

**PLACE OF THE JEWISH THEATER
ON THE THEATER MAP OF UKRAINE AND ODESSA
(REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE ARCHIVE MATERIALS
OF THE ODESSA PRESS)**

Ovcharenko T. S.

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish Theater has gone through a difficult and striking path of attitude and affirmation. From the very beginning, he identified himself as national, revealing his identity in forms of existence (badhani singers, Broadzingers, mobile and stationary theaters), in genres of dramatic works (liturgical drama, mysteries, purimspiels, musical comedies, historical operettas, historical operettas), location (Middle East, Europe, Galicia, Romania, Poland, Ukraine). Despite years of being banned from playing Yiddish, being banned from living in big cities, the Jewish theater has proven to be resilient and the Jewish nation is able to adapt in difficult circumstances. The formation of Jewish theater has evolved (birth, formation, decline, rebirth), and this path has been associated with changes in socio-economic, historical and political events in society. It can be noted that the evolution of Jewish theater was continuous, and the developed traditions of theatrical art were passed on from generation to generation, from director to director. Unfortunately, we must admit that Jewish theater art was deprived of such iconic personalities as K.Stanislavsky in Russian, and L.Kurbas in Ukrainian theater. Therefore, in our opinion, it is legitimate to speak not about the traditions of a certain Jewish director, but about the peculiarities of a theatrical formation.

The mystery is not the fact that Ukrainian culture is often compared to Jewish culture. This concerns both the historical stages (the banning of language, resettlement), and the development of theatrical culture (closing down theaters, destroying theatrical figures). There are known facts when the actors and directors of Jewish theaters are compared to the actors and directors of Ukrainian theaters. There has always been applause from the Jewish theater. For example, Esther Kaminskaya, who was compared to M. Ermolova, E.Duse and Maria Zankovetska. Goldfaden himself was called the Jewish «Mark Kropyvnytskyi», and B. Stupka is considered «the main Jew of Ukraine». This gives reason to particularly study the genesis of the existence of Jewish theater in Ukraine, in particular in Odessa.

Analysis of publications on the topic of the study

For this purpose, we have analyzed a number of archival materials that contain the overwhelming majority of reviews of relevant performances, as well as information about the common life of Jews in the area. For a complete analysis of the current state of the problem of the study of the evolution of Jewish theater, we have analyzed the sources that we have divided into such groups (memoir literature; literature on the theory of theatrical art; publications in the press and archival materials; fiction; reference literature; academic literature; historical sources; sources) subjects; literature of psychological direction). The analysis of archival documents, research, memoirs, fiction, historical literature, allowed us to consider the theatrical art of Jews in the context of world culture and proved that the «Jewish issue» was always considered one-sided, not deep, subjective and therefore needs further study.

One of the critics of the Jewish theater Chaim Flexer (Akim Volynsky) believed that: «...Jews are naturally theater-like. All of them – conversation, intonation, gesture, movement, plastic, all figure and posture are expressive and must exist on stage»¹. He regarded the gesture of the Jews as a peculiar language – «real, lively, sharp, sharp, and the Hebrew language – «a fragment of opera from life, «which «turns into a real aria in the synagogue and is the second nature of the Jew»; he noted that the course of the Jews, both in life and on stage, was «clear and solemn». The clothing of the Jews retains the characteristic features of the whole nation, since the Jews «always remain themselves», bearers of what they live».¹

The most valuable in the Jewish actor is his «temperament, his quick excitability and vulnerability, his emotionality, which is a component of strength and often interferes with the expectation of artistic drawing»². Other researchers also note the emotionality and theatricality of Jews: M. Beregovsky, V. Levitina, M. Loev, J. Roth. In their opinion, «Lets», «clown», «Jester», – is a characteristic feature of almost every Jew from birth.

The first mention of Jewish theatrical performances in Ukraine dates back to the sixties of the nineteenth century, when Gerl Broder

¹ Волинский А. Еврейский театр. Статья 1. Ипокрит // «Жизнь искусства». Л., 1925. № 27 (901). 2-4 с.

² Волинский А. Еврейский театр. Статья 2. Походный ковчег // «Жизнь искусства». Пг., 1923. № 28. 2-4 с.

(Margolin) created the first troupe of professional Yiddish singers in the town of Brody. The singers were called «Broadensingers», and they performed in the taverns, food outlets, outdoor summer venues, which greatly expanded the number of viewers. The Brodengzingers were a new type of Jewish folk actor both in terms of the performance technique and the nature of the repertoire. The origins of the art of «Brodensingers» originate in folk shows related to religious rituals and biblical subjects, but, unlike ritual shows dedicated to religious dates or events, the performances of «Brodensingers» were systematic and regular, accompanied by parody, accompanied by improvisation. Basically, the actors played songs, dramatized them, and used makeup and dressing. Very soon Jewish troupes of professional singers-actors appeared in Podillya, Volyn, and in other cities of Ukraine.

The first memories of the creation of a large number of national amateur troupes in the city, which gave performances in different languages, including Hebrew and Yiddish, date back to 1817. There is very little documentary evidence on this page of Jewish theater art, or they are purely informational. E. Binevich noted that the theatrical performances of that time were religious in nature, were devoted to religious holidays, kept folk elements of the Purimshpil, national traditions of parody and improvisation. Given the above, we believe that the emergence of a national Jewish theater in Odessa should be attributed to the first half of the nineteenth century, supporting the opinion of V. Karp and O. Karp, not to 1876, which is the official date of foundation of the Jewish theater.

