

## Semiosphere of musical communication in puppet theater (on the example of the latest performances of the Kharkiv State Academic Puppet Theater named after V. A. Afanasiev, Ukraine)

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper investigates the phenomenon of the semiosphere of musical communication in the latest performances of puppet theater. Modern puppet theater is a synthetic art form in which the live and puppet plans, means of scenography and animation, as well as the musical solution of the play interact. In it, the composer embodies a certain sound image of the play, which performs the function of audio communication with the audience. The semiosphere is a semantic space that is a necessary prerequisite for communication. The article reveals that the sound image of the latest performances of the Kharkiv State Academic Puppet Theater named after V. A. Afanasiev (director — Oksana Dmitrieva) expresses the semiosphere of musical communication.

**Keywords** music in puppet theater, musical communication, semiosphere, scenophony, sound image of the play, Oksana Dmitrieva's Theater.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout its centuries-long historical development, the art of puppet theater has always been associated with music as a universal means of expressing the movement of objects on stage (ie, animating them - in other words, "spiritualization"). Music has been and remains an important component of theatrical drama and the fundamental principle of communication. In fact, puppet theater depends primarily not on text but on an active audiovisual component, and more than live theater, it uses the integration of sound and images. Hans Jelmoli, a Swiss composer of the early twentieth century and author of music for puppet theater performances, argued that music was a means of enhancing the illusion effect needed for puppet theater. The invisible and intangible nature of sound can create the impression that animated objects act in space as living beings [1].

In modern art history there are works dedicated to puppet theater, which are a separate branch of theater studies. Among them are recent scientific works: Penny Francis: "Puppetry: A Reader in Theater Practice" (2012), dissertation by D. Ivanova-Hololobova "Ukrainian Puppet Theater of the 1920s: Organizational and Artistic Principles" (2020), monographs by O. Rubynsky "Kharkiv Puppet Theater: History, Analysis of Traditions and Schools (Experience of Historical Philosophy)" (2014) and "Essays on the History of the Puppet Show in Kharkiv. To the theory and practice of the Kharkiv school of puppeteers" (2018). These works explore both the most important stages in the history of puppet theater and individual components of this art form. However, a review of sources on one of these components, namely music, reveals that some information about music in puppet shows we find in theatrical works, but musicological studies of modern puppet shows today are missing.

**The aim of the paper** is to highlight the specifics of the musical solution of puppet theater stages in its communicative aspect on the example of the latest performances of the Kharkiv State Academic Puppet Theater named after V. A. Afanasiev, Ukraine. This theater has a long history, dating back to the 1920s, and today it is one of the most innovative centers of this art in Ukraine.

## II. MODERN TENDENCIES OF MUSICAL DECISION OF THE KHARKIV STATE ACADEMIC PUPPET THEATER PERFORMANCES

Modern puppet theater tends to mix semantic codes specific to different artistic languages. The semiosphere of communication in puppet theater includes the live actors' play, interaction with puppets and props, a combination of live and puppet plans, means of scenography and animation, as well as the musical design of the play. It can be considered as a sound score, which is an audio projection of the general "score of the play" and serves as an audio communication with the audience. In this way, the composer models a certain sound image of the performance. As is known, the sound image of the play is embodied in the acoustic complex, which includes: the language of actors, live music, music in audio, live noise, noise in audio, special sound effects (reverberation, simulation, transposition of sound frequencies, sound panning, etc.). In this aspect, in relation to the sound solution of the play, it is appropriate to use the concept of "*scenophony of the play*" [2].

Musical design of the latest performances of the Kharkiv State Academic Puppet Theater named after V. A. Afanasiev occupies a special place in their general stage decision. This theater in the context of the Ukrainian theatrical art space has been the leading carrier of the puppet school since the 1930s. Today it is a symbiosis of caring for traditional forms of puppetry and continuous experiment in the search for new means of expression. It is noteworthy that well-known Kharkiv composers (including Mark Karminsky, Dmytro Klebanov, Ihor Kovach, Valentyn Bibik, Valentyna Drobyazgina, Ihor Haidenko and others) have always collaborated with the Kharkiv Puppet Theater, from its inception to the present day.

