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# From utopia to ideology

## 1920s theatre studios in Ukraine

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When the theatrical neo-avant-garde swept the European and the North American arts scene in the 1960s, one notable feature of this movement was the advent of innovative ideas from the informal environment of studio theatres and workshops<sup>1</sup>. The-then stage rebels preferred to organise new associations of a clearly non-commercial nature, whose main aim would involve searching for new artistic forms and expression as well as changing the very lifestyle of creative personalities.

Yet, the underlying phenomenon of theatre studios itself was hardly new. For many innovators of the time, including such heavy-weight figures as Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, the studio experience of their long-gone predecessors, avant-garde artists of the 1920s, proved pivotal and fundamental. In later years, and perhaps most visibly around the new millennium, theatre practitioners could be seen actively turning to the same experience again, as if to find their way out of the creative crisis. Overall, theatre studios and workshops of the 1920s have effectively served a fitting model of creative laboratories to several generations of artists, including a modern-time cohort of renowned Ukrainian directors, such as Volodymyr Kuchinsky who created and launched the famous Les Kurbas Theatre Studio (Lviv) in the late 1980s.

Researchers of the 1920s artistic processes have not failed to note the above time linkage between the-then creative studios and those emerging in the 1960s<sup>2</sup>. Also, some authors have focused in their studies on theatre workshops that were known to develop individual avant-garde concepts, constructivism in particular<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, the involvement of theatre studios and workshops in the wider cultural, social and non-artistic processes has remained for the most part outside researchers' attention. The latter appears to have been concentrated almost exclusively on studios and work-

1. Drawing actor Hnat Ihnatovych as the Son of the Billionaire in *Gas and Worker* in *Zhovten* (October), creator Olena Kryvynska, 1923. Berezil Artistic Association. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv



<sup>1</sup> See G. Berghaus, *Neo-Dada Performance Art*, [in:] *Neo-avant-garde*, Ed. D. Hopkins [et al.], Amsterdam - New York 2006.

<sup>2</sup> See K. Osińska, *Russkiye konteksty tvorчества Kantora*, "Voprosy teatra" 2008, No. 1/2, pp. 301-316.

<sup>3</sup> See Ch. Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, New Haven - London 1983; M. Zalambani, *L'Arte nella produzione. Avanguardia e rivoluzione nella Russia sovietica degli anni '20*, Ravenna 1998.



<sup>4</sup> **B. Groys**, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die gespaltene Kultur in die Sowjetunion*, München-Wien 1988.

<sup>5</sup> See **Ch. Innes**, *Avant-garde Theatre 1892-1992*, London - New York 1993; **G. Berghaus**, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde*, New York 2005.

shops as creative incubators, whose unique experience has not lost its relevance even a hundred years after. Consequently, their apparent role of social molecules absorbing and broadcasting the moods of the “roaring” 1920s has yet to be properly explored.

Actually, analysing the functioning of theatres and studios of the 1920s solely from the viewpoint of creative tasks does not provide a full picture. After all, one of the most important strategies of avant-garde art in general, according to Boris Groys, was the effective transformation of reality, carried out through a change in the usual life formats, through the so-called life-building<sup>4</sup>. While the ideas of avant-garde life-building were declared and implemented in artistic and literary circles, it was thanks to the proliferation of theatre studios, their truly mass appeal, that they received collective approbation. In essence, the studio as an association of creative like-minded people of the 1920s was also acting as a collective of active social reformers and utopians who aimed to build a new world.

Utopian thinking, as well as their involvement in politics, was a typical phenomenon to avant-garde theatre and artists in many countries<sup>5</sup>. However, in the Soviet Union – which at the time included Ukraine as its part – the political loyalty to the authorities from someone creating avant-garde predetermined his or her success as an artist. This circumstance led to the fact that studios in Ukraine of the 1920s, while clearly being associations of like-minded creators, as well as inspired social reformers, also became active propagandists of political ideas. Their involvement in life-building, social processes and politics allows us to call them active and influential social molecules.

