

Kateryna KOT

Reactions. Oleg Liptsyn



Theatrical Club

UC. What is the driving force of your activity? If you don't set up any goals then why have you organized the festival? What are you guided by in your creativity work?

What I know for sure is that I am not so much in control of this process, I am in it. I am going like the nature perfuses, how life is advising. Creativity work is closely connected with expression. Expression is a very personal thing, not common, not social but individual. I can't completely understand what forces speak to one's mind; I don't think anybody is able to answer this question seriously. It's an affective natural occurrence, laid in person. It's in everyone but in different proportions. These proportions are also connected with creative energy, with which person is perfused from not understandable reasons and by not understandable way. In other words I don't think it's possible to set conscious, serious aims. Properly, it's possible to set them — but it's cheating yourself and others. And if to talk about real process, the only important thing is occurrence, which is necessary to understand, to hear. That's why there are no real tasks. There is only one task: how to formulate what is inside you and doesn't leave you in peace. There is nothing special to talk about. It's easier to explain the question of material choice. Person falls in love not because he sets such aim or wants to become richer or get a promotion. Certainly people do like that, but it's already not about falling in love. If to talk about occurrence of spiritual or soul matter, they exist by

not understandable laws to us. And for us just to be in time with understanding that this feeling is worth of your stops, life losses and refusal to yourself. And others are not worth it. You should have a good understanding but not planning.

UC. Nowadays a lot is said about the attempt to step aside from literature, from verbal image to visual during all sorts of Ukrainian theatrical and cinematography events. How is it happening in the world?

I can say that these tendencies are out of date. However there are a lot of them. And the fact that there are a lot of them proves how far out of date they are — as mass carries on the last. As the most progressive is usually very rare, «single-piece». To my mind, this question was foremost 20-25 years ago, especially here in the sphere of Slavic theatre which is completely oriented on the dialogue; theatre where ideology was expressed by word, literature. And refusal from ideology induced a great many to refuse from word in particular from verbalism. The last couple of years I worked a lot in Taiwan. It's Chinese theatre which has its own traditions and set forms. One of such forms is narrator, story-teller presence, who is the element of open theatrical form. Though it doesn't prevent them to have another category of actors, who, let's say only dance or sing. In other words everything is so divided. But I like this narrative discourse very much and it seems to me also very modern. The question is not in

80th and 90th of the last century, «Second Ukrainian Renaissance», broke out by formation of the new theatrical way of thinking and appearance of big amount of independent drama schools. «It was promising», — says Oleg Liptsyn, famous and acknowledged in the world as theatrical director, remarkable Ukrainian artist of the end of the XX century. And journalists in the hall at once reacted with questions: «Are you planning to revive Ukrainian theatre?», «What aims does the festival set?», «What is necessary to change?» — agree, usual questions at press-conferences. But Liptsyn answers unusually, he doesn't have ambitions to «change» or «introduce», without generalizing and not searching for «underlying reasons», director «just reacts on what touches him»

the essence but in the form. When we are talking about non-verbality, we are talking not about the essence and people who are doing this; they are talking about form, genre and have to realize that. When author passes the young experimental stage, he/she starts to understand that form and the rest of everything depends on essence. And in this sense word is not worse than gesture. That's why it's a very relative position. If traditional theatre exists, based on word, then a new theatre which is trying to be born or trying to renew something, maybe, will be based on another element. But it won't change the essence. It's important not to have Illustrativity. Illustrativity or tautological, repetitiveness — is jejune use of product. And essence remains essence.

UC. In one of the interviews you told that Ukrainians don't perceive «Ukrainian» as a part of world process, in the world «context» so to say...

It's connected with inferiority, with Ukrainian complex, which I correlate in a lot of things with national history and culture, which was harassed a long time; it wasn't recognized as independent and of full value, as an independent cultural phenomenon and then also got into Soviet ideology «alive burring» machine, which does something unique from everything like «Soviet elephant if the best elephant in the world». It seems to me that this connects in a lot of angles with uniqueness claim, which was formed by uncertainty and unacceptability feeling in its term. Ukrainians always stick together, separate from others, sheering off, positioning themselves a little bit superficial — as if someone accepts us as nothing. It's we who accept us like that. But I think that this is a political question mostly, it's not the question of culturology — because in such a way it's easier for politicians to manipulate. What should we do with this? We should open ourselves, open as much as possible.

