

PART 2. POLYASPECTIVITY OF THE ART PHENOMENA

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THEORETICAL CONCEPTS IN THE PRACTICE OF THE SOVIET UKRAINE BALLET CRITICISM IN LATE 1920S

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INTRODUCTION

A holistic understanding of any kind of art is impossible without the study of its criticism, because the unity of theory, history and criticism is the key to the existence of art disciplines, including ballet knowledge. The fundamental studies of the Ukrainian prominent ballet scholars (L. Dolokhova, M. Zahaikevych, Yu. Stanishevskiy, A. Chepalov, etc.) are based on artistic criticism of various historical periods. The aforementioned authors themselves made a lot of efforts to develop the art-critical discourse of Ukraine. However, Ukrainian ballet criticism has not yet become the subject of a special study.

The transformation of the social and cultural sphere of Ukraine at the end of the XXth and beginning of the XXIst centuries, the collapse of the totalitarian Soviet regime, opening access to previously classified archival materials, changing value orientations made it possible to objectively reproduce the panorama of the ballet criticism development in Ukraine. The first steps in this direction have already been taken by us in previous publications¹. New research allows us to deepen the subject of the study.

In the focus of the late 1920s Ukrainian criticism of the theatrical forms of art (Drama Theatre, Opera, etc.) ballet criticism gradually gained the right to independence. In that time the problems of the ballet repertoire updating in the Soviet Ukraine were the main issue in the discussions, associated with the diverge from the of Proletkult's (Proletarian cultural and educational organizations) ideological attitudes and the formation of a new aesthetic platform of Soviet art's formation. These were the conditions influencing the formation of the Ukrainian ballet criticism.

The aim of the study is to identify the main aspects of the Soviet Ukraine ballet criticism's development in late 1920s through the prism of general aesthetic concepts of art criticism.

¹ Pidlypska, A. (2019). Balety Kasiana Holeizovskoho "Iosyp Prekrasnyi" ta "Hrotesk" v Radianskii Ukraini druhoi polovyny 20-kh rr. XX st.: krytychnyi dyskurs. *Dance Studies*, 2, 2, 158–167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31866/2616-7646.2.2.2019.188816>.

Ukrainian ballet criticism as an independent phenomenon was formed in the field of art criticism, the search for a common aesthetic platform of which continued inseparably throughout the 1920s. The first part of the study is devoted to this aspect.

The Ukrainian ballet theatre criticism reflected ideological principles proclaimed by theorists and practitioners of the USSR cultural construction. In the depths of criticism there were formed certain aesthetic canons of the artistic value of works depending on the proximity to the “old ballet”, as well as certain social and ideological attitudes. This issue is highlighted in the second part of the study.

1. Aesthetic platform of art criticism on the pages of Ukrainian periodicals

After the contradictory circumstances of the October Revolution or the “events of 1917” (according to A. Badiou)², the national liberation struggle in Ukraine of the 1918–1921, the Politics of War Communism affected the cultural and artistic life of Ukraine, there began a period of certain stabilization, the search for a unified doctrine of cultural development.

The authorities recognized art criticism on the pages of the media (newspapers, magazines) as one of the important tools for introducing ideological principles in the artistic culture. A specialized theatrical journal “Nove mystetstvo” (New Art) (1925–1929) began to be published in Kharkiv in 1925. It became an important subject of the art-critical discourse of Ukraine. In the seventh issue for 1925, K. Rafalsky made an extensive article on criticism in the artistic life, recognizing the lack of attention to it. The author noted the dynamics of changes in the artistic development of society and the corresponding tasks of criticism, that must be considered and set in the general context of the state’s tasks in the field of artistic policy, with that one of the 1925 being significantly different from the artistic policy of 1919–1920, and the latter not being like the art politics of 1917 and 1918³. The author proved the “ideologically artistic values” to be gradually replacing abstract revolutionary agitation in art and criticism. He understood the naturalness of moving away from a purely anti-art agitation, the pursuit of artistic value in the content and form of the work. Political and ideological attitudes are clearly visible in the publication: theatre and art criticism are positioned as one of the “most powerful tools of social reorganization”, “the factor of educating the public”. K. Rafalsky also considered criticism

² Abushkin, P.G. (2014). *Revolutsiya s tochki zreniya filosofii i politiki: teoriya sobyitiya*. A. Badiou. *Obshchestvo: filosofiya, istoriya, kul'tura*, 2, 20–24.

