

"Silver" Age Theater

Liudmila Mikheeva^{1,*} Magda Dzhichonaia^{2,a} Julia Gushchina^{3,b}

¹Department of General Humanitarian Disciplines, Russian State Specialised Academy of Arts, Moscow, Russia

²Department of Social and Humanitarian Disciplines, Moscow state University of Food Production, Moscow, Russia

³Russian research Institute of cultural and natural heritage named after Likhachev, Moscow, Russia

^aEmail: magdalena-27@mail.ru

^bEmail: Gushchina.j@gmail.com

*Corresponding author. Email: lira19lm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the complex ways of theater development in the beginning of the XX century. The article considers the creative ways of theater reformers, the search for realists and modernists, the mutual influence of symbolists and those theater figures who were realists, but were true innovators of theater art in Russia at the beginning of the XX century. The focus is on relying on the best traditions of Russian realistic art in theatrical activities. Theater figures felt the need to update the theater, to change the function of the Director with the emergence of the Moscow art theater; the Russian theater became a Director's theater.

Keywords: renewal, searching for ways to develop the theater, realism, symbolism, Moscow art theater, emotional tension, solving aesthetic, ethics, ideological problems, avant-garde of arts, theater as a barometer of cultural life in Russia

I. INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the century among the artistic intelligentsia of Russia, there was a growing movement for the renewal of theatre, for understanding the need for early and radical reform of the theater.

As in all spheres of art, in the theatrical world there was a division of forces, and there was a struggle between realism and modernism.

The theater, as the most democratic form of art, was much discussed and debated at that time.

The first Manifesto of symbolism in the theater is called V. Bryusov's article "Unnecessary truth" [1]. It stated that the realistic theater has become an anachronism, and has outlived itself. Slogan: "Death to everyday life!", which was thrown to the realistic theater in the early 90s by Bryusov, Blok, Bely, and Balmont, was directed, in particular, against the Moscow Art Theater "MkhAT" ¹, and against Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. A little later, the futurists also entered the theater; a tragedy was staged in St. Petersburg (1913). In Mayakovsky's "Vladimir Mayakovsky", Kruchenykh's Opera "Victory over the sun", many works have been published by K. Stanislavsky, V. Nemirovich-Danchenko, M Ermolova,

A. Yuzhin-Sumbatov, dedicated to the problems of theater development.

The theater of the beginning of the century was significantly influenced by the Bruce aesthetic concept. Given this fact, we can talk about symbolism in the direction of K. S. Stanislavsky, V. E. Meyerhold, and F. F. Komissarzhevsky. During 1902-1908, the creative paths of the theater reformers and the most prominent symbolist repeatedly crossed.

We should also note the great contribution to theater studies made by another prominent symbolist, poet, philosopher, and scientist - Vyacheslav Ivanov.

He was, according to V. E. Meyerhold, "the initiator of a new theater, one of the creators of a new theatrical era." His manifestos to a large extent formed the theater ideology, enriched theatrical thought, and established the tradition of philosophizing about the theater [2]. Vyacheslav Ivanov was closely associated with V. E. Meyerhold, V. F. Komissarzhevskaya, actors and directors of the Moscow art theater, the Maly theater.

The Foundation of the Moscow Art and public theater (1898) radically changed not only the aesthetic, but also the organizational system of the Russian theater. The theater was one of the first to feel the need for renewal and produced it in a fundamentally new business.

¹ The Moscow Art Theatre or MAT; Russian: Moskovskiy Hudojstvenny Akademicheskij Theatre (MkhAT).

II. DIRECTOR'S THEATER

There were changes in the function of the traditional theater figure of the director. "He took a Central and leading position, taking responsibility not only for the artistic integrity of the performance, but also for the aesthetic, ethical, organizational existence of the theater as a whole. With the emergence of the Moscow art theater, the Russian theater becomes a director's theater. This gave rise to a variety of directions and searches, theater concepts and acting schools. This is what brought the theater to the vanguard of the arts, turning it into a kind of barometer of cultural and social life, and because it is in the theater that the interests of all types of art-literature and painting, music and architecture, acting and poetry-merged, intertwined, tied in a tight knot, revealing its universal, synthetic nature" [3].

