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**PETER STEIN'S
THEATRE AESTHETICS**Iryna Ivashchenko^{1a}, Viktoriia Strelchuk^{2a}¹Associate Professor, Honoured Artist of Ukraine,

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The purpose of the article is to reveal the specifics of P. Stein's direction in the context of the master's experiments with various types of theatre aesthetics in a historical retrospective on the examples of the performances of *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus, *The Three Sisters* by A. Chekhov, *Faust* by J. Goethe, etc. Research methodology. Making fair sense of the stated issue, the article applies the method of historicism and the problem-chronological method to study the development of the P. Stein's directing method in the historical retrospective; the method of comparative analysis, the purpose of which is to compare the techniques and methods of P. Stein's directing in the process of staging multi-layered plays; the systemic method, which helped to consider director's theatre of P. Stein as an integral artistic system; the method of art history analysis and genre-typological method to identify the features of the director's methodology and the use of expressive means by the master in the process of working on performances, etc. Scientific novelty. The article has studied the aesthetic aspects of P. Stein's theatre directing in the context of the dynamics of the development of the artist's idiom. Theatre direction by P. Stein is considered as a unique type of aesthetic activity, one of the attributes of which is "the aesthetics of thinking" (according to M. Mamardashvili), which provides the perception culture of dramatic material and the artistic taste of the staging. Conclusions. The study revealed that P. Stein's work is characterised by theatrical aesthetics like ancient theatrical art, medieval mysteries, Renaissance art, Elizabeth Theatre, W. Shakespeare's plays, psychological realism by K. Stanislavski, plays by A. Chekhov, as well as postmodern structures of drama. Aesthetic reorientation of P. Stein's work is manifested in the tendencies of attitudes towards the textual basis, the strengthening of the polysemantic and polyphonic components of the performance, ambiguity and understatement, despite the clarity and thoughtfulness of stage decisions, the interpretation of classical theatrical works. In the 21st century, P. Stein has transformed the traditions of naturalistic theatre and "new drama" into the energy of total stage mastery.

Keywords: Peter Stein; directing; theatre aesthetics; experimental productions; text; metaphorization

Introduction

The research of the features of the directing activity of the leading modern masters of the West European theatre scene, the revelation of the originality of author's idioms and uniqueness of personal world views, which gives extraordinariness to their productions are actual directions of national Art Studies of the 21st century, which cause particular research interest.

The creative activity of one of the leading West European theatrical figures German director Peter Stein is theoretically and practically significant in the context of the history, theory and practice of European performing art, to the experience of which the national producers turn traditionally.

The analysis of researches and publications has shown that the peculiarities of P. Stein's theatrical directing, despite the great interest of Ukrainian art critics in the theoretical and practical experience of West European theatrical figures of the second half of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century, have not got appropriate scientific attention. The considerable attention has been paid to various aspects of P. Stein's work by foreign researchers, in particular L. Galletti (2014) *Aeschylus' Oresteia According to Peter Stein: History of a Staging* (1974-1994), V. Koliazin (2015) *Peter Stein Stages Kleist*, L. Ulberte (2006) *The Model of Bertholt Brecht's Theatre in the Stage Productions of Peter Stein* ("Bertolta Brehta teātra modelis Pētera Šteina iestudējums") and others. Nevertheless, the theatre aesthetics issue of one of the world's leading directors of the second half

of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century deserves more detailed study from the standpoint of modern art history.

The scientific novelty of the article is that there is the attempt to identify the specific features of P. Stein's directing in the context of changes in theatre aesthetics of the second half of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century in national Art Studies for the first time. The comprehensive analysis of the specifics of P. Stein's direction of this period contributed to the objective assessment of his creative activity and the identification of the influence on the pan-European theatrical process.

In terms of the metacategory "aesthetic", which determines the variety of expressive forms, on the example of P. Stein's staging, the tendencies of transformational processes of stage direction in the space of various aesthetic systems (aesthetics of Art Nouveau and Postmodernism) are revealed, the change of which is caused by principal changes of sociocultural nature.

Purpose of the article

The purpose of the article is to reveal the specifics of P. Stein's direction in the context of the master's experiments with various types of theatre aesthetics in a historical retrospective; to describe the unique directorial methodology, the artist's terms of reference and stylistics on the examples of the performances of *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus, *The Three Sisters* by A. Chekhov, *Faust* by J. Goethe, etc.

