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**BALLET CRITICISM
OF ALEKSEI GVOZDEV**

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The purpose of this article is to define the main aspects of A. Gvozdev's work as a critic of ballet theatre in the 1920s in the USSR, highlighting the external influences on this work. Research Methodology. In the course of the research, a set of scientific methods was applied: analysis of literature and sources; comparison of basic approaches to dance by G. Fuchs and A. Gvozdev; historical method – to study the emergence and evolution of the conceptual views on the ballet theatre development in the critical works of A. Gvozdev. Scientific Novelty. The publications of A. Gvozdev as a critic in the 1920s in the USSR in terms of changing the main aesthetic positions regarding the development of ballet theatre, the influence of artistic and aesthetic concepts and personalities on the theatrical critic have been analysed for the first time. Conclusions. A. Gvozdev's works of the 1920–1930s in the USSR reflect the aesthetic concepts of the development of ballet practice at that time, having influenced the formation of the theory and criticism of the Soviet ballet. The formation of the formalistic views of A. Gvozdev was influenced by the ideas of the ОРОУАЗ (V. Shklovskii). The theatre critic, following the principles of the formalists, saw the meaning of the theatrical action not in the content and ideology, but in its artistic features (means, forms, techniques, etc.). The works of the German theatre critic G. Fuchs also had an influence on the formation of working methods of A. Gvozdev. Among the general intentions: support for the development of dancing means of expression; the understanding of the specifics of classical dance and its potential as the main method of expression of the ballet art; prospects for attracting young people to the ballet renewal. The changes have been taking place in A. Gvozdev's artistic and aesthetic approaches to the evaluation of ballets until 1927: he makes accusations of pointless formal search in classical dance, the only value of the latter, in his opinion, is technicality and physical culture; adheres to the position of rejecting the ontological romantic features of classical ballet, asks for content, emotional expressiveness, drama, elimination of the class privilege of ballet. He moves from the aesthetic to the sociological nature of criticism.

Keywords: ballet criticism; Aleksei Gvozdev; ballet; Georg Fuchs; formalism; choreography; dance

Introduction

Critical comprehension of the ballet theatre is an important component of the cultural process that performs axiological and gnoseological functions, plays a significant role in the art disciplines (theatre studies, musicology, ballet studies, etc.). The name of the outstanding theatre critic Alexey Gvozdev (1887–1939) is associated with the formation and establishment of the ballet theatre criticism of the 1920s in the USSR. His work as a critic was at the same time a reflection of the leading trends in the development of that time ballet and artistic and aesthetic concepts of the art sphere.

Despite the significant place of A. Gvozdev in the ballet discourse of the USSR in the 20-30s, his critical potential has not been studied in terms of changing the main aesthetic positions regarding the development of ballet theatre, the influence of artistic and aesthetic concepts and personalities on the theatrical critic.

The theoretical and critical work of A. Gvozdev is still relevant (Gvozdev, 1987). Among the studies devoted to the theatre critic, we can conditionally distinguish the complex review works (A. Degen (1981), I. Shneiderman (1987) and others); publications dedicated to Gvozdev as a drama theatre researcher (V. Gudkova (2019), V. Maksimov (2019), S. Mokulskii (1963), N. Pesochinskii (2004) and others). The research on his work in the field of the ballet studies (A. Sokolov-Kaminskii (2003, 2019, 2020) was conducted fragmentary, its main aspects and external influences on this activity were not identified.

Purpose of the article

The purpose of this article is to define the main aspects of A. Gvozdev's work as a critic of ballet theatre, highlighting the external influences on this work.

In the course of the research, a set of scientific methods was applied: analysis of literature and sources; comparison of basic approaches to dance by G. Fuchs and A. Gvozdev; historical method – to study the emergence and evolution of the conceptual views on the ballet theatre development in the critical work of A. Gvozdev.