K. Stanislavsky and V. Nemirovich-Danchenko were true innovators of theatrical art in Russia at the beginning of the century. The Moscow art theater sought to fulfill its aesthetic, ethical, and ideological goals, following three conditions: the main figure remained the actor, the theater found its own playwrights and, no less important, implemented the reform, not departing, but, on the contrary, relying on the best traditions of Russian realistic art.

Democratic-minded theatrical figures sought to make the theater widely accessible," accessible to the public (this definition was often included in the very name of the theater), and open to the democratic audience. Theater art reflected the trends inherent in other types of art at the turn of the century, the search for new means of expression, the expansion of propaganda of folk art, and the interaction of classical and folk traditions. These were the new trends in the artistic life of Russia, associated with the general democratization of culture.

The Moscow Art Theater has become a harbinger of new, modern art. Will quote the words of Stanislavsky about the essence of theatrical reforms implemented them: "We protested against the false pathos of poetry, and act against artificiality, and against bad conventionality of production and sets, against the premierships, which spoiled the ensemble, against the insignificant repertoire of those theatres" [4]. With the name of Stanislavsky, it is connected a lead line in the development of the aesthetics of stage realism.

The friendly relations of "mkhatovtsev"² with Chekhov and Gorky undoubtedly helped the theater in its creative self-determination, and in the formation of the personalities of those actors whose activities enriched the Russian stage: O. L. Knipper-Chekhova, I. M. Moskvina, M. P. Lilina, M. F. Andreeva, A. R.

² "Mkhatovtsy" – collective name of the actors of the Moscow Art Theater troupe.

Artem, V. E. Meyerhold, V. I. Kachalov, L. M. Leonidov, and others.

Why did Chekhov's drama attract Stanislavsky and the Moscow art theater company? It seems that the writer's desire to awaken people's dissatisfaction with their lives and-as a result-the desire to liberate themselves internally (remember the cherished Chekhov's desire "to squeeze out a drop from myself a slave" from the vulgarity, the grinding of the soul was in tune with the interests of the Moscow art theater. The relationship of the lyrical (the richness of the inner world of Chekhov's intellectuals, people of fine mental organization) with the epic (i.e., the external: society with its unrighteous laws, the fight against vulgarity, "the middle-class swamp") and determined the conflicts of A. P.'s Chekhov plays. - "conflict of further action".

The style structure of Chekhov's plays is special, because in them a true human tragedy unfolds in the form of a lyric drama. The commonplace becomes the habitat of the characters, and the plays turn into "the tragedy of everyday life". In the flow of habitual life, A. P. Chekhov looks for opportunities for significant and concrete manifestations of characters. For example, the "Chaika" ("the Seagull") reflects the processes that took place in Russian culture as if it were a drop of water. It was the crisis of old forms, the search for new ones, the emergence of decadence and its alienness, from Chekhov's point of view, for Russia [3].

III. A.P. CHEKHOV AND THE MOSCOW ART THEATER

Russian society was brought up on Chekhov's performances of the Moscow art theater, and it was thanks to the Moscow art theater that Chekhov at the beginning of the century became the ruler of the souls of the Russian intelligentsia. Due to the important and topical issues set by the writer, the audience did not remain bystanders, but became involved in the dramatic fate of the characters, seeing them as a reflection of the fate of the whole country — its worries and anxieties. The playwright, the characters, and the actors taught the audience to be unapologetic about vulgarity and philistinism, did not ingratiate themselves with the audience, and were sometimes even harsh in discovering certain bitter truths, and this awakened the public conscience.

Stanislavsky did not immediately accept Chekhov's dramaturgy, because the "ordinary life" that Chekhov's characters allegedly lived seemed to him too every day for the stage, in his words - "non-scenic, monotonous, boring". In the future, creative contacts became more fruitful, and Stanislavsky became really interested in Chekhov, especially in the process of working on "the Seagull". I think this is not accidental, since Chekhov's plays were built on the laws of realistic drama, which is

equally close to both the writer and the director. "Mkhatovtsy" gradually came to understand that behind the seeming ordinariness and routine in Chekhov's plays, there is always a true drama of human destinies.