³ Rafalskyi, K. (1925). *Krytyka. Nove mystetstvo*, 7, 1.

to be an important factor in the art propaganda, which should be on the path of a deeper, thoughtful approach to artistic life, under the sign of the increased artistic demands⁴.

One of the key issues of the Soviet cultural policy was treating the attitude to opera, ballet, and musical art. In the USSR, in a difficult situation of the early 1920s, opera and ballet were perceived as “remnants of the past”. Throughout the 1920s, the issue of one or another classic, or a work of classical art “usefulness” for a new society remained the subject of active debate. However, the main thing was that the “bourgeois cultural heritage” elimination responded to the Proletkult and avant-garde’s directions to creating a new “revolutionary art”. Thus, the Proletkult and avant-garde brought together utopian intentions and projects for the society’s reconstruction, with this “new art” being an important factor of which.

Mid 1920s was the time when the Proletkult attitudes regarding the artistic heritage still dominated, but given the external and internal social and political factors, they were gradually losing influence. In 1925, to develop a unified cultural policy in the USSR, there was founded “Sovetskoe iskusstvo” (Soviet Art) magazine (Moscow). In its first issue the magazine’s editor-in-chief stated that the old principles [of bourgeois aesthetics] had been destroyed, new ones had not yet been created ... there was no theory, and the revolution would be pathetic without the theoretical foundation of scientific socialism⁵. And in these conditions, one of the ways of stabilization was to appeal to the theatrical repertoire of the past.

In 1926 answering the question of the classical repertoire acceptance from the Marxism point of view, the famous philosopher and art critic M. Lifshits remarked that it was necessary to practice the old repertoire reworking. Although in the future the emergence of new things that meet new needs and increase the mass cultural level in our country, would allow the release of classical works without changes⁶.

According to M. Lifshitz, when reworking, there were two circumstances to be taken into account. The first one was the truly classical works, with a specific period of the mankind’s development been reflected in, needed reworking not because they were outdated, but because they needed to be made accessible to viewers, which in turn was aimed at further promoting them. At the same time, M. Lifshits warned that it was necessary to remember

⁴ Rafalskiy, K. (1925). Krytyka. *Nove mystetstvo*, 7, 1.

⁵ Pel’she, R. (1925). O edinoy khudozhestvennoy politike (k postanovke voprosa). *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, 1, 10–12.

⁶ Lifshits, M. (1926). Dopustimy li s tochki zreniya marksistskoi estetiki peredelki veshchei klassicheskogo repertuara? *Programmy gosudarstvennykh akademicheskikh teatrov*, 55, 4. URL: <http://www.gutov.ru/lifshitz/mesotes/zper.htm>.

which imperceptible line separated popularization from vulgarization and how noticeable there were its slightest violations. Secondly, according to the critic, a classical work reproduction was in its transcription⁷. Since it was impossible to change the essential, historical content of a work without violating its artistic merit, but changes were accessible when they contributed to the disclosure of its content. But this, according to M. Lifshitz, did not mean that preference was given to the cognitive side of art over the effective one. There was no need to admire the superficial revolution, but very carefully to apply the materialistic interpretation of the classical heritage, while maintaining the true meaning of the work.