This fact comes from the analysis of the genesis of Jewish theater art in Western Europe, where stable Jewish theater companies emerged in the eighteenth century, from the analysis of the level of economic and social status of Jews in Odessa, and finally from the analysis of the psychological and national peculiarities of the representatives of this people, and also loyal to them representatives of city government. In this opinion, we are also encouraged by the analysis of the influence of Jewish culture on the peculiarities of the character of the inhabitants of Odesa, language, humor, the tendency of the inhabitants of Odesa to theatrical events, games, improvisation, which made it possible for a whole galaxy of researchers and writers to note the dissimilarity of the inhabitants of Odessa to other residents.

Formation and self-determination of Jewish theatrical art

Second half of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth century, especially the period 1878–1883 became an important stage in the establishment of the Jewish National Theater. At that time, theatrical life in the city was raging. In 1871, the first National Theater in the Russian Empire was opened at the expense of the Markov counts. In 1912 the summer theater began to operate at the Seventh Station of G. Fontana, in which the Russian troupe under the direction of A. Sergeyev performs. In 1893, a national audience or a national reading audience was opened in Moldavanka to educate the population. «It was a one-story room with a wide and long hall of 1,000 seats, a stage and a lobby, a bookstore, workshops and artistic rooms. Thirty-four dramatic, fifteen literary and musical performances and eleven musical evenings were held here between 1894 and 1895. Another National Audience is working at Slobodka. It seems that Moldavanka seeks to compete with the aristocratic city center in the development of theater arts. In 1899, another theater appeared at the corner of Preobrazhenskaya and Staroyaznichny streets – the Bocharov Theater, better known as the Sobriety Theater, because it was located in the premises of the Society for the Care of Folk Sobriety. Professional troupes of Ukrainian and Jewish actors play in the theater. In 1902, another 1,500-seat theater opens in Moldavanka – Brunstein Drama Theater. The auditorium housed one and a half thousand spectators and had three tiers. In the lobby of the theater exhibitions of artists were constantly held. In 1903 the Sibiryakov Theater was opened (now it is the Ukrainian Theater named after V. Vasylko). In the same year the German club «Harmony» and a small theater in Arcadia under the name «Manchuria» are opened³. These theaters did not have state support, permanent premises, and therefore permanent troupes, repertoire, directors, they quickly emerged and suddenly disappeared from the life of the inhabitants of Odessa. Until 1915, only Bolgarova Theater with a Jewish troupe existed from the above mentioned theaters³.

Against the background of such theatrical diversity, associated with the growing national and cultural identity of the peoples living in the city, there has been a formation of professional Jewish theater since 1876, theater began to exist. The Odessa press, which also ranked third in the Russian Empire by number of publications, was very interested in

³ Голота В. В. Театральная Одесса. К.: Мистэцтво, 1990. 245 с.

the vicissitudes of the Jewish theater, but in most publications there is no deep analysis, it is only about news reports: what, when, where a particular troupe played. Often, Jewish troupes are associated with the name of the theater venue where they perform, and many correspondences do not have an author. The insufficiency of the actual material or its substandard quality hinder the full analysis of the formation of Jewish theater in the city in the first years of its existence.

"Odessa period" of Jewish theater

The first Jewish troupe to appear in Odessa was a theatrical troupe A. Goldfaden, who was touring in Romania at the time, and at the beginning of 1879 received an invitation from her supporters from Odessa. A. Fizon describes this fact: «Grodner proposes to go to Odessa. Srulik hired a large hall, it is located on Rischelevskaya Street. It is impossible to convey what happened in Odessa. They played not only on Saturdays, but every day. People were spending the night at the ticket offices to get a ticket for at least the fifth day». However, the press in Odessa does not very much approve of A. Goldfaden's performances. So, the reviewer of the «Odessa Bulletin» M. Halperin after attending the performance of «Witchcraft» («Di Kishefmahern»), writes: «The best forces of the troupe take part in this play, but, nevertheless, the play goes sluggish, and there is no way to listen to her, the orchestra is weak and leaves much to be desired. It is worth mentioning only the chief choirmaster of Mr. Hirsfeldfeld (grandfather of I. Dunaevsky), who has done a great deal since the day he joined the troupe of A. Goldfaden. «However, the average audience did not agree with the criticism – in the theater there were sell-outs at almost every performance. The newspaper «Odessa City Council» (January 1880) notes that when the Goldfaden Theater visited the great tragedian Tomazo Salvini, who carefully followed the content of the play, and she was amazed by its originality, he spoke about Jewish theater «This evening they gave «Witchcraft» – one of the favorite Jewish plays produced by Goldfaden. The theater was, as usual, almost full, and there was no shortage of applause. It is strange to see how the audience who applauded yesterday for the salvation of Salvini – Othello or Hamlet – is admired today. «Witchcraft», which, moreover, is performed by homegrown celebrities»⁴.

⁴ «Глядач». 1922 р. № 6. – 8 с.; № 8. – 9 с.; № 9. – 8 с.; № 10. – 7 с.