### **In the beginning**

Although the studio movement flourished in the first half of the 1920s, its origins can be traced to the global organisational changes in the theatrical and, more generally, artistic life of a much earlier period. Even before the First World War, artists and writers, along their admirers from among those who rejected the established norms and rules applied to the arts sphere, had begun to establish fundamentally new associations that had nothing to do with traditional repertory theatres and enterprises. At that, despite the innovative aspirations held, for example, by the creators of “Theatre Libre” (1887) or entrepreneur Sergei Diaghilev, performance and its commercial success – as an outcome of such activities – would remain the priority goal in both cases.

But with respect to actor’s and dance studios that mushroomed in the mid-late 1910s, the situation was totally different. To founders and participants of these studios, the process of creation was more important than its result, the latter including even a reception of the

shown performance by the audience, while their obvious preference for expressly ascetic lifestyles would almost be the norm.

One of the brightest representatives of such creative laboratories and among those who impacted the global artistic environment was the Émile Jaques-Dalcroze Institute in Hellerau near Dresden (1906–1914). The sole performance by the Institute, of Gluck's *Orpheus*, was presented to the public in 1912 and 1913 and instantly became mythologised as a phenomenal, exceptionally innovative piece of art. Taking place in the vast-sprawling space under the theatre's dome, that performance made a grandiose impression on the audience – and not only thanks to its unusual and complex set-design. The attendance may have been quite small but most spectators were said to be amazed at the level of technical skills displayed by the performers – Dalcroze's students, who subsequently popularised their teacher's artistic ideas the world over.

Like the Dalcroze Institute, most of the studios and workshops of this kind were guided by clearly defined and programmatically manifested tasks. Their activities were positioned as an alternative to official and traditional schools and colleges, with the education process conducted according to a special author-designed curriculum. As studio students were taught to develop creative free-thinking, they were strongly encouraged to use improvisation and their own imagination to generate new ideas and, therefore, not depend on the old rules.

In terms of their organisational system, such studios (also known as author's studios) had a number of other noteworthy peculiarities. Not everyone was accepted there as a student – only those like-minded, devoted to the master's cause and in agreement with his or her ethical and aesthetic principles. As for the profile of studio attendees, they were adult, relatively self-sufficient and, as a rule, well-educated people not necessarily keen to become professionals in the arts sphere. At the same time, there was practically no tuition fee, or it was paid in the form of voluntary contributions and other material "assistance". Most importantly, studios' creative quests would take place hermetically, as it were, and whenever such quests were made public, it was as if the studio was performing a sacrament.

The widespread likening among pundits of the 1910s studios to monasteries gives an idea of how isolated those studios must have been from contemporary social and political processes<sup>6</sup>. It was precisely this isolation that characterised, for example, the well-known First Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre at that point in time – some ten years before the studio was transformed into a repertory theatre and became famous thanks to actor Mikhail Chekhov. The same detachment from the outside world was typical of such popular Kyiv-based studios as the Theatre Studio of Stanislava Wysocka (best known for being attended by writer Yaroslav Ivashkevich) and the Theatre Academy (where another would-be star, this time of local si-



<sup>6</sup> See K. Osińska, *Klasztory i laboratoria. Rosyjskie studia teatralne: Stanisławski, Meyerhold, Sulerzycki, Wachtangow*, Gdańsk 2003.

2. Poster of performances *Ruhr* and *Zhovten* (October), 1923, Workshop No. 1 by Berezil Artistic Association. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv



lent movies, Ksenia Desna, graduated from), as well as the art workshops of Alexandra Exter (1918) and Heorhii (Hryhorii) Narbut (1920).

Relatively isolated and closed in this respect were even such Kyiv-based studios as the Young Theatre (1916–1917) headed by Les Kurbas and the School of Movement (1919–1921) of Bronislava Nijinska, where the foundation for novel approaches to the education of artists and dancers were being laid. Thus, the events of the First World War found no reflection at all in the activities of the Young Theatre studio, while in Nijinska case everything that was connected with official authorities caused irritation and fear.