Main research material

The creative work of A. Gvozdev, a well-known theatre expert, theatre and ballet critic is in the circle of active scientific reflection, as evidenced, in particular, by the Scientific conference “School of Theatre Cognition: History and Modernity” dedicated to the 130th anniversary of the A. Gvozdev held in 2017 in St. Petersburg (Russian Institute for the History of the Arts, 2017). The conference was held at the Russian Institute of Art History, where Gvozdev was the head the Theatre section, became the founder of the so-called “Leningrad theatre school”, which was accused of bourgeois formalism in the early 30s (Degen, 1981). N. Pesochinskii (2004) rightly notes that the formation of the formalistic views of A. Gvozdev was influenced by the ideas of the OPOYAZ (Russian acronym created from “Obshchestvo izucheniya poeticheskogo yazyka” or “Obshchestvo izucheniya teorii poeticheskogo yazyka” - Society for the Study of Poetic Language or Society for the Study of the Theory of Poetic Language) – association of literary scholars and practitioners, who adhere to the ideas of formalism. The formalists did not recognize the ideological and social value of art, and considered poetics (means, forms, techniques of a particular art) to be the main one.

“The aim of art is to give a palpability to a thing, as a vision, not as a recognition; the technique of art is the technique of “ostranenie” (Translator's note: a process or act that endows an object or image with “strangeness”) of things and to make forms difficult, which increases the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception in art is an end in itself and must be prolonged; art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object, and the object is not important... The purpose of the image is not to bring its meaning nearer to our understanding, but to create a special perception of the object, to create a “vision” of it, and not a “recognition”, - stated one of the ideological inspirers of the formalists V. Shklovskii in the landmark publication “Art as Technique”, which became a kind of Manifesto for the OPOYAZ (Shklovskii, 1925). Following the principles of formalists, A. Gvozdev saw the content of theatrical action not in the idea, not in what was happening on the stage, but in the artistic features of the composition, theatrical techniques, entertainment methods, and so on.

The formation of A. Gvozdev's methods of work was significantly influenced by the work of the famous German drama theatre director and theatre theorist Georg Fuchs, whom A. Gvozdev mentions in his publications (Gvozdev, 1987, pp. 21, 177), and also refers to in his work “Revolution of the Theatre: History of the Munich Art Theatre” (p. 129). There is every reason to assume that this work played a significant role in the formation of A. Gvozdev's attitude to a dance as an important artistic phenomenon that deserves significant attention not only in the terms of its impact on the drama theatre, but as an independent perspective artistic phenomenon. After all, G. Fuchs attaches great importance to the rhythmic movements in the drama theatre, which is actually a dance – rhythmically organized movements in space as a desire for a harmonious union with the world. The German theatre theorist is interested in dance as a component of the cult actions of the ancient world, discovers the genetic connection of such rhythmic dances with the birth of drama, concludes: “We would like to determine that the drama, even in its most complex and spiritual expressions, is nothing but the rhythmic movement of the human body in space, which organically grew out from the movement of a festive crowd” (Fuchs, 1911, p. 78).

Fuchs understands that stage art comes from dance (well-known theories of the origin of a number of arts from syncretic forms of ancient folk acts, where dance movements played a significant role), natural expressive means of expression in dance are also natural for the actor, but the actor has a broader palette of dramatic play. At the same time, an actor “should never become a dancer in the literal meaning of the word” (Fuchs, 1911, p. 93). Fuchs also agrees with Goethe that the art of acting and the art of dance should develop in the same way (Fuchs, 1911, p. 103). And here there is a threat of unified approaches to the consideration of the mechanisms of the development of drama and ballet theatre, which were promoted by the theatre experts, not always distinguishing the culture of dance as a component of the acting art and choreographic art as an independent artistic phenomenon with its own stage laws.

Taking the Hellenic view of dance as a means of the body culture formation and its expressiveness, G. Fuchs (1911) states that “those who do not feel dance will never understand the real comedy or the real tragedy” (p. 105). Again, only the applied meaning of dance is cultivated as a way of educating a physical instrument of a dramatic actor and means of mass physical and aesthetic education. But G. Fuchs, recognizing the general cultural role of dance, noted that “without dance, without plastic gymnastics, which prepares for the art of dance, the real culture is absolutely unthinkable”, adhering to Furtwangler’s position on the necessary introduction of dance in the educational process, “unless we seriously strive to become a truly cultured people” (Fuchs, 1911, pp. 100-101).