In the same 1880 performances of A.'s troupe Goldfaden were banned. One of the Odessa newspapers wrote in August 1880: «Readers already know that a few months later, in Odessa, a troupe of Jewish actors playing the slang play of A. Goldfaden's works, under the direction of the same A. Goldfaden, who calls himself a famous poet, opened performances in the hall of artisans, and then took shelter in the Mariinsky Theater. But it turned out that the plays performed by the troupe were not viewed at all by dramatic censorship. The General Directorate of Press asked the local authorities whether Jewish performances were allowed at all. The result of the request was the termination of performances»⁵.

Summing up the Odessa period of the Goldfaden Theater, the Jewish magazine «Dawn» noted: «The performances attracted a lot of Jewish, and even even non-Jewish, audiences. This fact alone shows that, despite the aversion many people have felt to the Jewish troupe, this troupe, or rather, some slang plays, satisfy the tastes of a large portion of the Jewish public. Considering that the mass of the Jewish population considers attending this theater one of the best pleasures, it suffices that the beggars accumulate money during the week to buy tickets. Goldfaden will be followed by other writers; the ground is laid and the building quickly rises»⁶.

The magazine's correspondent was right. Under the influence of the Goldfaden Theater, Jewish theaters began to be created in the city. At the end of the seventies of the XIX century. many of them, the most famous among them were the corpses of Z. Mogulesco, R. Friedman, I. Grodner, J. Spivakovsky, M. and A. Fizonov. Odessa becomes a city of Jewish theater art. In 1878 – 1883 the Jewish theater was established in Odessa. With great success at the Mariinsky Theater are the performances of the troupe of Sigmund (Zeliga) Mogulesco: «On Thursday, March 27, the first performance of the invited Jewish troupe was held at the Mariinsky Theater. The comedy «Obsessed by the devil» is presented. Despite the length of the play and the intolerance of the individual types, it was a success due to its careful staging and good execution. The theater was full, and, judging by the first performance, one could foresee a success for the new Jewish troupe, under the direction of comedian Mogulesco»⁷.

⁵ «Відомості Одеського градоначальства». 1880 р. з 1 січня до 31 грудня. 3 с.

⁶ Гальперин М. «Рассвет». СПб.1880., № 5. 168-171 с.

⁷ «Відомості Одеського градоначальства». 1879 р. № 50. 251.2 с.

After Mogulesco's departure from Odessa, I. Lerner becomes the entrepreneur of a new Jewish drama troupe still touring in London. St. Petersburg magazine «Souffler» wrote about this: «At the stage of the Odessa Mariinsky Theater now gives its ideas of a troupe of Jewish artists, which was under the direction of I. Lerner and directed by Z. Mogulesco. The repertoire is quite wide, most important of the songs: «Love of Jerusalem», «Obsessed by the devil», «The Rainy Daughter», «Polish Mantis»⁸. I. Lerner dreamed of elevating the Jewish theater to the height of the European one, using a «serious» repertoire, highlighting pressing issues, attracting talented actors from other corpses. For the first time, a classic play by Uriel Acosta's European repertoire appeared on the stage of his theater. This performance amazed viewers and critics alike: «We are honest to say that we were biased at the performance of the Jewish troupe Uriel Acosta. In our understanding, it seemed absurd to choose a Jewish troupe of serious and classical works. The role of Acosta overseas is taken by first-rate actors. Indeed, our assumptions have been misled G. Sheingold skillfully fulfilled the role of Acosta»⁹.

New Jewish acting groups are born in Odessa, which have their audience, their repertoire, their directors. Odessa constantly replenishes professional theaters with its fans. Contemporaries noted that if the Jewish theater did not have this «Odessa» period from 1876 to 1883, it would not have been possible to revive after the tsarist order banning Yiddish performances in the Russian Empire in 1883. For fifteen years in Odessa, Jewish troupes did not speak their native language because they were allowed to play only German in the government's order. These times are not the best period for Jewish theater to preserve the folk traditions, the manner of the play, to convey to the viewer Jewish dramaturgy. The corpses move from city to city, rent the premises under the «German Theater», and play the repertoire of Jewish dramatists in Yiddish, using its similarity to the German language. An important role is played by entrepreneurs, who not only rented the premises, setting flower prices, but also chose a repertoire, actors to perform roles, agreed with the city or city authorities about touring, and discussed what language they would play. The famous entrepreneurs of the Jewish corpses of that time were S. Adler, I. Berman, M. Weisfeld, N. Eidelman, A. Kaminsky, A. Kompaniets, S. Lobel, D. Sabsai, J. Spivakovsky, A. Fizon.

⁸ «Відомості Одеського градоначальства». 1879 р. № 50. 251.2 с.

⁹ Ibid.

This fact is described in his memoirs about Jewish actors by I. Fayl: «At that time Jewish performances were banned and organized in a semi-legal manner, thanks to bribes given to the police»¹⁰. The same fact is described by another actor, Boruch Chemerynsky: «Persecuted for their ardent desire to play in their mother tongue, the Jewish actors followed the lines of least resistance. Leaving the big city where a number of Cerberians, headed by a sergeant, bailiffs, stood in their path, the actors scattered throughout the small towns. Here, gathering a few lovers, with the help of «some friends», for a small bribe, the bailiff and the clerk floated to the nearest village, tempted the guards with an arbitrary binge, and by the time the regular denunciation had reached the clerk, the performance had already been played, and the same operation was already underway, in the another other town with other superiors»¹¹.

