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Representation of Stage Concepts of Wartime Existence in the Printed Periodicals of Contemporary Ukraine

Objective. Theatre, as a special type of social communication and a form of culture, acquires signs of multidisciplinarity in our time. During wartime, it becomes an important consolidating factor in the development of Ukrainian society and in shaping patriotic meanings of existence. Comprehensively interpreted in specialized cultural publications, including those presented in library collections, the art of Melpomene today remains the most mobile, lively, and aimed at finding social dialogue, a form of artistic communication. Its stage codes are organically interpreted in the well-known Ukrainian periodicals such as “Kino-teatr”, “Ukrainian Theatre”, “Theatral’na besida” in the genres of reviews and theatrical surveys. **Methods.** The methodological framework comprises inductive-deductive and systematic methods, content analysis, and the semiotic method, alongside cultural analysis of theatre studies texts. **Results.** Theatrical periodicals in 21st-century Ukraine embody the cultural dimension of the nation’s development, marked by severe wartime challenges. Actively represented in the collections of Ukrainian libraries and in digital formats, theatrical criticism and journalism contribute to shaping the spiritual potential of the nation, fulfill the value-oriented function of culture in a globalized society, and unite society in the search for national identity. **Conclusions.** Specialized theatrical publications of the 21st century articulate Ukraine’s contemporary wartime experience through stage concepts. They interpret harsh realities by combining factual precision in event representation with artistic authenticity and immersive techniques.

Keywords: art media; cultural code; interpretation; theatrical periodicals; libraries

Introduction

The presentation in library art collections of printed periodicals from different periods of the development of stage concepts allows us to emphasize that the 21st century is articulated in the global socio-cultural space as a “society of spectacles and performances” (Debord, 2024). Globalist challenges and metamodern attempts to seek the meaning of human existence are manifested across various art forms. Among them, theatre stands out as the most mobile, lively, interactive, and multidisciplinary in its expressive and representational means.

Ukrainian society, currently undergoing difficult times, requires forms that make it possible to comprehend the complex realities of war. Morris (2021) emphasizes that “theatre becomes a kind of mirror in which the social and moral problems of society are reflected.” Contemporary theatre employs both print and digital platforms to convey complex social messages, adequately extrapolates the concepts of this art form into society, and contributes to shaping patriotic meanings of existence.

Today, theatre has become a powerful component of the socio-communicative space of society, which exists within the synergistic coordinates of nonlinearity, non-systematicity, and instability. According to the famous researcher N. Korniienko (2008), stage art has always provided society with spiritual analysis. This position of the author is consistent with the opinion of the great reformer and director Les Kurbas (2001), who believed that theatre today should be what society will be tomorrow.

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The verbal-visual presentation of the art of Melpomene takes place within the interpretative framework of contemporary journalistic genres: reviews, interviews, and critiques. These texts articulate important cultural codes of Ukrainian society during the period of Russian-Ukrainian aggression, represented in specialized Ukrainian periodicals such as "Kino-Theatre", "Ukrainian Theatre", the online publications "Theatre and Concert Kyiv", and "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia". These publications are aesthetically designed from the perspective of verbal-visual content. Their high level of publishing culture makes them suitable for presentation in the arts departments of national and regional libraries, as well as in university collections, where courses such as "History and Culture of Ukraine", "History of Arts", and "Cultural Studies" are mandatory.

Modern theatrical criticism is transforming the socio-cultural space of Ukraine, which is experiencing war trials. Contemporary drama, documentary performances, post-dramatic works, and performative experiments contribute to the formation of value and worldview orientations of both adult audiences and student youth.

The social-communicative nature of modern theatre is evident. It extrapolates within stage practice the well-known models of social communication developed by J. Carey and A. Tudor. The latter emphasizes the dual determination of communication by both social structure and culture (Rizun, 2008). Interpreting the well-known communication model of G. Laswell (communicator - message - communication channel - recipient - effectiveness), it is necessary to clarify the important roles of each participant in communication. The final element of this chain, "effectiveness", can be achieved through library presentations, the open access publication of theatre-related materials, and cooperation with creative unions.

This educational and cultural aspect of the socio-communicative activity of libraries has been confirmed in scholarly works by O. Beylis (2006), O. Bilychenko (2012), O. Vakulchuk (2023), N. Zubko (2024), H. Shemaieva (2008). For instance, N. Zubko (2024) analyzed the artistic publications of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in Lviv, highlighting the digital collection of the Vasyl Stefanyk National Library of Ukraine as particularly valuable from the perspective of contemporary readership.