German theatre critic, recognizing the independence of the expressive means of dance, believes that it is not a dramatic art, but only a sensual impulse, “which passes into dramatic action with the help of creative ideas and imagination, with the help of various plastic representations and intellectual moments.” He believes that “the theoretical question of the relationship between dance and stage art, between the style of one and the style of the other” is no longer relevant, since there are examples of their successful interaction in the work of dancers (Fuchs, 1911, p. 94).

G. Fuchs pays much attention to the dancer Madeleine, admiring her dramatic and choreographic talent, high strict performing style (Fuchs, 1911, pp. 94-103), laying the methodological foundations of creative portraits of ballet dancers, which influenced A. Gvozdev (for example, an article dedicated to M. Semenova) (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 203). Also A. Gvozdev (1987) spoke enthusiastically about A. Pavlova, noting: “She brought to life ballet criticism not only as a ballet dancer, but also as a dramatic actress. And since then, we had performances that brought together the attention of critics, but there was not any acting talent that would have sparked a lively discussion for and against” (p. 46).

G. Fuchs (1911) praises not only ancient dances, which are close to the natural rhythms of the body expression and free dance of contemporaries (Madeleine, Ruth Saint-Denis), but also treats the ballet theatre of the mid-late 19th century with piety, “when Pepita and Taglioni were the object of universal admiration, there were a lot of the friends of the theatre, who were able to feel the scenic values in all their immediacy and judge them properly” (p. 107), gets upset as to the fall of the old dance culture at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries: “If we go back two generations ago, we will see that the decline of criticism in the field of acting values is absolutely parallel to the fall of the old culture of dance” (p. 106).

G. Fuchs talks about working with ballet artists, indirectly outlining views on the renewal of the ballet theatre through getting rid of templates (“We have attracted ... young ballet students, in whom the template has not yet managed to distort the immediate freshness of the talent”), expressing confidence that the available knowledge and means will raise the art of ballet to a higher level (Fuchs, 1911, p. 233).

G. Fuchs’s views on the nature of dance, its place in the drama theatre, and the importance of ballet art were assimilated by A. Gvozdev, which was reflected in his critical articles and theoretical works on the issues of drama and ballet theatre in the 20s and early 30s in the USSR.

Using an article about A. Gvozdev from the Encyclopedia of Ballet, A. Bitov (2011) erroneously claims that “he was primarily a ballet critic”. Indeed, A. Gvozdev regularly appeared in the press with publications devoted to ballet, was the author of the article “Ballet” in the first edition of the “Great Soviet Encyclopedia”, and the editor of the first Russian translation of Jean-George Noverre’s Letters on Dancing and Ballets in 1927 (Degen, 1981), but did not specialize only in ballet, and was an apologist for drama theatre.

According to S. Mokulskii (1963), A. Gvozdev “always said that a theatre historian should be a theatre critic and participate in the construction of a socialist theatre culture. He himself set an example for his students and colleagues: in the great literary heritage left by him, about half of his works are newspaper and magazine articles on current issues of theatrical modernity, including reviews of performances of various genres (drama, opera, ballet, operetta, stage, circus, etc.). He was a theatre critic - demanding, strict, authoritative and a man of principle” (pp. 382-383).

Among the scientific works devoted to A. Gvozdev, a prominent place is occupied by the articles of A. Sokolov-Kaminskii, in which an attempt is made to identify the role of Gvozdev in the formation of the Soviet ballet. “This is undoubtedly one of the pillars of the special phenomenon of the Soviet ballet criticism, which was born in the 1920s, and, more broadly, the idea of ballet” (Sokolov-Kaminskii, 2019, p. 91). A. Sokolov-Kaminskii (2020) notes that A. Gvozdev introduced the issues of ballet theatre to the thematic circle of theatrical developments of the Institute of Art History (Leningrad) founded by V. Zubov, paid special attention to a dance in the context of drama theatre in a situation of crisis and loss of credibility. He also observes the influence of A. Gvozdev on the work of Yu. Slonimsky - one of the first brilliant ballet experts in the USSR (Sokolov-Kaminskii, 2019, p. 97).