In 1898, after a 15-year break, the first Jewish troupe came to Odessa was the troupe of A. Kaminsky and I. Berman, who left the city after some time because the actors were not allowed to play Yiddish. But almost simultaneously with them there is a troupe of Y. Spivakovsky, who calmly showed all planned performances to the inhabitants of Odessa. S. Lobel's next troupe is again censured by the local authorities and has to leave the city, but in two years in Odessa the troupe of M. Weisfeld, which lasted until 1905, when the united troupe of A. Kaminsky and D. Sabsay returned to Odessa. It can be assumed that such unequal treatment of Jewish theater companies was caused not only by the political situation in the country at that time, but also by problems of the national Jewish theater, the main ones being the lack of qualification of the actors and the lack of quality repertoire consisting mainly of comedies, melodramas and historical operettas of A. Goldfaden, I. Latiner, N. Shaykevich, J. Gordin, which became a cause for concern of the Jewish intelligentsia. That is why the prominent Jewish playwright Sholom Aleichem in 1905 signed an agreement with the touring troupe of A. Spivakovsky and S. Adler to establish a professional Jewish art theater in Odessa. Under this agreement he becomes the artistic director of the theater and undertakes to provide the theater with a repertoire. However, these plans were not destined to come to fruition as the pogroms began in Odessa.

¹⁰ Файль И. Жизнь еврейского актера. М.: Всероссийское театральное общество, 1938. 98 с.

¹¹ Ibid.

Thus, from 1898 to 1905, there were many Jewish theater groups in Odessa who performed separate troupes or united, staged performances in full sold-out, or disappeared after the first screening. Almost all the Odessa editions of that time paid attention to Jewish theatrical performances. The problems of the national Jewish theater are addressed not only by newspaper reviewers but also by authoritative critics and writers, such as Sh. Asha, I. Pepper. They believe that, in keeping with the national orientation, it is necessary to create a repertoire of theater that would consist of highly artistic dramatic samples of Jewish literature. And in 1906 A. Kaminsky's troupe showed in Yiddish (translated) the plays by M. Gorky «At the bottom», by F. Schiller «Robbers», and the play by the Jewish playwright J. Gordin, who began writing for the Jewish theater as early as the eighties of the nineteenth century, but its melodies were hardly used by Jewish entrepreneurs and directors.

In 1908, a stationary Jewish theater began operating in Odessa, founded by the renowned playwright P. Hirshbein. The latest ideas of director, entrepreneur, playwright and actor P. Hirshbein was not always understood by the mass audience, condemned by the Jewish intelligentsia because of the low professional level of the actors, so the theater only worked for two years. The insufficiency of the modern theatrical repertoire made the directors of both Ukrainian and Jewish theaters turn to the plays of A. Goldfaden, J. Gordin, Sh. Ash, A. Shomer and other playwrights who used folk and biblical motifs. Compared to the dramatic works of such well-known playwrights, the plays by J. Gordin and P. Hirshbein were more diverse, showing bright characters and different roles. The dramatic works of these well-known Jewish playwrights were also widely used in the Ukrainian theater of M. Sadowski. It was the first time that the play by the Russian playwright E. Chirikov «The Jews» was translated into Ukrainian, where Leah Zankovetsky played the role of Leah. Unfortunately, the play was banned in 1907 by the local authorities, and it came to light later – in the production of prominent Ukrainian theatrical figures – L. Kurbas and G. Yuri.

In 1908 K. Mardzhanov showed the play of P. Hirshbein's play «On the Other Side of the River», and during this time the Jewish troupe, I. Spivakovsky, decided to show the play «Paval» («Di Newayle») in the city. It premiered on November 23, 1908. Qualified actors were employed in it: D. Fachler, V. Silberberg, E. Mendele-Krause, B. Dalskaya, M. Schwartz. Both plays were a great success. Theatrical news columnist D. Goldstein summed it up: «..two Hirshbein plays were staged. Both the first and the second are definitely valuable contributions

to Jewish theater. The impression was very pleasant. People have been seen to be serious and affectionate about their commitments. Everything that the rich scene of the Harmony Theater could do was done. We hope that the Jewish intelligentsia will meet and assist the artists»¹². This may have prompted P. Hirshbein to create his own theater. He invited actors already known in Odessa from the troupe of Y. Spivakovsky: V. Zilberberg, B. Dalsk, J. Ben-Ami, as well as actors beginning the artistic career who graduated from the Odessa drama school: L. Rogov, I. Verite, S. Estrin, Suvorin and others.

