

**“POSTDRAMATIC” TENDENCIES IN THE GERMAN DRAMATIC ART
AT THE END OF XX – BEGINNING OF XXI CENTURIES**

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Disintegration and integration processes of German culture of the end of XX and beginning of XXI are analyzed by giving examples of stage interpretations of mythological plots in theatres of present-day Germany. It is stated that pluralism and multidimensionality of the spiritual experience of modern cultural workers, both writers (such as V. Braun, S. Schutz, B. Strauss etc.) and leading producers (D. Dorn, S. Nubling and others) contribute to the drawing up of a special syncretic style of theatre staging, first of all with the use of the ancient material which is appropriate for it. Ancient myth, as one of the steadiest constants of the European literature, gives a universal key to the interpretation of various cultural and ethic-aesthetic phenomena that are irredundant to nothing else. There is a sociocultural context in which German spectators nowadays try to comprehend these dramaturgy phenomena; and there is a genuine stage director interpretations of them (in Aachen City Theatre, Dramatic Theatre of Hannover, Munich Chamber Theatre etc.) that not only lead to the decanonization of the classic model, but also pinpoint problematique of these performances.

Keywords: *myth, mythologization, interpretation, plot, philosophic-aesthetic conception, postdramatic theatre.*

Theatre, from its very appearance in the antiquity, has always been the most sensible tool that could catch and reflect all the sentiments of any society in the days of social development crisis. Despite existing among critics opinion that in the new social situation – when one of the most significant issues of the time was a search for a new German identity, as far as it was rather difficult to unify the country divided more than 40 years ago – theatre turned out to be unprepared to solve important problems of the nation, but this presentation does not correspond to the reality. When everybody in West Berlin felt euphoric about the unification of Germany, red flags appeared above the “Volksbühne” (or, People’s Theatre) theatre of famous and scandalous producer and non-conformist from GDR Frank Castorf. When he was asked by journalists about it, he answered in the following way: “My attitude towards the consolidation of two countries has always been ambiguous. Speaking about the red flags, in XVI-XVII centuries, red colour meant for illiterate Germans the danger: if red flags were hung out, it called upon them to be cautious. So when I hung those red flags above the “Volksbühne” – it was not done to show my loyalty to the resigning political regime, but rather a warning: we are going to face many dangers on this way... The entire wonderful world is deceptive. We should not only understand the past, but also foresee the possible future. Theatre should be a constant reminder of this; it should always put questions and doubt everything that used to be undoubtable.

“Art should fight against somnolent society” [2, p. 48].

This thesis clearly defines the relations between theatre and society in the unified Germany. Disintegration and integration processes in German society of the end of XX and beginning of XXI are illustrated by the examples of several stage performances, actions and projects. Pluralism and multidimensionality of the spiritual experience of modern culture workers such as recently gone (C.

Muller, P Hacks, K. M. Gruber) as well as living (V. Braun, S. Schutz, B. Strauss, T. Dorset, P. Handke and others) and leading directors (D. Dorn, S. Nubling, F. Castorf, M. Thalheimer, Thomas Ostermeier and etc.) contribute to the drawing up of a syncretic style of the theatre aesthetics in the unified Germany. Nowadays, this style determines all branches of modern German theatre, including opera performance. It is engendered by new sociocultural state of society in the present-day Germany and is defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann as postdramatic. The definition "postdramatic" is first given in the conception of the young scientist by opposing Attic tragedies as the model of "predramatic" theatre (or, theatre before drama) to the modern postdramatic theatre (or, theatre the basis of which is the dramatic text). In discussions and critical literature of late this term is used more often, especially to define new modern tendencies in theatrical processes. E. Shevchenko elaborates on it in his article [3]. Discussers often understand the substance of the term in various ways. Some connect the term with such theatre phenomena as "happening" and "performance". For others the new reality of theatre is intensively implied in the modern German stage performance projects, in which not only professionals, but also amateur actors and even different groups of population can participated (if the project is carried out in some city district): musicians, artists, poets, dancers.

Integral dramatic works seldom provide basis for such projects; usually this role is fulfilled by a text – epic, lyric, documentary, or a collage made of those texts. Postdramatic theatre does not rest upon author's drama work as the only source of any theatrical action. Drama gives way to approximate adaptation which supposes different variants of stage incarnation and high degree of improvisation based on the unpredictable behavior of spectators and participants of such performances. In order to carry out those postdramatic projects and theatrical performances all kinds of tools and means can be used, including multimedia (audio, video and cinema). Myth and cinema editing, ancient motives and a workshop of a former metallurgical plant as acting space are harmonically combined and all together they create a special psychological state. This new phenomenon not only finds expression in works of some dramaturges (H. Muller, R. Goetz, P. Handke, E. Elinek) or directors, but also defines the state of modern German theatrical aesthetics and practice. Heiner Muller's name has become for postdramatic theatre as symbolic as Brecht's name for epic theatre. The principle of the approach towards analyses of the state of modern German dramaturgy and her constituents has slightly changed in the context of new theatrical reality. Dramaturgy of present-day Germany – is not only summation of dramatic works of recognized professional dramaturges. Text of the play or dramatic work has always been implemented through theatrical interpretation, but on the threshold of XXI century directorial, interpretation and transformation theatre has become very popular. Subjects of modern theatre are not classic works or harmonic with the present-day works on social problems of recognized modern European authors, but rather classical texts (ancient and Shakespeare's) and of modern European dramaturgy; texts which are adapted in a proper way to German reality. These texts often become subjects of new German theatre.

