

**HEROIZATION OF THE YOUNG GUARDS' FEAT IN THE STAGE PRACTICE
OF LUGANSK THEATERS
AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE HISTORICAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF THE REGION**

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In the world philosophical and aesthetic tradition, the idea of a hero as a spiritually and physically perfect person who, performing a feat, becomes the personification of worthy behavior has been formed. In a feat, the inner strength, strong-willed and moral qualities of the individual, the ability to rise above the ordinary, to destroy the boundaries of the possible are most clearly manifested. An analysis of the historiography of Lugansk theaters allows us to state that the ideological context of the time determined the repeated appeal of Lugansk theaters in the Soviet period of their formation to the heroic theme. The historical self-identification of the region led Lugansk directors to turn to the historical events that took place in the Lugansk region during the Civil War, the Great Patriotic War.

The article examines the problem of the heroic personality of the Young Guard through the prism of director's work, which is a category of feat, which is determined by a set of personal properties.

The study provides an analysis of the creative practice of Lugansk theaters of the 20th century. and modernity from the standpoint of understanding the feat of the Young Guard. It is noted that the historical self-identification of the region led the Lugansk directors to turn to the historical events that took place in the Lugansk region during the Great Patriotic War, as a result of which the performances "The Young Guard", feat of the youth.

Key words: Lugansk theatre, performance, Young Guard, Young Guard feat, historical self-identification

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Introduction

One of the major principles of the repertoire policy of Lugansk theaters of the 20th century was an idealization of the *heroic* concept transmitted mainly through the heroic-patriotic orientation of performances in which optimism, romantic revolutionism, and massive involvement come to the fore. The significance of these fundamental characteristics of the repertoire intensified during the Great Patriotic War with the depiction of the national struggle against fascism and the sacrificial feat of the people on the battlefields and in the rear to overcome severe hardship. Moreover, the suffering of the Soviet people became a powerful factor of emotional impact on the audience with the objective of uniting them in the name of defending the Motherland.

The relevance of this study lies in the sociohistorical transformation that gives impetus to cultural creativity. For 8 years, the armed conflict involving Lugansk and the Donetsk People's Republic has influenced the modern culture of the region. Historical events and sociocultural

phenomena have become the subject of modern reflection due to their significance in the self-identification of residents of the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR).

Research methods

This study used a methodology of complex analysis, which mainly involved historical, cultural, and local history methods. On this basis, it traced the problem of heroism in regional theatrical culture.

Historical background

An indisputable fact of the theatrical culture of the Lugansk region is the direction of the repertoire policy, which focuses on the events of the Great Patriotic War, due to military events occurring on Lugansk territory. German invaders occupied the region, and the civilian population experienced the full extent of Nazi aggression. The miners of the Lugansk region demonstrated high levels of patriotism and dedication, exceptional courage, and heroism during the war years at the front and at the

mine face. In August 1941, the formation of the 395th Rifle Division was initiated in Lugansk.

The memorialization of the Great Patriotic War is, thus far, the most important aspect of the public consciousness of LPR residents. From the view of this study, this notion is also induced by the fact that the Lugansk territory is the homeland of the Young Guards, who is the clearest example of patriotism and the ideal of service to the Motherland and of sacrifice in the name of the Great Victory formed in the context of Soviet ideology. The current times confirm the relevance of the feat of the underground youth organization called Young Guard.

Notably, a play based on A. Fadeev's novel also entitled "The Young Guard" was first staged in Lugansk in 1947 by the Russian and Ukrainian drama theaters of the city. Individual chapters of the first edition of the novel were published in Soviet periodicals in 1945. In 1946, the novel was published as a separate book.

In his dissertation entitled "Two Editions of A. Fadeev's Novel 'The Young Guard.' Historical and Figurative Accents" researcher O. G. Manukyan notes that the first edition posed a few inaccuracies the most obvious of which was the narrative on the death of the party underground team prior to the emergence of the underground youth organization Young Guard. Based on a comparative analysis of the two editions of A. Fadeev's novel, the scientist concludes that in the second edition, the writer revised the role of the *adult* underground and strengthened the image of its district leader Lyutikov. Meanwhile, the main storyline, that is, the depiction of the underground activities of the Young Guard and the heroic images of its members, remained unchanged [6].

According to scientist M.N. Lipovetsky, the tragic aspect manifests itself in the implementation of the deep aspiration of the Young Guard heroes to self-sacrifice. However, this story does not fit the framework of a literary text, which, thereby, transformed them into martyred heroes in which death and suffering, which are given as a reward for a life lived with dignity, elevate the heroes to the rank of *immortals* [5].

