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Shakespeare Studies at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv: Maiia Harbuziuk *in memoriam*

Abstract

Several aspects of the development of Shakespearean studies at the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv are explored, highlighting its role as an academic centre fostering theatrical research. Special attention is given to Shakespeare studies, a field initiated by Professor Maiia Harbuziuk. She investigated Shakespeare's theatrical interpretations in Lviv, particularly the tragedy *Hamlet*, and made a significant contribution to the development of Ukrainian Shakespeare studies. Her research sheds light on the

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multicultural growth of Lviv, the influence of theatre on audiences, and national self-identification through stage productions. The department's publishing activities, including the release of Shakespearean research and translations, continue to advance the study and popularization of Shakespeare's works in Ukraine. Harbuziuk's scholarly ideas are carried forward by modern young theatre researchers. The impact of Shakespeare's works is also revealed in the academic process of students enrolled in the "Dramatic Theatre and Film Acting" program. It is emphasized that working with Shakespeare's plays enables future actors to gain a deeper understanding of archetypal characters, honing rhythm through body, voice, and movement. Shakespeare's texts provide useful guidance for character development, making them an integral part of the educational process.

Keywords: Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Department of Theatre Studies and Acting, Shakespeare Studies, Stage Art, Theatre Studies, Bohdan Kozak, Maiia Harbuziuk, William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

On 26 March 2024, the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. This milestone is significant for the Theatre Studies school in Lviv, as it laid the foundation for the development of professional higher education in "Performing Arts" and established an academic centre that became the core of research in the field. The department, under the leadership of Bohdan Kozak, People's Artist of Ukraine, academician of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine, laureate of the Taras Shevchenko National Prize of Ukraine, and an esteemed member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society and the National Union of Theatre Workers of Ukraine, has played a pivotal role in this process.

Shakespearean studies, as a branch of theatre studies, was initiated by one of the department's founders and first professors, Maiia Harbuziuk, a renowned European theatre scholar. In 2007, Harbuziuk defended her doctoral thesis on the topic: *Stage Interpretations of William Shakespeare's Tragedy Hamlet in Lviv Theatres (1796–1997)*. Through the lens of *Hamlet* productions, Harbuziuk scientifically analyses the multicultural development of Lviv in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, tracing how audiences in different eras experienced theatre in German, Polish, and Ukrainian, and examining the impact of theatre on the audience. Harbuziuk notes in her thesis abstract:

The iconic performances of the tragedy in the 20th century – on the stages of Polish (1907) and Ukrainian (1943) theatres – became acts of self-identification for these nations within the European humanitarian space. This was significant in light of the phenomena of the early 20th century when, through theatrical art, oppressed

nations affirmed and realized their programs of ‘cultural nationalism’ as part of their struggle for political and state self-determination. (Garbuzûk [Harbuziuk], *Scenični pročitannâ tragedii Gamlet* 14)

Harbuziuk also explored the retrospective of stage art in Lviv through the prism of the city’s 225-year history of theatre development, arguing that productions of *Hamlet* became examples of the civic position of Ukrainian artists who, through theatre, showcased contemporary problems and conflicts on stage:

The establishment of the Austrian German-speaking theatre (1776) and, alongside it, the Polish theatre (in the 1780s) marked the beginning of the stage history of Lviv’s Hamlets. The integrated history of *Hamlet*’s stagings in Lviv aims to uncover the unique cultural and artistic codes, as well as the recurring artistic models, within the context of the multicultural and historically interconnected cultures of the city. (Garbuzûk [Harbuziuk], *Scenični pročitannâ tragedii Gamlet* 3)