In the situation of struggle with classical dance as a relic of the bourgeois past in the 1920s in the USSR, the denial of the development of ballet theater in the conditions of the proletarian state, criticism of A. Gvozdev, according to the fair statement of S. Mokulskii (1963), “was objectively directed against common in those years incorrect approach to the classical heritage, which prevented its real deep development” (p. 396). The article “Awakening of the “Sleeping beauty” (1924), criticizing the situation with a standard set of names of past ballets in the repertoire of the modern theatre (“Don Quixote”, “Le Corsaire”, “Swan Lake”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Nutcracker”, “Raymonda”, “Vain precaution”, “Coppelia”, “Petruška”, “The Firebird”), A. Gvozdev does not call for abandoning the “independently developed, well-established dance culture” (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 189), but draws attention to the inconsistency of the ballet theatre with the needs of the modern mass audience, the issue of the transformation of the ballets into Museum exhibits. Renewal, according to the critic, can only come from creative initiatives among artists, and not be imposed from above. A. Gvozdev (1987) believes that the ballet master’s experiments did not justify themselves, and one can only count on the studio activity of ballet youth, because “a young team full of brilliant opportunities”, and it is possible to overcome obstacles “through the collective creative effort of young forces” (p. 191). We can see here something similar with the G. Fuchs’s proposals to update the ballet theatre. But in the USSR ballet theatre in the mid-20s, the founder of the Leningrad theatre school sees the problem in providing the freedom to young people who are brought up in humility before the traditions of the past, their ignorance of new theatrical and musical trends, and the lack of opportunities for amateur studios (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 200).

A. Gvozdev supports the development of the dance expressive means, understanding the specifics of the classical dance and its potential as the main expressive means of ballet art, stands for “pure dance”: “the entire entourage with its Baroque and Rococo clothing is outdated and dilapidated, but the basis of classical ballet is the skill of an actor – dancer who has a self-sufficient dance culture, who thinks geometrically, or rather stereometrically, with the forms of his body as the only material of his profession – this basis is precious and deeply modern” (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 192). Again, we can talk about a parallel with the theoretical provisions of the G. Fuchs’s work regarding the independence of artistic means of dance art.

At the same time “Red Whirlwind” by V. Deshevov-F. Lopukhov (1924) A. Gvozdev considers as an adventure, surrender of the “classics before Dalcroze” (supporter of rhythmoplastic movement), which impoverishes the technical capabilities of the academic ballet (Gvozdev, 1987, pp. 200-201).

By emphasizing the self-worth and self-sufficiency of the choreographic art, it is worth mentioning the famous expression of V. Shklovskii, a kind of quintessence of formalism – “art is always not an inscription, but a pattern” (quote of Pesochinskii, 2004). Criticism of art “as a pattern” involves knowing the specifics of this type of artistic activity, searching for the adequate formulations for its analysis and evaluation.

Continuing to support “pure dance” while following the method of G. Fuchs in revealing the individual characteristics of ballerinas’ performing skills, A. Gvozdev in the article in honour of the fifteenth anniversary of artistic activity of E. Gerdt “the Art of pure dance” (1924), notes the features of her creative personality, which are revealed in the traditional way: “Gerdt... everything is enclosed in dance, and only in dance.... it is remarkable that, using the absolute, pure language of dance forms, Gerdt achieves the expressiveness everywhere. In the purity of technical performance of a rapid, fast tempo... a powerful dance temperament is exposed, not external, natural, but created on the basis of true skill, as an organic result of the reincarnation into the dance element. Exceptional softness of movements, absolutely free from the slightest shades of sweetness, allows the artist to develop a subtly nuanced range of lyrical moods... the complete clarity of plastic postures produces the material from which the severe expressiveness and weight of the whole image is created” (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 196). Poetic metaphorical and associative analysis implements one of the main criticism requirements – the selection of the unique means to characterize the choreographic art, created as if following the instructions of V. Shklovskii.

In addition to the fact that A. Gvozdev stands for the preservation and development of classical dance, he is aware of the importance of purity of style and technical perfection, which becomes possible by irreproachable performing skills (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 197). In contrast to G. Fuchs, who recognizes the positive and negative aspects of variety shows, their right to preserve their own qualities, and moreover, advocates strengthening the expression of the essence of the variety shows, thanks to the increase in the artistic level (Fuchs, 1911, p. 227), A. Gvozdev is quite critical of the variety art, focusing on its eclecticism and harmful effects on ballet artists, citing the example of Viktorina Kriger (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 199).