According to O.L. Pogodina-Kuzmina, A. Fadeev created a "pantheon of saints of the new era" [8]. The type of hero who met demise for the sake of peace and justice, as stated by A. Fadeev, becomes

relevant in the art of socialist realism as part of the ideological system of the country. The characteristic features of the hero's image, such as determination, asceticism, self-sacrifice, fortitude, and willpower, were the foundation of the newly created world.

Arguing against the falsification of the facts of the underground youth organization, K. Ivantsov emphasizes that "... the novel has everything: purity, faith, feat, love, struggle, courage, dream, hope" [2, p. 142].

Russian researcher S. Yu Smirnov bitterly states that heroization is occurring in the consciousness of modern Russian society. However, it targets the heroes of the Great Patriotic War instead of those of the October Revolution and the Civil War, because the events of this specific historical period form a space of *information confrontation*. According to the scientist, heroization occurs through various technologies by leveling a heroic deed, belittling a heroic act by silencing it, discrediting the personality of the hero, and satirizing his image [11]. Thirty years ago, Kim Ivantsov noted that the deheroization of the feat of the Young Guards, which is a distortion of our past, is being undertaken with the aim of depriving the country of its heroic history. As a result, the younger generation will be deprived of an example to follow [2].

The team of the Russian Drama Theater was seriously prepared for creating this performance. The authors of the play were director P. Monastyrsky and artist A. Chechin. Images of young underground heroes depicted young artists of the troupe. Critics noted the masculinity of the performance, that is, its exciting feature, which was created by the realistic description of events combined with the heroic-romantic tone of their representation. The performance was striking in its massive scale (more than 40 artists were involved) with an interesting musical solution based on the works of P. Tchaikovsky, D. Shostakovich, and T. Khrennikov. For this reason, the story about the Krasnodon youth acquired the power of generalization. At the end of the final scene, the spectators stood up and honored the memory of the heroes [1].

Theater management decided to feature the premiere performance in the homeland of the Young Guards in the city of Krasnodon. Not only the fellow countrymen of the heroes were present among the audience but also the mothers of

executed underground fighters U. Gromova, I. Zemnukhov, S. Tyulenin, L. Shevtsova, and I. Turkenich, as well as a member of the Young Guard named O. Ivantsova.

In parallel with the Russian Drama Theater in 1947, which selected the vector of heroic themes, the Ukrainian Musical Drama Theater took on the novel by A. Fadeev "The Young Guard." Director N. Makarenko staged the play based on the first edition (without party instructions) of the novel about the Krasnodon underground fighters. The actors of the troupe repeatedly traveled to Krasnodon and Rovenki to meet the parents of Young Guard members. Elena Nikolaevna Koshevaya, the mother of Oleg Koshevoy, served as the consultant for the performance [4]. The artistic design by B. Volkov and the brilliant direction by N. Makarenko rendered the performance deeply heartbreaking. Especially, the performance sounded especially painful and relevant during the years of mourning in Krasnodon in which the Nazis tortured the children. The performance of the Lugansk Ukrainian Theater in Young Guard in 1947 became a cultural event not only in the Lugansk region but also in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The reason is that the production of the play, which was based on the novel by A. Fadeev, was performed in Kiev (director G. Yura) and Moscow (director N. Okhlopkov of the Mayakovsky Theater).

On the 30th anniversary of the Krasnodon epic, in 1972, the Lugansk Russian Drama Theater again turned to A. Fadeev's novel "The Young Guard." To stage the play, the theater management invited the famous Ukrainian director (Honored Artist of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) A. Barseghyan. The director had experience in staging The Young Guard at the Kyiv Theater for Young Audiences (1964). This work by A. Barseghyan was awarded the Lenin Komsomol Prize.

Realizing that the material taken as the genetic memory of Luhansk residents impresses an indelible mark in their hearts, Director A. Barseghyan prioritized the storyline of their lives and victories over the enemy instead of the death of young underground fighters with a focus on the scale of artistic generalization and authenticity.

The play intended to evoke compassion and horror from viewers for the sake of soul purification using figurative enlargements, vivid comparisons, animated sculptural groups, and plastic constructions of mise-en-scenes. The director consciously introduces the method of repetition

into the text of the play to impart expressiveness to the action, in which the oath of the Young Guard was repeated three times at the most climactic moments: solemnly for the first time, courageously the second time after the execution of communists, and, toward the end, similar to a testament for the third time.