On January 26, 1909, P. Hirshbein's Literary and Art Theater opened with his play Engagement. An unknown reviewer of the Odessa News wrote: «Today is a holiday on the street for fans of Jewish theater»¹³. On February 28, the premiere of «With the Wave» («David») was played by S. Ash. «This beautiful play has caused a violent hobby of the overcrowded theater with the passion of the language, the depth of the subject. This is a play of subtle moods, quiet inner longing, unclear searches and, at the same time, a play of everyday life, «wrote an unknown columnist of the Odessa News». On April 1, the troupe showed the premiere of another play by Hirshbein's «Joel» with I. Believe in the lead role, which according to the press reports «...conveyed to the audience with all the talent of the intelligent and intelligent actor, movement, language and feelings of the main character», and his talented partner Noemi «...enhanced his performance with the impression left by the performance»¹⁴. Along with P. Hirshbein's plays, two premieres were shown to the need of viewers: D. Rosenblitt's «Women's Hearts» and B. Schreiber's «Unhappy», which the audience and reviewers met coolly. One of them, referring to «Women's Hearts», wrote that «on the stage, which is to replace the old Jewish theater and show a new one, this play cannot take place». The play Unlucky spoke of the tragedy of mixed marriages, and the critic, though acknowledging the «undoubted truth of life», but noted that «the truth of life can speak from the stage scenery in clear, convincing language only when it has turned into the artist's soul, vivid images», and the play by Schreiber, «not inspired by the breath of

¹² Гольдштейн Д. Еврейская труппа П. Гиршбейна. Театральные вести. № 1 / 31 января / 1909 г. 2 с.

¹³ Перец Гиршбейн. «Обручение» Одесские новости, 1909. 5 с.

¹⁴ Ibid.

a real creator – the artist creates an impression not holistic, but sometimes confusing»¹⁵.

The new season of 1909-1910, the theater began on November 10 with the play «Wandering». Then there were the «Jankel Koval» and the «Avreil Schuster» – melodramas in which «.. Jewish poverty, which has established its residence within the limits of settlement, looks from the stage with its hungry, terrible eyes», S. Steinberg wrote. «The performance of the play is wonderful. G. Ben-Ami attracted the attention of the whole public»¹⁶.

December 16 saw the premiere of Isaac Sheftel by D. Pinsky. «According to the performance, this performance is one of the best of the season», the Odessa News reviewer said. New premieres are being prepared: «In the City» by S. Yushkevich, «White Bone» by Sh. Ash. Suddenly. «the performances of the Jewish troupe of Hirshbein at the Harmony Theater were suspended by order of the local administration»¹⁷. Two days later, the performances were allowed to show, but without the participation of the theater director P. Hirshbein. «There was neither explanation nor details. Now the troupe has become known as the «Jewish Dramatic Theater Society of Artists», and J. Ben-Ami has assumed the role of director. On January 1, 1910, the troupe showed the White Bone. S. Basmanov (Ber), a well-known entrepreneur in the twenties, and V. Schwartzer, who later became a leading actor of the Odessa State, made his debut in this performance. Another premiere of «God of Revenge» by Sh. Ash took place on January 10. Then came the benefits: the benefit of W. Silberberg, whose game was well liked by critics; Beneficiary J. Ben-Ami, who in the play «Satan» by J. Gordin «received great success in the public»; Benefice Noemi, whose play has been criticized for "vividly staging" images of an old Jewish mother and a blind old woman. On February 20, Odessa said goodbye to the theater going on tour. Satan and the White Bone were shown. «The hall was full, It seemed that all the Jewish intelligentsia were in a hurry to express their sympathies to the troupe, apologizing and apologizing for the indifference that manifested itself in relation to Jewish art theater. The game of artists this evening was so good that many will still have a

¹⁵ Бинеvич Е. Гиршбейн П.: Рождение и гибель его театра. «Народ мой». № 23 (315) от 15.12.2003. 7 с.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Гольдштейн Д. Еврейская труппа П. Гиршбейна. Театральные вести. № 1 / 31 января / 1909 г. 2 с.

good memory of this evening and the regret that the troupe has left the city. It was a beautifully organized troupe with artists who had high expectations, who were waiting for the renovation and revival of the Jewish theater»¹⁸. The touring of P. Hirshbein's troupe in Belarus and Lithuania was met with coolness by the Jewish public, and only in Warsaw did they become the «event of the day»: «There was some special love and appreciation for the troupe for her arrival, even without regard to the game. The audience, without getting tired, summoned Hirshbein as if emphasizing that she was aware and aware of what a heavy cross this person was carrying so selflessly. And the audience was not just Jewish-theatrical, but quite different: students, technicians, high school students and realists; many students and high school students; but, all in one way or another involved in Jewish art – some artists, sculptors, many writers, musicians – in short, the color of the local national intelligentsia. There were many workers from the more conscious and intelligent. Only the Polish-Jewish intelligentsia, who was hostile to any endeavor in the field of national culture, was amazed by its absence»¹⁹.

Having received neither material nor moral support from the Jewish intelligentsia, P. Hirshbein disbanded the troupe in July 1910. «The first Jewish art theater died», A. Ardov wrote. – The agony lasted a long time. The agony was unbearable. Under such conditions, only martyrs-intellectuals could engage in artistic work»²⁰. We did not find a new theater of rich patrons, our own, educated on the best theater models of the public, experienced financial managers. The Hirshbein Theater was ahead of its time and was therefore not always perceived by the audience. Subsequently P. Hirshbein and several actors of his theater emigrated to America (1911). His plays were staged by Jewish theaters in different countries. The new theater wanted the theatrical performances to be one-of-a-kind and thought-out, free from the improvisations of the actors, who had to have a high stage culture, discipline, and clearly follow the directors' text and instructions. The acting skills of the Jewish theater from that time included the ability to show real characters, to convey the psychological state of heroes.

