

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2022.53.05.15>

How to Cite:

Sovhyra, T., Tatarenko, M., Kasianenko, A., Skrypnyk, Y., & Belymenko, L. (2022). Avant-gardism in the work of director Andrii Zholdak: Ukrainian and global context. *Amazonia Investiga*, 11(53), 155-165. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2022.53.05.15>

Avant-gardism in the work of director Andrii Zholdak: Ukrainian and global context

El vanguardismo en la obra del director Andrii Zholdak: Contexto ucraniano y mundial

Received: April 18, 2022

Accepted: May 20, 2022

Written by:

Tetiana Sovhyra⁶⁹<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7023-5361>**Maryna Tatarenko**⁷⁰<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6838-3560>**Andrii Kasianenko**⁷¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6085-2190>**Yevheniia Skrypnyk**⁷²<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0481-9147>**Liliana Belymenko**⁷³<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7323-9528>

Abstract

The article deals with the essence of avant-gardism in art (theater, cinema, music). The study aims to analyze the avant-garde techniques in dramatic productions directed by A. Zholdak. The representatives of the avant-garde direction in the works of different countries of the world are marked and the historical aspect of the emergence of avant-gardism in theatrical art is briefly outlined. The main life stages of Zholdak's formation as a creative unit are elaborated on the basis. Noted individual features and ways of presenting interpreted performances, including the integration of political issues in the content of the work, the play on the contrasts, the emphasis on the role and meaning of the theatrical space, dynamism. The research methodology is based on the principles of objectivity, historicism, multifactoriality, systematicity, complexity, development, and pluralism. Examples of the main controversial productions of classical plays in the interpretation of the famous director Andrii Zholdak are given. Also described are the attitudes of the public in different European

Resumen

El artículo trata de la esencia del vanguardismo en el arte (teatro, cine, música). El estudio pretende analizar las técnicas vanguardistas en las producciones dramáticas dirigidas por A. Zholdak. Se señalan los representantes de la dirección vanguardista en las obras de diferentes países del mundo y se esboza brevemente el aspecto histórico de la aparición del vanguardismo en el arte teatral. Se elaboran las principales etapas de la formación de Zholdak como unidad creativa. Se señalan los rasgos individuales y las formas de presentación de los espectáculos interpretados, incluyendo la integración de temas políticos en el contenido de la obra, el juego de los contrastes, el énfasis en el papel y el significado del espacio teatral, el dinamismo. La metodología de investigación se basa en los principios de objetividad, historicidad, multifactorialidad, sistematicidad, complejidad, desarrollo y pluralismo. Se presentan ejemplos de las principales producciones controvertidas de obras clásicas en la interpretación del famoso director Andrii Zholdak. También se describen las actitudes del público de diferentes países europeos,

⁶⁹ PhD in Art, Assistant professor Department of Variety Direction and Mass Holidays Faculty of Theatre, Cinema and Variety Art Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine.

⁷⁰ Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences Assistant Professor Department of Directing and Acting Skills, Faculty of Theater, Cinema and Variety Art, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine.

⁷¹ Teacher Department of Variety Direction and Mass Holidays Faculty of Theatre, Cinema and Variety Art Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine.

⁷² Assistant Department of Directing and Acting Skills, Faculty of Theater, Cinema and Variety Art, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine.

⁷³ Teacher Department of Variety Direction and Mass Holidays, Faculty of Theatre, Cinema and Variety Art, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine.

countries, including Ukraine, to the work of Andrii Zholdak as an innovator and avant-garde artist. The peculiarities of the audience's perception of Andrii Zholdak's productions in different European countries are indicated.

Keywords: avant-gardism, theater, art, director, decree.

Introduction

The theatrical avant-garde in Ukraine is a complex of innovative artistic trends, functioning in parallel with traditional, realistic trends. To cover the theoretical foundations and practical achievements of theatrical modernism and avant-garde in Ukraine is a complex and difficult task. It is important in such research to choose the appropriate direction of research problems of modernist and avant-garde art. Consideration of the theatrical modernism in Ukraine exactly through the prism of proto-expressionist search is weighty, productive, and justified from the research and analytical point of view. In proto-expressionism, the totality of worldview postulates, quite distant from positivism and, to a certain extent, close to naturalistic and realistic specific art forms, such as psychodrama or "new drama" in drama, quite thoroughly demonstrate the transitional nature of this artistic current. It was proto-expressionism, given its artistic moderate manifestations but too epathetic content, which prepared the ground for the formation of expressionism and futurism in Ukraine, thanks to whose radicalism the theatrical avant-garde finally established itself.

Theatrical avant-gardism refers to the "left" (non-realistic) currents of European art, based on an innovative philosophical and aesthetic, and political platform. A set of different currents of avant-gardism were reflected in the process of the art of Western Europe, Latin America, and the United States, but were distinguished by the unique specificity in each region.