I. Davydova characterizes the interpretation of A. Barseghyan's Young Guard as follows:

The main element of the visual image is the scarlet banner, the names of the underground fighters inscribed on the screensavers, the road. The edge of the blue sky, the silhouette of the mine, the famous "Grieving Mother" stele, the music of D. Shostakovich, the song "Young Guard," the sounds of the "Internationale," the Ukrainian melody, the eternal flame merge into a single image of the performance. It, like the acting performance, was distinguished by romantic elation, spirituality, great sincerity, revealed the nature of the heroism of the Young Guards, revealed their mental world [1, p. 38].

The theme of the Krasnodon "Young Guard" continued the heroic pathos. However it was based on the play by Y. Stelmakh "Ask the Herbs Someday" instead of the novel by A. Fadeev. Generating the performance of the Lugansk Ukrainian Musical and Drama Theater (1983) was difficult.

The tragedy, written by the playwright in 1979 and first staged by the Lugansk theater in 1983 (the theater turned to this play for the second time in 2002), represents a fundamentally new interpretation of the play about the feat of the Young Guard, which has important sociocultural and political significance. The Ukrainian playwright presents his artistic version of the feat of our young fellow countrymen. Based on the novel *The Young Guard* by A. Fadeev and Ya. Stelmakh created the tragedy-reflection "Ask the Herbs Someday," in which, due to the genre decision and use of figurative techniques and stylistic elements, a fundamentally new interpretation of the heroic deed of the *Young Guard* is revealed. Stelmakh, in an effort to reveal new aspects of the lives of young heroes and display the heroic features of the characters, explored the formation of heroic traits. However, the author consciously refused to depict episodes of the feats of the undergrounders, their arrests, and the absurd failure of the organization;

instead, the playwright focuses on the scenes of the life and behavior of the heroes after the arrest and the moments when they are hanging between life and death. The reason is that under such an extreme scenario, the complex processes of the final determination of moral laws or their destruction occur. The author is uninterested in the external signs of conflict or the actions of the heroes but in the most subtle psychological nuances of their lives, such as their thoughts about the present and the future, extreme love for life, and undisguised feelings, all of which gave them faith in victory over the enemy. The release of the play coincided with the 40th anniversary of the creation of the underground youth organization.

According to the intention of director A. Bondarenko, this speculation is about the *Young Guard* and the origins of the heroic. The play does not retell the story of the creation of the underground organization in a chronological sequence of events but forces viewers to penetrate into the essence of the feat of the young people and to understand where and when the seeds of betrayal grow. This performance was awarded a diploma from the Ministry of Culture of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Central Committee of the Leninist Young Communist League of Ukraine.

The production of Y. Stelmakh's play "Ask the Herbs Someday" in 2002 was primarily a tribute to the memory of Lugansk residents for the heroic feat of their fellow countrymen on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the *Young Guard* [7]. Kharkov director N. Yaremkev (scenography by T. Medvid and musical design by G. Frola) created a surprisingly bright performance due to its innovative solution, which provided reasons for reflection and certainly caused catharsis. In a critical article on the play, literary critic M.M. Radetskaya defines its genre as "a philosophical and historical optimistic tragedy-speculation, a dialog between people of the forties and their descendants" [9]. The chronotope of the director's solution to the tragedy of the *Young Guards* as a global problem of the struggle of the high and heroic with the spiritual and ignoble is presented through the prism of modernity.

N. Yaremkev created a performance based on the principle of parallel editing in which a German director makes a film about the Krasnodon underground youth organization and plays the role

of a Schutzstaffel man, an antagonist of the moral laws of Soviet youth.

The performance is replete with the director's metaphors and symbols, which can be classified as follows: (1) scenographic (statics of permanent scenery: a mine pit, a *stopped* clock without a dial, and chains as an allegory of a prison), (2) plastic (social dances of pre-war girls and boys, figurative and plastic scenes of falls of beaten Young Guards, the *hellish* waltz-rhythmic movements of transfer of Lyubka by an SS man into the hands of an executioner, pantomime performed by victims and executioners with the ominous skeleton of Death rising above them), (3) sound-noise (silence and dripping water in a prison ward and a camera girl's clapstick, which are reminiscent of the link of times), (4) speech (the voice of the Young Guard team, which was created on the basis of the functional principles of the chorus of an ancient tragedy; vivid lyrical and philosophical dialogues of lovers Vanya Zemnukhov and Klava, for whom the dream of life and eternal happiness continues even in prison in the face of death), and (5) light (crimson sky and the flames of a fire, in which Lyubka sees herself as Joan of Arc in a scene of fantasy-delirium).