The 1910s studios served an important formative stage in the careers of their founders, who could thereby put to real probe their pedagogical skills and experience, along with helping their students develop as creative personalities. However, there was not much to show in terms of direct stage output. For example, throughout the whole period of the studio's existence Kurbas made with his students only one theatrical performance, of Volodymyr Vynnychenko's play *Bazar* (Market, 1917), whereas Nijinska could present to the public just a few dance concert numbers prepared by students of her own (1920). In both cases, the main achievement appeared to lie in the working out of special training systems. This apparently took most of the creators' time and effort, given that Kurbas and the studio team spent two full years rehearsing Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* – only to stage it after the Young Theatre studio had closed (1918) – while Nijinska needed to develop several versions of her treatise<sup>7</sup>.



<sup>7</sup> See M. Ratanova, *The Choreographic Avant-garde in Kyiv: 1916–1921: Bronislava Nijinska and Her École de Mouvement*, [in:] *Modernism in Kyiv: Jubilant Experimentation*, Ed. I. R. Makaryk, V. Tkacz, Toronto 2010.

### The boom years

Significant changes in the nature of the studio movement began to emerge at the outset of the 1920s. The typical studio that used to function as a kind of closed community tended to be replaced by a workshop open to everyone who was interested and, thus, uniting like-minded people ready to actively promote the studio and themselves rather than just seek aesthetic values. These changes seemed to indicate that author's workshops had ceased to be marginal islands of the art life and turned instead into more or less full-fledged agents of the social processes. Whereas the founders of the 1910s' studios used to self-impose mostly, if not exclusively, creative tasks that would in effect be devoid of commercial considerations, the 1920s were about to see newer studios positioning themselves as influential "social molecules" capable to transform the world.

One illustrative example of such a transformation of the studio movement is the changeover undertaken by Les Kurbas. Intent on reincarnating the above-mentioned studio "Young Theatre" in 1920, he wrote the following about his early studio experience:

The main positions of the studio have remained the same as in the past period:

(1) The studio is not a school, because any school is something temporary that can be "finished", whereas (our) studio is impossible to finish, since being in the studio, like creation, has no end and eventual completion. Whenever the studio ends, there comes an end to creation and attack. The studio assigns itself with the task of inspiring creation and showing endlessly new ways and possibilities;

(2) Thanks to the special organisation of work, where all the initiative belongs to students themselves, everyone must display maximum self-made



<sup>8</sup> L. Kurbas, *Nezalezna studia pry Molodomu teatri u Kyive*, [in:] *Molodyi teatr. Heneza. Zavadannia*. Shliakhy, Ed. M. Labinskii, Kyiv 1991, pp. 59–60.

<sup>9</sup> See N. Yermakova, *Berezil's'ka kul'tura: Istorija, dosvid*, Kyiv 2012.

<sup>10</sup> See I. Makaryk, *Shakespeare in the Undiscovered Bourn: Les Kurbas, Ukrainian Modernism, and Early Soviet Cultural Politics*, Toronto 2004; N. Kornienko, *Les Kurbas: Repetycija majbutn'oho*, Kyiv 2007.

<sup>11</sup> L. Kurbas, *Shliakhy Berezolia*, “Vaplite” 1927, No. 3, p. 160.

action and contribute something eternally individual. Our studio will respond to every new breath of the new art, to every new creative word, as a result of which it will never stop dead in its tracks, as it happened with almost all drama schools where learning replaced creation and the “fixed” worldview of a director shackled the diversity of artistic possibilities<sup>8</sup>.