UC. About Soviet. You were telling in the conversation that post soviet problems are not enough upraised and open in Ukrainian culture.

Concerning me, I don't see that culture has started to grasp Soviet after its passing, that those who have overcome it started to comprehend their Soviet past. At least I don't see this, neither in the theatre nor, for example, in literature. This topic is not revealed. There is its exploitation, but not on the serious art level. But it's very interesting as a culture which you need to comprehend — and it was showed on a good level in theatrical performance «Mother Maritsa, Columbus' wife» (play by Eugene Hudzyk, director from Lviv, based on novel by Maria Matios — K.K.). I saw this in the costume, in the manner of play and even in the topic, I saw this. The play had novelty for me in this sense. I re-

membered that once in a theatrical club we performed play «I» based on works of Mykola Khvylovy. Khvylovy became one of the first of our authors, at that time he was forbidden and we were the first who referred to him. So in his «I (Romance)» a son kills mother, but in «Mother Maritsa» son sleeps with his mother. As if the play returned me in those days, in that atmosphere.

As a whole it was pleasant and joyous to watch the works of my students, as I have seen art «maturing» (festival directors were former students of Oleg Liptsyn — K.K.). It was important for me in the play «Notes of crazy musician» (the play by Eugene Chystokluev, director of Donetsk theatre «Zhuky», based on the novel by Mykola Gogol — K.K.) that I finally have understood something that I couldn't for a long time. I always interpreted this text from the point of view what is lacking for the main hero and what makes him go crazy? And I should approach it differently: I am lacking something in comparison with him because he is complete. That's why he is crazy because he has everything. And this change in my consciousness is very important for me. It opened me a lot, and strange, that I hadn't grasped it at once.

UC. Aren't you interested to research the topic of Soviet/Post soviet consciousness in the modern world on your own?

I would love to. But again, it's necessary for parts to get together. I can't do it like this: there is a very important topic, so I will put something on the stage. It doesn't work like that. Such primitive ideological chain of thoughts seems a blunder for me. So to say there is an adequate demand, now we need to find material that suits, then the person who will do this — this closely to the producer's way of thinking. Being a director, I can't think like that. And as I have already mentioned, I can react. For example, in the play «Contrabass» (the play by Vansan Margot, Parisian director, based on the same name monologue by Patrick Süskind — K.K.) I was more impressed by actor's «standing», how he was awaiting the pause, when technical halt happened. How he as an actor behaved himself on the stage at that moment — these human's outpourings, reacts are personal and it's very interesting. I know Gilles very well (the actor of the «Contrabass» — K.K.), he was my student. He is a mature person, dentist according to the profession. He was objectively standing out from other students in two ways: he was extremely modest in life and absolutely different person when he was up on stage. Uninhibited was his stage trait. He is very shy and modest person in real life, who doesn't pretend on anything. And this tells on its own, about special inner talent. A couple of years in a row he played in mono comedies for 3-4 times per week. It's original stand-up show, which goes one by one as showings in the cinema,

«Contrabass»

The occasion to organize the First Festival of Actual Ukrainian Theatre was the 25th anniversary of Theatrical Club foundation in Kyiv — one of the first theatrical societies in Ukraine which influenced greatly the culture of 80th — 90th and became the environment for new relatively independent artistic expression of young and talented theatre creators.

«The idea of Theatrical Club foundation laid in the foundation of society formation, — says Oleg Liptsyn. — We started from reading Bulgakov, Ahmatova and Voloshyn. We chose forbidden artists of the highest level who had attitude to Kyiv, Ukraine. Theatrical Club and other similar clubs are cultural channels. I want on the example of small Theatrical Club to show that processes are happening and developing and their forms can become not so closed and tersed».



Vansan Margot and Oleg Liptsyn

Photo: Roman Filipov



«Notes of Crazy Musician»

Photo: given by Eugene Hudzyk



«Mother Maritsa, Columbus' wife»

Photo: Roman Filipov



«Endgame» to the right — Oleg Liptsyn

Photo: given by Eugene Hudzyk



«Mother Maritsa, Columbus' wife»

Photo: Roman Filipov



«Endgame»

Photo: Роман Філіпов



«Contrabass»

in Paris. He had been playing there for years. That's why he is experienced in communication with audience.