Main research material

P. Stein's (1937 birth year) stage direction is characterised by ambitious experiments in the process of searching for his theatre aesthetics. Having debuted in 1966 on the stage of the Munich Theatre with the play *Salvation* by E. Bond, the director worked at the Bremen Drama Theatre for the next few years, having turned to classical works for educational purposes (in his opinion, the conflicts of that time can be explained by limitations and inaccuracy of historical and aesthetic knowledge) and made productions of *Love and Intrigue* by F. Schiller (1967) and *Torquato Tasso* by J. Goethe, in which he represented a unique author's vision of the interrelation between history and modernity. The director's unwillingness to integrate into the state system and its dispute with the quartermaster of the theatres of Bremen K. Hubner made P. Stein and a group of actors leave the theatre. In 1970, the municipality of West Berlin invited him to head the Schaubühne Theatre. Thanks to P. Stein's innovative vision achieved by the productions of *Peer Gynt* by H. Ibsen (1971), *Poor Heinrich Kleist's Dreams of the Prince of Homburg* by H. von Kleist (1972), *The Optimistic Tragedy* by V. Vyshnevskiy (1972), *Summerfolk* by M. Gorky (1974), plays by contemporary German and French playwrights B. Strauss, B.-M. Koltès and others, it became one of the most famous European theatres for the next twenty years. The director aspired to combine mind and feelings in a single-stage space organically, engaging intelligence into the emotional holiday.

P. Stein made compensation for the lack of theatrical education in his work with knowledge of Art History and German philology. The researchers of P. Stein's work emphasise that during different periods of his work, the director focused his attention on the study of drama of a particular style or author, consistently experimenting with the aesthetics of different types of theatre. L. Ulberte (2006, p. 351) claims that P. Stein's early work is characterised by the use of the principles of Brecht's epic theatre both in content and form. According to the Latvian researcher, P. Stein knew Brecht's theoretical principles not directly, but indirectly through Brecht's actor Fritz Kortner. Two productions of the Munich Chamber Theatre in 1968–1969 Brecht's *In the Jungle of Cities* and P. Weiss' *Discourse on Vietnam*, continue the traditions of the political theatre started by E. Piscator in the 1920s and soon theoretically expanded by B. Brecht and revived in the 1960s by leading representatives of the German documentary play. At the same time, according to the researchers, P. Stein was not very attracted to revolutionary ideas, respectively, the productions in which the director focused on solving universal and social issues, using the techniques of epic theatre and drama of a different type were more interesting. In particular, L. Ulberte (2006, p. 352) emphasises that the most conceptual works of the epic period of P. Stein should be considered J. Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* (1969) and Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg*, which purpose was to represent how social rules prevailing in society affect human behaviour. However, according to V. Koliazin (2015, p. 162), the concept of the play *Poor Heinrich Kleist's Dreams of the Prince of Homburg* showed a shift of emphasis from the principles of the political scene (the director avoided consideration of such topics as authoritarianism and freedom, discipline or anarchy) to the liberal democratic theatre: "Stein has finally put the poet Kleist ineffige "dreamy and seen in a dream" Prince in the

centre of the play, pushing aside the prince-electors with the inevitable theme of the argument about the greatness of Prussian ideas”.

German critics identified the play *The Prince of Homburg* (a romantic drama and at the same time a romantic comedy “about a poet whose happiness can only come true in a dream”) (Hensel, 1972) as the third theatrical triumph of P. Stein after *Tasso* and *Peer Gynt*, emphasising the sophisticated vocabulary of the performance, which reflected the romantic world of the poet harmoniously, the language of very dense and wide artistic associations (associations with Nike, who puts a wreath on a winner’s head, Pieta, the symbols of Prussia from the time of Scharnhorst, with Caspar David Friedrich’s *The Monk by the Sea*, which provided the basis for a wide variety of figurative solutions) (Lothar, 1972). Literary critic H. Mayer (1972) emphasises the echoes of *Wallenstein*, *Tasso* and *Hamlet*, as the original source is permeated with “functional quotations”, defining the director’s decision “to show the process, the dynamic connection between a particular author, a contemporary of Kleist and his dramatic work as a work based on literary experience on stage” as excellent (p. 12).

The European theatre of the 1950s and 1980s is, at first glance, an extremely colourful picture of the ideological and aesthetic searches of representatives of various fields and professional level, imitators of the traditions of theatrical art and true innovators. However, according to modern researchers, the searches of the atrial figures indicates the presence of some common tendencies of development in world theatrical culture.