Soft, lyrical, but internally uncompromising, "hard" Chekhov predetermined the horizons of development of Russian and world drama of the XX century. Hidden psychological drama, a kind of "heroless" dramaturgy, equality of actors, the inner meaning of the scenes that does not lie on the surface ("undercurrent")- this is what determined the originality of Chekhov's plays, which inspired the mkhatovtsy and helped them discover new laws of stage art.

An important milestone in the development of the Moscow art theater was Chekhov's "The Sea Gull» ("Chaika"). In its production, there was a happy coincidence, the correspondence of the Director's and writer's method, although we note that the feeling of a special Chekhov's realism came to Stanislavsky a little later, in the process of working on "the Cherry orchard". Working out all the components of the performance (mise en scene, pauses, intonation pattern of monologues and replicas, light and sound effects), Stanislavsky sought not only to recreate the truth of life on the stage, but also to convey to the audience Chekhov's idea, to make them feel the special emotional mood of the playwright, and the atmosphere of the play.

Chekhov's plays defined the style of the Moscow art theater, gave the spirit of modernity to what was later called "mood". Nevertheless, creative conflicts were inevitable. Looking at the history of productions of "The Seagull", "Uncle Vanya", and "The Cherry orchard", it is possible to identify the reasons for Chekhov's disagreement with the interpretation of his plays by the Moscow art theater. For example, one of the reasons for this in the process of working on "The Cherry orchard" was Stanislavsky's understanding of the play as "a heavy drama of Russian life", while Chekhov insisted on Comedy (not for nothing did he define the genre of "the Cherry orchard" as comedy). According to the playwright, the former owners of the garden-Ranevskaya and Gaev-are petty, helpless, ridiculous, and unworthy to be even the heroes of a melodrama. Everything is not real: laughter and tears; Ranevskaya admiring her "garden" is not love for the Motherland; on the contrary, it was the sale of the garden that opened the possibility for her to return to Paris. If we consider the experiences of Ranevskaya and Gaev dramatic, this would mean "heroizing" them, and they are, in Chekhov's understanding, vaudeville. Chekhov was convinced that the old Russia was laughing goodbye to the past. However, the feeling of sadness is undoubtedly palpable and is associated with the lyrical image of the cherry orchard itself-a symbol of the Motherland. The former and current owners of

the garden are unworthy of its luxury and beauty-hence the elegiac mood. Gradually Chekhov managed to convince the "mhatovtsy" in the rightness of his view on the genre of this work; the troupe still managed to understand the subtle psychological nuances of the play, where the lyrical merged with the tragicomic, and the sadness of parting with the past coexists with the joy of anticipation of meeting with the future - i.e. it was a surprisingly polyphonic work, the main theme of which was the fate of Russia at the dawn of the new century.

Chekhov is reflected not only social functioning schemes of the characters in the new society, which, incidentally, is definitely caught and recorded in their staging decisions of the Moscow art theatre, but showed genuine "cosmological" shift of consciousness - and this was reflected in the compositional techniques of his dramatic works

For the same period of time, techniques were developed that in themselves were fundamentally different from the techniques of the previous stage of the existence of stage means of expression, they could not yet cover and exhaust all the richness of meanings, to master the Chekhov Convention, that is, precisely those compositional techniques that characterize Chekhov as a "symbolist", and an "impressionist".

Changes in the compositions of Chekhov's plays affected not only the issues of building the foundations of drama as such, but also demonstrated the radical changes that took place in the late XIX - early XX century. Being, by virtue of a natural science education, a sober scientist and at the same time an artist-philosopher, Chekhov combined these views of the world with true universalism, obtaining an unusually bright stereoscopic picture, from which the Moscow art theater, by virtue of time, was able to reproduce only the three-dimensionality of the image.

The second (after "The Seagull") Chekhov's performance, which firmly established new principles of stage art, a new understanding of the tragic, and a modern concept of the hero, was "Uncle Vanya".

Chekhov himself was well aware that he and the Moscow art theater had the great fortune to create a fundamentally new stage art, which has a future that opens a new era. "The art theater", he said, "is the best page of the book that will ever be written about modern Russian theater" [5].

Analysis of various sources allows us to conclude that, reproducing life on the stage in its smallest manifestations, which, of course, was innovative in comparison with all previous long-term theatrical practice, the Moscow art theater nevertheless did not fully grasp the change of attitude that was so clearly reflected in the plays of Anton Chekhov.