Discussions about the aesthetic canons and the Marxist foundations of artistic activity and its criticism reached Ukraine as well. M. Khrystovyi considered the arsenal of Marxist principles while developing the theory of art criticism, proving the educational role of art criticism. He said that the criticism should express artistic tendencies to the class, the artistic tendencies of our era society's organizer – the proletariat. Briefly speaking, the criticism of that time was to be Marxist ... It was the time of developing Marxist criticism... it was necessary to find and educate the specialists of the Marxist criticism in general and theatrical in particular⁸. Without being immersed in the ideas of Marxism, the writer used this term as a certain stamp, imparting it with the features of ideological reliability, correctness.

The author claims that theatrical criticism to be a socially necessary factor in building a socialist culture; the critic was to be able to correlate his thoughts and impressions with the tasks of the time, the general theatre policy. M. Khrystovyi was sure that art criticism had never been so popular anywhere; there had never been such a mass consumer as the proletariat before. Orienteering to the masses a priori deprived artistic criticism of elitism, deep artistic content, interpretative features and the like. According to the author of the article, ideological relevance and social importance should have become the main evaluation parameters for the critics.

The seventh issue of the “Nove mystetstvo” magazine for 1926 contained an article “Znovu y znovu pro te same” (Once again about the same) (unfortunately, the author was not indicated)⁹. The article stated the art criticism lacking sustainable methods and any principles and expressive line of work. There were expressed some concerns about the lack of a single methodological guideline. There was felt an attack on personal and individual

⁷ Lifshits, M. (1926). Kakogo roda peredelki veshchei klassicheskogo repertuara v nastoyashchee vremya dopustimy dopustimy i zhelatel'ny? *Programmy gosudarstvennykh akademicheskikh teatrov*, 59, 6. URL: <http://www.gutov.ru/lifshitz/mesotes/zperv.htm>.

⁸ Khrystovyi, M. (1926). Pro nashu teatralnu krytyku. *Nove mystetstvo*, 25, 1–2.

⁹ Znovu y znovu pro te same. (1926). *Nove mystetstvo*, 7, 1.

manifestations in the critics' statements. The author believed that the theater reviews were full of too many "coincidences", "individual taste domination", "nepotism". He openly opposed individual sympathies, aestheticism and idealism in art and criticism, considered them to be the legacy of the bourgeois social order.

The author refers to the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (without naming it) "On Party Policy in the Field of Fiction" (1925), which became important for the country's further cultural development. The criticism's tasks were formulated here: it (criticism) was one of the main educational tools in the hands of the party¹⁰. According to the resolution, it was argued that criticism would become the educator of society when armed with sustainable scientific methods and based on its ideological superiority. The author appealed to Marxist ethics, which denies individual tastes, insists on the critics to use the scientific Marxist method. There was a call for the elimination of unprincipled, eclectic, pre-revolutionary bourgeois heritage, as well as a radical change in the principles of critical approach to theater and methods of work.

The author saw the mission of criticism to be not only in the analysis of works. A critic should be a "judge of art", "the most important factor in the organization of psychology of the masses". The starting points for criticism should be "ideology of the time", "social and public value", "class nature" (reflecting the class ideology of the proletariat), "focus on the present"¹¹.

The problem of the theoretical foundations of art criticism was not limited to discussions on the newspaper pages; it was regularly solved in the USSR in a normative way. In addition to the aforementioned resolution, there were issued a number of documents on art criticism, in particular, at the end of December 1926, the Press Department of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union approved the Thesis on Theatre Criticism¹². In addition to various explanations for the role of art criticism in Soviet society, there were also suggested ways of combating substandard criticism. Any manifestation of hack-work, illiteracy, or lack of education ledge in the field of theatrical criticism, hidden under the poorly mastered Marxian phraseology and aplomb, being completely opposite and not corresponding the real the art tasks and politics of the party, should be

¹⁰ Babichenko, D.L. (ed). (1997). "Schast'e literatury": Gosudarstvo i pisateli, 1925–1938. Dokumenty. Moscow: ROSSPEN.

¹¹ Znovu y znovu pro te same. (1926). *Nove mystetstvo*, 7, 1.

