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## CONTEMPORARY FESTIVAL AND COMPETITION ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL OPERA HOUSES OF KYIV, ODESA, AND LVIV: SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

**The purpose of the study** is to compare the festival and competition activities of opera houses in the socio-cultural context (on the examples of national opera houses of Kyiv, Odesa, and Lviv in recent years). **The research methodology** is based on an interdisciplinary approach that includes knowledge of cultural studies, art history, and management of socio-cultural activities. The main method of the article is comparative analysis, as we have tried to compare and highlight the key forms of festival and competition activities of the studied theatres and their socio-cultural context. **The scientific novelty** of the study lies in the comparative analysis of the festival and competition activities of opera houses in the socio-cultural context (on the examples of the national opera houses of Kyiv, Odesa, and Lviv in recent years). **Conclusions.** Having examined the festival and competition activities of the theatres we studied in 2020-2023, we can identify the following main trend in this aspect of functioning: the course of moving away from the closeness (“inflexibility”) of the theatre to an open artistic discourse through international partnerships, joint projects, and cooperation with other artistic groups in Ukraine – theatres act as a discussion cultural and artistic platform in the socio-cultural and professional space.

**Key words:** value, national culture, national heritage, festival, opera, ballet, competition, theatre.

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**Сучасна фестивальна та конкурсна діяльність національних опер Києва, Одеси та Львова: соціокультурний контекст**

**Мета роботи** – порівняння фестивально-конкурсної діяльності оперних театрів у соціокультурному контексті (на прикладах національних опер Києва, Одеси та Львова останніх років). **Методологія дослідження** базується на міждисциплінарному підході, який включає знання з культурології, мистецтвознавства та менеджменту соціокультурної діяльності. Основним методом статті є порівняльний аналіз, оскільки ми намагалися порівняти та висвітлити основні форми фестивально-конкурсної діяльності досліджуваних театрів та їх соціокультурний контекст. **Наукова новизна.** Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в порівняльному аналізі фестивально-конкурсної діяльності оперних театрів у соціокультурному контексті (на прикладах національних опер Києва, Одеси та Львова останніх років). **Висновки.** Таким чином, розглянувши фестивальну та конкурсну діяльність досліджуваних нами театрів за період 2020-2023 року, можна виділити таку основну тенденцію у цьому аспекті функціонування – курс відходу від закритості («негнучкості») театру до відкритого арт-дискурсу завдяки міжнародному партнерству, спільним проектам та співпраці з іншими мистецькими колективами України – театри виступають дискусійною культурологічною та арт-платформою у соціокультурному та професійному просторі.

**Ключові слова:** цінність, національна культура, національне надбання, фестиваль, опера, балет, конкурс, театр.

Relevance of research. Difficult socio-political circumstances caused by COVID-19 and Russia's full-scale invasion have prompted academic musical theatres to preserve and reflect on existing artistic practices and deepen the development of festival activities, aimed at the axiological manifestation of Ukrainian culture and the inclusion of young people in artistic and cultural processes under martial law at the national and international levels by the studied academic theatres will allow us to analyse the modifications and adaptability of socio-cultural and artistic events in times of war, which determines the relevance of our study.

Analysis of researches and publications. The issues of the festival and competition activities are covered in the studies of O. Kopyievska, M. Shved [11], G. Vyshnevskaya, E. Popovych, A. Sviatnenko [9] and others. All these works focus on various kinds of such events. Our article is an attempt to analyse the festival and competition activities of theatres in recent years by comparing national opera houses of Kyiv, Odesa, and Lviv.

The purpose of the study is to compare the festival and competition activities of opera houses in the socio-cultural context (on the examples of the national opera houses of Kyiv, Odesa, and Lviv in recent years).

The main part. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, a festival is an organised series of performances (spectacles) [13].

Similarly to the way we study opera houses, we also pay attention to music festivals. In his monograph "Trends in the Development of International Contemporary Music Festivals", M. Shved, a Ukrainian researcher, having revealed the definition of a music festival in the context of glocalisation and globalisation dimensions, offers his own group of models of music festivals. The researcher chose the organisational and conceptual specificity as a criterion. M. Shved distinguishes two "typical" models of festivals – post-plenary and pro-Western [11, 314-319]. The former is characterised by a style of organisation reminiscent of the plenaries of the Union of Composers, namely, its presentational nature, particularly the introduction of new products. This model also focuses mainly on the national cultural product rather than the international one, i.e. the dominance of domestic authors and productions. According to composer M. Shved, the latter trend will sooner or later lead to stagnation and marginalisation of the festival [11, 315-316]. The second one is based on the models of Western European festivals, where the basis of the festival concept is the author's creative idea. Among its features, M. Shved also includes the wide involvement of international

stars from other countries, art projects with interdisciplinary, postmodern, and modern content [11, 319].