A typical example of it is the success of Belgian writer Thom Lanoy in Germany. He has never been considered a star neither in Europe nor in Belgium itself. However, his success in Germany is quite logical. At the Salzburg Festival in 2000 and then at Berlin Theatre Meeting his performance-adaptation (the definition he gave himself) based on the Shakespeare's historical chronicle and staged in German Playhouse of Hamburg by famous Belgian director Luk Perceval with a provocative name "SCHLACHTEN" (slaughter) was awarded with German prize for innovation in the field of theatre. His success could be explained by the fact that his play turned out to be in a spirit of the present-day condition of social and literature awareness in Germany at the turn of XX – XXI centu-

ries, when everything was highly politicized on account of unification of West and East parts of the country. Adaptation of Shakespeare's historical chronicles about dynastic strife (the Wars of the Roses) has become extremely right on and they vividly responded to direct events of that time. Seven years later the theme has not lost its currency. It's convincing enough to recall a recent opening night in the Viennese Burgtheater – a seven hours' "The War of the Roses" staged by Stefan Kimmig, who united all three parts of "Henry XI", "Richard III" and "Hamlet" first staged by Thielmann Kohlmann in Maksim Gorky theatre of Berlin. German theatre is constantly and painfully looking for something new. It's noteworthy that the idea of educational function of the theatre which is traditionally popular in Germany, finds its embodiment in various theatre projects which are successful not only on German stationary stage, but even outside it ("theatre + school", "theatre + university", "theatre + mythology" ("Arbeit am Mytos") in Hannover Drama theatre). The new call – Theater für alle – is not only theatrical, cultural, but also political. Vom Elfenbeinturm in die Fankurve – is the motto of new educational theatre policy. Establishment of the Federal Fund for Culture Support, designed to encourage "Heimspiel"-projects is especially noteworthy. These projects are a unique phenomenon in cultural life of Germany. Nine projects carried out from Swabian Jura to Görlitz, from Hamburg to Moers, have become a cultural journey made to find new forms, actors and public. With the help of this fund city theatre projects are carried out. These projects are designed to help different layers of society to adapt psychologically to various social problems through emotional impression. The main purpose of such funds is to help theatre to present its potential facilities to attract and educate new spectators in new conditions.

What is "Heimspiel"? It covers all the kaleidoscope of theatre forms based in the first place on the documentary and amateur theatre.

This initiative is well observed on the experience of the political theatre of Erwin Piscator, who created a new stage genre – documentary drama. "Heimspiel"-projects deal with the theatrical pedagogy – the subject actively developing in Germany.

The federal union of theatrical pedagogy was established in 1900 and since 1980 there are communities of theatre pedagogy, based on the educational program of Brecht and dealing with socio-cultural studies.

"Heimspiel"-projects are based on long-term aesthetic exploration of city space, discovery of new possible places for theatre performances: city cemetery in Weimar (M. Gruber), an old castle or a workshop of the foundry works. Analyses shows that such projects are carried out mostly in former GDR territory and areas with a high density of Russian-speaking and other immigrants' population.

Thus, the Chamber theatre of Patterbuorn got an assignment to work with German young workers who speak Russian and live densely in one of the districts of the city. The basis of the project was the novel of M. Ende "Ophelia's Shadows". In the project the elderly Ophelia gave her last will to her deprived of citizenship shadows appearing on the curtain. She invited them to participate with her in the theatre performance as means of work therapy. Later classic scenes are shown during the action. Even this project reminds of homeless shadows of Hades, shadows from Dante's "Hell", and Remarque's novel "Shadows in Paradise". The experience of the director Aksel Vornam on the metallurgical plant Maxhütte in the city of Rudolstadt is also interesting. The acting space is a dispatching office of gas engines. The theme of the play is the history of the industrial giant GDR and its social problems in the present. Modernization of the production left only 670 out of 6000 workers which caused social problems. The opening night was, of course, on the 1st May, 2003, on the Labor Day which coincided with the Ascension Day. On the giant space the plant started its work

once again. The project is based on the performance of the scenes from drama works of H. Müller (Heracles 5), E. Toller (Machine Destroyers), P. Zech (The Wheel), V. Braun (The Praise to Communism) with the use of a powerful symphonic background. Musicians, 150 actors, chorus and consisting of former workers amateur groups took part in the performance.