¹² Tezy pro teatralnu krytyku (Zatverdzeni Viddilom druku Biuro TsK VKP(b) 29 hrudnia 1926 roku). (1927). *Nove mystetstvo*, 4, 14–15.

mercilessly pursued and pulled out from usage¹³. These theses were full with tyrannical tendencies, gradually rooting in life.

Thus, in the late 1920s Ukraine as a part of the USSR began to search for a methodological basis for artistic criticism, which had already departed from the anti-artistic agitation of the proletariat, but still was not oriented to axiological and epistemological principles.

2. Ideological attitudes reflected in the Soviet Ukraine ballet criticism

Proletkult's attitudes towards revolutionary, "new art" contrasted with the artistic essence of ballet theatre, where conservatism and traditionalism became the key to the very concept of "ballet". Ballet, being in its essence an elitist, aristocratic art, did not fit into the strategy of a new reality construction as a "revolution in art".

As for the propaganda direction of choreographic activity, it, given the worldview incompatibility of many recognized ballet masters with the requirements of proletarian culture, caused persistent rejection and even resistance. However, the propaganda of political ideas by means of art was the first and main direction, supported by the new government, and "the effectiveness of art", at the same time, was determined by its "propaganda power, the ability to effectively incorporate into reality"¹⁴.

The mid 1920s period of experiments in choreographic art ended with the closure of a number of dance studios and theatres, with the press launching campaigns to return the Soviet culture and art to the previous century traditions. It primarily concerned realism; with the movement "to learn from the classics" gaining its momentum.

Classical ballet, the basis of which is classical dance as an established set of poses, movements, gestures and visual means, is strictly conventional. There are two ways to break this convention: deviate from classical dance, as Isadora Duncan did, or try to invent your own micro-convention inside classical dance (ballet). The need to preserve this conventionality was also understood by A. Lunacharsky. According to him there were people saying that the classical ballet school was a product of the ancient past. As people would mainly need dances depicting true performance, past dramatic or dance in the proper sense, there was no need for ballet at all. Thus, artificial "classic" was out of needed. But during A. Lunacharsky's time as a theatre

¹³ Tezy pro teatralnu krytyku (Zatverdzeni Viddilom druku Biuro TsK VKP(b) 29 hrudnia 1926 roku). (1927). *Nove mystetstvo*, 4, 14–15.

¹⁴ Napreenko, G. & Novozhenova, A. (2018). *Epizody modernizma: ot istokov do krizisa*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.

and art educator, he was always afraid of breaking the traditional line, because once it been lost, anybody would never find it again. In case the Russian classical dance, being at such a high altitude with no one daring to equal, be destroyed, then not only ballet lovers, but, possibly, proletarian youth would cry with bitter tears¹⁵. The preservation of the acquired and reforming the individual components of classical ballet became an ideological setting that determined the ways for the further development of the opera and ballet theatres' repertoire and, in general, the classical basis of the USSR ballet.

Amid unprecedented social and cultural transformations, well-known theatre critic I. Sollertinsky sought to preserve the great achievements of classical ballet, realizing its unique artistic value. Therefore, having sufficiently mastered political rhetoric, he participated in new values promotion, a new way of life, the ideals of the revolution and the communist future of the country. Thus, when considering the fifteen-year path of the ballet and opera theatre development in the History of the Soviet Theatre, published in 1933, with reconstruction (reduction or sovietisation, interpretation) being a relevant issue, the central problem of the military communism era was considered to be the "development of the opera-ballet heritage left over from autocratic, landowner and capitalist Russia. The critic noted that although the opera and ballet theatres "lived in classics and heritage", they were fundamentally distinguished from those ones of the previous years by their orientation "to the new multi-million proletarian audience". Thus, both I. Sollertinsky and M. Lifshitz talked about bringing classical ballets closer to the audience.

Regarding the performances of classical ballet heritage in Soviet ballet, two strategies could be distinguished: authentic reproduction of the author's version (restoration) and interpretation of the ballet performance according to ideological prescriptions of party instances.