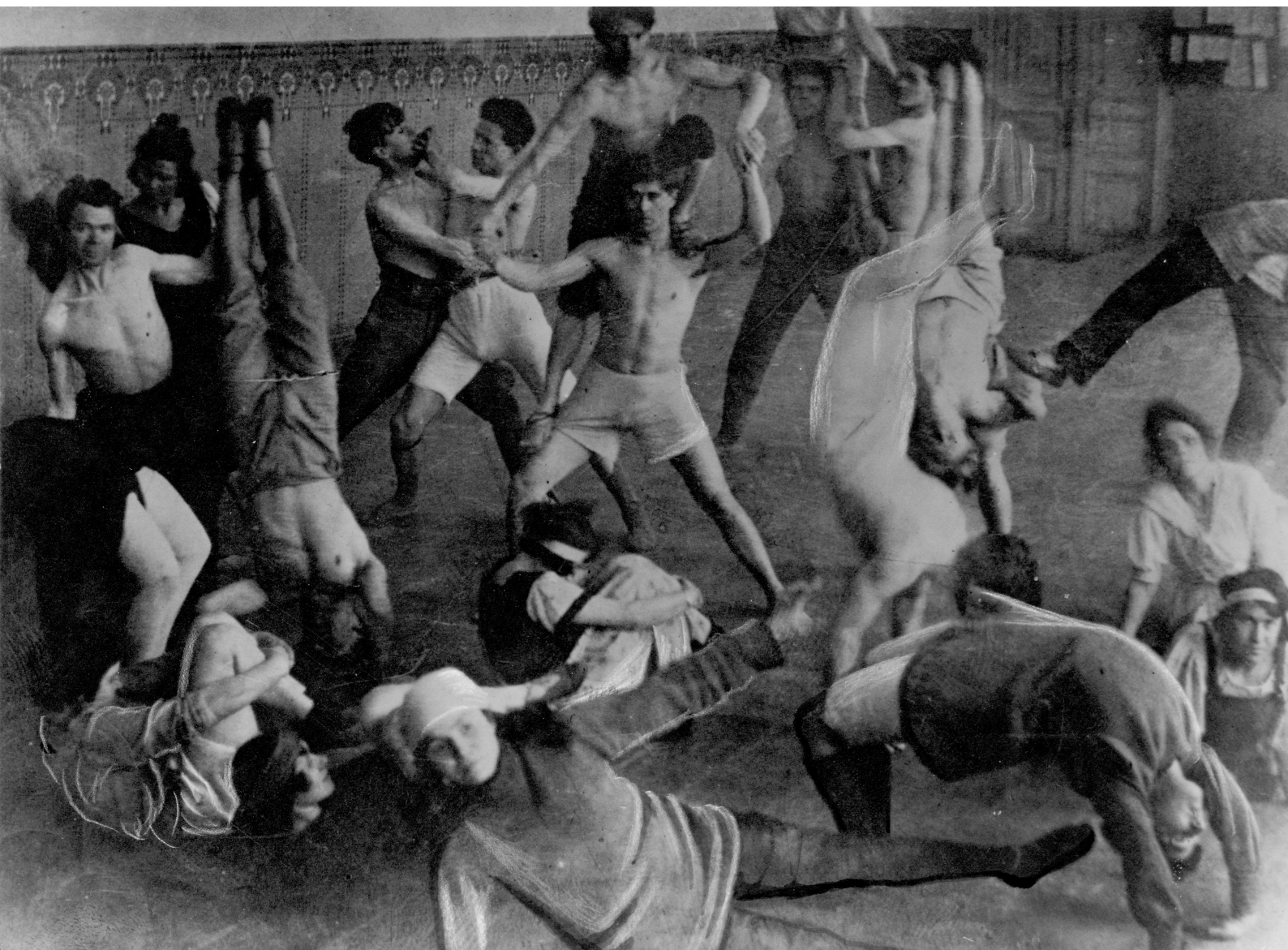
Yet, the attempt to revive the studio of the Young Theatre failed amid the war-inflicted political turbulence of 1920–1921, and Kurbas was able to return to his idea only at the beginning of 1922. In March of that year, he and some of his like-minded colleagues come up with a completely new format of creative workshops: an entity that would be gigantic in embrace and mass-like in terms of membership. More specifically, he founds a whole bunch of studios and laboratories united into what becomes the *Mystetske Obiednannia* “Berezil” (MOB, the Berezil Artistic Association).

Unfortunately, only a few studies point out to the fact that the MOB – or Berezil of the Kyiv period, as it is alternatively referred to – was actually not a theatre, but a unique studio conglomerate that had accumulated and transformed the experience of many Kyiv studios of the 1910s, including those of Exter, Narbut and Nijinska<sup>9</sup>. Also, in exploring the Berezil heritage, researchers most often overlook the social tasks that were set to this conglomerate of studios by the director himself<sup>10</sup>. After all, as Les Kurbas wrote:

Berezil is a revolutionary theatre not only in the formal sense, but first of all in the social sense. As a consequence of this, Berezil has never focused solely on its direct artistic produce, but has all the time tried and still tries in its work to cover all areas of theatrical culture and impact them. Therefore, in the first years of its existence, relying on the enthusiasm of its employees, Berezil forms six workshops where to raise a new breed of young actors and a new directorship<sup>11</sup> [Fig. 1].

