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PRESENTATION OF THE THEATRICAL SURREALISM: ALFRED JARRY'S "UBU-KING, OR THE POLISHERS" (1896)

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to determine the benchmark of the vanguard theatrical movement, which European art criticism reasonably recognized the "Ubu-king, or the Polishers" after Alfred Jarry's tragifarce, performed in Paris, in the "L'Oeuvre" theatre, managed by Orillien-Marie Lunier-Poe (1896). This performance prompted the playwriter to create a new theatrical theory, where the European stage traditional attributes, such as a scenic space, dramatic action organization and acting, have been rethought. Jarry outlined his theory in several articles ("Ubu-king program", "About the inexpediency of the theatrical in the theatre", "Answer on the question about the dramatic art", etc.) and a book "Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, Pataphysicien" ("Gestures and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician") (1898, pub. 1911). At the same time in the field of the French culture itself this performance presented the surrealism – one of the powered (in the aesthetic-&-artistic sense) historic avant-garde branches. "Ubu-king or the Polishers" stylistic successor was Guillaume Apollinaire's "Tiresias Nipples", in 1917 showed by one of the surrealistic pioneers Pierre Albert-Biraud in the Paris stage laboratory "Art and Liberty". The research methodology combines elements of the historical-reconstructive and the structural-analytic methods. The scientific novelty of the article means the introduction into the scientific use of the Ukrainian theatre researching "one of the most extraordinary French down poet's" (Esslin) a little explored creativity and formation of the clearer understanding of the theatrical surrealism rising. Conclusions. Ukrainian theatre studies yet haven't filled the gap regarding the formation of the historical avant-garde culture. Meanwhile, it's an important part of the general cultural process; therefore its study is necessary for the more objective understanding and more resultative using of the achievements of the contemporary Ukrainian stage. Keywords: Alfred Jarry; Orillien-Marie Lunier-Poe; symbolism; surrealism; tragifarce; guignol aesthetics; puppet style; heraldic decoration; moving abstraction

Formulation of the problem

Timeliness of referring to the Jarry's personality as the European theatrical avantgarde, in particular surrealism, forerunner as well as unsolved problems, common for

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the entire post-soviet art-studies space (for example, lack of the common system of the ideological and artistic coordinates and clear contextual references, inarticulate periodization) are becoming evident when someone realizes that the contemporary Russian theatre researches prefer a literary position (presented first of all by the Doctor of Philology E. Galtsova), where surrealism is limited to the purely philological exercises by Andre Breton's group. Meanwhile the theatrical origins of the artistic movement. related to the creativity of Alfred Jarry and his direct follower and term's inventor Guillaume Apollinaire, are ignored. Therefore the purpose of the article is to determine the benchmark of the vanguard theatrical movement, which European art criticism reasonably recognized the "Ubu-king, or the Polishers" after Alfred Jarry's tragifarce, performed in Paris, in the "L'Oeuvre" theatre, managed by Orillien-Marie Lunier-Poe (1896). This performance prompted the playwriter to create a new theatrical theory, where the European stage traditional attributes, such as a scenic space, dramatic action organization and acting, have been rethought. At the same time in the field of the French culture itself this performance presented the surrealism - one of the powered (in the aesthetic-&-artistic sense) historic vanguard's branches. "Ubu-king or the Polishers" stylistic successor was Guillaume Apollinaire's "Tiresias Nipples", in 1917 showed by one of the surrealistic pioneers Pierre Albert-Biraud in the Paris stage laboratory "Art and Liberty".

Analysis of the previous researches and publications

Creativity of Alfred Jarry (1873–1907), on Martin Esslin (2010, p.352) opinion, one of the most extraordinary and eccentric French "damn poet", until now hasn't become the subject of the Ukrainian theatrology special researches. However no study on the theatrical avant-garde topic can ignore his personality and the only one lifetime production of the first play from the trilogy about daddy Ubu. Among the books of the XXI century beginning let's mark G. Veselovska's monography "Ukrainian theatrical avant-garde" (2010) and A. Klekovkin's lexicon "Theatrica" (2012). Meanwhile, even these fundamental scientific works aren't enough to fill the modern theatrical culture lacuna, artificially created in old days.