In 1923–1924 F. Lopukhov, in the early 1920s standing up for the authentic reproduction of the author's text and defending the old repertoire, was one of the first Soviet choreographers to perform the restoration of "The Nutcracker" and "Sleeping Beauty" on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater. But this work caused controversial reviews. On the press pages K. Goleizovsky accused him that F. Lopukhov, as a director, was pulling the ballet of the Mariinsky Theatre back to bygone times¹⁶. And this was not surprising, because the K. Goleizovsky's creative work at that time became an

¹⁵ Lunacharskii, A. (1958). *Novye puti opery i baleta*. In *V mire muzyki*. Moscow: Sovetskij kompozitor (pp. 399–417). URL: <http://lunacharsky.newgod.su/lib/v-mire-muzyki/-novye-puti-opery-i-baleta/>.

¹⁶ Lopukhov, F. (1966). *Shest'desyat let v balete. Vospominaniya i zapiski baletmeistera*. Moscow : Iskusstvo.

innovative breakthrough in the aesthetics of Soviet ballet, but it was aggressively perceived and did not take root.

The staff of the State Ukrainian Opera (Kharkiv) operated within framework of the first strategy. On October 25, 1925, the premiere of P. Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" ballet was staged by R. Balanotti. The latter sought to preserve the L. Lavrovsky and M. Petipa's choreography as accurately as possible¹⁷.

Oddly enough, but the new audience liked the "old" ballet. According to Yu. Yakovleva, despite all the feverish proposals of the Proletkultists, the public did not want to see the Dawn of the Revolution instead of Princess Aurora¹⁸.

The signs of the second strategy of attitude towards the ballet heritage (total renewal) are observed in the author's interpretation of M. Moiseev, the new choreographer of Kharkov State Opera. In March 1926 he staged the "Le Corsaire" ballet to the music of A. Adam¹⁹. According to a contemporary, the director's approach to the "Le Corsaire" ballet was a healthy dance without its refinement and decadence ... He (director) gave the ballet an original interpretation, rejecting the stencil of Moscow theatres' old productions²⁰. The author of the review clearly expressed his position regarding the ballets of the past. He considered the choreography of that time to be "sick", refined and decadent, seeing the prospects for the ballet development in a total update, manifested not only in choreography, but also in all components of the ballet. In the fifth picture of the act the choreographer staged a flying ballet and addressed to moving planes²¹. The reviewer was in the position of "new art", striving for a "new reality" in ballet.

The decoration by A. Petrytsky, created without the use of designs, was typical of the theatrical scenography of that time. In the aesthetic principles of the article's author, the Proletkult attitudes were felt to emphasize the human body's beauty, depriving of the national identification signs. The reader's attention was drawn to the absence of "ethnography" in the sets and costumes. It was felt that the writer positively perceives that the costumes emphasized not the nationality, but the features of the human body.

After the "Le Corsaire" premiere, there appeared a new review by I. Turkeltaub in "Nove Mystetstvo" magazine. The author enthusiastically discussed about the variety of colours and paints of the ballet's decoration,

¹⁷ Stanishevskiy, Yu. (1986). Baletnyi teatr Radianskoi Ukrainy: 1925–1985: Shliakhy i problemy rozvytku. Kyiv : Muzychna Ukraina.

¹⁸ Yakovleva, Yu. (2017). Sozdateli i zritel'i. Russkie balety epokhi shedevrov. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.

¹⁹ B. (1926). Do postanovky baleta "Korsar". *Nove mystetstvo*, 7, 3.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

where each picture was created in a different style. The author called the costumes a real “feast for the eye”.

The choreography was recognized as masterful. I. Turkeltaub considered the compositional construction logical, the choreography organically interacting with the music, the pantomime revealing the plot, the characters being endowed with characteristic features. But the reviewer noted the lack of the mass scenes drawings, the excessive static of the corps de ballet in individual scenes. And this manifested the features of the future ballet aesthetics, when in the early 1930s the masses would become the main force in the performances, the driving force of the plot (for example, “Flames of Paris”, choreographed by of V. Vaininen to music by B. Asafyev, Leningrad, 1932).