Her research appeared in several publications, where she presented the history of Shakespearean theatrical practices in Western Ukraine through the lens of global Shakespeare studies. Based on the *Bibliographic Index of Maiia Harbuziuk’s Works*, compiled by Halyna Bilovus of the Department of Library Science and Bibliography at the Faculty of Culture and Arts of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, it is important to highlight Harbuziuk’s articles in the field of Shakespeare studies. In most of her works, Harbuziuk addresses the issue of national identity, which is evident in articles such as “*Hamlet* in Ukrainian Theatre Studies in the Second Half of the 20th Century, *Hamlet* on the Ukrainian Stage: ‘A Mirror and Reflection of the Times’ (based on Lviv Productions)” and “The National Premiere of *Hamlet* in Lviv (1943). On the Historical and Artistic Contexts of the Production”. Drawing on the theoretical works of A. Greimas and A. Ubersfeld, Harbuziuk analyses the text within the context of drama theory, particularly the actantial model,¹ in her article “How Many *Hamlets* Are There in *Hamlet*? (An Attempt at Structural Analysis of the Dramatic Work)”. In her research, Harbuziuk extensively worked on reconstructing scenes from performances to better understand the theatrical process of the time. As a result, she published several works, including *Reconstruction. A Permanent State*, where she examined the style of the performance and the means of actor expression in the climactic scene of *Hamlet* – the “To be or not to be” soliloquy. In the article “Reconstruction of Scenes from W. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in Boris Tiagno’s Production at the Maria Zankovetska Theatre in Lviv”, using the director’s promptbook, press reviews,

1 The actantial model of semiotic-structural analysis of the play is based on the principles of A. Greimas and A. Ubersfeld.

and eyewitness accounts, Harbuziuk reconstructed individual scenes from the performance, which premiered in 1957.

Having an initial musical education (Harbuziuk graduated from Lviv Professional Music College named after S. Lyudkevych, then known as Lviv Music School, specializing in piano), she professionally analysed the musical arrangement of the 1957 *Hamlet* performance by the composer Oleksandr Radchenko in her article “Works of the Theatre Studies Commission. Music in the 1957 *Hamlet* Production at the Maria Zankovetska Theatre: Collaboration Between the Director and Composer” published on the Ukrainian Shakespearean Portal of Zaporizhzhia National University in 2017. In the article, she defined the role and place of music in dramatic performance, highlighted the musical themes of the characters and, based on the composer’s correspondence, examined the stages of collaboration between the director B. Tiagno and the composer O. Radchenko on *Hamlet*. This article became the first and, until recently, the only publication on music in dramatic theatre performances in Lviv from a theatre studies perspective, setting a new trend in performance criticism in Ukraine. This interdisciplinary research between theatre studies and musicology is being continued by Harbuziuk’s former student, Khrystyna Novosad-Lesiuk at the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting.

Historiographic research on Shakespearean productions on Ukrainian stages is presented in Harbuziuk’s work “The First Performances of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in Ukraine (late 18th – early 19th centuries)”.² In her articles on translation studies, Harbuziuk revealed the impact of Ukrainian Shakespearean traditions on the development of translation practices, since the majority of translations were carried out specifically for stage productions commissioned by theatres in “Ukrainian Translations of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the Context of National Theatre Development” and “Mikhailo Rudnytsky’s Theatrical Shakespearean Studies”.

Established by Harbuziuk, historiographic research into Ukrainian Shakespearean traditions continues, not least through the annual competition in Performing Arts held in Lviv. Winner of this research competition in 2022–2023, which saw work submitted by young scholars from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Ternopil, and Lviv, Olesia Ostapiuk’s monograph titled *Directorial Interpretations of William Shakespeare’s Hamlet in the Repertoires of Theatres in the Western Region of Ukraine* impressed the jury, representing major Ukrainian theatre educational institutions. In her research, Ostapiuk analyses recent *Hamlet* productions: the

² According to the theatre scholar, many Ukrainian translators engaged with Shakespeare’s works, including P. Svetsitsky, Y. Fedkovych, M. Starytsky, P. Kulish, H. Khotkevych, O. Burgardt, L. Hrebinka, M. Rudnytsky, H. Kochur, I. Kostetskyi, and Y. Andrukhovych. See among others, Korneliuk and Moskvitina’s article in this volume.

Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre in Ivano-Frankivsk (dir. Rostislav Derzhypilsky) which premiered in 2017 as a *drama per musica*, the Lviv Academic Theatre of Miniatures 2017 *People and Puppets* (dir. Oleksii Kravchuk) as part of the world history of puppetry,³ and the international theatre project *H-effect* based on *Hamlet*, written by Joanna Vikhovska and directed by Roza Sarkisian, that premiered in 2017 as a post-documentary drama. Ostapiuk shared her view on choosing this topic for her first in-depth research:

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is significant to world culture, and Ukrainian theatre, although not having as long a history with the play, holds valuable experience in interpreting this work. The character of Hamlet has become an archetype of the fighter for justice, yet modern directors continue to find and reveal new facets of this hero. Therefore, the most fascinating part of my work was tracing and analyzing the transformations of Hamlet's character in the repertoires of theatres in Western Ukraine. Now, I plan to expand the scope of my research to include stage interpretations of other Shakespearean plays, not just *Hamlet*, and broaden the geographical range of my study. ("Studentka fakul'tetu kul'turi i mistectv Olesâ Ostap'ûk" n.p.)

True to her word, Ostapiuk has developed her research on the topic *Interpretations of William Shakespeare's Hamlet on the Ukrainian Stage (2014–2024): The Image of a Modern Hero*, thus continuing to develop a historically informed practice of performance criticism in Ukraine. By expanding the timeframe and spatial boundaries of her work to twelve productions across dramatic, musical-dramatic, and puppet theatres in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Rivne, Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, Sumy, Zhytomyr, Uzhhorod, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Lviv, her study not only continues the historiographic approach to Shakespeare but argues that *Hamlet* is the play that tells the Ukrainian history as we speak, a national story once again under the threat of erasure by the Russian occupation. Thus, the foundations of Shakespeare studies, established by Maiia Harbuziuk at the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting, continue to be developed by younger generations of theatre scholars. In 2022, Harbuziuk initiated a new phase of revitalizing the academic and educational focus on Shakespeare studies through open dialogue, particularly by establishing and strengthening partnerships with international Shakespearean institutions. During her tenure as Acting Dean of the Faculty of Culture and Arts, she facilitated collaborations with the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival in Romania (2018) and with the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, University of Birmingham, UK. This outreach and collaborative approach initiated by the Ukrainian scholar was recognised not only at home but also internationally: in

³ Please see the article by Roman Lavrentii and Olesia Ostapiuk on puppet theatre in this volume.

2023, at the end of the first year of the full-scale war in Ukraine, Harbuziuk became an honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Shakespeare Institute.

Maiia Harbuziuk had a wealth of not only scientific but also creative ideas. She was the creative mind behind a media projection dedicated to Shakespeare's works. To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the first Ukrainian stage production of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1943, a virtual museum titled "#Hamlet_UA: Act I, Scene 1943" was created. The project was realized through joint, international efforts that brought together the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (led by Roman Lavrentii), the Ukrainian Interuniversity Shakespeare Center at Zaporizhzhia National University (led by Nataliya Torkut), the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham (led by Michael Dobson) and The Open University (led by Nicola Watson).⁴ Visitors can view photos and information about the creative team of the production as well as the cast. The following rooms contain posters, title pages of the performance booklet, drawings and caricatures of the characters, reviews in the contemporary press, information about Ukrainian translators of *Hamlet*, and photographs of Lviv during World War II. The museum highlights the rich history of Shakespeare production in Ukraine by focusing on *Hamlet* and therefore speaks even more about guarding national heritage, reclaiming Ukrainian history from Russification and asserting its European roots.⁵

Maiia Harbuziuk was the first scholar to introduce Shakespeare Studies into the Ukrainian academic curriculum, creating the elective course "Shakespeare and World Culture" at postgraduate level in 2022: The course focuses on studying Shakespeare's works and comparing European – among these Polish – American, and post-Soviet experiences. As a result, students examine Shakespearean productions in Ukraine and the post-Soviet space through the lens of political issues, whereas in the United States, the analysis centred on social aspects. They share the understanding that, for Ukrainian audiences, Shakespeare serves as a platform for discussing the political crisis in Ukraine.