Most likely, one of the reasons for the disagreement between Chekhov and Stanislavsky was that the Moscow art theater read the writer's idea, and his plays contain a philosophical concept. Mutual discontents often intersected, for example, at two points. The first was related to the understanding of the genre of Chekhov's works, the second - with the abundance of naturalistic "details that Stanislavsky literally" stuffed Chekhov's performances. But (again) the problem was not the quantitative accumulation of these details, or the quality of their meaningful, for Chekhov, it would seem that he attached great importance of detail, in fact, put in different content than a Director that also defined the fundamental difference of their "creative eye".

The opinions of Nemirovich-Danchenko about the nature of Chekhov's laughter are also interesting. Objecting to the "satirical" of Chekhov's plays, and their "vaudeville" nature, the Director had in mind primarily the accusatory function of laughter. The Chekhov, however, continued the tradition of Gogol's laughter is bitter through her tears.

In line with the "Chekhov" direction, there lays a number of plays accepted in those years by the Moscow Art Theater for production. This is "Lonely" by G. Hauptmann, and "Dr. Stockman" by Ibsen. The actors were attracted in these works by a deep psychologism in revealing the characters of the characters, as well as the fact that the conflict was based on the collision of people of a subtle spiritual organization with the Philistine. In the early 900s, Chekhov's famous "Three sisters" and "Cherry orchard" were staged - which became true masterpieces of stage art. Following the concept of Chekhov's psychological theater, delving deeper into the spiritual life of the heroes, the Moscow Art Theater and its leaders were able to find moral fortitude and "hidden" heroism (heroism, not phrases, but actions, thoughts) in people, which helped to withstand the onslaught of militant philistines. The main aesthetic trend in the art of the Moscow Art Theater was this way of revealing the souls of the heroes: from the inner to the outer. Chekhov always strove to write "vigorous" plays that would induce people to perseverance, and charge them with the confidence that they can and should rise above vulgarity, can and must overcome the power of "everyday life."

The theater's motto was the truth of life-"unconditional and honest". And this could not but lead to the fact that it was necessary to destroy the theatrical routine, to get away from the false pathos, and "stilt" of the characters. Chekhov brought the theater as close to life as possible. However, the departure from "idealization "and" heroization" did not mean the triumph of everyday life or pettiness. On the contrary, "mkhatovtsy" correctly understood Chekhov's idea that the poetry of art should be able to extract from the

prose of life, and in it, in life, there is always "an invigorating beginning".

After Chekhov's plays, Gorky's dramas entered the Moscow art theater's repertoire: "Philistines", "The Lower Depths". L. Tolstoy's plays were also staged: "the Living corpse" and "the Power of darkness". "The Lower Depths" was a huge success, although it was difficult. "Mkhatovtsy" carefully studied "bosyatsky" (poor people) life, but there was also a danger; the life of "nochlezhniki"³, their peculiar "exoticism" could absorb the very essence of the Gorky play. This, fortunately, did not happen. The playwright's peculiar romanticism, his protest against the depersonalization and oppression of man, were in tune with what determined the public position of the theater. At the same time, we must not forget that the views of Gorky and the troupe, the leadership of the Moscow art theater did not exactly coincide, especially with regard to the interpretation of the images of Luka and Satin. The "mkhatovites" understood Satine's calls for human freedom in an abstract and heroic way, and they did not "expose" Luka.

There was a polemic between the author and the theater (and in what truly creative business can you do without it?), but the "mkhatovtsy" reached that high romance, the romance of the free human spirit, which Gorky dreamed of. "The day of the premiere of "The Lower Depths" - December 18, 1902-is not without reason considered a historical day in the life of the Moscow art theater. On this day, the art of the theater rose to a new, higher level: the basic principles of creativity developed by it -high modern idealism, protection of humanism and denunciation of the poorly existing system of life, consistent democracy of the position, and the stability of the new realistic method - all these principles found their brilliant development in "At the bottom" (...) And the epic breadth of the stage picture, recreated by the Director, as always, led the solution of the conflict to a meaningful non-personal plan" [6].