It should be noted that together with the National Theater of the New Direction in Odessa, which existed for only two seasons, remained a

¹⁸ Биневич Е. Гиршбейн П.: Рождение и гибель его театра. «Народ мой». № 23 (315) от 15.12.2003. 7 с.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

popular Jewish operetta, whose repertoire was supplemented by original pieces by Jewish composers or the best models of European operetta. Among the stars of the operetta were noted N. Neroslavskaya, J. Zailbert, K. Jung.

In one of the Odessa editions of 1911 we found information about the stay of the Jewish troupe M. Fizon in Odessa: «Our Odessa is happier than other cities. Sometimes it seems that it is not very safe on the streets of the city, and yet the theaters are not empty. The new theater is not easy to live with. In recent times, Fizon's corpse, nestled in its walls, does not work worse than in other years. The explanation is simple. Only Jews, most of whom make up the Moldovanka contingent and generally distant from the city center, are visiting the shows, and they do not dare to go out in the evening because of the often recurring "troubles" on the streets. It is nice to note that in the repertoire of the Jewish theater, apart from the melodramas, there are songs of the last movement. There are many good forces in the troupe»²¹. About the troupe of M. Fizon and D. Sabsay are written in other Odessa editions. For example, Theatrical Review applauds Ms. Zaslavskaya's benefit. Sholem Aleichem's play «God of Revenge» and two paintings from A. Fischen's play «Ioiklik and Zeylikl» were staged at the benefit. The author writes that the benefit was worthy. Noting the talent of Ms. Zaslavskaya, who acted as the girl of Manka, the author notes that "other actors were only her background and the choir was indistinct"²². After a while the benefit of A. Fischen and the actress of the troupe E. Braginsky took place. The play «Three Weddings in One Evening» was successfully passed and was intended for Jewish teachers. In the same year, viewers saw A. Goldfaden's operetta in A. Fischen's treatment of «Jacob and His Sons (The Sale of Joseph)» and a play for Jewish children with hearing impaired «Der Griner Actor» with songs and dances, which were noted in Odessa the press.

Meanwhile, the formation of Jewish theater art is difficult, as truthfully told in an interview with the scene and life correspondent of Odessa Jewish troupe M. Fizon. Asked if there was a future for Jewish theater, he said that there was no dramatic material, a low level of spectator culture that needed only «...humor and fun», an insufficient professional level of actors, and a lack of a single cast: «...Our aim was to show to whom:

²¹ «Відомості Одеського градоначальства». 1881 р. № 2, 3, 4, 7 / від 2 січня до 10 січня. 3 с.

²² «Театр». 1940 р. № 3 – 157 с.; № 5 – 183 с.; № 7 – 160 с.; № 12 – 46-49 с.

«... Jewels of pearls of dramatic art, create a repertoire, but there is no such thing! There are almost no authors. I firmly believe that both the authors and the plays will be there, and in eight to ten years the Jewish theater will be in full reverence and prosperity!»²³.

Later, appraising the pre-revolutionary Jewish theater, prominent theatrical figure S. Michaels noted: «The past of a Jewish actor is as bleak as that of his audience. The harsh and cruel way of life for a long time hindered their meeting, the actor and the spectator. However, finally, fifty years ago this meeting took place. Their spiritual world was equally low. The stage material is poor, an actor who has just separated himself from the viewer, differs little from him in both technique and ability to act as a hypocrite. However, the actor appeared to be a worthy viewer – he was a full-time shopkeeper, a man of the household, a tradesman. He became his master, his ethical legislator. He sought solace and assertion in the theater. And the actor sang to him»²⁴.

These confessions of a well-known Jewish actor and director coincide with the confession of the actress of the Jewish theater of Mrs. V. Zaslavskaya: and for the first time I created for the Jewish scene the role of «Khasi Orphans», and about other Jewish types who have the right to be named exemplary. We tried to click, to lead a mass, but as you can see, forced to follow her. This does not mean that the fate of the Jewish theater has been resolved. I am deeply convinced that even now, if the case had a practical basis, a «joint stock» or a «mutual» company, now it would be possible to combat the power of operetta. But the interesting thing is that other provincial cities require drama, and only serious ideological things. In Odessa, the operetta is flourishing! Amazingly! Impoverished! But the authors are few! It was Gordin, and he died! The rest is all pale! As for the future of Jewish theater, there can be no two thoughts about this. Sooner or later, but the Jewish theater will gain citizenship rights, and then more talented authors and a more regular audience will emerge!»²⁵. It must be stated that such confidence in the future of Jewish theater was astounding. But in fact, in about a decade, a professional Jewish theater is emerging that is steadily

²³ Міллер Є.М. «Одеський огляд», 1909 р. № 332. С. 6.

²⁴ Михоэлс С. М. Статьи, беседы, речи: Статьи и воспоминания о Михоэлсе. Вступ. статья, ред. и примечания К. Л. Рудницкого., 3-е издание., доп. М.: Искусство, 1981. 557 с.

²⁵ «Жизнь искусства». 1922 г. № 36. 3 с.

evolving, gaining strength, going beyond the Jewish scene. The playwrights, directors, talented actors appear in the theater.