A. Gvozdev gradually abandons formalistic ideas, accusing the ballet “Ice Maiden” in the production of F. Lopukhov to the music of E. Grieg (1927) in a purely formal combination of movements (“naked

form, although updated with acrobatic techniques”), which he recognizes as a fault of the “old” ballet, puts forward requirements for content, emotional expressiveness, drama (Gvozdev, 1987, pp. 209-210).

In the middle of 1927 A. Gvozdev, in accordance with changes in the ideological attitudes of the state and the beginning of the struggle against “bourgeois formalism”, changes his rhetoric and accuses F. Lopukhov of being afraid to realize the class nature of ballet, of developing “pure dance”, of using pantomime without leaving the platform of classical dance, and in general of being closed in a circle of “pointless formal searches”, which, according to the theater expert, “has lost its viability” (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 212). And if in 1924 he was afraid of Dalcroze’s influence on the ballet theater, now he recognizes the positive development of the acrobatic dance as a method of “banishing the techniques of classical aesthetics” and “rapprochement with modern physical culture” (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 212).

From the promotion of the sublime, “immaterial”, romantic nature of the ballet theater, theater critic comes to the denial of special aesthetic, calling it “nonsense”, classical dance - formal, purely decorative art, and now sees the only value of it in the physical, purely technical basis, welcomes the use of acrobatics (Gvozdev, 1987, pp. 220-221).

Another marker indicating a change in the aesthetic priorities were statements about the ballet dancer, who should be an actor concerned “primarily with the content of the action depicted by him, rather than purely formal tricks” (Gvozdev, 1987, p. 218).

G. Fuchs (1911) emphasized the importance of the professional aesthetic criticism for the development of the theatrical art, which performs evaluative and regulatory functions (pp. 279-283). A. Gvozdev went from recognizing the role of aesthetic criticism as an important component of the creative process in the early 20s to focusing in 1928 on the sociological aspects of ballet criticism: the need to study a new audience, considering its requirements based on the historical experience (Gvozdev, 1987, pp. 216-217).

Conclusions

Despite A. Gvozdev’s considerable theatrical creative work, it is impossible to underestimate his role in the critical and theoretical ballet discourse of the 20-30s in the USSR, since A. Gvozdev’s works reflect the aesthetic concepts of the development of ballet practice at that time, having influenced the formation of the theory and criticism of the Soviet ballet.

The formation of the formalistic views of A. Gvozdev was influenced by the ideas of the OPOYAZ (V. Shklovskii). The theatre critic, following the principles of the formalists, saw the meaning of the theatrical action not in the content and ideology, but in its artistic features (means, forms, techniques, etc.). In critical statements about ballet performances he uses, according to V. Shklovskii’s instructions, metaphorical and associative word constructions, which are adequate formulations for the analysis and evaluation of the choreographic art.

The works of the German theatre critic G. Fuchs also had an influence on the formation of work methods of A. Gvozdev. Among the general intentions: support for the development of dancing means of expression; the understanding of the specifics of classical dance and its potential as the main means of expression of the ballet art; prospects for attracting young people to the ballet renewal. Different views on the variety art: A. Gvozdev saw its harmful influence on ballet artists, and G. Fuchs defended the professional development and strengthening of the expression of the essence of the variety shows.

The changes have been taking place in A. Gvozdev’s artistic and aesthetic approaches to the evaluation of ballets until 1927: he makes accusations of pointless formal search in classical dance, the only value of the latter, in his opinion, is technicality and physical culture; adheres to the position of rejecting the ontological romantic features of classical ballet, asks for content, emotional expressiveness, drama, elimination of the class privilege of ballet. He moves from the aesthetic to the sociological nature of criticism.