The main material presentation

Between 1950s and 1960s Eugen Ionesco (1962, p.222), recognized *anti-drama* creator, talking about the "great artistic revolution of the literature and thoughts, started in 1915 – 1920 and continues to this day", added surrealism to the list of its presentation markers among the scientific discoveries, psychological renovations and abstract art. In 20 years these statements of the leading absurdist were heeded by the researches of the newest (that is, unrealistic or non-mimetic) theatre formation. True, they suggested looking for the dramatic origins of the surrealistic movement somewhat earlier – at the end of the 19th century, when one of the types of the French theatrical symbolism was directed towards "irrational and irreverent, as if the teasing was hidden in its very primary formula. After the symbolistic poetry [...] unrealistic theatre openly called for turning reality into a dream or a nightmare in a sharp-satirical

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view", — said, for example, John Styan (2003, p.65), meaning tragifarce "Ubu-king, or the Polishers" by Alfred Jarry, in 1894 first presented by the author to the visitors of the famous writer Rashild (Marguerite Emery) literary salon. With this work, American scientist considered, the 21-year-old author "found the way, how to overcome, on one hand, the down-to-earth realism, on the other hand, romantic overestimation of the own capabilities, which characterized some symbolists".

Instead of this, Jarry himself (2002, p.148) claimed to have argued only with "Peer Gynt" by Great Sly Heinrich Ibsen and complained that this battle of his "Ubu-king" with the former naturalist and present neoromantic just went unnoticed by the contemporaries. He simply didn't pay attention to the other authors, and yet "prosaic drama in five acts", where "there was nothing symbolic" (Kosikov comp., 2002, p.479), was brought to the French stage just by symbolists - writers of the respected "Mercure de France", where famous journalist, publisher and Marquerite Emery's husband Alfred Walett published the "Ubu-king" in 1896. Even more, to the publication of the extremely original in form and absolutely uncompromising in content dramatic pamphlet by not long ago an unknown author responded the masters of the mostly politically neutral and asocial art movement (in particular, Remy de Gourmont, Stefané Mallarmé, Catulle Mendes, Emile Verhaeren) – the belle époque worldview exponents and creators of its culture, whom Jarry didn't respect too much. Their support, in turn, helped Rashild to persuade artistic director of the "L'Oeuvre" theatre to add "Ubu-king" to the repertoire. However, after reading the text and noticing the recommendations of his literary secretary (part-time actor and substitute director of the troupe) for the future performance Lunier-Poe was completely disoriented. On one hand, he refused to perform the play, which didn't belong to any literary form, known then" (Guitry, 1999, p.237), and offered Jarry to perform it himself, on the other hand, was about to play the obviously travesty main character as tragic (Jarry, 2002, p.149).

On the 9th of December 1896 there was a dress rehearsal, where, attracted by advertising, gathered all of Paris. Before the performance started, "small black man in suit not for growth, combed a-la Bonaparte, with pale face and dark, ink-like or deep puddle-like eyes" climbed to the cathedra, set in front of the curtain, and "dryly and firmly" delivered a speech (Rashild, 1928, p.71). Jarry warned the public, that the presented spectacle would be similar to the performance of a fair quignol, where the main character – "ordinary puppet" that one of his teachers turned into "by the will of a schoolboy" – would embody all that is comical and ugly in our world. With the same aim "some actors for two nights" [...] rejected their own faces" and "hid under the protection of a mask to be as accurate as possible, expressing the inner self, the very soul of those dolls", that would appear in front of the hall "in human growth". Because, according to the author, stage events took place "in Poland, or simply nowhere", the theatre manufactured the decorations, which perfectly matched the play's spirit - on one hand, placed it "in kind of timeless eternity, which made it possible, for example, to shoot with a revolver a thousand god knows what year, on the other hand, allowed the doors to open into the snowy plains under the blue sky, a peaceful fireplace with a heavy clock to turn into the secret passage, and palm trees to bloom under the bed's canopies for feeding small elephants nesting on shelves". Also the public had to prepare for that "some of the main characters, for example, monsieur Ubu or Tsar, would