The first manifestations of avant-gardism in Ukrainian art took place in the 1910s (a traveling exhibition of works by brothers V. and D. Burluk, N. Honcharova, M. Larionov in Odesa, Kyiv, Kherson and Mykolaiv, 1910-1911; later - canvases by Exter, cubic sculptures of O. Arkhypenko, neovizantism of boychukists, the surrealism of Lviv association Artes, in particular M. Andriienko-Nechytailo, etc.). Signs of avant-gardism were characteristic of the Berezhil Theater. Not all styles fully coincided with this direction, some of them could exist within both avant-gardism and modernism,

incluida Ucrania, ante la obra de Andrii Zholdak como innovador y artista de vanguardia.

Palabras clave: vanguardismo, teatro, arte, director, decreto.

in particular expressionism or surrealism. It was in this theater that the famous contemporary Ukrainian avant-garde director Andrii Zholdak began his career.

Ukrainian theatrical art is going through a period of active formation and development. This blossoming is connected not only with the emergence of new, young acting talents, but also the improvement of educational training in directing, producing of stage art, analysis of touring activities, and improving the practical skills of costume designers. In 2022 various personnel preparation for work in the theater is realized by 19 Ukrainian high schools, where Kyiv National I. K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema and Television University, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, and others are considered to be the most authoritative.

Not the least role in the intensification of this segment is played by globalization, migration processes, professional rotation with foreign specialists, and activation of the national and foreign union of theatrical workers. Exchange of cultural heritage, a real possibility to broadcast national performances out of the territory of Ukraine, to adopt and accumulate the best foreign experience, all this makes a quintessence of possibilities and reflects the regularity of the theatrical art of the XXI century Ukraine is rich in artists, who develop their creative activity on our territory as well as beyond its borders. One of such outstanding contemporary theater directors is Andrii Valeriiovych Zholdak, who has been living and creating in Germany since 2006. About the creative achievements of the artist speak, as a rule, through the strips of the media, and the number of scientific works, in which as a subject of research are the features of his individual style and manifestation in theatrical productions - not much, leaves the contribution of A. Zholdak in the development of theater without attention. Accordingly, the **purpose** of the following **study** is to analyze the

avant-garde techniques in the dramatic productions of A. Zholdak's directing.

The purpose of the article is:

- analysis of the work of Andrii Zholdak as an avant-garde innovator in the Ukrainian and world context;
- defining the influence of avant-garde productions by Andrii Zholdak on the modern audience in Ukraine and the world;
- comparing the historical development of avant-garde theater on the consciousness of society.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Theater avant-gardism was founded by the French avant-gardist Alfred Jarry, author of *King Ubu*, and Eugène Ionesco, author of the drama *The Bald Singer*; the Irish-British Samuel Beckett, author of the play *Waiting for Godot*; the British Martin Ess Theater of Absurdity (Grinyshyna et al., 2021); the history of Polish avant-garde was examined in his works by Fazan et al. (2021), the Romanian avant-garde playwright Eugene Ionesco (Turoiu et al., 2019, p. 281). Botsman (2022), and Faulina (2021) wrote about the artist's creative path, having worldwide recognition, does not lose ties with Ukraine. The works of Condee (2002), Taylor (2018) revealed in detail the concepts and principles of actors' interaction in the theatrical space.

Methodology

Prepare the methodology of the paper defining the essence of avant-gardism as an innovative current in contemporary art. In the process of working on the article, primarily the comparative method was used. During the study and processing of materials, the historical, systemic and logical-legal methods were also used.

In the study we used the following research methods:

- analytical - review and comprehension of literary sources covering avant-gardism in theatrical art;
- comparative-historical - comprehension of the ways of avant-gardism development in theatrical decisions and in art in general;

Results and Discussion

Avant-garde theatrical art

The peculiar nature of culture is determined by its existence and development in an open space. Rejection of another "alien" culture implies a comparison with one's own in a certain country because it is a culture that is a reflection of the spiritual life of the people concerned. Historically Ukrainian culture has always actively perceived alien cultural experience and implemented some aspects so that the following generations have already perceived some cultural phenomena as their own national tradition. The basic idea of avant-gardism is the freedom from established traditions and social norms and restrictions. From the position of avant-gardists, the modern individual in the process of knowledge of the surrounding reality should rely on the primordial worldview, devoid of the negative influence of civilization and restrictive cultural norms (Grinyshyna, 2021, p. 9-10). The main characteristics of avant-gardism should be considered: an atmosphere of rebellion; guidance for constant renewal and creative experimentation; external-formal novelty; epatage; amoralism; the principle of destruction of the whole and installation of its debris; collage; mosaicism; the stream of consciousness; playful reincarnations. Avant-gardism implies the destruction of traditional forms and canons, a departure from the traditional. The peculiarities of the Polish avant-garde were examined by Dorota Jelevska and Anna R. Burzynska, who believed that the heterarchical forms of the interwar and postwar avant-gardes allow for the contemplation of art in a combination of reality and objects that are destroyed and are witnesses of past and present events (Fazan et al., 2021, p. 214-215). In the era of postmodernism, avant-gardism is actively developing as an innovative phenomenon through which culture is perceived not as a tool but as a value (Turoiu et al., 2019, p. 281-282). The contemporary theoretical understanding of avant-garde art is substantially saturated by experiences with neo-avant-garde art. In the avant-garde, from which the neo-avant-garde grows and to which it belongs, we look for the equivalent of our current expectations, repeated in this retrospective gaze. Only in this way, only by turning back, can the supposed potential of this art be revealed. The historically determined purpose of the avant-garde can be considered a revolutionary influence on class consciousness (Armand, 2020, p. 2). Avant-gardism in theater is a powerful energetic basis, a kind of science that has its own laws by which the new theater of the twenty-first