The library, as a distinctive information and intellectual center, is positioned as such in the article by T. Kolesnykova and M. Demidko (2024), where its special spiritual and consolidating mission is defined.

An interesting perspective on the cooperation of libraries and social media is offered by V. Strunhar (2014), who systematizes the terminological aspects of the issue: "They are characterized by the following features: interactivity, multichannel, and multimedia nature".

Researchers N. Samokhina and I. Peliukhovska (2024) identify academic scholarly publications within the centralized infrastructure of open access, pointing to their unique nature.

The purpose of this article is to describe the stage concepts of contemporary Ukrainian theatrical reality as represented in specialized media, including print journals ("Kino-Theatr", "Ukrainian Theatre"), and online publications ("Theatre and Concert Kyiv", "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia").

Methods

Methodology applied: inductive-deductive, systematic, content analysis, and elements of cultural analysis of theatrical studies texts.

The inductive-deductive method involves identifying theatrical concepts of wartime reality in specialized cultural studies publications and generalizing theoretical material from other sources, including theoretical articles, critical editions, and monographs on the subject. Within this method, theatrical concepts were distinguished in analytical genres.

The systematic method helps to consider the spiritual and cultural aspects of the war theme in leading theatre journals in a logical perspective, to streamline the processes of analyzing the concepts of war reality. In this way, it is possible to reveal the dialectical connection "theatre - society".

The content analysis method performs a qualitative and quantitative interpretation of the content of specialized periodicals of Ukraine from February 2022 to August 2025, such as: "Kino-Theatre", "Ukrainian Theatre", online publications "Theatre and Concert Kyiv", "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia", and the operation of dismembering journalistic texts into concepts of interpreting military life, identifying their communication orientation. The evaluation of theatrical-critical text, its genre nature, and its figurative-analytical structure applies definitions from semiotics and structuralism to analyze methods of media interpretation and meanings. The sources of textual analysis also consider the macro-social environment that influences the spiritual and cultural values of society during the period of Russian aggression.

Elements of the cultural analysis of theatrical phenomena are also used, which highlight the special function of this form of art, its leading place in the socio-cultural dimension of Ukrainian society during the wartime period.

Results and Discussion

The definition of "concept" is considered in contemporary humanities as a form of interpretation of human existence, a set of concepts, a "condensed embodiment of the content of the text" (Selivanova, 2008). Initially interpreted by P. Abelard, this concept acquired a well-founded scientific elaboration in the works of C.-G. Jung and G. Deleuze. In performing arts, concepts were studied by O. Klekovkin, O. Levchenko, N. Korniienko, V. Fialko, and others. The modern rethinking of wartime existence through the figurative and expressive means of theatre relevantly interprets the concepts of "Ukraine", "faith", "memory", "pain", and "Victory". Their publicistic articulation in various genres is carried out on the pages of a few printed periodicals and can serve as a meaningful means of forming patriotic consciousness among readers, aesthetic taste, and high reader demands. The reader's emotional intelligence is shaped with the help of sophisticated stage works, which are presented on Ukrainian stages and in the critical dimensions of reviews, critiques, and interviews with famous theatrical personalities.

As a "unit of consciousness and information structure," a concept embodies human experience and the mental world through linguistic or graphic means. In the theatrical environment, concepts are produced by stage action and the conditional circumstances of imaginary existence. As a special form of artistic communication, modern theatre is the most mobile. This interactive art reproduces A. Tudor's socio-cultural model of communication, which defines "the double conditionality of the communication process: on the one hand, by the social structure, on the other – by culture" (Rizun, 2008). The multi-vector nature of the process of this artistic type of communication generates high stage meanings, motivates the desire for democratic development, free human choice, and overcoming the destructive fear of war.

From the first days of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the creative and patriotic project "Theatre in the Chronicles of War" began to operate, initiated by the well-known critic and publicist, Honored Journalist of Ukraine Oleh Verhelis. His acutely topical, talented journalistic vision of events is outlined in numerous publications on the pages of the journal "Ukrainian Theatre" and the analytical weekly "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia". The well-known journalist presented his individual authorial vision of the wartime existence of Ukraine in the concepts of "pain", "children", "Theatre", "Mariupol", presenting in the genre of journalistic reflection the most tragic page of the wartime existence of the Mariupol theatre, under the ruins of which children and adults

perished in March 2022: "As it turned out, time made adjustments to the creative idea. After all, war has rolled from stage plots into our everyday reality. And from its explosions, consciousness sometimes collapses and hearts are broken." (Verhelis, 2022). The tragic-dramatic picture of existence, created by a journalist, realizes the tragedy of the death of innocent people in an art institution of the third millennium. The use of antithesis, the changing emotional tempo of thought, and dialectical verbal transitions confirm the originality of the journalist's authorial style. The civic position of the master of words is emphasized by the author's generalizations, metaphorical formations, and intertextual references.