"theater workers painted all last night". Finally, "to achieve a full correspondence of puppet theatre, it was extremely important to accompany the performance with a real fair music, for which were found trumpets, gongs and one-string tiny violets". However, due to the lack of time, the orchestra wasn't formed from them, so "pianos and timpani" had to successfully deal with "all the play's themes" (Jarry, 2002, p.85-86).

After Jarry finished his speech the curtain parted and the public saw the stage, com-

fill the stage space themselves", riding the cartoon horses, which, Jarry complained,

pletely cowered with a black row and as if connected to the hall through the switched off ramp. Spectacle's space was formed by Paul Sérusier and Pierre Bonnard – a symbolistic art-group "Nabis" founders, who tried at the same time to visually convey the travestyfarcical style of the play and to show in maximum economic way the plenty of the acting places (Ubu couple's apartment, king's palace, peasant hut, casemate in the fortress, Moscow Tsar chambers, Polish military camp, mountain cave, etc.), which, moreover, were in different latitudes. So the scenery "resembled a child's drawing: a house, a street and even a heat tropics or arctic zone were on stage simultaneously. Apple-tries blossomed under the blue sky on the backstage; against the blue sky were a fireplace and a closed window. Noisy, bloodthirsty drama's characters were acting in this space. A bed was painted on the left side, a bare tree stood at its foot, it was snowing. Palm trees grew on the right, doors opened against the heaven, next to the door was hanged a skeleton. Respectable gentleman in the evening suit trifled on tiptoe by the stage and before the every episode clung on the nail a new poster, indicating the place of action" (Symons, 1906, p.161). Next character appearance on the stage through the opened doors of the fireplace was accompanied by a new music theme, played by a small orchestra, hidden in the coulisses and conducted by a composer Claude Terrasse.

Declaring in advance about the puppet-guignol style of his play and the performance after it, their creator seemed to have previously denied anyone's claims about the plausibility of the plot and vitality of the characters instead making possible the use of forms of travesty, alienation and abstraction, of farcical outrageous techniques, grotesque exaggeration, sharp stage caricaturing. Actors in masks, projected by Jarry, moved and gesticulated on stage as if the puppets, controlled by a puppeteer, or the mechanic devices. When the characters passed through the fireplace doors it meant they wandered through the dungeon or forest and mountain paths, visited Russia or Poland; the outstretched fingers of the actor's hand pointed to the prison gates; in the fourth act the cavalry attack was depicted by the actors with the horse's heads, attached to their chests; in the third act, scaring the audience, forty accordingly dressed mannequins in human growth, representing kingdom's noblemen, financials and officials, were thrown into the stalls, as if into the failure. Very simply but ingenious were solved numerous mass scenes: in some the actors echoed behind the coulisses to make an impression of the loud speech, hum of voices in the crowd, in some (the military ones) alone soldier imitated a whole army.

Absurdity, according to the playwriter, cultivated by the French society of that time, reached its apogee in the stage existence of the play's main character. Daddy Ubu (Firmin Gémier) – fat potbelly with a bald peach-shaped head – hid his face under the mask with an elephant trunk, bald head – under a cauldron hat, which he, becoming a king, cowered by a crown. A cane was sticking out of the right pocket of his pants,