century is built, departing from the established traditions of the past and modeling a different aesthetic. Bertolt Brecht is one of the most popular playwrights worldwide and in Germany, an experimentalist whose work has been of great importance to the modern and avant-garde theater (Müller-Schöll, 2021, p. 283-284).

The origin and development of avant-gardism in Ukraine Early Ukrainian avant-garde actually “sprouted” from the postulates of Ukrainian modernism of the 1910s, although in the theatrical practice of Ukraine the modernist discourse proved to be quite limited, primarily because of the content and plot and structural-constructive plan of drama and creative practice of the Young Theatre. Proceeding from the principles of subjectivization of creativity postulated by modernism, avant-garde art resorted to a fundamentally new step in the interpretation of A. Riegl's notion of “artistic” will. The point is that the subjective element, which was the object of the art research, in the avant-garde is interpreted not as a special feature of a particular individual, but as the way and character of the behavior of entire generations, social groups, etc. With the transformations of the content paradigm, the formal plane of art changes, which in avant-garde art acquires exclusively abstract generalized forms since its main task becomes the expression of the subjective character of the masses. Man is a social being, and theater is the most influential way of expressing emotions and facilitating interpersonal communication (Usakli, 2021, p. 31). The formation of avant-garde tendencies in Soviet Ukraine in the 1930s was suspended by the active cultivation of socialist realism by the Bolshevik authorities. After the Second World War, one can observe the emergence of new constructivist trends in music in the context of artistic experimentation of the late 1950s, which had gradually evolved and continued to develop at the present stage (aleatoric, collage, polystylistic, pointillism, serialism, sonorism, and stochasticism). The advantage of musical avant-gardism was the active introduction and use of noise, natural effects, electro-sound synthesis, and the use of mathematical-playing models in compositional practice, etc.

On the one hand, theater can act as an ideal platform to impress the public through the production, and on the other hand, it can exert a kind of political influence (Heinz, 2020, p. 8).

In contemporary art, neo-avant-garde movements are closely intertwined, which is a

consequence of the emergence of fundamentally new varieties of synthetic art.

Formation and development of creativity of Andrii Zholdak

An art historian once remarked, “Theater in all ages has served to reflect or analogize life, but in the Hellenistic period one gets the impression that life was sometimes seen as a reflection of theater” (Puchner, 2017, p. 34). Avant-garde and all of its tendencies are at odds with the established tradition of theater.

Relatively little information is known about the life of Andrii Zholdak. He is a descendant of famous theatergoers: great-grandson of I.K. Karpenko- Karpenko-Kary, grandson of Nazar Tobilevych, son of Valerii Zholdak - journalist, playwright, author of plays “An Inconvenient Man”, “Telephone Trust”, “Chance”. He was born in November 1962 and spent his childhood in the capital of Ukraine on Turgenyev Street. My mother spent most of her working life as an editor at Scientific Thought, which specialized in philosophical dictionaries, treatises, grammars, etc. The artistic elite instilled in the future director of the theater a taste for all things beautiful and honed the author's vision. Since childhood, as Zholdak notes in his interviews, he was convinced that his life would be associated with the cinema. Among the favorites that the boy was guided by were the Italian filmmaker F. Fellini, the Soviet filmmaker of Georgian origin S. Paradzhanov and Andrii Tarkovsky. In parallel, he was fond of art, even becoming a graduate of the then-Republican Art High School named after T. H. Shevchenko. By the way, here he meets his first love - Larissa, by whom he will eventually give birth to a son Panas. His adolescence falls in the unstable, tumultuous 90s, so in an interview, he noted “if I did not get into art, I probably would have been a super gangster”, or already been “crowned” bandit, or murdered, or something else (Botsman, 2022). At the age of 18, forced to serve two years in the army in Lviv. These times did not seem easy for a creative person, but in the second year of “life by order” Zholdak wrote the first scenario about an invisible hero who had the ability to move in space, contemplating how other people live. Over time, Andrii Valeriiovych will give his work to his grandmother, who came from the glorious Tobilevych family, for criticism.