Theatrical art in contemporary Ukraine is an interdisciplinary branch of the humanities that performs its value-orienting, national-patriotic, and artistic-aesthetic functions. It uses specific means to form the cultural code of a nation, which determines its identity. The Theatre seeks new meanings of human life in accentuated military coordinates, performingly recreating reality, and striving for its operational and interactive interpretation. The tragic-dramatic understanding of socio-political events in contemporary Ukrainian Theatre through various genres of journalism allows for the creation of new theatrical languages that contribute to cultural renewal and national identification. Reviews, surveys, interviews, and essays reflect the tragedy of the human soul, capturing universal and individual experiences in wartime in analytical and artistic genres of journalism. The reader-recipient of materials on Theatre topics in the specialized press thus realizes the full tragedy of wartime, empathizes with the heroes in the stage action. Immersive Theatre is created using similar techniques.

Authors of journalistic articles analyzing theatrical performances on the theme of war introduce concepts, symbols, and metaphors into the figurative fabric of their materials, characterizing national identity. Thus, in S. Vasyliev's (2024) article "Theatre of Witnesses" (2024), the wartime present is identified through the concepts of "pain" and "collective trauma": "In places, the excessively high emotional level of the performance justifies what... the artists created in evacuation. Hence, the concentrated pain and bitterness of the action."

The dramatic as the leading aesthetic category in theatrical journalism dialectically raises the problem of human choice, national dignity and honor, patriotism, and moral virtues. The reality of war accelerates this artistic search. Thus, O. Bondarieva (2023) rightly notes: "The Russian-Ukrainian war, having become our battle for civic identity, received an unprecedented (at least quantitatively) artistic interpretation in modern Ukrainian dramaturgy."

Modern Ukrainian theatre journalism today actively interprets the concepts of national identity and full value. Dramatic works are appearing in the cultural space that position the theme of national dignity in interesting theatrical genres of parable, confession, and one-actor theatre. Such scenic means interpret the dramatic tempo-rhythm of the authors' imaginative thinking. This creates a collective perception of history and culture. Thus, the play "Let There Be Luck" by the Kharkiv State Academic Theatre named after T.G. Shevchenko, in the genre of a heroic fairy tale, raises the issue of war and peace, in which the main character, the boy Ivanko, fearlessly defeats his enemies. Critics Veselovska and Vasyliev (2024) note: "...the relevance of the performance is luminous. Although it was created literally under the roar of exploding shells and air bombs in frontline Kharkiv."

Analytical genres of journalism actively shape national identity, help society understand its history, culture, and place in the modern world. Modern theatre journalism positions the idea that performing arts are an experimental space for forming new ideas about man and his spiritual mission.

In modern theatrical productions that explore problems of social injustice, the dramatic conflict serves to affirm high moral and ethical ideals (as in the play "*The Unrighteous*" (2022)). With the help of stage conventions, the audience gains the opportunity to understand their own

position on social problems. Dramatic art can serve as an effective means of influencing the formation of public consciousness and the development of an active civic position.

Today, it is important to emphasize that theatre is becoming a platform for expressing collective experiences and feelings caused by the war and its consequences. In the conditions of Russian aggression, journalistic works and theatrical performances explore the theme of trauma, which acts as a maximum concept.

Performances that touch on the theme of trauma allow audiences to feel and relive the emotions that accompany war. An important example is the play "Home" (2022), which depicts a veteran's journey from the front to his home, focusing on his inner experiences and struggle with the consequences of war. This performance not only reveals the depth of trauma, but also emphasizes the importance of returning to one's roots, to family and community.

Publications on the theme of theatre actively raise the issue of historical memory. Dramaturgy becomes a tool for creating an image of heroism and self-sacrifice, emphasizing the value of human life in conditions of conflict. Thus, the play "Code of the Nation" (2023) interprets the stories of people who became victims of war. The director addresses this topic through the memories of the stage characters. Printed publications present these materials with vivid visual content, using photo-reportages from performances, presenting an interesting layout of materials, such as the updated journal "Ukrainian Theatre".