Quite remarkably, the MOB of 1922–1926 had an intricate structure of branches, which to the bargain happened to be adjusted from time to time. Thus, at the peak of its activity that came in 1923–1924, the MOB included six actor workshops operating in Kyiv and other cities, Odesa in particular, as well as a range of what was called “stations” and “commissions” (such as the museum commission and the one bearing the adjective “psycho-technical”), in addition to standard technical laboratories (phono- and photo-ones). Besides, the MOB had at its disposal the so called director’s laboratory (later renamed into the director’s headquarters), plus such specialised workshops as the drama workshop, the set-design workshop (headed by Alexandra Exter’s student Vadym Meller), and the choreographic workshop (managed by Bronislava Nijinska’s student, Nadia Shuvars’ka).

The bewildering organisational complexity described above may look overblown today, but at the time it was clearly supposed to re-



3. Rehearsal of the show *Miracle Workers*, dir. Stepan Bondarchuk, 1924–1925, Odesa Theatre Workshop by Berezil Artistic Association. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv





4. Scene from the show *Miracle Workers*, dir. Stepan Bondarchuk, 1924–1925, Odesa Theatre Workshop by Berezil Artistic Association. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv



<sup>12</sup> V. Tkacz, *Les Kurbas and the Actors of the Berezil Artistic Association in Kiev*, "Theatre History Studies" Vol. 8 (1988), p. 139.

flect the kind of innovative thinking the MOB architects had arrived at. In discussing Berezil of the Kyiv period, one researcher of Kurbas and his theatre explains the director's rationale on the MOB's structure as follows:

Kurbas envisioned the Berezil as an organization that would unite all theatre artists. It would produce plays, but also develop theatre research, conduct experiments and study all the related arts. It was to be the universal Ukrainian theatre center which would create the new revolutionary theatre, a laboratory that would develop new forms and bring them to life. But first the "new man", the new Berezil actor, had had to come into being. Kurbas chose to begin with only the youngest actors who were still very pliable and had not acquired any stage habits. They became Berezil's First Studio and Kurbas developed his system of training actors with them<sup>12</sup>.

The proclamation by Kurbas of the need for theatre workshops to cultivate a "new actor" and a "new person" became a logical key

task set to the 1920's studios at large. Such slogans were neither an exception nor accidental, since avant-garde theatre managers and directors chose to be guided by the-then dominant ideological concept of art as a reflection of social reality. This concept was based on the assertion that art constituted an integral part of human existence and, therefore, was not so much an aesthetic as a social phenomenon.

But the avant-garde's ideology line did not stop there and then. As if to deepen the art-is-a-social-reality postulate, there came another utopian concept, of the so called life-building through art, as developed by revolutionary theoretician Boris Arvatov. And this was what appeared to have inspired the 1920's theatre studios to proclaim their tasks of social reconstruction even more intelligibly. Thus, loud discussions that flared up in the local art community at the tail end of 1922 revealed an increasing popularity in the avant-garde theatre circles of the following idea:

The stage is a space where the actor has always played life, representing it, reflecting and producing it. Now it is necessary to use this space consciously and in a completely industrial way. It is necessary to finally erase the boundaries between the performance and life<sup>13</sup> [Figs. 3–4].

Berezil was among the first to formulate its artistic mission along such lines. With the MOB workshops launched in March 1922, it began to act in that direction well before the above theoretical discussions arose. The process of “life-building” – that is the formation of a new personality through art – took place simultaneously on two levels, intellectual and physical. Besides, unlike the artistic leanings of the 1910s studios, their “life-building” was not hermetic. On the contrary, thanks to the gigantic size of the MOB and the respective scale of its activities, the process involved an unusually great number of people – and, what was especially novel, not only the studio members themselves but the audience as well. This involvement of “masses” was also facilitated by the de-facto existence of a kind of Berezil fan club, which seemed to embrace all sorts of like-minded people, including writers and musicians as well as even army officers and politicians from among that vast non-art part of the audience [Fig. 5].