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a bottle dangled on the belt, and the state scepter was replaced by a toilet brush. His stage behavior was marked by strange, as if uncoordinated, movements and monotone speech without modulations and accents - experienced performer seemed to justify in every way Jarry's statement that Ubu was just a geste potachique, that is, the subiect of a school mockery of a hated teacher. However, in the introductory speech the author not in vain allowed ironically "to see in monsieur Ubu as many hidden senses as anyone wanted". Lover of the verbal obscenities and chatterbox who always spoke "only stupid phrases with the categoricalness and authority of barbarism" (Levesque, 1951, p.87), coward, troubled only of indigestion, "for the sake of an umbrella, a bonnet and a cloak to the very heels" (Rashild, 1928, p.71) suddenly became a murder of the royal family, persuaded by the shrill and ignoble mammy Ubu (Louise France) in concierge dress and vulgar hat, decorated with feathers and flowers. However, pulling on with difficulty the royal mantle, until recently fanatically greedy and stupid fat-belied Punchinello turned into the cruel despot, who abolished law and justice in the country, thereby absolutizing power to gain an innumerable wealth, exterminated nobles, robbed bankers, extorted taxes from the people with a legion of the petty extortioners. "Let's gut the brains, squeeze the juices, cut the ears, shake out the finances and get drunk to death – here it is, life of a flay-flint, here it is, happiness of the Chief publican!" (Jarry, 2002, p.65) – "king Ubu, daddy Ubu [...] personifies the disgusting qualities, that are inherent in bankers, politicians, kings; incredible cynicism and lack of morality that reach the grotesque, instantaneous adaptability to the most incredible situations, pointless, endless, dumb chatter", - Emile Verhaeren (Behar, 2003, p.186) wrote.

"The most original, grandiose cartoon, ever created in the world" (Guitry, 1999, p.237) allegedly caused a loud scandal by dividing the Parisian cultural community into the two opposing camps. During the first two acts of the pre-premiere performance there were favorable applauses in the hall from time to time, and even on the endless merdre, which daddy Ubu - Gémier threw from the stage, the audience reacted guite goodnaturedly. However, from the beginning of the third act the hall's patience ran out. Famous playwriter Georges Courteline, jumping up from his seat and turning to the audience, seemed to give it a signal: "Don't you see that he is mocking us?" There is a noise in the hall. Honored literary critic Francisque Sarcey rises, definitely about to leave the theatre. "You are the old bastard!" – a lady shouts in his ear, frantically punching the arm of a chair. Jean de Tinan applauses and whistles at the same time. Ferdinand Herold, trying to calm down the audience, directs the light from behind the curtains to the stage, then to the hall. "Is this not a joke?" – Jules Lemaitre fearfully asks. "Echo de Paris" literary observer Henri Bauer loudly expresses his admiration. Shouts are heard: "This thing is stronger than Aeschylus!" "That is how you hissed Wagner!" Fernand Greg screams: "You and Shakespeare can't understand!" "You read him first, fool!" - someone immediately answers from the balcony. The hall is roaring for a quarter of an hour, and audience is about to rush to the stage, when suddenly Gémier comes to mind how you can stay safe: he begins to dance and is dancing the jig until the exhausted one falls on the prompter's booth. The stunned hall, coming to its senses, explodes with applause, and the performance ends well (next day, on the 10th of December, when the official premiere will take place, Gémier will put in his pocket the conductor's horn and apply it as soon as the hall will make a noise or whistle)" (Kosikov comp., 2002, p.480-481).

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However, the tricks of the lead actor didn't affect the Parisian reviewers, who reacted to the "L'Oeuvre" theatre performance purely negatively – as to a vulgar and unsuccessful mystification. An influential "Figaro" reviewer called the spectacle very boring. but capable of "overthrowing the symbolist dictatorship" (Stain, 2003, p.70). Popular literary newspaper "Le Gil Blas" observer stated, that "honoring of the "Ubu-king" text" would mean "contempt for its readers". "In the past the play wouldn't end, apparently our parents were smarter and perhaps more energetic than us", – wrote his colleague from the "Le Soleil". Francisque Sarcey, unofficial head of the French critical quild, who left the theatre one of the first "together with common sense, which was neglected there", expressed his anger in the "Le Temps": "It was an obscene deception that deserved only a scornful silence!" (Zinger, 1990, p.170). "Le Golois" insisted: "We need an immediate disinfection!" (Kosikov comp., 2002, p. 481). So, despite the opinion of even the respected, but few supporters of Jarry's play (for example, Catulle Mendes, Henri Bauer, Gustav Khan), that those night took place a great event for the French theatre, Lunier-Poe, irritated by the failure of the play, which damaged the theatre reputation and brought the financial losses, stopped all the contacts with the "Ubu-king" author.