I. Turkeltaub noted the widespread use of purely dance moments, supported the stylization of dances, depriving the performance of a conservative stencil²². The reviewer dwelled on the individual characteristics of the performers: he considered the Siamese dance performed by Somova and Maslova to be rhythmically complex and the dance of the prima ballerina Salnikova in the image of Medora to be technically perfect. Whatever Salnikova did, it was full with lightness and elevation; it had a clear rhythm and very firm pointes. In “Le Corsaire” Salnikova was magnificent and completely captured the audience with a complicated “frapper” combined with “fouettes”²³. I. Turkeltaub was one of the few who carefully and comprehensively analysed the lexical and choreographic details of the ballet using professional dance terminology. Unfortunately, such an art criticism approach was rare for Soviet Ukraine’s critical ballet discourse of the late 1920s, because theatrical and musical critics, who were not deeply aware of the choreographic art nuances, used common stamps when evaluating the art of works.

I. Turkeltaub also emphasizes the shortcomings of the performance, considering the “flying ballet” to be unsuccessful and the last act shipwreck organization to inappropriate. The reviewer considered the musical decision of the ballet to be strange. Namely, the conductor A. Weissenberg used an Overture from the Wagner’s “The Flying Dutchman” Opera, processed by Tolstiakov, as an introduction to the “Le Corsaire”²⁴.

In the mid-1920s, most of the reviews were still saturated with the Proletkult’s attitudes to the ballet classics. For example, an Odesa critic, who signed as Largo, accused the Odesa Opera House ballet of constantly referring to the repertoire of the past. According to him, “Le Corsaire’s” plot with its musty musical content

²² Turkeltaub, I. (1926). “Korsar”. *Nove mystetstvo*, 10, 7.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

brought nothing to the heart or the head²⁵. The critic, although not denying the usage of the ballet heritage for creating new performances, noted that, except for “Swan Lake”, there was not any attempt to address to great ballet literature published before and after the October period²⁶.

The concepts of the Proletkult were gradually losing their influence, thus affecting the idea’s cultivation of the parity importance in the repertoire of traditions and innovations. However, critical publications put forward requirements for new ballet performances not from the point of view of artistry, but from the standpoint of social accessibility, orientation to the taste of workers; although the educational aspect of art was not left behind. The educational function was understood from the perspective of the collectivism’s cultivation, but not from the point of the individual personality characteristics’ identification and development. Recognizing all the financial risks of introducing a new repertoire, experiments that the viewer simply would not attend, critic Largo emphasized the task of the Soviet theatre to educate the new formation while noting that the theatre shouldn’t focus exclusively on the audience in the art work ... it should adapt to the dynamics of that day’s theatre life²⁷”.

The forerunners of the new Soviet art in Ukraine were the ballets to music of S. Vasilenko “Joseph the Beautiful” and “Grotesque”, staged by K. Goleizovsky in 1926 in Odesa and in 1928 in Kharkov. However, according to critics, they did not fit into the canons of ideology and orientation towards the mass working viewer and were accused of aesthetics²⁸.

In full accordance with the ideological guidelines of the time, there was developed the ballet of R. Glier’s “Red Poppy” (first staged in Moscow on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre in the summer of 1927, by ballet masters V. Tikhomirov and V. Lashchilin). It was proclaimed to be the first Soviet ballet in the Soviet historiography²⁹. Already in December 1927, the premiere of “Red Poppy”, staged by M. Moiseev, was held in Kharkiv. Compared to the ballet performance that took place in Moscow in 1927, the Kharkiv one was marked with significant changes. According to the *Nevermore* reviewer despite the general impression of novelty of choreography and scenography, it closely related to the forms and means of the old ballet. The critic admitted

²⁵ Largo. (1928). *Odeskyi derzhavnyi opernyi teatr. Nove mystetstvo*, 13, 6–7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Pidlypska, A. (2019). Balety Kasiana Holeizovskoho “Iosyp Prekrasnyi” ta “Hrotesk” v Radianskii Ukraini druhoi polovyny 20-kh rr. XX st.: krytychnyi dyskurs. *Dance Studies*, 2, 2, 158–167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31866/2616-7646.2.2.2019.188816>.