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БАЛЕТНА КРИТИКА ОЛЕКСІЯ ГВОЗДЄВА

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Мета статті полягає у з'ясуванні основних аспектів критично-оцінної діяльності О. Гвоздева у 20-х рр. ХХ ст. у сфері балетного театру СРСР, виявленні зовнішніх впливів на неї. Методи. У процесі дослідження застосовано комплекс наукових методів: аналіз літератури та джерел; порівняння основних підходів до розгляду танцю Г. Фукса та О. Гвоздева; історичний метод – задля вивчення виникнення та еволюціонування концептуальних поглядів щодо розвитку балетного театру у критичному доробку О. Гвоздева. Наукова новизна. Вперше проаналізовано критичні публікації О. Гвоздева у 20-х рр. ХХ ст. в СРСР в аспекті зміни основних естетичних позицій щодо розвитку балетного театру, впливу на театрознавця художньо-естетичних концепцій та персоналій. Висновки. Праці О. Гвоздева 20-х рр. ХХ ст. в СРСР, відбиваючи тогочасні естетичні концепції розвитку балетної практики, вплинули на становлення теорії та критики радянського балету. На формування формалістичних поглядів О. Гвоздева вплинули ідеї ОПОЯЗу (В. Шкловський). Театрознавець, наслідуючи принципи формалістів, зміст театрального дійства вбачав не в змістовності та ідейності, а в художніх особливостях (засоби, форми, прийоми тощо). На формування методів роботи О. Гвоздева також вплинули праці німецького театрознавця Г. Фукса. Серед спільних інтенцій: підтримка розвитку власне танцювальних виразних засобів; розуміння специфіки класичного танцю та його потенціалу як основного виразного засобу балетного мистецтва; перспективність залучення молоді на шляху оновлення балету. До 1927 року відбувається зміна художньо-естетичних підходів О. Гвоздева до оцінки балетів: висуває звинувачення у безпредметних формальних пошуках у сфері класичного танцю, єдиною цінністю останнього вважає технічність та фізкультурність; пристає на позицію відмови від онтологічних романтичних рис класичного

балету, вимагає змістовності, емоційної виразності, драматизму, позбавлення від класової привілейованості балету. Переходить від естетичної до соціологічної природи критики.

Ключові слова: критика балету; Олексій Гвоздев; балет; Георг Фукс; формалізм; хореографія; танець

**БАЛЕТНАЯ КРИТИКА
АЛЕКСЕЯ ГВОЗДЕВА**

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Цель статьи состоит в выяснении основных аспектов критически оценочной деятельности А. Гвоздева в 20-х гг. XX в. в сфере балетного театра СССР, выявлении внешних воздействий на нее. Методы. В процессе исследования применен комплекс научных методов: анализ литературы и источников; сравнение основных подходов к рассмотрению танца Г. Фукса и А. Гвоздева; исторический метод – для изучения возникновения и эволюционирования концептуальных взглядов на развитие балетного театра в критическом наследии А. Гвоздева. Научная новизна. Впервые проанализированы критические публикации А. Гвоздева в 20-х гг. XX в. в СССР в аспекте изменения основных эстетических позиций по развитию балетного театра, влияния на театроведа художественно-эстетических концепций и персоналий. Выводы. Работы А. Гвоздева 20-х гг. XX в. в СССР, отражая тогдашние эстетические концепции развития балетной практики, повлияли на становление теории и критики советского балета. На формирование формалистических взглядов А. Гвоздева повлияли идеи ОПОЯЗа (В. Шкловский). Театровед, следуя принципам формалистов, содержание театрального действия видел не в содержании и идейности, а в художественных особенностях (средства, формы, приемы и т. д.). На формирование методов работы А. Гвоздева также повлияли труды немецкого театроведа Г. Фукса. Среди общих интенций: поддержка развития собственно танцевальных выразительных средств; понимание специфики классического танца и его потенциала как основного выразительного средства балетного искусства; перспективность привлечения молодежи на пути обновления балета. К 1927 году происходит изменение художественно-эстетических подходов А. Гвоздева к оценке балетов: выдвигает обвинения в беспредметных формальных поисках в сфере классического танца, единственной ценностью последнего считает техничность и физкультурность; переходит на позицию отказа от онтологических романтических черт классического балета, требует содержательности, эмоциональной выразительности, драматизма, избавления от классовой привилегированности балета. Переходит от эстетической к социологической природе критики.

Ключевые слова: критика балета; Алексей Гвоздев; балет; Георг Фукс; формализм; хореография; танец