In our opinion, the festival and competition activities of the theatres we have studied have two main aspects that we will highlight: their own festivals and competitions, and cooperation with festivals/competitions where the theatre acts as an art platform for creative communication.

The Odesa National Opera and Ballet Theatre hosts two festivals. Their concepts were developed in accordance with the seasonal themes of the winter and summer-autumn periods. The Velvet Season at the Odesa Opera Festival takes place in late August and early September. It is characterised by a symbiosis of musical events of various genres, from operas to concerts, with the participation of leading Ukrainian opera houses and world opera stars. In 2021, the VI Festival was dedicated to the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence. The festival took place at three open-air venues (Potemkin Stairs and Teatralna Square) and in the theatre itself. The organisers sought to combine the best achievements of Ukrainian music and theatre culture with contemporary European content, as evidenced by the range of events included in last year's festival programme, including opera, ballet, oratorio, and symphony orchestra concerts led by leading Ukrainian and international conductors, including concerts of Hobert Earle's "Ukrainian Odyssey" with the Odesa Philharmonic Orchestra, "Ukraine to the World" and the presentation of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation's project "Ark Ukraine: Music" by the most famous Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv, dedicated to the development of Ukrainian music of the last ten centuries, accompanied by holographic and augmented reality technologies. The best examples of world ballet performed by the theatre's artists were embodied in the "Odesa Ballet Gala Classic & Modern" concert programme. We also want to admit the creative partnership with the Western European artists from the Benelux region. For example, the director of the opera "La bohème" by G. Puccini was J.-F. D'Onde, a Belgian director, the stage design was M. Knops and costumes were created by N. Avents. Carl Orff's oratorio "Carmina Burana" was presented in a choreographic version by Gerard Mosterd, the Dutch artist, who has already worked with such Kyiv-based companies as R. Poklitaru's Ballet-Moderne and the CREDO Choir. The main elements of the scenography were video installations by S. Kokke.

At the intersection of September and October 2022, under martial law, the Odesa Opera House

hosted the VII “Velvet Season at the Odesa Opera” Festival. The festival programme included a number of different premieres: “Catherine” by O. Rodin, “The Journey of a Little Musician” (children's programme), the ballet “Suite À LA DANSE: From Classical to Modern”, a concert of Baroque choral music, Orquestra Classica Docentro and a gala concert dedicated to the 135th anniversary of the Odesa National Opera House. The season culminated in the exhibition “ART OF VICTORY” about wartime art dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the theatre museum [5].

In January 2021, the new “Winter Promenade” festival premiered at the Odesa Opera House. This was a synthetic event that combined ballet, opera, and concert programmes with artists from other countries. The project was created by the theatre's chief conductor V. Chernukho-Volich and artistic director N. Babych. The programme of the first festival included cultural products by Ukrainian artists, in particular ballets, concerts, a choral vernissage, and a symphony programme dedicated to the holiday of Valentine's Day, which was dedicated to the tragic love of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in versions by world heritage composers. It is worth noting that the festival was opened by the performance “La Traviata”, winner of the All-Ukrainian Theatre Award “GRA”. In early 2022, the Second Festival took place. Unlike the previous one, which was characterised by performances of Ukrainian teams only, the second festival featured productions created in collaboration with foreign artists. The performance “Madame Butterfly”, which premiered in 2019, deserves special attention, as it was created with the participation of representatives of various Western European countries, namely Austria – A. Preisler, director, the Netherlands – K. Spangak, artist, Germany – U. Kremer, costume designer, and France – A. Comestaz, plastic choreographer. The conductor was Ukrainian musician Ihor Chernetskyi.

The theatre's competition activities are represented by the First International Competition of Young Opera Singers, which was founded at the initiative of the Odesa Opera. The first competition was supposed to take place in June 2022, but due to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine's sovereignty, it was postponed indefinitely. The main goals of the event were to introduce young people to the trends in opera, to reflect on opera works and to discover new talents. The organisers envisaged that the winners of the competition would have the opportunity to perform in productions of the 2022-2023 theatre season [7].