The masterful performances of young Luhansk actor A. Barkar (Oleg), Y. Simukhina (Lyubka), N. Kutova (Ulya), E. Merzlyakov (Sergey), A. Redi (Traitor) and stage masters A. Morozov, and A. Goncharov, among others, in combination with the philosophical direction of Kharkov director N. Yaremkev, condensed and compressed the chronotope of the events in the play. When the *actors*, having played their roles in the film of the German director, return to the auditorium, and the director returns to his chair, the audience realizes the timeless subtext of the biography of the *Young Guard* and its carriers of the idea of romantic youth immortality.

The authors of the rock opera entitled "Crucified Youth" proposed an entirely new interpretation of the history of the activities of the Krasnodon underground organization. The creation of a stage version of the nonchrestomatic visualization of the heroic deed of the *Young Guard* by the creative team of the Lugansk Academic Ukrainian Musical Drama Theater was dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the creation of the Young Guard. This is not a mere performance but a large-scale project, which, in our

opinion, poses an enormous sociocultural significance in the theatrical life of the Lugansk region. For the first time in the history of regional theatrical culture, the theme of the *Young Guard* is not merely based on the novel by A. Fadeev or a play by the Ukrainian playwright Y. Stelmakh, as was the case of various stages of the formation of the Ukrainian troupe. In 2012, fellow contemporaries, the Honored Worker of Culture of Ukraine V. Zaitsev (author of the libretto), Honored Artist of Ukraine Y. Dersky (composer of music,) and Honored Artist of Ukraine A. Yavorskiy (director) created a work unique in artistic qualities.

The rock opera “Crucified Youth” is a *musical story-pain* [10], which does not raise controversial historical issues, but universal human values come to the fore only with the help of compressed factual information enhanced by nonverbal texts of plasticity and choreography (by O. Tarasenko) along with the rock performance of voice parts that alternate with a lyrical solo (choirmaster I. Yusupova).

The heroic pathos of the rock opera “Crucified Youth,” which was filtered through the prism of the worldview of modern youth, is translated in the new edition of the play through a special theatrical language, primarily music, plasticity, and stage effects.

Notably, that in the author’s edition of the rock opera “Crucified Youth” in 2012, a storyline featured the characters Oleg Koshevoy, Ulyana Gromova, and other Young Guard as heroes. However, in the stage version of the play, which was restored to the repertoire of the theater after the events of 2014, no such storyline exists according to director A.N. Yavorsky. The director’s emphasis shifts toward historical facts, feats, and the readiness of young people to defend the Motherland.

In the system of life-meaning and moral coordinates embodied in rock opera, the major values are patriotism and heroism, which are antagonized by betrayal and cowardice. The specific theatrical language of the production onto the events that occurred in Donbass in 2014–2015 projected these fundamental concepts of the heroic.

The rock opera chronotope is its spatial-plastic system in which events transported viewers to a conventional place of action or fascist dungeons, which outline the time of action, that is, the last days of the Young Guards. “Crucified Youth” is a story about the feats of war heroes through the eyes

of the modern youth (young theater artists declare this notion from the stage at the beginning of the performance). The object of a rock opera is a heroic world recreated by the will of artists; this space is that of torture, which is terrifying in its reality; these are resurrected “human characters” that form a collective image of the hero of the “Young Guard,” that is, boys and girls who rebelled against fascism.

In our opinion, the force field as one of the means of artistic expression in “Crucified Youth” is a plastic solution that is complex, intense, and large-scaled in depth in the associative series and depicts mass choreographic scenes combined with dynamic plastic episodes. The antiheroes of the stage work are traitors, a gray mass that does not have its own face and hides it behind a mask with black gaps instead of eyes perhaps due to cowardice. Through their plasticity, they express an action specific and habitual for traitors called *snitching*.

A separate, independent element of the multilevel system of the Lugansk rock opera is a recurring character who leads the storyline and participates in the plot but is not the main character; they are typically called the Witness or the inevitable Fatum (Natalia Starodubtseva) [3]. The director of the play assigns this character not only the function of a narrator voicing archival documents; in certain scenes, this image is transformed and projected on a dynamic backdrop or a screen. The initial faceless spot on the screen in the background gradually *transforms* into the face of a woman. The viewer visually perceives the versatility of the screen in which an image of fire, excerpts from newsreels, and photographs of young guards replaces the female image. From this perspective, the exaggerated visual image of a woman transmitted through the screen is a collective image, namely, that of a mother who keeps an eye on the fate of her child hero and occasionally closes her eyes when witnessing the cruelty of fascists begins to hurt. Perhaps, this face is that of the Motherland, our long-suffering country.