²⁹ Stanishevskiy, Yu. (1986). *Baletnyi teatr Radianskoi Ukrainy: 1925–1985: Shliakhy i problemy rozvytku*. Kyiv : Muzychna Ukraina.

compliance with the ideological requirements of modern times, but blamed the presence of “pure ballet aesthetics”. He noted that was thanks to the “dreams”, which gave pure classical dance, as well as splendour and fabulousness, ordinary adagio and variations been introduced, etc. All these were the attributes of old ballet art. The fear of breaking the age-old traditions of the ballet art was felt in everything³⁰. The reviewer had a positive attitude not to pure dance, but to pantomimes or mimodramas. There were signs of admiration for the choreodrama, which from the beginning of the 1930 would become firmly entrenched on the Soviet ballet stage, slowing the down the ballet dancing development, in fact choreographic forms themselves.

The reviewer considered A. Moiseev production to be more successful than the Moscow one, that been facilitated by A. Petritsky’s artistic stage design. The latter managed to mechanize the permutations as much as possible, using theatre technique extensively. A. Petritsky’s rich colourful costumes left a vivid impression; especially original and workshop costumes with wings. Therefore, it was not surprising that the artist’s work caused unanimous applause of the audience. Nevermore noted that no one could accuse the artist of aesthetics because it was not conditioned by the ballet itself³¹.

The reviewer also praised the choreographer, but his attention was also drawn to the weak mass-scenes of pantomime, which, in their static and lack of proper choreographic solution, were similar to the opera mass scenes.

A unique performance of this period was the production of “Tales of a Jester” by M. Diskovsky to music of S. Prokofiev at Kyiv Opera and Ballet Theatre in 1928. According to F. Malkov, the original production showed significant creative opportunities and prospects for the Ukrainian ballet theatre, how far modern ballet had gone with its libretto and music content from ceremonial ballet performances of the past³².

In late 1920s, despite the fact that the Soviet government was no longer sought to get rid of the classical heritage, but, on the contrary, to use its “great aesthetic power” as a “powerful weapon”³³ for its own purposes, the main evaluation criteria for the reviewers was either presence or absence of ties with ballet of the past.

³⁰ Nevermore. (1928). Balet “Chervonyi Mak” v Kharkivskii Derzhavni Operi. *Nove mystetstvo*, 1, 6–7.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Malkov, F. (1928). “Kazka pro blaznia, shcho simokh blazniv peremudryv”. *Nove mystetstvo*, 8, 7.

³³ Lunacharskii, A. (1958). *Novye puti opery i baleta*. In *V mire muzyki*. Moscow: Sovetskij kompozitor (pp. 399–417). URL: <http://lunacharsky.newgod.su/lib/v-mire-muzyki/novye-puti-opery-i-baleta/>.

The complexity and tragedy of the Soviet ballet formation process, including ballet criticism, with the interpretations of classical ballets and original works prevailing, was determined by the search for a special way of ballet development in the conditions of the increasing the state's role in the artistic process, the desire to control the course of the latter. Thus, there began and was spreading the process, while defining which one can refer the concept of the German literary critic Hans Gunther "nationalization" – "the ballet nationalization", which resulted in the "Soviet ballet" concept emergence, and more broadly – "the dance art nationalization".

CONCLUSIONS

In late 1920s the Soviet Ukraine art criticism departed from anti-artistic agitation and was searching for a theoretical basis for its continued existence. The methodological field of art criticism was formed by discussions unfolding on the pages of social and political and specialized periodicals (for example, the "Nove Mystetstvo" theatre weekly, published in Kharkiv in 1925–1928), as well as normative documentation (resolutions, resolutions of party and governmental agencies). The very presence of discussions was an important progressive sign of the times, because the next decade lost this opportunity for the USSR critics.