Upon completion of service, Zholdak Jr. on the recommendation of his father entered the Kyiv National I. K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema

and Television University to the course of Serhii Danchenko, who later told the young man that directing is not his life's work because the student has no talent. This led the boy to turn to Mykhailo Reznikovych, with whom he spent an excellent academic year, not losing enthusiasm, but on the contrary - discovering new creative roles in himself. He went to Novosibirsk, leaving his studies at the university, and later will study at the workshop of Anatolii Vasyliiev in Moscow Gitis. His career developed gradually: starting as an assembler at the Lesya Ukrainka Theater. Later became assistant director at the KrasnyFakel Theatre. The artist also worked in the pedagogical field, since 1988 Zholdak has been teaching at Kyiv Institute of Arts, and also took the initiative of creating the Ukraine-Culture-Europe Foundation, the name of which is already clearly identifiable with the director's artistic aspirations and creative guidelines.

The artist's life path is not as controversial in its events as his creative legacy. In the present, the director's surname is immediately associated with scandal, breaking the established patterns, and epatage, because the artist could impress not only his own audience but also caused a mixed reaction among theater critics.

The creative path in the theatrical environment of the famous Ukrainian avant-garde director Andrii Zholdak began back in 1989 when he made his debut as a director of the small stage of the Ivan Franko theater in Kyiv with the production of the play "Moment" by V. Vynnychenko. However, this particular production was not as revolutionary and radical as most of his later productions.

The theater has learning objectives that define the contribution of theater to personal development: social skills, interpersonal relationships, attitudes, understanding, relationships, and problem-solving (Rojas et al., 2021, p. 2352).

In 2002 Andrii Zholdak became artistic director of the Kharkiv Taras Shevchenko Academic Ukrainian Drama Theatre. Over the next three years, the Ukrainian audience sees the performances created by the director: "Hamlet. Dreams," "Moon of Love" (fig.1), "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," "Goldoni. Venice," and the Kharkiv troupe performs at dozens of European festivals. For example, in the first showing of Zholdak's Hamlet, the performer in the title role bared himself to the last limit and sang fragments of songs, thereby giving the classical works a certain "popishness." The other dramatic actors in the dialogues did not even

communicate with each other but only shouted and laughed and it did not even matter who played what role. Zholdak realized the game of puppet actors, where it is important to their submission to the "puppeteer". Scenes in Zholdak's productions replace each other, creating a kind of "parade of attractions" and it encourages the viewer to solve cunning riddles.

Analyzing the artist's style in general, one can't help but notice that his performances are an eclecticism of style and content, based on the principles of literary and theatrical classics. Gradually associative and allusive elements are strung together, which allows for better disclosure of the globalism of the issues. Philosophical categories prevail as a subject of review and theatrical reflection in Zholdak's performances, here are both love and power, human cruelty, betrayal, ambition, and cynicism. The poetics of dreams are uncommon.

A key feature of the director is playing on contrasts. None of the performances passes without unexpected visual, sound, costume, and scenic, content metamorphoses. Sometimes they form transitional parts, separating one action from the other (as a rule, it is the cases when the performance is built on a series of successive pictures). The most expressive acts, using which the viewer's attention is held, are those in which high and elite culture are juxtaposed, as was the case in "Romeo and Juliet. Fragment", which is further referred to as forbidden to show. We see a similar thing in "One Day in Ivan Denisovich," where a famous opera singer, exalted by the world of music, must give concentration in a concentration camp; and in "Hamlet. Dreams," where vacationers disguise themselves as destitute refugees. The composition of the mise-en-scenes on a visual level does not always correlate with the musical accompaniment, but it is also part of the author's style. In the unruly corporeality, nudity, and infantilism that the actors convey, they reproduce a real picture of the world as it was yesterday, and as it is now.

Zholdak quite often becomes a "victim" of viewer criticism due to another characteristic - the accumulation of dramatic views. We are talking about scenes of rape, adultery, and episodes from the life of prisoners. Undoubtedly, elements of violence are present here, because it makes to keep the whole audience in suspense, and accordingly - the emotional background of the target audience is included in the general course of events in the play. Thus, the audience and the participants in the performance become one. Accordingly, the moment of release of

tension from the audience becomes important as well. Depending on the performance, Zholdak chooses different options: problem-solving (good triumphs over evil, actors come to a common consensus), and concentration of the audience's attention in other circumstances. The superficial discomfort that accompanies a period of tension is gradually replaced by the realization of the sacred, valuable to each individual, which he took after going to the theater. One such example that most accurately reflects the above is a play from Zholdak's repertoire, *The Yellow Prince*, whose motif was a novel by V. Barca. The events unfold during the Holodomor of 1932-1933. The physical and psychological abuse of the Ukrainian nation under Stalin's regime. The purpose of the play is ambivalent: on the one hand, it is to inform the world about the famine as a pre-planned anti-Ukrainian policy, and on the other, to call for the development of joint measures to prevent genocide and other crimes against humanity. Any acknowledgment of those terrible events was strictly forbidden in the Soviet Union, so the novel did not appear in Ukraine until 1991 after the country had gained its independence. The play "Lenin's Love. Stalin's Love" is based on the most tragic page of national history, staged by the director to honor the millions of victims of the Holodomor and to remember the political system and its government leaders, because of whom millions of people died.