IV. NEW THEATRICAL AESTHETICS OF THE MOSCOW ART THEATER

The new theatrical aesthetics of the Moscow art theater was defined by the ability to convey the true atmosphere of life, without false stylization and naturalism, but with the very "documentality" that is a "document of time". Modern theater critics also highlight as an innovative feature the concept that defined the creative image of the Moscow Art Theater as the "intelligence", its external and internal appearance, which were entirely associated with a high ethical behavior, understanding the essence of active

³ "Nochlezhniki" - people who do not have a specific place of residence, who are forced to rent a place of residence.

humanism, and insight into the depths of human psychology. Psychological style is also an innovative feature of the art of the Moscow art theater. All this ensured the high role of the theater in the Russian artistic culture of the beginning of the XX century.

To better understand the true innovation of Anton Chekhov and his dramaturgy, let's look at how the theory and practice of symbolism were reflected in the theater of the beginning of the XX century. The transfer of the aesthetics of symbolism to the practice of theater is connected with the work of V. E. Meyerhold, who was called a "young associate" of K. S. Stanislavsky. Meyerhold called his theater "conditional" because the plays had no movement of the plot, even internal or psychological. For all the undoubtedly innovative things that Meyerhold's theater carried, we can't say that it, in fact, encroached on the foundations of the theater's foundations, replacing the action with a subjective-lyrical beginning.

The feeling in the work of A.P. Chekhov of "a very broad mystical sense of nature and infinity" [7] gave Merezhkovsky the right to classify Chekhov as one of the symbolists, about which the playwright himself was so perplexed. Andrey Bely tried to be more precise. Feeling a syncretic equivalence, the equivalence of symbolism and almost naturalistic detail, he believed that Chekhov's symbols appear as if "involuntarily", without being a conscious author's technique. "Chekhov thinned reality by suddenly attacking symbols. He's barely aware of them. He does not put anything into them intentionally, because it is unlikely that he has a mystical experience"[8].

The world of Chekhov was not constrained by the framework of one philosophical system or one's religious teachings. Moreover, Chekhov seems to have synthesized in his mind several worldview positions - from the belief in radio to the belief in Jesus Christ, as well as the fact that by combining these "faiths" within his own personality, he synthesized a third category that includes mutually negating each other. Apparently, it was right. D.V. Ovsyanniko-Kulikovsky, recognizes Chekhov's right to the fact that the symbolic subtext is not only a dogmatically artistic device, but a conscious move of the artist, "who only outlined the possibility of new feelings and new thoughts, which the reader himself must implement and develop"[9].

The symbol is always set out the broad semantic nature. In Chekhov, the parts that deny each other are inextricably and necessarily merged in the balance of their mutual negation. First, impressionism seeks to capture an objective essence in an instant impression, as if it always exists and therefore is fixed by this moment, typified in it. Chekhov's plays are like a momentarily snatched segment of time (point time, contrary to the novel's course, where in the linearity of development time and space are exactly separated from each other), a

segment of space, and space-time-the meaning of the phenomenon. Secondly, the typical impressionist verbal brushstrokes, combinations of words, and word rows that are not internally connected, but color each other, are most often rows of different speech styles. We really see justification and understanding of the monologism of Chekhov's dialogues, their striking incompleteness in time and space, deafness to communication, incoherent replicas, monological utterances.

Without the awareness of symbolism and impressionism, without the development of a new concept that combines the polysemous static of the symbol and the instantaneity of impressionism, it is impossible to find an adequate stage form of Chekhov's dramaturgy on the stage.

V. METAPHOR AS A WAY TO CREATE AN ARTISTIC IMAGE

Literary studies gives a precise and clear definition of such a method of creating an artistic image in verbal creativity: a trope, a kind of which is the metaphor we are looking for. Only the metaphor "at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries becomes the leading principle of human thinking, replacing the "comparative" and realistic paradigm of the positivist worldview" [10]. It is based on the principle of combining incompatible, negating each other values, connected not by logical, but by semantic connection. It is the metaphor that captures and typifies an instant impression and, by a high degree of generalization, raises it to the level of a symbol, deepening and expanding our concept of an object or phenomenon infinitely in accordance with the level of our imagination, our everyday experience.

Understanding A.P. Chekhov as a metaphorist who consistently conducts this principle not only in verbal combinations, but also in the entire compositional structure of the play, allows the production to make a reasonable selection of household details in accordance with its meaning and role in the negation of other household details and build a dynamic scenographic, Director's and actor's score.