Gradually, critics increasingly came to define a limited range of tasks, instead of simply discussing a wide range of meaningful and functional attributes. Among the leading ones there were recognized social (tools of social adjustment), educational, propaganda functions of art criticism. The critic was required to obey the general ideological guidelines, to focus on the mass reader. The main evaluation criteria for this or that artistic phenomenon were class affiliation, true ideology, social and public value, modernity. Art criticism was proclaimed to be an effective factor in cultural construction.

In late 1920s, the apologists of Marxist ethics in art criticism insisted on the relevance of criticism to the public interest. Marxist ethics, within the framework of the Soviet art criticism concept development, became a dogma that for many years banned personality-oriented evaluative canons, made it necessary to consider works of art from a position of social significance. The objections of transferring the critics' individual tastes turned them solely into an ideological mouthpiece and an instrument of reprisal.

With the opening of Kharkiv State Opera Theatre in 1925, the functioning of Odesa and Kyiv Opera Houses, where ballet performances were staged, ballet critics became intensified. Accordingly, two approaches to the ballet heritage (one is periodical reference, minor editing, preservation of traditions; the other is a total reworking of everything related to the ballet of the past) in the criticism formed an evaluation criterion. The overwhelming majority of

ballet critics drew attention to the presence or absence of communication with the ballet of the past, which was a manifestation of the Proletkult's certain features dominance.

Among the ballet performances that became the object of the critics' attention there were "Swan Lake" (with minimal revisions, the maximum preservation of the early XX century classical performance text), "Le Corsaire" (a significant degree of reworking, compared to the classical primary source), "Joseph the Beautiful" and "Grotesque" (innovative ballet performances transferred from the Moscow stage, minimally adapted to the conditions of Odesa and Kharkiv theatres),"Red Poppy" (a considerable degree of originality), "Tale of a Jester" (original production). A wide thematic and lexical palette of ballets in late 1920s Soviet Ukraine testified the considerable creative potential of Ukrainian ballet.

Gradually, ballet critics moved away from the revealing the epistemological and axiological aspects of the works and turned to the search for the social and educational role of the performances.

In general, Ukrainian critical art discourse underwent transformations and gradually turned into a product of political and ideological determination.

SUMMARY

A comprehensive understanding of any kind of art is impossible without studying its criticism, because the unity of theory, history and criticism is the key to the existence of the art disciplines, including ballet knowledge. In the focus of the late 1920s Ukrainian criticism of theatrical art forms, ballet criticism gradually gained the right to independence.

The art criticism of that time departed from anti-artistic agitation and was searching for a theoretical basis for its continued existence. The methodological field of art criticism was formed by discussions unfolding on the pages of social and political and specialized periodicals, as well as by specialized and normative documentation (decrees, resolutions).

The main evaluation criteria for this or that artistic phenomenon were class affiliation, true ideology, social and public value, modernity. Art criticism was proclaimed to be an effective factor in cultural construction.

Marxist ethics, within the framework of the Soviet art criticism concept development, became a dogma that for many years banned personality-oriented evaluative canons, made it necessary to consider works of art from a position of social significance, and denied transferring the critics' individual tastes.

With the opening of Kharkiv State Opera Theatre in 1925, the functioning of Odesa and Kyiv Opera Houses, where ballet performances were staged, ballet critics became intensified. Accordingly, two approaches to the ballet

heritage (one is periodical reference, minor editing, preservation of traditions; the other is a total reworking of everything related to the ballet of the past) in the criticism formed an evaluation criterion. The overwhelming majority of ballet critics drew attention to the presence or absence of communication with the ballet of the past, which was a manifestation of the Proletkult's certain features dominance.

In general, Ukrainian critical art discourse underwent transformations and gradually turned into a product of political and ideological determination.

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