UC. So the choice of Samuel Beckett (*the last performance of the festival was «Endgame» directed by Oleg Liptsyn*) was also your reaction, «creative expression»? Why did you refer to absurdity?

Absurdity is very conditional term. It reached us only at the beginning of 80th gone through Soviet greater and completely not with that meaning, which had in Europe at the end of 50th. Everything entered much «portioned» and at once was distorted. Distorted at least, by this prohibition which created a boom. As one of the absurdity principles is unsuccessfulness, not willingness for success. It appeared as critics of bourgeois bases. Absurdist didn't want to do anything to please «consumer», client. And Beckett entering the theatre where ten people were sitting in the stalls told that it was his theatre. For us the term successfulness is something undisputable, it's the main criterion of creativity success, but not everything like that in the world. There are categories which don't suit such boundaries, because you can't measure creativity level, for example by popular awards. No one in the world considers Oscar to be the criterion of film creative level, no one suspects that here, if the film has an Oscar that it's highly artistic film. Such wrong acceptance is because the culture is much closed. It doesn't receive adequate message because of its closeness.

So for me Beckett is not absurdist. For me Beckett is extremely modern author, the esthetic and topical level of whom corresponds to my point of views on life. As Beckett describes modern life, for me none of play writers do — on such a modern level. That's why my choice of Beckett is understandable. Not because he was or wasn't absurdist and it's not important when he lived. This is one reason. The other is the moment of challenge, which is important for the artist to my mind. The artist constantly checks himself on toughness where the boundary of his toughness is. He sets the bar in such a way, that it will be impossible to reach it — and he tries. In this mechanism of pulling yourself out for your hair, in this Munchausen myth — it seems to me — there is another feature of artist view, of artist approach, this not understandable energy. In this sense the Beckett play was a very serious challenge. I staged this play in 2003. We performed it on the festival «Art Berezillya». And I was inspired on this play by Barbara Bray, who was a very close friend of Beckett and also his assistant and very close person. We got acquainted in Paris. And properly speaking because of her I felt Beckett. I understood how emotional it is. However absurdity was accepted here as something abstract, cold, and intellectual. Nothing in com-

mon at all! And Barbara came for the «Berezillya» which was a great honor for us and for me personally. She is unique woman who was not only the main Beckett's assistant but in many points creator of this Nobel Prize winner. She also worked with Harold Pinter. And to tell the truth this performance was dedicated to Barbara Bray. Also she is generally acknowledged as the best translator of Marguerite Duras from French to English, classic of French play writing of XX century. And also she was a founder of bilingual theatre in Paris. We had been working more than a year and a half on this play. For me it's very vital thing. And I doubt that there is material which can present me bigger happiness and bigger challenge.

UC. What are your impressions from the festival?

My specialty of the house is very low level of satisfaction after the work is done. I don't want to pose but it's like that. The biggest impression on me made the fact that former students are maturing and becoming serious artists. And also evenings with... Two evenings which repeated for me that wonder which I don't know how it happens — when suddenly from nothing appears tremendous artistic energy like a creativity pillar. One evening was with Theatrical Club and another one with poets. I was just observing these processes. I was looking how on my eyes not knowing from where appeared was growing this wonder. I understood that it's only connected with personalities. Particularly with those separate figures who sit down — it's not important whether they are famous or not — if it's serious formed personality, in human and creative way — it's something uncontrollable for you and very tempting. Because it's not you who are doing — however you — but without doing anything. These are my main impressions.

And the most important for what the festival was done — it's important to underlying for me too — is the attempt to form here in Kyiv, in Ukraine, seminar of playing drama. It's an alternative drama school to some extend for those who already have some artistic grounding (in theatrical meaning) and which can allow moving forward Ukrainian theatrical process. It seems to me that it lacks new theoretical ideas and methods of their realization. I, thanks to my teacher Mykhailo Butkevych from whom I got an inculcation am connected with this material more, and I am hoping that festival created the background which will us to gather such seminar. We want to try on basis of «Master Class» literarily on the wave of festival to announce seminar — in order to conduct first session in autumn and in spring to conduct the second one — to reach certain product. We wanted to attract attention of everyone to the seminar by festival.

UC.