The "interdisciplinarity" of presenting theatre news is present today in specialized art publications. This creates the effect of multilayered communication. The reviewers describe the visual effects and multimedia finds in the stage texts. For example, in the play "We Are the Wind" (2023), theatrical elements are combined with live music. This creates an atmosphere of immersion in the event.

Modern theatrical journalism actively explores the phenomenon of documentary theatre, which most accurately reproduces the truth about the war and its consequences. Interviews with participants in the events create the effect of factual accuracy, co-presence. The events integrated into the storyline organically reproduce the truth of war. Thus, the documentary play "Notes from the Front" (2022) shows the testimonies of soldiers, their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. This allows the audience to feel like co-participants in the action in immersive theatre. The concept of "historical memory" here acquires a powerful symbolic meaning as an awareness of one's roots and social significance, national fullness.

Thus, the modern Ukrainian theatre press is a platform for discussing and understanding social, political, and historical problems. Printed and digital publications ("Kino-teatr", "Theatre and Concert Kyiv", etc.) contribute to the formation of public dialogue, emphasizing the consolidating role of the theatre in the life of a military society.

Modern theatrical practices actively explore and actualize the concepts of dignity, honor, and humanity in the modern military existence of Ukraine. An example is the play "People of Our Time" (2023), which raises the issue of moral choice in wartime. The performance embodies the ideas of searching for the meaning of life and capturing the state of human consciousness in the extreme conditions of war.

It's important to emphasize that the presentation of military themes in contemporary theatrical journalism contributes to the formation of a new understanding of the role of theatre in society. The Mystery of Melpomene today is the most mobile type of artistic communication aimed at searching for cordial dialogue.

Conclusions

Thus, the interpretation of the war theme in modern Ukrainian theatrical journalism is quite important. It extrapolates the models of social communication of J. Carey, Laswell, and A. Tudor

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and forms national-patriotic feelings. The authors of critical materials rethink wartime existence in analytical and artistic genres, revealing the concepts of “victory,” “Ukraine,” “home,” and “pain.” It is important to realize that in the conditions of Russian aggression, the theatre performs a prognostic and value-orienting function, calling for a creative dialogue with the viewer.

Libraries act as intermediaries in this dialogue, professionally presenting these important aspects of theatrical life to the student community. Readers, as participants in the communicative chain, acquire the opportunity to experience and comprehend the events unfolding in society. This interactive and immersive collaboration between the theatre, the audience, and library institutions shapes a new quality of perceiving the tragic and dramatic reality. Contemporary Ukrainian theatrical journalism in both its print and digital dimensions creates a space for discussion and reflection on social, political, and historical issues.

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Репрезентація сценічних концептів воєнного буття у друкованій періодиці сучасної України

Мета. Театральне мистецтво як особливий тип соціальної комунікації та форма культури набуває в наш час ознак мультидисциплінарності. У період війни воно стає важливим консолідуючим фактором розвитку українського суспільства, патріотичних смислів буття. Всебічно інтерпретоване у спеціалізованих культурологічних виданнях, зокрема представлених у бібліотечних колекціях, мистецтво Мельпомени сьогодні залишається найбільш мобільним, живим, спрямованим на пошук суспільного діалогу видом художньої комунікації. Його сценічні коди органічно інтерпретуються у відомих періодичних виданнях України, таких як «Кіно-Театр», «Український театр», «Театральна бесіда», у жанрах рецензії, театральних оглядів. **Методика.** Індуктивно-дедуктивний та системний метод, контент-аналіз, семіотичний метод, елементи культурологічного аналізу театрозвічних текстів. **Результати.** Театральна періодика України XXI ст. уособлює культурний зріз розвитку українського суспільства, позначеного суверіними воєнними викликами. Активно представлена у фондах бібліотек України, в цифрових форматах, театральна критика та публіцистика формує духовний потенціал нації, здійснює ціннісно-орієнтаційну функцію культури у глобалізованому суспільстві, об'єднує суспільство в пошуку національної ідентичності. **Висновки.** Спеціалізовані театральні видання XXI ст. артикулюють сучасний воєнний період України у сценічних концептах, інтерпретують сувере буття фактографічною точністю відтворення подій, художньою правдою, прийомами іmersivності.

Ключові слова: арт-медіа; культурний код; інтерпретація; театральна періодика; бібліотеки

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