For many years, the Odesa National Opera has been the artistic platform of the Odesa International

Film Festival. In August 2021, the festival traditionally opened with a festive ceremony in the theatre with the participation of famous Ukrainian and world stars. As the XII Festival was timed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the event, one of the most interesting events was the selection programme in “the National Corps” section, which featured the premiers of cultural products of Ukrainian cinema.

The National Opera of Ukraine hosts the international festival “Ballet.ua”. In autumn 2021, it was held for the first time. The ideologist and creative director of this festival was O. Filipyeva, artistic director of the theatre's ballet company. The event was organised in collaboration with the “ART Guild”, which sponsored the main awards. The festival was attended by representatives of the leading opera and ballet theatres of Dnipro, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Odesa. Soloists from the best theatres in France (Paris Opera Ballet), the UK (Royal Opera House, English National Ballet), Germany (The Theatre of Kiel), and Lithuania (The Lietuvos National Opera and Ballet Theatre) took part in the gala concert.

The National Opera of Ukraine also serves as an artistic platform for various creative competitions and festivals. In 2018, Kyiv hosted the international festival and competition “Ballet Open Space”. It was organised by theatre soloists and media stars K. Kukhar and O. Stoyanov. The festival had a wide range of participating countries – Kazakhstan, France, the United States of America, Germany, and Italy. In early October last year, the theatre became a creative space for the final of the Pavlo Virsky All-Ukrainian Festival-Competition of Folk Choreography and its gala concert.

The National Opera of Ukraine also hosts the well-known International Ballet Festival “Grand Prix Kyiv”. Nobuhiro Terada, the Japanese-Ukrainian choreographer, People's Artist of Ukraine, was its creative ideologist. According to the concept of the festival, its main mission is to discover new talents and internationalise teachers, choreographers, and classical ballet dancers from all over the world. It is a symbiosis of a competition and a festival. The competition began as a small local non-profit event, but in 2016 it gained international status and since 2019 has been held under the patronage of the UNESCO international organisation, which emphasises the high status of participation and the level of the jury. In 2021, the jury consisted of the brightest representatives of the world's ballet elite: V. Malakhov, L. Sarafanov, A. Ananiashvili (Georgia), S. Avazoglu (Turkey), O. Filipyeva, Z. Zirui (China), L. Hilaire, and Minh Pham (France). In 2022, the festival was supposed to take place in early June, but due to

Russian aggression, it was postponed indefinitely [14].

One of the main festivals of the Lviv National Opera is the Solomiya Krushelnytska International Opera Festival. This figure was chosen for three reasons: as a symbol of the Ukrainian opera heritage in world history, the history of Lviv, and the patroness of the city's opera house. To date, 17 festivals have been held [12]. The last of them was timed to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the festival and was accompanied by high-profile events called "impressions". There were many of world opera stars. The festival was opened by the First Lady of Ukraine. The programme of the event consisted of 9 impressions presented by different creative teams, namely: "Krakowiak and Gurali" (Wroclaw Opera), "Salomea", "The Maid of the House" (Lviv National Opera), "Nabucco" (Odessa National Opera) [1], "Opera rustica" (Kyiv Camerata), "Don Carlos" (National Opera of Ukraine), a gala concert and a unique concert of mini-operas performed by the outstanding Austrian baritone Rupert Bergman [12].

Since 1991, the theatre has been holding its own competition in honour of its patroness, the Solomiya Krushelnytska International Opera Singers Competition. Since its foundation, it has been held only 5 times. It was distinguished by an international jury and Ukrainian components. In 2022, Ukraine celebrated the 150th anniversary of the birth of the world's most famous Ukrainian opera singer, Solomiya Krushelnytska. In accordance with the "Terms and Conditions of the VI Solomiya Krushelnytska International Opera Singing Competition", the competition is held in three rounds. The first round involves performances accompanied by a piano, the second one – by a symphony orchestra, and the third – by productions of the Lviv National Opera [10]. It is worth noting that due to Russian aggression against Ukraine and the high level of danger, the competition was postponed to November 2023.