XX century – forecasts, problems and aspirations

The beginning of the twenties of the twentieth century, characterized by the emergence of a significant number of theater studios throughout Ukraine, including in Odessa (1922). Theatrical studios were created by unemployed actors. Lack of professional directors and actors, poorly thought out repertoire, heterogeneity of corpses led to conflicts. Such corpses did not exist for a long time. Spectator Magazine tells the story of the establishment of a Jewish theater in Odessa: «A small troupe of Jewish artists has formed a collective whose task is to serve the Jewish masses. The troupe is performing on the outskirts, choosing social plays. Performed by artist Basmanov, Authorized Comrade Kotlerman. With the addition of the troupe with new forces, it is located in one of the central theaters».¹⁶ The same issue of the magazine is about the beginning of the work of the acting parliament. Forty delegates were present at the convention. The Stolyarov-led congress noted the plight of Jewish and Ukrainian actors. It was proposed to open permanent Ukrainian and Jewish theaters in Odessa, because «...the absence of a Ukrainian and Jewish theater troupe in such a large theater center as Odessa»¹⁶.

After a while, the Jewish team received a room at the Mirror of Life theater, but the problems remained: «The troupe is not impressed with known names and talents, but it is completed well, and the performances are performed in full house. The plays are old. Ordinary Jewish songs with screams, shouts, shots, blood. Plays are frivolous, idle, bourgeois content. There are no new Jewish plays. He puts the traditional Basmanov – Di istifmame, Zurik Funtorge, Der ehive bucher, and others like that, because the bourgeois audience is brought up on these plays, has become obsessed with them and sees the reflection of their own lives. However, director Basmanov tries his best to smooth the sharp corners, reduce the amount of blood, shots, and refine the characters, but still the mold remains moldy»²⁶.

Prominent literary and artistic critic of the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries. Akim Volynskyi (Chaim Flexer) thus characterizes the dramatic twenties and the place of theatrical art in them: «When a country is broken and humiliated or destroyed, the theater falls fatal. The

²⁶ «Глядач». 1922 р. № 6 – 8 с.; № 8 – 9 с.; № 9 – 8 с.; № 10 – 7 с.

scene follows, fair melodies, rough farces, clowns»²⁷. He calls for the theater to be «a place of healing for the soul».

Until the thirties, the Odessa Jewish Theater existed in search of new stage techniques and in disputes between disparate corpses. The dream of M. Fischon and W. Zaslavskaya about the future of Jewish theater began to come to fruition: the theater found its audience, improved the repertoire, came contemporary creative directors, appeared talented actors who sought to learn, improving the professional level. The life of Jewish theater in Odessa is widely covered in the city press. Tours of the Odessa Jewish Theater are a success, and the Odessa spectator emotionally meets the tour of the Jewish Theater of Belarus, which showed performances in Odessa: «Bar-Kohba» (S. Galkin), «Sulamif» (A. Goldfaden), milkman «(Sholom Aleichem), «People in White Coats»(S. Kingsley), «Leibke Soldiers»(I. Levin).

In 1939, the theater celebrated outstanding dates dedicated to the five years of the merger of the Odessa and Vinnytsia Jewish theaters, which made it possible to replenish the Odessa State Jewish Theater with new forces and to make the repertoire more interesting and the 20th anniversary of the Moscow State University. As part of these holidays, a solemn meeting of writers, journalists, and art workers took place. Theatrical figures with reports on the creative path of the Odessa State were made by I. Drucker and artistic director E. Leiter. The theater noted significant dates by the resolution of the play «Girl from Moscow» by A. Huberman. In November 1939 the Odessa State Committee celebrated another solemn holiday – the centenary of the birth of the founder of the Jewish Theater A. Goldfaden. His famous play «Witchcraft» – one of the most popular plays – was shown. In fact, it is a musical comedy, a vaudeville satire for the life of local Jewishness. «Performance directors – M. Meyerson and E. Leiter gave the performance a light, dynamic feel. Decorative installations, stylish Memel, successful use in the mass scenes of a small stage – all this speaks to the taste and skills of the producers. Lots of music material, instrumental composer J. Feintuh. The role of Baba Yahne was played by actor Brandesko, according to the tradition of the National Theater. The production was a success, «the Black Sea Commune wrote».²⁸ This newspaper also emphasized the

²⁷ Волинский А. Еврейский театр. Статья 2. Походный ковчег. «Жизнь искусства». Пг., 1923. № 28. 2-4 с.

²⁸. «Чорноморська комуна». 1939. № 2-135. 3 с.

diversity of the repertoire: “Led by its leader Comrade E. Leiter theater seeks to draw up a repertoire plan so that it meets the viewer's requirements. Jewish classical literature is represented by the plays of Scholom – Aleichem «Stepen Libe», «Tevier der Milhiker» and A. Goldfaden's play «Don't Be Like Me». The European Classical Playwriting is presented by L. Feuchtwanger, The Oppenheim Family, and K. Goldoni, The Tractor Room.¹⁹

The Odessa State Department, under the leadership of E. Leiter, successfully worked in the city before the Great Patriotic War, then was evacuated to Tashkent and, on returning, resumed its activities to the delight of the Odessans. But the city's post-war press paid less attention to theater, and subsequently began an anti-Semitic campaign to combat cosmopolitanism. Art persecution, arrests, and liberation began. On May 4, 1948, the Jewish Odessa State Theater played its latest Freilechs performance, which concluded a whole stage in the activities of the national theater.