The beginning of the modern stage of the theater's history is connected with the arrival of the director Oksana Dmitrieva: "*In 2007, a new stage in modern history will begin, in which all previous experience is synthesized and completely new and unexpected facets will begin to unfold, which determined the New Theater. Now it calls Dmitrieva's Theater.*" [3, 233].

Indeed, among the notable features of the unique author's handwriting of the main director of the Kharkiv Puppet Theater Oksana Dmitrieva we can note the extremely attentive and demanding attitude to the musical design of the play. Trying to achieve a complete fusion of visual, verbal and audio components, the director draws attention to the fact that the means of musical expression (temporhythm, timbre, dynamics, etc.) are in inseparable unity with all elements of stage action.

In her performances, Oksana Dmitrieva addresses such composers of the XX and XXI centuries as Alfred Schnittke, GiyaKancheli, Philip Glass, AlekseyAygi, Piotr Moss, Volker Beltermann, EleniKaraindrou. It is noteworthy that in the creative work of all the above authors theatrical music occupies an important place.

There are two approaches to the musical design of a modern play: collected music of different musical numbers by one or various composers, or original music created in collaboration with the director and composer. The latter approach allows to achieve a holistic solution of the performance, in which its audio component coexists in close connection with the visual and verbal components. Oksana Dmitrieva prefers to involve the author's music in the scenophony of her performances. This is an additional factor in understanding the role of musical score, which is not an "accompaniment" to the performance, but an integral component of its stage image.

Musical instruments in Oksana Dmitrieva's performances often become elements of scenography, can be used in productions as props or even full-fledged acting persons. such animation of musical instruments emphasizes the signs of the communicative semiosphere of Oksana Dmitrieva's performances.

In working on the play, the director uses musical terminology, such as: "the scene sounds or does not sound", "to play pizzicato" and so on. A particularly notable manifestation of the director's thinking is the genre definition of the play "Simple Stories of Anton Chekhov" as "Sonata of the escaping time". Parallels with the sonata genre do exist in the structure of the play, which has three acts, and in the temporhythm of each of them, and in the system of leitmotifs, which can be traced both at the level of the plot and in the musical decision of the play.

In almost every performance of Oksana Dmitrieva, the semiosphere of musical communication is manifested in the inclusion of live music by actors on stage in the audio component. Particularly notable is the play "Children of Paradise" (2019), in the musical solution of which there are two layers: the first is the music of contemporary Greek composer EleniKaraindrou, which is the basis of the scenophony of the play. The second layer includes instrumental and vocal numbers created by contemporary young composer Kateryna Palachova for a small ensemble of instruments (violin, flute, guitar, concertina, accordion, metallophone, drum) and performed by actors in the characters of street musicians-mimes. These numbers are intonationally related to the music of EleniKaraindrou –so in the scenophony of the play live music is organically combined with music that sounds in audio recording.



Fig. 1. Performance "Children of Paradise" (Kharkiv, 2019)

### III. SEMIOSPHERE OF MUSICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE PLAY "A FAIRYTALE FOR A LITTLE BUNNY"

On a concrete example, we will outline the semiosphere of musical communication in the play, which premiered on the stage of the Kharkiv Academic Puppet Theater named after V. A. Afanasiev in 2020. This is a play "A Fairytale for a Little Bunny" by Sergei Kozlov (production group: director - Oksana Dmitrieva, artist - Natalia Denysova, animation artist - Anna Brahina, composer - Kateryna Palachova). Oksana Dmitrieva is guided by a semiotic approach, claiming that in contemporary theater puppets act as certain symbols. The director considers the opinion of the artist and art critic Irina Uvarova to be one of her main creative instructions: "A puppet appears in the space of art when a person meets something incomprehensible." This thesis is more about the "adult" repertoire of puppet theater, but in the play "A Fairytale for a Little Bunny" the appearance of puppets is also symbolic in content: they are nostalgic images of childhood, in which the surrounding space seems mysterious, charming and amazing.

In her work on the play, Oksana Dmitrieva often refers to the concept of "fine tuning", which arises during the contact between the play and the audience. By this term is meant a certain intonation sphere, in which each meaning must be intoned by word, gesture, visual signs and musical means. In fact, the "finely tuned" intonation sphere creates a communicative space of the performance.