The popularity of the MOB studios was widespread and particularly apparent in Kyiv, Bila Tserkva, Odesa and Boryspil. In these cities and towns, young people of different social groups, nationalities and religious affiliations would come to the studio speaking Ukrainian, Russian, Polish or Yiddish. All this was leading to ever more people being drawn into the “new” theatre and, ultimately, “new” life, which worked to make the MOB quite an influential, truly public organisation. At that, incredibly enough, most of the studio members had practically nothing to wear, except for a pair of shoes and a shirt: they lived in a commune sharing meagre meals and very



5. Premiere poster performance *Miracle Workers*, author of the logo: Vadym Meller. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv



<sup>13</sup> M. Zalambani, *op. cit.*, p. 162.



<sup>14</sup> Kh. Tokar, *Studia "Berezil" L. Kurbasa. "Rur", "Proletarskaia pravda" 1923, No. of 1 March, p. 2.*

modest facilities but were still eager to participate in the “creation” of art. That brand of the avant-garde art was as productive an activity to them as any other economic activity providing values that had never existed before. And at the end of day, this was actually what allowed Kurbas and his team to position their art as an exceptionally useful social activity [Fig. 6].

The first public presentation of what the MOB had to deliver as its new output did not take long to prepare. In early November 1922, the workshop named the First and considered to be experimental showed the composition *Zhovten* (October) with the eloquent sub-heading “Three Pictures of Struggle and Victories. A few months later, next February, the same studio presented *Ruhr*, a spectacle dedicated to the revolutionary events of 1918-19 in Germany. In both cases, the performances in question were a propaganda product made on the basis of scripts written collectively by the studio members. They were shown in workers’ clubs and barracks, as well as in the open air, on an impromptu stage made up of the bodies of two trucks [Fig. 1].

Even so, judging by his own statements, Kurbas perceived the campaign-like objectives of these works as a requirement of time and the circumstances. Above all, Kurbas seemed to be concerned about how the content was presented, something that became a transformative factor both for those who used it, that is the actors, and for the audience. For example, his “Ruhr” was staged as a series of pantomime episodes of the allegorical nature, one of which featured Death playing cards with Capital. Here is what one of the critics who had eye-witnessed the performance wrote in this respect:

The Ruhr tragedy, as thought out and played by the director and the studio members, is constructed in such a way that it is native to the same Red Army soldier for whom it was made and for whom it is intended. This is not a crude propaganda splint but an artistically done work that influences through its action, not propaganda wordplay<sup>14</sup>.

### **The end of utopia**

The discussed “life-building” or what actually looked more like a socialisation through art, was at the first stage quite a successful project of the 1920s, at least to a good many young people who believed in social utopia. After all, similar processes drew not only members of Berezil, but also those participating in the studios created by the Jewish art association Kunst Vinkl and the Kyiv workshop run by one of Vsevolod Meyerhold’s students, Alexei Smirnov, someone who had proclaimed that the body of an actor was the most perfect instrument.

It is also apparent that the studio movement allowed the “new personality” to grow up in a truly new, socially, ethnically and reli-



6. Scene from the show *Zhovten* (October), dir. Les Kurbas, set design Vadym Meller, premiere on 7 November 1922, Berezil Artistic Association. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv

7. Petro Masokha and Nadiia Tytarenko in the *Death Dance*, scene from the show *Riff-Raff*, dir. Yanuarii Bortnyk. 1926, Berezhil Artistic Association. Photo: Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematic Art of Ukraine, Kyiv



giously diverse environment. For example, one participant of the Alexei Smirnov studio, the heiress of an old noble Ukrainian family, Tatyana Tarnovska, married the son of a Jewish merchant, Alexei Kapler. Later on, Tarnovska surfaced as a short-lived movie star, while Kapler briefly joined some obscure futurist group before making a career in cinematography himself. Eventually, Kapler became best-known for his romance with Stalin's daughter, as a result of which he spent a big part of his life in prison camps.