However the main idea of the action was not the presentation of once glorious history of the industry giant. It all made up a gigantic collage, not narrating, but rather clearly demonstrating changes in the life of workers and the way those workers changed. The spectators could observe a mythologization of the image of the modern worker and the idea of labor. With the help of the Maxhütte example we have an opportunity to reflect upon psychological phenomenon of Labor in its ambivalence: wage-labor as destruction of the personality and free labor as the source of humanizing energy. This is a world-old problem typical for Hesiod. It is interesting to observe the way slogans from H. Müller's "Heracle 5" and Vollker Braun's "The Praise to Communism" well-known in East Germany were adapted in new conditions with the final conclusion from H. Müller: a man should get free all by himself and he should not believe other people's promises. Even in this breathtaking production sight the makers rest upon mythological images and situations, e.g. Heracles's fifth heroic deed with Augean stables. Neomythologism, appeal to mythological motives, images, allusions – all this is traditionally characteristic of German art and all this unifies various branches of modern German theatre, both traditional and postdramatic. Performances with ancient mythological plots are not new for the repertoire of German theatre. Beginning with the second half of the XVIII century leading philosophy and aesthetic concepts of Germany define significant psychological phenomenon: theorists of the art and its artists have a claim on direct continuity of traditions of Antiquity, on a special spiritual kinship with beautiful "human childhood".

However, new theatrical directorial style is displayed in modern stage presentation of mythological plots, a presentation that could be called "postdramatic", or "German" in theatrical articles [1]. Its components are peculiar and all in all compose a so-called "aesthetics of hideous". In such performances there are no decorations, but the set design is very bright. It is just enough to recall the black box in S. Nubling's "Mama Medea" staged at Hannover drama theatre or iron constructions reminding of tribunes in "Tannhauser" stadium (Staatsoper-Hannover). All this provides a visual quintessence of the play and makes not only spectator's imagination work, but also their thoughts, setting them into a special state of perception. The conception of the beautiful, elevated and heroic is gone from such plays even when initial material of the presentation predisposes it (Verdi's "Othello", Wagner's "Tannhauser" in Staatsoper-Hannover). The plays are oversaturated by naked human body which is far from perfection. ("Tannhauser" and "Othello") that indicate the frailty and imperfection of the existence. The critic M. Davidova says: "First thing that comes into your mind: here's art that has no ideals, which is free from illusions. Behind German sobriety and mercilessness towards the world, people and the society, there is not only absolute pessimism. There is also a high degree of social responsibility behind it. The German art shows us what we should escape from." [1]. There is a socio-cultural context in which German spectators nowadays try to comprehend such subjects of dramaturgy, and a genuine stage director interpretations of them (in Aachen City Theatre, Dramatic Theatre of Hannover, Munich Chamber Theatre etc.) that not only pinpoint problematique of these performances but also lead to the decanonization of the classic model. V. Braun's staging of "Iphigenia's freedom" in the East and West of Germany, B. Strauss's "Ithaca" in Munich, "Oresteia" and "Percians" by Aeschylus in Berlin (Gruber), "Antigone" by Sophocles and remake of "Mama Medea" by T. Lanoy in Hannover and etc. Present-day original plays or amateur re-

makes give rise to discussions in scientific publications as well as in the periodical press about the fruitfulness of the implication of “mythical” plots in the theatre. The myth appears to be still effective and important beginning of modern theatre of Germany which is so diverse and contradictive.

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«ПОСТДРАМАТИЧЕСКИЕ» ТЕНДЕНЦИИ В ТЕАТРАЛЬНОМ ИСКУССТВЕ ГЕРМАНИИ НА РУБЕЖЕ XX–XXI ВВ.

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На примере ряда сценических интерпретаций мифологических сюжетов в театрах современной Германии анализируются дезинтеграционные и интеграционные процессы в немецкой культуре конца XX и начала XXI вв. Констатируется, что плюралистичность и многомерность духовного опыта современных деятелей культуры, как писателей (Ф. Брауна, С. Шютца, Бото Штрауса и т.д.), так и ведущих режиссёров (Д. Дорна, С. Нюблинга и др.) способствует выработке особого синкретического стиля в театральных постановках, прежде всего на античном материале, в силу известной классической традиции предрасположенном к подобному. Античный миф как одна из наиболее устойчивых констант европейской литературы даёт универсальный ключ к интерпретации несводимых ни к чему другому разнообразных культурных, этико-эстетических феноменов. Существующий социокультурный контекст, в котором идёт осмысление подобных явлений драматургии немецкими зрителями сегодня, а также их оригинальные режиссерские трактовки (в Аахенском городском театре, Драматическом театре Ганновера, Мюнхенском камерном театре и т.д.) не только приводят к деканонизации классического образца, но и заостряют проблематику этих спектаклей.

Ключевые слова: миф, мифологизация, интерпретация, сюжет, философско-эстетическая концепция, постдраматический театр.

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