In subsequent years Jarry many times tried to explain French critics the meaning of those dramatic and scenic innovations that he laid in his play. His efforts were in vain, instead in the articles of 1896 – 1900 ("Ubu-king program", "About the inexpediency of the theatrical in the theatre", "Answer on the question about the dramatic art", etc.) was finally formulated an abstract theatre program, unprecedented for the European stage of that time. The work, titled at the same time pathetic and ironic "Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, Pataphysicien" ("Gestures and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician") (1898, pub. 1911), presented to the artistic community a newly invented pseudoscience pathaphysics, designed "to study laws, that govern exceptions and tend to the concepts of another world, that complements our". Its subject was "the world which we can and, probably, should see instead of usual".

According to Jarry (2002, p.346-348), abstract theatre was a self-sufficient, self-directed stage art. Its scenic reality, formed under the grotesque and paradox laws, had to contradict the everyday life. Dramatist listed several ways of its creation: to fill the space of the spectacle by the one-person symbols, its unusual heraldic decoration, and existence of the moving abstracts. Jarry named his Ubu an example of the moving abstract, irrational, synthetic, universal personage, whose characteristic features represented the six main positions of the puppet theatre character. Joining the Maurice Maeterlinck's idea of the motionless theatre, he demanded from the French actor the unlimited plasticity and unconditional playing, that was, the ability to create a personage only with the help of makeup, mask and light.

Thus Alfred Jarry's "Ubu-king" "anticipated many forms of the "subversive art" – Dadaism, surrealism, absurd theatre", however, Martin Esslin (1999, p.359) insisted that "its direct influence, not counting the sensation and scandal, was rather weak". At the same time, on our opinion, it's worth considering the only exception to this statement, namely the farce "Tiresias Nipples" by Guillaume Apollinaire, the work on which the future inventor of the theatrical surrealism began in 1903 – the year of his personal acquaintance with the "Ubu-king" author. In 1917 "no less bright and extravagant play" (Esslin, 2010, p.355) was presented in the Paris stage laboratory "Art and Liberty" by

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Pierre Albert-Biraud, one of the surrealistic theatrical movement' pioneers. The spectacle caused no less scandal than the longtime "Ubu-king" premiere and marked the beginning of the very fruitful "surrealistic decade" of the French scene.

Scientific novelty of the article means:

- 1. the introduction into the scientific use of the Ukrainian theatre researching "one of the most extraordinary French down poet's" (Esslin) a little explored creativity;
 - 2. the presentation of the basic postures of Alfred Jarry's "Abstract Theatre" concept;
- 3. the establishment of the direct following of Alfred Jarry's scenic innovations and surrealistic drama and theatre proposals, contained in Guillaume Apollinaire's play "Tiresias Nipples" and Pierre Albert-Biraud spectacle after it;
 - 4. formation of the clearer understanding of the theatrical surrealism rising.

Conclusions

Ukrainian theatrology for a long time was forcibly on the margins of the worldwide humanitarian and socio-cultural issues. Now slowly, but steadily this artificially created lacuna is filling. So finding out the ways of forming the theatrical culture of the historical avant-garde, which is a significant part of the general cultural progress of the 20th century, is necessary for the more objective understanding and effective use of the achievements of the contemporary Ukrainian theatre.