The semiosphere of musical communication in "A Fairytale for a Little Bunny" is inextricably linked to its visual solution: the laconic scenery includes several large objects - a large table and chairs, large apples and pears on the forefront. The main puppet characters Bunny, Hedgehog and Teddy Bear look small and fragile in this space. Such a visual solution adjusts the viewer to the child's perception of the world around him, which the child sees much larger than he really is, and realizes himself as a small part of space.



Fig. 2. Performance “A Fairytale for a Little Bunny” (Kharkiv, 2020)

The relief and restraint of visual instruments of communication determines the composer's choice of appropriate musical means, which aim to immerse the viewer in a contemplative, meditative atmosphere – actually one that corresponds to the literary source of the play.

The sound score is created for the chamber ensemble of instruments, in the choice of which timbre semantics plays a key role. Timbres of flute, harp, marimba and metallophone, kalimba, pizzicato strings are connected with the sphere of the fancy, tender and fragile world of childhood. Each musical number is limited to a minimum set – from one to three instruments, so the timbre acquires a significant content.

In addition, in the sound score of the play, synthesized timbres sometimes appear in the transition from real to fantastic images (visually, this is also accompanied by a transition from the puppet plan to the live one or vice versa). For example, in the scene of the Little Bunny's encounter with his greatest night fear, the Gray Wolf, the theme of fear sounds in a synthetic tone – viscous and deep, with a mechanical "rattle".

The general temporhythm of the scenophony of the play is aimed at creating a feeling of endless lingering flow of time – such as it is perceived in childhood. For example, in the contemplative scene of the appearance of snowflakes, their smooth, slow movements follow the musical sounds, which gradually "melt", dissolve in the air.





Fig. 3. Performance “A Fairytale for a Little Bunny” (Kharkiv, 2020)

The main visual sign in the scenography of the play is the circle as a symbol of infinity, eternal return to childhood, continuous-rotating movement in which life passes and the universe rotates. Most of the visual components of the play have the shape of a circle or a sphere: in particular, the main element of the scenography is a large round table that rotates around its axis and on which the puppet plan of the play takes place. Round visual shapes also have other visual objects: apples and pears on the forefront, a giant “snow” blanket in winter episodes, festive Christmas oranges, voluminous leaves, snowflakes, stars and butterflies circling in the stage space, and their animated projections. on the backstage.

In the scenophony of the play, the main musical theme is connected with the symbol of the circle. This is the theme of the Waltz, which underlies most of the musical numbers of the play, and is repeated many times in different versions –from a minimalist, chamber-lyrical piano presentation at the beginning of the play to a festive orchestral finale. Bunnies dance on the lawn to the sounds of waltz, snowflakes move smoothly in the winter space, butterflies circle in the warm summer dream of the Little Bunny.

In the first scene of the play, the main character sits on a huge chair at a large round table. He is worried about the vast and amazing phenomena of the world around him: is he sitting on a chair, and the Earth is spinning at this time? Dad tells him that "the Earth is like a big orange that flies in complete darkness and spins." However, Little Bunny can not find answers to many of his very important questions, and adults are always focused on adult affairs. The music reveals the inner experiences of the Bunny: in the main musical theme of the play, light and carefree, there are intonations of barely noticeable, incomprehensible sadness.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the XXI century we note the growing role of the composer as a full-fledged co-author of a puppet show, which creates it in close collaboration with the director and artist. As a result of this collaboration, a contemporary puppet show appears as a synthetic act in which all its components coexist organically: puppet and live plan, means of scenography and animation, as well as musical design of the play –a sound score in which the composer models a certain sound image of the performance.

In the performances of the Kharkiv State Academic Puppet Theater named after V. A. Afanasiev, created by director Oksana Dmitrieva, the sound image of the play is an integral part of its general stage image. Thus, the musical solution of modern performances of the Kharkiv Puppet Theater occupies a special place in their stage decision. The semiosphere of musical communication in puppet theater aims to "animate" the movement of objects on stage, to enhance the expressiveness of puppet movement. So the scenophony of the play appears as an important means of dialogue with the audience, and is inextricably linked with the visual and verbal components, emphasizes them and creates additional semantic layers in the communicative process.

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