In this regard, the "symbol of faith" by A.P. Chekhov's dynamic coexistence-denial of the rational act of a creator man, walks towards nature, and not along the path of overcoming it, creating the universe in a rational co-creation with it.

VI. CONCLUSION

The turn of the century is the birth of the "new drama", which is diverse in genres and styles.

Chekhov's drama is considered a new and important stage in the development of not only Russian but also world drama. He was called the "father of the new

drama", meaning that the playwright created works that are marked by genuine artistic innovation, despite the fact that A.P. Chekhov relied on the Foundation of Russian drama, which was laid by his predecessors, in particular - A. N. Ostrovsky. Of course, Chekhov's plays are realistic, but the realist and symbolist writers are children of the same era, and they were not separated from each other by insurmountable barriers. On the contrary, the achievements of some were taken into account by others, so in the plays of A. p. Chekhov, which he called comedies ("the Seagull", "Uncle Vanya", "Three sisters", "the Cherry orchard"), there is a lot of realistic symbolism. This is what Stanislavsky called the "undercurrent" of the play, a special romanticism and lyrical atmosphere; in them, pauses, subtext, and "mirror image" were of great importance: gentlemen-servants, off-stage characters, and replicas of actors who were of great importance for the development of the main theme. Productions of Chekhov's plays, especially the Cherry orchard play at the Moscow art theater, were very difficult. Stanislavsky first understood "the Cherry orchard "as" a heavy drama of Russian life." This caused a tense discussion between Chekhov and Stanislavsky, and in the end the playwright convinced the Director that the Cherry orchard genre is a lyrical Comedy.

A new stage in the development of Russian drama was the work of A. M. Gorky. What at the center of his plays is the collective image of the mass, so many dramas have collective nouns in their titles: "Burghers", "Cottagers", "Enemies", "barbarians", and "Children of the sun". The playwright asserted the creative transforming power of man, as well as the romance of creative work. A. M. Gorky's worldview was largely contradictory. The most difficult socio-philosophical drama was the play "The Lower Depths", where the traditional theme of Gorky's appointment of a person, the problem of his happiness and truth, is set. The theme of alienation of the intelligentsia and the people is heard in the plays "Summerfolk (Dachniki)", "Children of the sun", "barbarians", and "Enemies".

Modernist trends have also spread in the theater, which is marked, on the one hand, by traditionalism, and on the other - by symbolism. This was characteristic of the "conventional theater" of V. E. Meyerhold. Game, mask, and duality are elements of the Meyerhold scene.

In Leonid Andreev's dramaturgy, God-fighting motives are strong (the philosophical drama "Anathema"). In the works of Leonid Andreev paradoxically combined interest in social issues and "absolute pessimism" of their resolution. The playwright asserted the power of rock (the drama "the Life of a Man"). Symbolism was intertwined with allegorical images (the drama "To the stars"), and

thought was the basis of the dramatic action of the plays "The Days of our life", and "Tsar Hunger".

References

- [1] Published in the magazine "World of art", 1902.
- [2] See: S. V. Stakhorsky. Vyacheslav Ivanov and Russian theatrical culture of the beginning of the XX century. M, 1991- p. 3.
- [3] Russian drama theater of the late XIX-early XX centuries. Moscow, 1997, p.18, p.24-29.
- [4] K. Stanislavsky. My life in art. Moscow, 1980. p. 196.
- [5] A. Chekhov. Complete collection of works and letters, Vol. 18, M. 1949, p. 266.
- [6] Russian art culture of the late XIX - early XX century (1895-1907). Book one. Moscow, Nauka, 1968, p. 94.
- [7] D.S. Merezhkovsky, the Old question about the new talent. // Severny Vestnik, 1888, no. 11. - p. 85.
- [8] A. White. Cherry orchard. // Libra, 1904, no. 2. p. 47.
- [9] D. N. Ovsyanniko-Kulikovsky Questions of psychology of creativity. St. Peterburgs, 1902. p. 251-252.
- [10] O. P. Goryunova Metaphor as one of the principles of artistic thinking in the art of the XX century. - Kiev, 1992, p. 56.