What is characteristic: The play begins at the entrance to the theater. The audience enters the theater room with a red wooden corridor that makes a very strong impression, reminiscent of a hall of blood, a place of crime and torture. The walls of this corridor are covered with photographs of hundreds of children who suffered from starvation in concentration camps from 1932-to 1933. The performance itself tells the story of the inhabitants of one village, whose

peaceful life is changed in the blink of an eye. A Stalinist plan called the Collectivization Program, which is supposed to help meet the nutritional needs of the Soviet Union, becomes fatal for this area as well as for the entire people of Ukraine. 1930s agriculture is the backbone of Ukraine, but the scheme to combine peasant land and cattle into collective farms results in the state becoming significantly impoverished. All of the characters in the play who personify communism are deeply evil, cruel, and have inherently inhuman traits.

Director Andrii Zholdak conveys the vision of the work without any reservations, in a straightforward manner, always subjecting the source material to an unexpectedly frank treatment, thereby filling the entire performance with energy. Thus, for example, *Château de Barbe-Bleue* (an opera interpretation being shown in France in 2021 at the Lyon Opera Festival) is structured according to the musical principle of the theme with variations, which in itself is an extremely bold solution in relation to Bartók's classical version of the opera. It is factors and episodes such as these that create a full representation of the actual theme of war.

From a quantitative and qualitative point of view, Zholdak has become quite productive during his years abroad. Each performance is a performance, a fundamentally new vision and approach, which cannot be repeated by other directors. Since then, he has also received international acclaim: the director's works have received honorary awards at festivals such as Sibiu, BITEF, Nurderzon, Artistic Berezil, and Golden Lion, and he has been a constant speaker at specialized master classes in Finland, Germany, Switzerland, and other European countries. Moreover, Zholdak's "Charodeika" was even nominated for the Opera Awards in 2020.



Fig. 1. Performance “Moon of Love” directed by A. Zholdak, 2012 (Puchner, 2017)

Images in cinematography reproduce reality in combination with the artistic vision of the director, which is emphasized by the viewer's perception of what he sees, providing vivid, rich images of reality (Petrovici & Ivan, 2019, p.140).

But Zholdak's theatrical productions demonstrate his attitude toward the dramaturgy of the source material and toward the audience, drawing them into provocative actions to make a stunning impression. In other plays, *One Day in Ivan Denisovich* and *The Moon in the Village*, Zholdak does not follow a storyline through the text, but rather uses footnotes around the play, which causes surprise, displeasure, or admiration in the audience. In the play “Goldone. Venedia,” Zholdak departed as much as possible from the author's source material. He used not so much the plot and motifs of the play itself as derivatives of these motifs, so the production was based on associations, capturing the viewer. In the production of “*Romeo and Juliet. Fragment*” was already significantly noticeable the absence of ethical criteria, that is, the rules of communication with the audience, and did so intentionally, with a provocative purpose.

However, Andrii Zholdak's productions have been performed in theaters in many European countries: Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Macedonia, Belgium, Romania, France, etc. In Ukraine, the audience did not perceive eccentricity and such a peculiar approach to the construction of theatrical performances, and therefore the director has gained great popularity abroad. Andrii Zholdak can be considered one of the founders of a new directorial school that has

moved away from the basics of Soviet drama and the linear construction of theatrical performance.

Zholdak's approach to the model of construction and staging of performances is such that he goes not to the text, as most domestic directors do, but from the text, thus forming a new attitude toward drama. “The uniqueness of Zholdak is that in his productions he will approach the author's text, not in terms of systematic analysis, but places it in a new dimension, responding the soul of the audience of any age and nationality, - said OlehKokhan. - And I am sure that Ukrainian audiences will soon feel it too” (Russian Literary Newspaper, 2022, February 12) Zholdak is an ambiguous figure in today's theater world, and the evolution of his work is unpredictable. He subjected his performances to unmotivated associations, similar to fragments of dreams. At the Lyon Opera, Ukrainian Andrii Zholdak staged “*The Enchantress*”. Tchaikovsky's enormous, almost Wagnerian opera scares off directors and is rarely staged. Zholdak handled the spike, turning it into an erotic-religious blockbuster. Zholdak stages *The Enchantress* more as a comedy of passions: both bodily and spiritual. But it's one step from farce to tragedy. How Zholdak works with the actresses is a mystery, but they play fantastically in his performances is no exaggeration. And in musical productions, too. What the main character Kuma does on stage! There is a spectrum of debauchery and sanctity; both benevolent innocence and demonic seduction; and desperate irony - the actress can't help but notice the grotesque nature of the operatic heroine, and sincere fervor. Kuma dark folk rumors made up the status of a sorceress - in Zholdak's version, the heroine is not at all shy about it and resorts to “witch” passes, being