In the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century, the city's theater artists tried to revive the Jewish National Theater in Odessa, but at best, it came down to the creation of amateur Jewish theater groups and groups. Later, Jewish-themed plays appear on other Odessa theaters. In 1985 at the Ukrainian Theater of Odessa a play «Teveye-milkman» was staged according to Sholom-Aleichem (directed by I. Ravitsky), that is five years earlier than at the Kiev Theater of I Franko (1990), where the famous role was played by the famous Ukrainian actor B. Stupka and which became a prominent event in the history of Ukrainian theater. In 2006, the Russian Drama Theater showed a play based on a novel by renowned French writer of Jewish origin R. Gary, «The Dance of Genghis-Chaim», which became an event in the theatrical life of the city. The director of the play is the famous Odessa actor O. Shkolnyk, who a few years later staged «Random Happiness» based on the works of J. Singer, translated from Yiddish. His interest in the work of R. Harry lies in the biography of the classic French literature of the twentieth century. «Son of Vilensky tradesman and actress of Odessa; military pilot, resistance member, friend of Charles de Gaulle; a prominent diplomat, he has written more than thirty novels and is known as the winner of two Honkurov Prizes». ²⁹ The Genghis-Chaim Dance is the most significant work in the writer's work. Director A. Shkolnik and

²⁹ Бржестовская Н. Тень Чингиз-Хайма. «Культура» от 29 мая 2006. № 117-118. 5 с.

production director B. Antin based on the best samples of Jewish theater of the 20-40s successfully created the atmosphere of the play (closed stage space, limited number of objects on stage) and symbolically developed the characters of the characters. The Odessa audience received the performance warmly, the premiere was sold out, this performance was positively noted by the Odessa critic. But these isolated performances of Jewish life, staged by Odessa theaters over the last twenty years, certainly cannot meet the demand of the Jewish public in the city.

CONCLUSIONS

Theoretically, Jewish traditional theater is entitled to revival. This theater should be a theater of Jewish culture. His scenic means must not «portray something Jewish» but grow from the same roots as all Jewish culture. He must carry out a Jewish mission in the world, be Jewish «soulful» in which «a believing Jew, without compromising on his own upbringing and conviction, can be present both in the auditorium and on stage». In other words, «...a Jewish theater is a theater whose artistic narrative embodies the Jewish tradition, and expressive stage aids do not violate the ethical and aesthetic norms of that tradition»³⁰.

In examining the problem of the revival of Jewish theater, we have analyzed objective and subjective factors. Among the objective factors behind the revival of the Jewish National Theater are: equality in the rights of national and cultural development guaranteed by the Constitution of Independent Ukraine to all nationalities; the opportunity to seek financial assistance from the international Jewish community if necessary; theoretical foundations of the revival of theater art, developed by scientists. However, the factors that testify to the great difficulty in reviving the Jewish National Theater in Odessa are even more serious. First, the number of Jews who lived in Ukraine, and in particular in Odessa, decreased almost three times during the three waves of emigration to other countries. We can no longer speak about the ethnic group of Jews, but only about the Jewish diaspora in Ukraine – «qualitative and quantitative dispersion of an ethnic group that is losing compact settlement in one region»³¹. «Today, the «revival» is rather support for the minimal national and cultural needs of the disappearing

³⁰ «Театральний тиждень». 1926 р. № 2 (33). 6 с.; № 4 (35). 3 с.

³¹ Новая еврейская школа. Педагогический альманах: № 12 / Ламэд; Отв. ред. Ротман Х. // Ривка Менович. Еврейский театр? Мыслимо ли это? С.-Петербург, 2002. 336 с.

Jewish diaspora in Ukraine»³². The process of revival cannot be interpreted as the resuscitation of the past. It is, first and foremost, a psychological process when a nation must go through the maturation of its own chronotope as a system of ideas about the historical past of a people living in a foreign country, its present and future existence, surrounded by other nations and minorities. Only in this way can the life-giving ties of the broken tradition be strengthened, and the continuity of generations restored, reviving the «cultural matrix of the Jewish mentality, the inherent value system, special spirituality»³³.

SUMMARY

The study is aimed at studying the scientific concepts of the existence of the Jewish theater, its role in the development of the theatrical art of Ukraine and Odessa, as well as the possibilities of its revival in the modern cultural space. Analysis of scientific, methodical, artistic and memoir literature, archival and newspaper materials, allowed to determine that Jewish theatrical art is an original space-time system, which lives certain stages evolutionary development. We have identified objective and subjective factors of the impossibility of the existence of a professional stationary, repertory, national Jewish theater in Ukraine and Odessa.

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³² Финберг Л. К. Еврейские проблемы и украинское общество. Сб. «Пам'ятати заради життя». К, 126 с.

³³ Ляховицький Ю. Черная книга Холокоста и агония еврейского галута. Сб. «Пам'ятати заради життя». К,1993.158 с.

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Information about the author:

Ovcharenko T. S.,

Candidate of Cultural Studies,
Associate Professor of the Department
of Cultural Studies, art and philosophy of culture
Odessa National Polytechnic University
1, Shevchenko av., Odesa, 65044, Ukraine