M. Shvydkoi (1991) claims that in the last decades of the 20th century, there were changes in world view and aesthetic approaches to some fundamental problems of human being that remained in the centre of attention of theatre culture. The researcher emphasises that P. Brook created the figurative formula of many plays of the West European theatre of the 1960s of the 20th century “the hostile world was falling on the hero, trying to suppress and destroy him. The decorative ornamentation and painting were removed from the stage ruthlessly. The hard and cruel, the indifferent world demanded human sacrifice, at first it was the opposite of human nature, the image of society, as a rule, constructed of inorganic materials, replaced nature” (p. 41). The change in views happened in P. Stein’s play *Summerfolk* by M. Gorky extremely noticeably, which was staged by the director in the early 1970s in West Berlin Schaubühne, contrasting the beauty of the surrounding world and nature with the abomination and vulgarity of human relations, presenting the animal principles of human essence to the audience.

According to the researchers, P. Stein, as one of the leading directors of world theatre, who is fluent in left-wing radical stage vocabulary, did not consider the legacy of the 1960s as the only source of creativity or an embodied “cultural layer” outside of which creativity cannot be discussed. In the striving for a certain metatheatricality that absorbs all the heritages, not limiting himself to a single method or style, the director passes freely from postrealism (A. Chekhov’s play *The Three Sisters*) to neoexpressionism (E. O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape*) or rational anarchism (B.-M. Koltès’ *Roberto Zucco*).

The creative state of the Schaubühne Theatre troupe in the 1970s was distinguished by the craving for search and increased interest in aesthetics issues (Koliazin, 2017, p. 21): W. Shakespeare’s dramas determine the theatre repertoire *As You Like It* and *Hamlet* (K. Gruber’s production), plays by Aeschylus, P. Marivo, J. Genet, *Trilogy of the Reunions*, *Big and Little* by B. Strauss, *Neither Fish Nor Flesh* by F. Kroetz.

In 1979, P. Stein staged *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus, which marked the peak of one of the fundamental stages of the director’s work and the Schaubühne theatre troupe. L. Galletti defines this production as a part of the path of research of the classics, started by the director in his work on the plays *Peer Gynt* by H. Ibsen, *Torquato Tasso* by J. Goethe, *The Prince of Homburg* by H. von Kleist. In his opinion, this project is perfect for the atmosphere of experimentalism, in which the formation and development of the director idiom of leading figures of the theatre scene of the last third of the 20th century take place: *Orlando Furioso* in E. Sanguineti and L. Ronconi’s adaptation (1969), who suggested a new interpretation of space and text; *Orghast* is a joint project of P. Brook and T. Hughes, representing the result of long-term researches and experiments with language (1971); *My father’s House* by the avant-garde theatre group from Denmark Odin Teatret (1972), aimed at the final destruction of the boundaries between the spectator and the actor (Galletti, 2014, p. 259). The premiere of the play took place at the Schaubühne theatre in 1980, and then on the world’s leading stages, reaching its apotheosis on the stage of the Red Army Theater in 1994 when *The Oresteia* found itself in a context extremely similar to that in which it was produced for the first time in 458 BC (Avezzi, 2003, p. 142).

P. Stein emphasises that the choice of the tragic trilogy of Aeschylus (*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe*, *Electra*) was prompted by structural (the only work that has reached us in full) and literary character (arises from the decoding of Aeschylus poetics, in which the director identifies a strong connection with myth and ritual sources of the genre of tragedy), and the most important – by the inherent tendency of the work to the historical rationalisation of the text, which tells about the passing from a “primitive” system of judgments to

a civil one: “the meaning is that what the work tells about the birth of assembly, democratic judgment very naturally” (Arditti, 2001, p. 89).

The director, in collaboration with the set designer K.-E. Herrman, having reviewed the sources of Western theatre, striving for “finding clear and simple aesthetic forms to talk about complex things” (Arditti, 2001, p. 89), has made an unusual and at the same time colossal production of *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus – nine hours of continuous play – in aspire to suggest the audience to live the day of performances in the context of the Dionysian agonies, choosing a political discourse on the birth of a democratic order.