possessed by her men, naked and snapping like a tigress. One of the play's main characters, devoted to passions and vain attempts to pacify them, naturally becomes Mamirov, Tchaikovsky's old clerk and friar Catholic priest for Zholdak; this role is played (and not only performed) by Piotr Michinsky, a Pole. Mamirov enters the opera straight from the service: the overture is preceded by a video in which the saintly father, having completed the ritual, goes to the Lyon Opera House. By the way, it is very different from other opera houses in the world: in Lyon, everything is black, both the hall and the foyer, where you cannot even find a normal staircase, only elevators, and escalators; only black mass and serve. On the days of the showings of "The Enchantress", the strangeness of the place was heightened by the installations scattered here and there for another production of Dido and Aeneas, where the action will apparently take place after a nuclear war: the foyer is filled with showcases of human objects, from surveillance cameras to food, all in decay and covered in ashes (Rutkovskij, 2019). Mamirov in the new "The Enchantress" is a consecrated but modern man; he follows the congregation with cameras embedded in the head of a giant Jesus. By the second act, this giant crucifix will be decorated and illuminated with hundreds of lights, which is how crucifixes are decorated in Latin America, where they don't know the word "vulgar". Yes, Zholdak began his provocative games with religious symbolism precisely in European opera - when he staged Bohuslav Martin's *Mirandolina* in Giessen, Germany. And he was the second director on Earth after Paul Verhoeven to dare to claim the erotic potential of the crucifixion: in Verhoeven's *The Fourth Man*, the hero imagined his dream boyfriend in the image of Christ on the cross. However, Mamirov is not prone to bisexuality (unlike the "earwigs," a "tramp in the guise of a black man" Paysius – Vasyl Yefimovboldly turns into an angry and flirtatious androgynous). After finishing his business and playing chess with the computer, he puts on a virtual reality helmet and flies to the Siberian village where Kuma lives, drinks, and has fun. So, we find ourselves in Russia, in a wooden hut (pickles on the shelves, sticky tape of flies hanging on the shelves - like in Soviet-era village houses), a wild kingdom where a European tired of the dietary life is drawn. The opening festivities of the opera, Zholdak is not so successful. Instead of a one-stage binge, he localized the action in two polar points: on the right side, in the hut, where "vodka and young," Kuma in a country pink jacket is kind to the dozens and awkward guests of the trade; on the left, in the setting of the princely

bedroom, other people fumble around; it is a mess with music. (The bedroom, the church, and the "blight" seem to be a complex set of locations where contradictory human nature searches for itself; the author of the majestic and mobile set design is simultaneously Andrii's son Danilo Zholdak, his regular collaborator for the past four years) (Rutkovskij, 2019). After all, the score in theater helps the director and actors because it increases the emotional intensity of the actors' performance (Pinchbeck & Egan, 2022, p. 7).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ibsen in the Federal Republic of Germany became quite well known and relevant to sociocultural changes. Various avant-garde movements, such as *FreieBühne* and the prominent theatrical figure Max Reinhardt, regarded Ibsen's plays as leading theatrical innovations (Schor, 2021, p.166-167)

In February 2022, the Romanian Drama Theater premiered with a full house on the stage of a new play by director Andrii Zholdak based on Henrik Ibsen's "Woman from the Sea" (Fig.2). Invited to direct Andrii Zholdak was George Banu, honorary president of the International Association of Theatre Critics. "In 1888, Ibsen wrote *A Woman from the Sea*. We are now in the year 2022. 134 years have passed... times, meanings and forms have partly changed, there have been some fractures and tectonic changes: in the mentality of men and especially in the mentality of women. My *Ellida* is still alive today, I often meet her in different cities and countries where I travel," said Zholdak.

The audience erupted in applause, probably one of the best productions since 1889. This play should also be mentioned because female psychology is another of the director's weaknesses. Translating through the prism of his own vision, he departs from the author's text and the position of systematic analysis and places the main idea of the work in a new dimension, thereby making the performance accessible to viewers of any gender, nationality, age. In doing so, all the space is the most important part of the performance, and the director works with it carefully. Bringing all the components of communication of the theatrical space (dramatic, scenic, scenographic, play (gestural), textual, internal) into a single whole entails distinguishing two levels of dialogue: the first level is an internal dialogue, it occurs within the theater and forms theatrical specificity; the second, outside fixed level, consists of coexisting moments of social reality and is formed by conditions and forms, of life activity.



Fig. 2. The Woman from the Sea, directed by A. Zholdak, Romania, 2022 (Botsman, February 2, 2022).

