

Overstepping Transnational Boundaries: 21st-century Theatre and Drama

Sat, November 11, 1:45 to 3:30pm, Marriott Downtown Chicago, 5th, Kansas City

Panel Overview

'New Drama' plays written in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in the 21st century have been startlingly transgressive in language, content and form: many of these developments emerged through shared drama workshops and festivals. As part of Manchester University's research into 'Cross-language Dynamics', we examine how such transnational achievements and collaborations have been affected by more recent political tensions in the region.

1) Noah Birksted-Breen, Queen Mary (U. of London) and U. of Oxford (UK)

Before and after the Maidan: the shifting landscape of Ukrainian playwriting

The popular uprising in 2013-14 (the Maidan) polarised Ukrainian civil society's sense of identity as either pro-European or pro-Russian. I document how this event translated into the sphere of professional theatre. Through interviews with playwrights and directors of the post-Soviet generation in Kyiv, I observe how the Maidan influenced their self-identification as artists with a political mission – feeling a responsibility to liberalise theatre in order to play a role in forging a transnational, pro-European Ukrainian identity, and affecting their relationships with Russian theatre-makers.

2) Tania Arcimovič (Belarus)

Transformations in the language of 'New Drama' in Belarus as a representation of a new model of identity

The Soviet period saw a process of Russification in Belarus. Representations of the everyday in Belarus 'New Drama' (e.g. in plays by Priazhko, Khalezin, Rossol'ko and Steshik) have mostly been expressed in Russian, and have naturally found an appreciative audience in Russia as well. But more recently bilingual works, or works written entirely in Belarusian, have started to appear, reflecting new socio-political developments in the post-Soviet space, and offering a different model of Belarusian identity.

3) Julie A.E. Curtis, U. of Oxford (UK)

The Liubimovka Theatre Festival: Playwriting Across Borders

The annual Liubimovka Theatre Festival (Moscow) has been showcasing the best of contemporary playwriting in Russian for over 25 years by staging rehearsed readings of winning plays by younger writers from all over the Russian Federation, but also from other countries where plays are written in Russian, such as Ukraine, Belarus and Latvia. Transnational co-operation of this kind has fostered further collaborations in the form of shared workshops, exchanges, and pedagogic and community activities. My paper traces this example of transnational activity in theatre, which has attempted to continue over recent years in defiance of international political tensions.