The artistic director of the Lugansk Academic Ukrainian Musical and Drama Theater on Oboronnyaya, the People’s Artist of Ukraine, and People’s Artist of the LPR Mikhail Vasilyevich Golubovich calls the rock opera “Crucified Youth” one of the most iconic performances and the trademark of the theater team. Noting the enormous noble mission of the theater to educate, teach empathy, analyze, and think, M.V.

Golubovich, in discussing the “Crucified Youth,” emphasizes the immortality of the heroic deed of the Young Guard as follows

Years pass, and the greatness of the Young Guard’s feat becomes even more visible, even more significant. <...> The Soviet Union, the great state that raised the “Young Guard,” is absent on the world map for many years now, but the names of the boys and girls who sacrificed their youth in the name of the freedom of their country, in the name of humanity, will forever remain in history, in the grateful memory of their descendants. Death cut short their lives, but their feat remained immortal [7].

We agree with M.V. Golubovich that the words of one of the vocal parts of the rock opera “You are the forever young guard!” leave an indelible mark on the heart and convince the modern viewer of the relevance of the thesis: “Donbass is the land of unconquered people, Luhansk region is the land of heroes” [7]. Undoubtedly, the images created by the directors of the “Crucified Youth” are signs of a certain moral choice that the viewer needs to make. In addition, the process of moral personality formation occurs at the moment of catharsis in the chronotope of the rock opera.

Numerous road tours and high theater awards confirms the recognition of the unabated relevance of the heroic deeds of Young Guard heroes, which were recreated by Lugansk artists in the rock opera “Crucified Youth.” The Lugansk performance was

viewed by spectators in many cities of the LPR, Crimea, and the Russian Federation (i.e., Moscow, Penza, Voronezh, Bryansk, Rostov, Novocheerkassk, and Astrakhan).

Research results

The creative practice of Lugansk theaters under the Soviet artistic tradition focused on the creation of historically identifiable heroic events and images, which determined the repertoire policy and appealed to the themes of the Great Patriotic War. The analyzed performances recreate the heroic events of the Great Patriotic War and depict the national struggle against fascism, the sacrificial feat of the people, victory over difficult trials, and the suffering of the Soviet people.

Conclusions

The study concludes that a characteristic feature of the repertoire of Lugansk theaters with regard to the events of the Great Patriotic War warrants attention not only to the heroic feat of the Soviet people in the fight against fascism but also to the feat of Lugansk residents. The reason is that the Lugansk territory is the homeland of the Young Guards, who became the most evident example of patriotism and the ideal of service to the Motherland, including sacrifice in the name of the Great Victory.

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ГЕРОИЗАЦИЯ ПОДВИГА МОЛОДОГВАРДЕЙЦЕВ В СЦЕНИЧЕСКОЙ ПРАКТИКЕ ЛУГАНСКИХ ТЕАТРОВ КАК ПРОЯВЛЕНИЕ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ САМОИДЕНТИФИКАЦИИ РЕГИОНА

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В мировой философско-эстетической традиции сформировалось представление о герое как совершенном в духовном и физическом плане человеке, который, совершая подвиг, становится олицетворением достойного поведения. В подвиге наиболее ярко проявляется внутренняя сила, волевые и моральные качества личности, умение возвыситься над обыденным, разрушить границы возможного. Анализ историографии луганских театров позволяет констатировать, что идеологический контекст времени определял неоднократное обращение луганских театров в советский период их становления к героической теме. Историческая самоидентификация региона обусловила обращение луганских режиссеров к историческим событиям, происходившим на Луганщине во время Гражданской войны, Великой Отечественной войны. В статье сквозь призму режиссерских работ рассмотрена проблема героической личности молодогвардейца, составляющая категории подвига, которая определяется набором личностных свойств. В исследовании приводится анализ творческой практики луганских театров XX в. и современности с позиции осмысления подвига молодогвардейцев. Отмечено, что историческая самоидентификация региона обусловила обращение луганских режиссеров к историческим событиям, происходившим на Луганщине во время Великой Отечественной войны, вследствие чего знаковыми театральными работами стали спектакли «Молодая гвардия», «Спроси когда-нибудь у трав», «Распятая юность», воссоздающие подвиг молодогвардейцев.

Ключевые слова: луганский театр, спектакль, «Молодая гвардия», подвиг молодогвардейцев, историческая самоидентификация

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