Zholdak needs to recognize the polar states of human existence. At one time he had to stage several productions (each of which was perceived by the artist as a transitional stage in his work) in Scandinavian countries. And what is the Scandinavian worldview? Imagine you've taken a deep dive and are swimming very slowly, looking at what's under the water. "The Cherry Orchard," staged in Finland, is a very slow five-hour performance, not without reason that Finnish critics, speaking of the play, remembered Tarkovsky. And the example of Zholdak's work with the Germans (Kafka's "Transformation") shows another extreme. Knowing about the discipline and technicality of German actors, the director went on an unprecedented experiment: he constructed the action in an ultra-intensive rhythm, painted the score of a five-hour performance, split every second. After a week of rehearsals, the actors had a breakdown, they defiantly put down their lyrics-notes...

An actor needs to be able to "activate" himself, and quickly oppositely rearrange himself - to enter a pause, to hold the state of inner tension, and when it is not required - to run and shout. For many art lovers who have repeatedly visited Zholdak's theater, his performances are shouting and running. There seems to be a certain grain of rationality in this, but one must answer the quite logical question: for what purpose is it done? Only to come to a state of psychological pause, which is what the great masters of European theater have always sought. A pause on the stage

that does not have a deep meaning is meaningless and deceptive.

Zholdak also expects a cultural explosion from directors engaged in theatrical performances directly in Ukraine: in Lviv, Kyiv, and Kharkiv. He lacks sharpness, over-the-top truthful theses, and perhaps even cinematic theatrical productions. The need to develop cultural volunteering, as it is accepted in the West, is palpable. AndriiValeriiovych, as a true patriot, considers the prospect of returning to his homeland, which he declared at a creative meeting in December 2021: "In general, I have to come to you to knock down the sour cream, because you gurgle a little," - said Zholdak (Faulina, 2021).

The work of director AndriiZholdak once again confirms that a real work of art is deeply subjective, individual, and unique. Before acquiring a concrete form, an artistic image develops, nurtured in the author's ideas. All that is experienced and comprehended by the creator: his vision of the world, his ideals, and the meanings of existence are manifested in concrete forms. It has always been difficult for avant-garde artists to gain recognition from their contemporaries, but Andrii Zholdak consistently continues to amaze audiences with his innovative experiments in stage art - from the passage-metaphorical to the naturalistically shocking.

Consequently, the "Star" figure of A. Zholdak - one of the most outrageous, intriguing by its unpredictability directors - is impossible not to notice in the firmament of contemporary theatrical art. True, not national, but Western

European stage production of the avant-garde director resonates with the priority world trends in theatrical culture.

The Meaning of Theatrical Avant-gardism

The innovative philosophical, aesthetic and political platform of all currents of modern theatrical avant-gardism acts as a peculiar form of protest against traditional art. The main conceptual ideas of avant-gardism, its general features: an atmosphere of rebellion, the constant installation of creative experimentation, mosaicism, outrage, destruction of the whole and installation of its debris in a new interpretation of collage, playful transformation, stream of consciousness (which is used in their own). Experiments with sound technology are an integral part of artistic avant-gardism and are most characteristic of European avant-garde movements (Rosati, 2019, p. 30)

The structure of the individual and the social environment, as well as the process of constructing reality, its perception, and representation through communication, are of great importance. The construction of social reality takes place through communicative actions as a process of coordinating interpretations. Accordingly, once the interpretive strategy is formed, it turns into operational constructivism, and the actions of the individual become social actions (Sandu & Unguru, 2017, p.54).

On this basis, we can say that the theatrical avant-garde is of great importance for modern society, for socialization. In terms of content, art was fueled by the cult of subjectivism and implied the absolutization of inner experiences, an interest in the depths of human psychology, namely the subconscious. Therefore, theatrical avant-gardism lacked the tools, life-like forms, and acting techniques used by theatrical artists of previous epochs. Freedom from tradition and social constraints is the basic idea of avant-gardism, the most widespread in Western European countries. There is a problem of preservation of identity in society and each individual, which is associated with all-encompassing globalization. The individual must adapt to such conditions and have the ability to switch from the internal environment (personal) to the external through social interaction and vice versa. The external social environment to a certain extent forms the inner world of the individual (Nerubasska et al., 2020, p. 279).

Such a function is actively performed by the theatrical productions of various avant-garde movements in Europe, America, etc.

Conclusions

Contemporary Ukrainian theater actively uses the heritage of theatrical modernism and avant-gardism. This is evident both in indirect quotations of the director's drawings and in the development of ideas proposed by artists of the first third of the XX century.

Like any other "director's" production, Zholdak's play touches on problematic areas of contemporary musical-drama theater. One of these is the definition of the aesthetic foundations from which the radically-minded director reproduces his own conceptual constructions on stage. Another becomes the choice of interpretative tools to be used in the process of clarifying this kind of directorial statement.

Reproduction in the Ukrainian theatrical environment of the avant-garde was short-lived but weighty, and its artistic influence and significance for the development of Ukrainian art stretches far beyond chronological boundaries. Artistic trends defined by avant-garde aesthetics played a fundamental role in the form-making processes of the Ukrainian theater for the development of innovative artistic forms and ideas. After all, the avant-garde directly is a real foundation for the official Soviet art of the 1930s and a kind of basis for the search of avant-garde 1960-1980s is of great importance to the development of contemporary artistic trends in the world context. Decisions Andrii Zholdak cause mixed impressions: some admire him, others - criticize, not perceived at all. But the undeniable fact is that the avant-garde in Ukraine has become a phenomenon virtually unknown, a kind of tabula rasa, and it is Andrii Zholdak that opens the Ukrainian public with a qualitatively new approach to theatrical art.