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ПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ ТЕАТРАЛЬНОГО СЮРРЕАЛІЗМУ: «УБЮ-КОРОЛЬ, АБО ПОЛЯКИ» АЛЬФРЕДА ЖАРРІ (1896)

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Анотація

Мета статті – позначити вихідний пункт авангардистського театрального руху, яким європейське мистецтвознавство обґрунтовано визнало виставу 1896 р. за трагіфарсом Альфреда Жаррі «Убю-король, або Поляки» у паризькому театрі «Творчість» (очільник – Орільєн-Марі Люньє-По). Постановка спонукала автора п'єси до розробки нової театральної теорії, де переосмислювалися традиційні атрибути європейського кону – питання сценічного простору, організації драматичної дії, акторської гри. Альфред Жаррі виклав свою теорію в низці статей («Програма Короля Убю», «Про недоцільність театрального у театрі», «Відповідь на питання про драматичне мистецтво» тощо) та у книзі «Діяння та мовлення доктора Фаустроля, патафізика» (1898, опублік. 1911). У царині власне французької новітньої культури цей спектакль водночас презентував сюрреалізм – одну з потужних (в естетико-художньому сенсі) гілок історичного авангарду. Стильовим спадкоємцем «Убю-короля» стали «Цицьки Терезія» Гійома Аполлінера, у 1917 р. представлені П'єром Альбер-Біро – проводирем сюрреалістичного театру – у паризькій сценічній лабораторії «Мистецтво і свобода». Методологія дослідження базується на елементному поєднанні історико-реконструктивного та структурно-аналітичного методів. Наукова новизна полягає у введенні в науковий обіг українського театрознавства малодослідженої творчості «одного з найбільш неординарних французьких проклятих поетів» (М. Есслін) та у формуванні чіткішого уявлення про становлення театрального сюрреалізму. Висновки. Вітчизняне театрознавство донині не заповнило наукової лакуни щодо формування театральної культури історичного авангарду. Між тим вона є вагомою частиною загальнокультурного поступу ХХ ст., тож її вивчення конче потрібне для об'єктивного осмислення та результативного використання сценічних надбань сучасного вітчизняного театру.

Ключові слова: Альфред Жаррі; Орільєн-Марі Люньє-По; символізм; сюрреалізм; трагіфарс; естетика гіньолю; маріонетковий стиль; геральдична декорація; крокуюча абстракція

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Аннотация

Цель статьи – маркировать исходный пункт авангардистского театрального движения, которым европейское театроведение обоснованно признало спектакль 1896 г. по трагифарсу Альфреда Жарри «Убю-король, или Поляки» в парижском театре «Творчество» (художественный руководитель – Орельен-Мари Люнье-По). Постановка побудила автора пьесы разработать новую театральную теорию, в которой переосмысливались традиционные атрибуты европейских подмостков – вопросы сценического пространства, организации драматического действия, актерской игры. Альфред Жарри изложил свою теорию в серии статей («Программа Короля Убю», «Про бесполезность театрального в театре», «Ответ на вопрос о драматическом искусстве» и др.) и в книге «Деяния и речения доктора Фаустроля, патафизика» (1898, опублик. 1911). В области именно французской новейшей культуры спектакль одновременно презентовал сюрреализм одну из мощных (в эстетико-художественном смысле) ветвей исторического авангарда. Стилевым наследником «Убю-короля» стали «Сосцы Терезия» Гийома Аполлинера, в 1917 г. представленные Пьером Альбер-Биро – пионером сюрреалистического театра – в парижской сценической лаборатории «Искусство и свобода». **Методология** исследования основана на элементном соединении историко-реконструктивного и структурно-аналитического методов. **Научная новизна** заключается во введении в научный обиход украинского театроведения малоизученного творчества «одного из наиболее неординарных французских проклятых поэтов» (М. Эсслин) и в формировании более четкого представления о становлении театрального сюрреализма. Выводы. Отечественное театроведение по сегодняшний день не заполнило научной лакуны относительно формирования театральной культуры исторического авангарда. Между тем она является важной составляющей общекультурного прогресса ХХ в., потому ее изучение необходимо для более объективного осмысления и более результативного использования сценических обретений современного отечественного театра.

Ключевые слова: Альфред Жарри; Орельен-Мари Люнье-По; символизм; сюрреализм; трагифарс; эстетика гиньоля; марионеточный стиль; геральдическая декорация; шагающая абстракция



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