P. Stein changes the relationship between the stage and the auditorium to restore discourse in its diachronic ways. For example, the use of machine space offers an incentive to explore the nature of theatre, its relationship to ritual and the evolution in three ways that are the separate tragedies of the trilogy. For example, the first tragedy takes place in a hall, the darkness of which is cut only by particular rays of light and the dim light of torches brought by the choir. The epicentre of the action is a table placed in the middle of the corridor, around which people dressed in grey shabby coats and hats of the 1950s move: “their barely visible in the dim light silhouettes move, pulling a kind of web that lures a spectator into a peculiar acoustic trap and allows hearing distant and close voices” (Arditti, 2001, p. 90) – these sounds reveal the secret of the tragic text, known and unrecognisable at the same time (the director transforms the auditorium into a place of speech and listening).

The director gives the top place to the text, choosing the path of not adaptation of the ancient text to the modern era, but rather a flat and linear interpretation of Aeschylus, which emphasises inconsistencies, and not hides them, and also makes a spectator comprehend the complexity of such work (for example, preserves Greek terms in the final text, striving for using the hidden sound-imitating and hereditary potential, that embodies the boundaries of confrontation with a distant reality, the impossibility of finding a dead language in German).

Emphasising that an ancient tragedy, plays by W. Shakespeare and A. Chekhov are the basis of European theatre, in 1982 P. Stein began preparation for the staging of the play *The Three Sisters*, positioning the Russian playwright as the only (appreciating Goethe at the same time) “ideal and the model worthy of imitation” (Shtein, 1999, p. 487).

The researchers claim that philology and textual criticism “Stein-director’s favourite feature” (Koliazin, 2017, p. 22) acquired thorough and refined character in the artist’s creative process, which manifested in a profound study of the era, the drama structure, the fulfilment of the comparative analysis of various translations, work on vocabulary, the creation of an original director copy of the translation and the preparation of a peculiar “Chekhov’s vocabulary” for actors, which should have contributed to complete disclosure of Chekhov’s style and its organic expression on the German stage (Koliazin, 2017, p. 23). The master creates the play, the leitmotif of which is the theme of human boredom for a meaningful life, the existential tragedy of human being. In 1989, P. Stein staged A. Chekhov’s play *The Cherry Orchard*, which singles out by complicated, polyphonic direction, ambiguity, maximum historicity and modernity.

One of the characteristic features of the director’s creative idiom is the observance of the principle of inviolability (in some cases literal and without any cutting down) of the author’s text – the primary literary source of the dramatisation.

In 2000, on the stage in Hanover, as a part of the program of the world exhibition EXPO-2000, P. Stein directed the most extended stage production of the full text of Goethe’s *Faust* (22 hours), levelling the traditional perception of the work as an array of dramatic text, from which the director highlighted the lines necessary to illustrate his creative idea. The director focuses not on the interpretation of the text of the work as the only recognised monument of German language culture and one of the most popular myths, but on the specifics of its “playing out”. According to theatre critics, Stein’s main desire was to convey the entire text of Goethe, because the interpretation of separate characters, described extremely traditionally, according to the laws of declamatory romantic theatre, as well as changing the play spaces do not help to reveal the director’s idea.

The study revealed that P. Stein’s work is characterised by theatrical aesthetics like ancient dramatic art, medieval mysteries, Renaissance art, Elizabeth Theatre, W. Shakespeare’s plays, psychological realism by K. Stanislavski, plays by A. Chekhov, as well as postmodern structures of drama. At the beginning of the 21st century, P. Stein, a representative of the unique creative generation of theatre directors, transforms the traditions of naturalistic theatre and “new drama” into the energy of total stage mastery.

Conclusions

The study revealed that P. Stein’s unique theatre aesthetics, which combines the work of the artist and the research aspirations of the philologist, formed following the dynamics of the director’s creative search (the

range of authors, interests and styles from specific political theatre to grandiose stage epics), is distinguished by a wide range of creative approach to the subtleties of the preparatory period, thoroughness and refinement of the practice of working on texts, a tangible German component based on the foundations of European theatre (aesthetics of antiquity, Shakespearean and Chekhov drama).

P. Stein's work is characterised by the aesthetic reorientation. In particular, innovation is manifested in the tendencies of attitude to the textual basis, strengthening of the polysemantic and polyphonic components of the play, ambiguity and understatement, despite the clarity and thoughtfulness of stage solutions in the interpretation of classical theatrical works.

The perspective for further research is to identify the specifics of the mise-en-scène drawing of P. Stein's productions at the beginning of the 21st century.