Bibliographic references

- Armand, L. (2020). 'Barbaric Peoples of the Earth': The Avant-Garde and the Revolt Against Civilisation. *Open Library of Humanities*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.16995/ol.h.453>
- Botsman, O. (February 2, 2022). Zholdak: If I hadn't gotten into art, I would have been either a "crowned" bandit or killed [Zholdak: Yakbyya ne potrapyv u mystetstvo, yabuv by abo "koronovanym" bandytom, abo vbytym]. Excluding «Hordona» [Ekskliuzyv

- «Hordona»]. Gordonua.Com. Retrieved April 9, 2022, from <https://gordonua.com/ukr/publications/zholdak-yakbi-ya-ne-potrapiv-u-mistectvo-yabuv-bi-abo-koronovanim-banditom-abovbitim-1590071.html>
- Condee, W. F. (2002). *Theatrical Space: A Guide for Directors and Designers*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Faulina, V. (2021, December 30). Andriy Zholdak in Kyiv: master class for theatergoers and dreams of staging in Ukraine (photo report). [Andrii Zholdak u Kyievi: maister-klasdliteatraliv ta mrii pro postanovku v Ukraini (fotoreportazh)] *Mirror Weekly*; Zn.ua. <https://zn.ua/ukr/CULTURE/andrij-zholdak-u-kijevi-majster-klas-dlja-teatraliv-ta-mriji-pro-postanovku-v-ukrajini-fotoreportazh.html>
- Fazan, K., Kobialka, M., & Lease, B. (Eds.). (2021). *A History of Polish Theatre*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108619028.009>
- Grinyshyna, M., Raevskaya, Yu., & Boklan, M. (2021). Presentation of theatrical surrealism: "I will kill the king, or the Poles" by Alfred Jarry (1896). *Bulletin of the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts. Series: Performing Arts*, 4(1), 8–16. <https://doi.org/10.31866/2616-759X.4.1.2021.234229>
- Heinz, E. (2020). John Rodker on Theatre: Rethinking the Modernist Stage from London's Jewish East End. *Open Library of Humanities*, 6(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.455>
- Müller-Schöll, N. (2021). Brecht and contemporary experimental theater. In *Bertolt Brecht in Context* (pp. 282–290). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108608800.036>
- Nerubasska, A., Palshkov, K., & Maksymchuk, B. (2020). A Systemic Philosophical Analysis of the Contemporary Society and the Human: New Potential. *Postmodern Openings*, 11(4), 275–292. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/11.4/235>
- Petrovici, I., & Ivan, D. (2019). Film as aesthetic experience and work of art. *Postmodern Openings*, 10(3), 135–150. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/86>
- Pinchbeck, M. D., & Egan, K. (2022). Staging scores: Devising contemporary performances from classical music. *Open Library of Humanities*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.4684>
- Puchner, W. (2017). *Greek Theatre between Antiquity and Independence A History of Reinvention from the Third Century BC to 1830*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 16 – 51. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107445024.003>
- Rojas, O., Mota, K., & Valenzuela, M. (2021). Perspectiva de los docentes acerca del teatro y sus aportes al aprendizaje significativo en la Comuna de Rengo, Chile – 2021. *Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudios Em Educação*, 2345–2357. <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v16i4.15684>
- Rosati, L. (2019). *Mechanical Kingdoms: Sound Technologies and the Avant-Garde, 1928–1933*. CUNY Academic Works. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/3237
- Rutkovskij, V. (2019, April 3). Wild Tchaikovsky. "The Enchantress" directed by Andriy Zholdak [DikijChajkovskij. "Charodejka" v postanovke Andrija Zholdaka]. Radio Svoboda. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/29849568.html> (in Russian)
- Sandu, A., & Unguru, E. (2017). Several Conceptual Clarifications on the Distinction between Constructivism and Social Constructivism. *Postmodern Openings*, 8(2), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/2017.0802.04>
- Schor, R. (2021). German Reception. In *Ibsen in Context* (pp. 166–174). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108381130.025>
- Taylor, L. (2018). Negotiating theatrical space in performances of Marguerite duras's later plays. In *Marguerite Duras* (pp. 118–134). Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Turoiu, L., Griga, A., Arapu, V., Gurguta, A., & Tica, A. (2019). A Romanian-French Season. *Postmodern Openings*, 10(1), 280–295. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/67>
- Usakli, H. (2021). Inner sound or forum theater to resolve communicational problems. *International Journal of Education and Science*, 4(1), 26–32. <https://doi.org/10.26697/ijes.2021.1.3>