Yet, for all the good start in the early years of the decade, the studio movement was about to undergo a major change again. The change had much to do with the evolving ideological environment, since by around mid 1920s social utopia as a school of thought had found itself in danger of being replaced by ideology. Although indirectly and mostly post-factum, contemporary scholars recognised that danger for a fact. Thus, in his 1929 work “Ideology and Utopia” philosopher Karl Mannheim pointed to the need to differentiate between utopia and ideology in that ideology, unlike utopia, was based on hypocritical perceptions of varying degrees. Therefore, concluded Mannheim, whereas utopia can get transformed in relation to reality, by opposing to the latter, ideology can not<sup>15</sup>.

The authorities’ incorporation of ideology, through the institute of commissars, into the activities of art studios and workshops led to all creative laboratories and, first of all theatre laboratories – because of their scale and influence – being essentially re-profiled and re-launched as propaganda entities. Carried away by social utopianism, Kurbas, like most of his students, found that kind of transformation hard to accept and continued to explain his own experimental activity by the desire to improve reality:

Does our cultural psychological reality satisfy us though? Do we have the right to reduce our activity, do we have the right to go stable in art? There is a certain reality and there is a need to change it. This is not leftism of the type proposed by Arvatov, who, with his artistic attitudes from the time of war communism, still remains in the role of a cabinet doctrinaire out of touch with life. No, this is the attitude that is dictated by the specific situation in the development of our cultural and social forms<sup>16</sup>.

It seems, however, that Kurbas had clearly overestimated the importance of creative studios and their potential to the government, or at least their initiatives to transform reality. In the spring of 1926, with one stroke of a pen, the Ministry of Education liquidates the MOB, and with another, establishes a new repertory theatre in the city of Kharkiv. The theatre is called simply Berezil (otherwise known as the Berezil Theatre) and supposed to follow ideological guidelines set out by the communist authorities.

But even then, Kurbas did not perceive the forced reorganisation of the MOB as a defeat; to him, it was only a transition to a different phase of “life-building”, with new opportunities and a new type of studio work lying ahead. In 1927, while in Kharkiv already, he declares the need to open, at the Berezil Theatre, a school studio – in order, in his words, “to put the education of young directors on a more solid footing”<sup>17</sup>. In essence, Kurbas calls for a return to the traditional type of training workshops at theatres, which would entail a wrap-up of the mass studio movement [Fig. 7].



<sup>15</sup> K. Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie*, 8th Ed., Frankfurt am Main 1995.

<sup>16</sup> L. Kurbas, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 164–165.

In sum, the 1920's theatre studios, and especially the MOB, were clearly intent on making not only an aesthetic revolution but also a social revolution, the one which was to be subordinated to the idea of transforming reality. This new mission of the theatre art won the admiration and support of studio participants, thereby contributing to the remarkable popularity of studios themselves and, perhaps most importantly, turning theatre workshops into a social molecule filled with unreserved optimism. The same social component of studio activities, combined with the spirit of revolutionary freethinking, proved a powerful impetus for creative innovation. Without the kind of mass participation in studios that was achieved, without the inspiration that came from social utopia, many artistic discoveries made by the avant-garde theatre would have hardly been possible.

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**Słowa kluczowe**

warsztaty, pracownia teatralna, ideologia, Łeś Kurbas

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**Keywords**

workshops, theatrical studio, ideology, Les Kurbas

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### Summary

**HANNA VESELOVSKA (National Academy of Arts of Ukraine) / From utopia to ideology. 1920s theatre studios in Ukraine**

The article analyses the origination of theatre studios in Ukraine and the peculiarities of their functioning in the 1920s. The author focuses on the social aspects of the studio movement, highlighting its mass character and the remarkable diversity of people involved in the studios' creative process. These features were represented best, in the author's view, in the activities of *Mystetske Obiednannia Berezil* (MOB, The Berezil Artistic Association), a conglomerate of studios and workshops founded by director Les Kurbas. Discussed in detail are the MOB's complex organisational structure, its artistic goals, particularly those based on postulates of social utopia, as well as the main studio performances staged by Kurbas.