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ТЕАТРАЛЬНА ЕСТЕТИКА ПЕТЕРА ШТАЙНА

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Мета статті – з'ясувати специфіку режисури П. Штайна в контексті його експериментів з різними типами театральної естетики в історичній ретроспективі на прикладі вистав «Орестея» Есхіла, «Три сестри» А. Чехова,

«Фауст» Й. Гете й ін. Методологія дослідження. Для об'єктивного осмислення заявленої проблематики застосовано такі методи: історизму та проблемно-хронологічний – для осмислення розвитку режисерського методу П. Штайна в історичній ретроспективі; порівняльного аналізу, метою якого є зіставлення прийомів та методів режисури П. Штайна в процесі постановок різнопланових п'єс; системний – для розгляду режисерського театру П. Штайна як цілісної художньої системи; мистецтвознавчий і жанрово-типологічний – для виявлення особливостей режисерської методології та використання майстром засобів виразності в процесі роботи над виставами та ін. Наукова новизна. Досліджено естетичні аспекти театральної режисури П. Штайна в контексті динаміки розвитку його творчого почерку. Театральну режисуру митця розглянуто як унікальний вид естетичної діяльності, одним із атрибутів якої є «естетика мислення» (за М. Мамардашвілі), що передбачає культуру прочитання драматургічного матеріалу та художній смак постановника вистави. Висновки. Виявлено, що для творчості П. Штайна характерне активне звернення до різних театральних естетик – античного театрального мистецтва, середньовічних містерій, мистецтва Ренесансу, елізаветинського театру, драматургії В. Шекспіра, психологічного реалізму К. Станіславського, п'єс А. Чехова, а також постмодерністичних структур драми. Естетична переорієнтація творчості П. Штайна проявляється в тенденціях ставлення до текстової основи, посилення полісемантичної й поліфонічної компоненти вистави, неоднозначності й недовомовленості, незважаючи на чіткість і продуманість сценічних рішень інтерпретації класичних театральних творів. У ХХІ ст. П. Штайн перетворює традиції натуралістичного театру та «нової драми» на енергію тотальної сценічної майстерності.

Ключові слова: Пітер Штайн; режисура; театральна естетика; експериментальні постановки; текст; метафоризація

ТЕАТРАЛЬНАЯ ЭСТЕТИКА ПЕТЕРА ШТАЙНА

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Цель статьи – выяснить специфику режиссуры П. Штайна в контексте его экспериментов с различными типами театральной эстетики в исторической ретроспективе на примере спектаклей «Орестея» Эсхила, «Три сестры» А. Чехова, «Фауст» И. Гете и др. Методология исследования. Для объективного осмысления заявленной проблематики применены такие методы; историзма и проблемно-хронологический – для осмысления развития режиссерского метода П. Штайна в исторической ретроспективе; сравнительного анализа, целью которого является сопоставление приемов и методов режиссуры П. Штайна в процессе постановок разноплановых пьес; системный – для рассмотрения режиссерского театра П. Штайна как целостной художественной системы; искусствоведческий и жанрово-типологический – для выявления особенностей режиссерской методологии и использования средств выразительности мастером в процессе работы над спектаклями и др. Научная новизна. Исследованы эстетические аспекты театральной режиссуры П. Штайна в контексте динамики развития его творческого почерка. Театральную режиссуру мастера рассмотрено как уникальный вид эстетической деятельности, одним из атрибутов которой является «эстетика мышления» (по М. Мамардашвили), что предусматривает культуру чтения драматургического материала и художественный вкус постановщика спектакля. Выводы. Выведено, что для творчества П. Штайна характерно активное обращение к разным театральным эстетикам – античного театрального искусства, средневековых мистерий, искусства Ренесанса, елизаветинского театра, драматургии У. Шекспира, психологического реализма К. Станиславского, пьес А. Чехова, а также постмодернистических структур драмы. Эстетическая переориентация творчества П. Штайна проявляется в отношении к текстовой основе, усилении полисемантической и полифонической компоненты спектакля, неоднозначности и недоговоренности, несмотря на четкость и продуманность сценических решений интерпретации классических театральных произведений. В ХХІ в. П. Штайн преобразует традиции натуралистического театра и «новой драмы» на энергию тотального сценического мастерства.

Ключевые слова: Петер Штайн; режиссура; театральная эстетика; экспериментальные постановки; текст; метафоризация