous figure of the national theater, playwright, director and actor Uladzislau Halubok, who was the first in the country to receive the honorary title of People's Artist of the Byelorussian SSR, was also strongly influenced by the then Ukrainian theatrics.

A 14-year-old teenager was extraordinarily impressed by the play *Nyashchasne kahanne* performed by a Ukrainian company in Minsk in 1896. He saw a theatrical performance, in which the dramaturgical framework, the skillful acting of Maria Zankovetska and Leonid Manko, rich Ukrainian language, the ethnic background and the harmony of songs contributed to the overall concept of the work. It was not his first encounter with the theatrical art: since his childhood, he attended the performances of travelling groups and *Batleika* shows, he even worked with the props and performed small roles of boys [1, p. 10]. One might think that as a boy Halubok remembered the principles of Ukrainian performance, which he later actively used in his director's career: ensemble of the cast, a harmonious combination of scenic and musical design and performance skills.

In 1917, Halubok joined the First Company of Belarusian Drama and Comedy, where he worked as an actor, director and playwright. Most of his dramatic works are comedies and melodramas (just like most Ukrainian plays of the time). S. Biryła tells about the play *Raftsmen*: «If it is «passion», then it is «great passion», if it is suffering then the one that can turn the soul inside out in an ignorant, unsophisticated spectator, if it is humor, then the humor that made your ears red» [1, p. 100]. One can agree with the opinion of the Belarusian theater researcher A. Sabaleuski that U. Halubok created an original and unique theater, which followed the traditions of folk performing

arts, and passing the principles and techniques of the Ukrainian stage through the prism of the Belarusian national theater [14, p. 241]. It is no coincidence then that S. Biadulia stated in 1923 that U. Halubok «played Ukrainian Kropyvnytsky's role in Belarus» [1, p. 25].

Thus, in the conditions of the period, Ukrainian theater experience had an impact on the formation of the Belarusian stage art, and general trends of Ukrainian practices were specifically manifested in the national theater culture. Local spectators were introduced to the Ukrainian drama as early as in the first half of the XIX century. Since the 1880s, every summer, many Ukrainian companies worked in the cities of Belarus, which enjoyed great popularity among the public. Their performances were very close to the Belarusian perception (ensemble and emotionality of acting, national flavor, abundance in vocal and dance elements), they helped awaken interest in the folk roots of art. Therefore, such contacts with Ukrainian culture – from sporadic relations to constant interaction – were a significant factor in the development of the national scenic forms of Belarus in the XIX – early XX century.

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У статті автор розкриває історію знайомства публіки і театральних діячів Білорусі з особливостями українського театрального мистецтва в XIX – початку XX століття. Спираючись на багатий фактичний матеріал, автор виявляє особливості української сценічної практики, найбільш вплинули на розвиток національного білоруського театру, зокрема, жанрово-тематична спрямованість репертуару, ансамблевистість і емоційність виконання, народний колорит, мелодійність мови, насиченість дії пісенними і танцювальними елементами, синтез живописного і музичного оформлення.

Ключові слова: українське театральне мистецтво, білоруське театральне мистецтво, взаємодія культур, синтетичність творів, драматургія, сценічна практика.

В статье автор раскрывает историю знакомства публики и театральных деятелей Беларуси с особенностями украинского театрального искусства в XIX – начале XX века. Опираясь на богатый фактический материал, автор выявляет особенности украинской сценической практики, наиболее повлиявшие на развитие национального белорусского театра, в частности, жанрово-тематическая направленность репертуара, ансамблевость и эмоциональность исполнения, народный колорит, мелодичность языка, насыщенность действия песенными и танцевальными элементами, синтез живописного и музыкального оформления.

Ключевые слова: украинское театральное искусство, белорусское театральное искусство, взаимодействие культур, синтетичность произведений, драматургия, сценическая практика.