A "Shakespeare_Franco_Garden" in Lviv was another idea that Harbuziuk never had the chance to bring to life as she passed away in 2023. The concept was intended to resemble the famous garden located in Stratford-upon-Avon, UK, with a collection of plants mentioned in Shakespeare's texts, as well as flowers from the Elizabethan era. These include roses, rosemary, rue, yew, daisies, violets, and

4 Please see the article "Virtual Museum '#Hamlet UA: Act1, Scene 1943' in the Context of Decolonising Knowledge about Ukraine" by Svitlana Deineka, Nataliya Torkut, and Roman Lavrentii in the present volume.

5 *Hamlet* has been the European play and has told the national story of other countries especially in times of occupation, war, as well as internal censorship. See more in Guntner, McLean and Cinpoes.

others. Alongside the plants, she envisaged plaques with quotes from William Shakespeare's sonnets and plays around the garden. Michael Dobson shared his heartfelt memories of Harbuziuk and their joint idea:

Maiia and I talked a lot about the significance of such gardens as bridges between nature and culture. Shakespeare gardens symbolize the flourishing of immortal words, meanings, and ideas, bringing to life the things important to us. [...], she sent me ideas for the creation of a unique project, the 'Shakespeare_Franco_Garden' in Lviv, and prepared suggestions for the plants that could grow there. She wanted a space in the middle of this garden where talented students could showcase their performances. I am very happy that this project will be realized. The great tragedy is that Maiia will not see the realization of the 'Shakespeare_Franco_Garden' concept, but I believe that the plants planted there will soon bloom in a peaceful and independent Ukraine. ("V Unìversitetì obgovorili realizaciù proêktu «Šekspìrìv_Franko_Sad»")

The joint concept was that Ukrainian mallows would grow in the UK, and British roses would bloom in Ukraine. The Department of Theatre Studies and Acting, particularly Roman Lavrentiy, Sofiya-Rosa Lavrentiy, and Myroslava Tsyhanyk, continue to work on realizing this idea – in the spirit of Harbuziuk and full of hope for a peaceful and independent Ukraine.

After her passing, the University of Birmingham established an annual Harbuziuk Scholarship in 2024 in the fields of Theatre Studies and Shakespeare Studies as a tribute. This scholarship offers an internship opportunity at the Department of Drama or the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon. The first recipient was Sofiya-Rosa Lavrentiy, PhD in Art Studies and a lecturer from the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting who spent April to July 2024 in the UK. During her stay, she furthered the cooperation between the departments of Drama and Theatre Studies and Acting concerning postgraduate studies. As a result of the British-Ukrainian collaboration, a joint online course entitled "Shakespeare Studies" will be offered to Ukrainian and British students, taught by specialists from the University of Birmingham and also including a lecture on Shakespeare in Ukrainian culture by R. Lavrentiy. This will strengthen the transcultural experience and broaden British students' understanding of Ukraine's history and Ukrainian theatre.

In September 2023, the Scientific Society of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv established the "Maiia Harbuziuk Award" in Theatre Studies. This award recognizes academic work from students of the Faculty of Culture and Arts, specializing in the "Performing Arts (Theatre Studies)" educational programme. Additionally, Maiia's daughter, Sofia Harbuziuk, together with the theatre studies community, founded the "Maiia Harbuziuk Fund" in 2023. This fund finances

a scholarship to cover part of the tuition costs for postgraduate studies in “Performing Arts (Theatre Studies)” at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. Such recognitions will help to further theatre studies not only as important artistic degrees but also signpost theatre as an important cultural factor during times of war.

The practical aspect of Shakespeare studies is implemented within the educational programme “Performing Arts (Acting for Drama Theatre and Cinema)”. In the “Acting Mastery” course, developed by Professor B. Kozak, students begin working on Shakespeare’s comedies in their second year, focusing on works such as *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and others.

During the first year, students engage in exercises, improvisations, and etudes, improving their acting skills (body and voice) by staging classical works. By the third and fourth semesters, the focus shifts to further developing each student’s creative individuality. Students are tasked with building their stage temperament, revealing their creative identity, understanding rhythm, and learning to use props and costume elements to create characteristics of their characters. Understanding rhythm through body movement, voice, and physicality is crucial in the role development process. Shakespeare’s dramatic works, in particular, offer deep insights into character traits, which are essential for students’ independent work in the future.