In 2021, the Lviv National Opera, with the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, also organised a Chamber Opera Competition for Young Composers and Directors, which took place in December. The competition had two nominations: chamber opera and directing. The main goal of the competition was to create a favourable creative and artistic platform for young professionals in the field of theatre and music. One of the main awards is a staging of the winning works at the Lviv National Opera, namely the chamber opera that won the first prize in the 2022-2023 theatre season. The jury consisted of musicologist and creative director of "the Opera Weekend" H. Dub, Ukrainian composers

B. Frolyak, O. Shchetynsky, M. Shved, and directors V. Vovkun and H. Volovetska. Last year, the winner of the competition was the drama "Prokula's Dream" by composer E. Petrov, staged by young director A. Lytvynov [3].

In 2023, the Lviv National Opera presented two new events – the All-Ukrainian Music Festival of Chamber Music "MIRROR" and the Competition of classical and modern choreography for youth named after Roma Pryima.

The first one took place in late April. Many chamber music group from different regions of Ukraine took part in the festival, presenting a wide range of music spectrum from world classical to Ukrainian contemporary music. Among them were "Kyiv Camerata", "Lviv Clarinet Quartet", "Kyiv-Brass", "Fenix", "Odessa Camerata", "NotaBene Chamber Group", "Dz'ob", a duet of Bogdana Pivnenko and Dmytro Tavanetz, and other [4].

The second one was a joint project of the Lviv National Opera, the Lviv Choreographic School, and NGO "Bright Country". In March 2023, the Lviv National Opera founded the Lviv Residency of Classical and Contemporary Ballet named after Roma Pryima. V. Vovkun became its president. The main idea of the project was to revive the memory of the Ukrainian choreographic heritage in modern society without the elements of former colonialism. On May 28-31, more than 300 youth dancers took part in a ballet competition that was a synthesis of competitions, master classes, lectures, and other events [6].

According to Vasyl Vovkun's "Ukrainian Breakthrough" development programme, one of the main tasks of contemporary theatre is "to leave the theatre-museum, where the world has frozen and there are no living reflections" and create platforms for cultural and artistic discussions [2]. Recently, the theatre has been acting as a discussion studio and a platform for other international festivals. In our study, we focus on the largest festivals and competitions of recent years that have used the stage space of the Lviv National Opera for presentations and performances. In 2021, the theatre hosted the International Music Festival of Austrian conductor Matthias Kendlinger, who toured Western Europe extensively with his K&K Philharmoniker orchestra, founded on his initiative in 2002. They have released more than 30 studio recordings, performed on European television in Germany, Denmark, and Austria, and participated in various concert programmes and festivals. The work of the composer and his ensemble is a symbiosis of classical and contemporary academic music, and some of their most recent collaborations include the musical works Healing and Larissa, which were presented at festivals in Austria [15].

In 2021, the Lviv National Opera became a partner of the LvivMozart music festival by the renowned Ukrainian-German conductor Oksana Lyniv, which started in 2017. According to the concept of the festival, it is an artistic project aimed to bring together talented musicians and artists from around the world. The name of this festival is inspired by the fact that Franz Xaver Mozart, the son of W.A. Mozart, lived in the city in the early nineteenth century and founded the first musical association, the St. Cecilia Choral Society. According to the artistic director of the festival O. Lyniv, the main task of this event was to “go beyond the traditional places where people are used to listening to classical music, because in fact, classical music knows no borders” [16]. The theatre hosted the final gala concert, which was the culmination of the festival.

In June 2022, under martial law, the theatre's artistic platform hosted the presentation and opening of International Theatre Festival “The Melpomene of Tauria”. Last year, the festival was held for the 24th time, and for the first time it was held outside the Kherson region. At the press conference, the creative director of the festival O. Knyga, noted that the new format of the event was that all participants presented their performances via online broadcasts from their own venues. The festival was attended not only by Ukrainian theatre groups, but also by representatives of Japan, Portugal, Romania, Turkey, Georgia, and other countries. The opening ceremony took place in the form of a theatrical performance “WE” based on the poetry of A. Matviychuk in the Mirror Hall of the theatre. In this case, the theatre acted as a platform to support theatre groups that were forced to leave their cities due to the Russian occupation and broadcast the idea of solidarity and unity of the people of Ukraine in the fight against aggression.

Conclusions. In sum, having analysed the festival and competition activities of the theatres we studied in 2020-2023, we can identify the following main trend in this aspect of functioning: a course towards moving away from the closure (“inflexibility”) of the theatre towards an open artistic discourse through international partnerships, joint projects, and cooperation with other artistic groups in Ukraine – theatres act as a cultural and artistic discussion platform in the socio-cultural and professional space.

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