Shakespearean texts are often among the first materials students work with in the “Performing Arts (Acting for Drama Theatre and Cinema)” programme because the playwright provides both creative freedom and clear guidance on how to shape characters. When studying comedies, it becomes evident that Shakespeare not only shows action in one scene but also describes how it unfolds in the next, a feature rarely found in other dramatic works. These and other dramaturgical principles reinforce the necessity of studying Shakespeare’s work for students, as his themes help shape the staging of scenes, ultimately forming a cohesive performance.

Plays by William Shakespeare have been periodically staged at the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting, often serving as bachelor final projects. Examples include *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (dir. by Taras Kyshchun) at Les Kurbas Lviv Academic Drama Theatre in 2006; *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* (dir. Halyna Volovetska, an “Honoured Artist of Ukraine”) staged at the Faculty of Culture and Arts in 2017; *Romeo and Juliet* (dir. Tetyana Lytvynenko, People’s Artist of Ukraine”) performed on the main stage of the Maria Zankovetska National Academic Drama Theatre in 2020; and in 2024, *As You Like It* (dir. Dmytro Zakhochenko) at the Lesia Ukrainka Lviv Academic Drama Theatre.

For students in the “Performing Arts (Acting for Drama Theatre and Cinema)” programme, the course *Stage Speech* is particularly significant. Among the materials covered in this course, Shakespeare’s sonnets hold a key place, helping

students master elements of verbal action through complex exercises. Studying the sonnets is an essential component in developing the students' proficiency in stage speech.

In 2001, under the initiative of the Rector of the University and later Ukraine's Minister of Education (2007–2010), Ivan Vakarchuk, the theatre journal *Proscenium* was founded and continues to be published despite the war.⁶ *Proscenium* is one of the few theatrical periodicals in Ukraine (alongside *Ukrainian Theatre* and *Kino-Teatr*) and as such remains vital for keeping abreast with the developments in theatre and performance studies. It features materials on the history and theory of theatre, theatrical criticism (reviews of performances, festival overviews), theatre pedagogy, dramatic works (often translations), reviews of new theatre literature, and information on theatrical events in Ukraine and abroad. The "First Studies" section allows students of theatre studies from higher education institutions across Ukraine to publish their work, thereby endorsing the future of Ukrainian cultural research. In 2023, Maiia Harbuziuk introduced a new section in the journal called "Shakespearean Studies". The 2023 issue included her article "The First Performances of *Hamlet* in Ukraine (Late 18th – Early 19th Centuries)", the 2024 issue an article titled "Therapeutic Journeys of *Pericles*" by Michael Dobson. Reflecting on his publication in the Ukrainian journal, Dobson writes: "The first version of this article was presented at an online symposium on Shakespeare and healing, organized by the Ukrainian Shakespeare Center in the fall of 2022, when none of us could have imagined how much healing Ukraine would soon require" (Dobson 35).

A broad spectrum of research into the study and exploration of William Shakespeare's works in the context of Ukrainian culture, theatre, literature, and translation studies still lies ahead. Shakespearean studies encompass the analysis of translations of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, theatrical productions of his works on Ukrainian stages, and the examination of Shakespeare's influence on Ukrainian writers, directors, and actors. Scholars who study the staging of Shakespeare's works, their cultural context, and national identity – reflected through performances of his plays – play a vital role in the development of contemporary Ukrainian Shakespeare studies.

Owing to Maiia Harbuziuk's research and pedagogical contribution, Ukrainian Shakespearean scholarship continues to evolve at the Department of Theatre Studies and Acting at Ivan Franco National University of Lviv, fostering new research, translations, and theatrical productions that adapt Shakespeare's works for a modern Ukrainian audience and cultural context.

⁶ From 2001 to 2014, the journal was edited by Bohdan Kozak, followed by Maiia Harbuziuk from 2015 to 2023, and since 2024, the editor has been Roman Lavrenti.

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