



**THEATRE OLYMPICS**  
WORLD AS A PLACE OF TRUTH  
WROCLAW 2016

<https://rg.ru/2016/10/27/aleksandrinka-vystupila-na-olimpiade-vo-vroclawe.html>

**Irina Korneeva**

## **Masquerade of the Future**

### **Over 80 plays of leading directors from around the world are being performed in the 7<sup>th</sup> Theatre Olympics in Poland**

To the 13th of November, The European Capital of Culture Wrocław is hosting plays of leading theatre directors of modern European stage: Theodoros Terzopoulos, Krystian Lupa, Tadashi Suzuki, Eimuntas Nekrošius, Robert Wilson, Romeo Castellucci, Jan Fabre, Eugenio Barba, Heiner Goebbels, Pippo Delbono and many others. It is very exciting just to list these names, but the audience of the Theatre Olympics can watch plays, moreover they can participate in daily workshops (masterclasses) of the directors, educational seminars, exceptional shows and exhibitions, film screenings. The closing of the festival will be undertaken by Peter Brook, and one of the first-liners of the Olympics is Russian director Valery Fokin. The Alexandrinsky Theatre from Saint-Petersburg is the only Russian theatre, which invites Polish spectators on its "Masquerade: Recollections of the Future" play in Wrocław Opera.

This is the first time the famous play is performed abroad (70 actors, 360 costumes, 6 truck trailers of theatrical scenery, teasers and curtains), and it is a long journey not only in terms of the distance, but in time: Valery Fokin conducted an impossible matter by exact reconstruction of certain scenes of Vsevolod Meyerhold's "Masquerade: Recollections of the Future" 1917 production – the most expensive and the last theatre play in Tsarist Russia. And he made the actors feel, act and sound like they were still living in the specific Tsarist-era.

The Polish audience highly appreciated the play (did the play justice); the spectators rose in applause after each performance to cheer the actors, many people strived to come more than one time to see the different acting of Peter Semak and Dmitry Lysenkov as Evgeniy Arbenin, seize opportunity to

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enjoy the play of Nikolay Marton (Unknown) and Elena Vozhakina (Nina), and watch with their own eyes the unique work style of Valery Fokin. The director is very famous and well-liked in Poland – he directed a score of Russian classics in Polish theatres, he worked at the PWST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków, was awarded the Medal for Merit to Culture «Gloria Artis» - for distinguished contributions to and protection of the Polish culture and national heritage.

"We need to show in the "Masquerade: Recollections of the Future" heads-up play, to let the spectators feel the culture of verse, musicality, and the naturalness at the same time, - the artistic director of the Alexandrinsky Theatre Valery Fokin said to "Rossiyskaya Gazeta". – The artists were under great pressure. But there was no other choice in the theatrical scenery of Aleksandr Golovin and with the music of Alexander Glazunov composer. Otherwise it wouldn't work. And here we go, exact reconstruction. Actors play and speak solemnly.

Nowadays everything is simple and naive. There is no magic on stage anymore. All was different in Vsevolod Meyerhold's production, the manner of speaking and acting differed. Yuri Yuryev, the leading actor in the Alexandrinsky Theatre, had even been taking notes on the Arbenin's script. All intonations, all pauses were written down. We tried to reproduce everything. I wanted to make the play as accurate as it could be – the perfect light, the scenery, the sound - to fall into the atmosphere of the period. The aura of the play is strange and surprising: no one plays and sounds in this way today, no one directs in such way. These are cothurni we were struggling against and destroying all these years. I myself participated in this. When I was younger while working in Sovremennik theatre, we always taught actors to be simpler, not to sing, but to speak. Oleg Efremov, rest his soul, said it over and over again, Galina Volchek, me and many others did. And we got rid of it and came to natural sounding speech.

But there was a school of different fantastic voice production, voice training and breathing; absolutely different positioning. The old culture is not used anymore. That's why it was such a highly sensitive task to reproduce it.

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At the same time it was an exciting adventure. There was a feeling of living the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The voices from the past helped us, the monologues of Yuryev – Arbenin. There was a competitive selection, I wanted to find an actor, whose voice resembles the Yuryev's monologue, to let the old voice live again. These scenes were diluted with modern scenes. The issue was not only to make actors sound as many years ago but to feel and live as they were still in 1917. Meyerhold carried this out by saying that there must be true passion behind bright dress. And when you read the notes of Yuryev, on one hand, you see countless notes in script, on the other hand he writes clearly about the role based on Stanislavski principles: how he lives in Arbenin's role, writes about feelings to Nina, who was a chance to change his life".

It should be noted that by coming the Alexandrinsky Theatre to the Polish land it was a lucky chance to have a connection with Russian theatre, to get to know something new about Vsevolod Meyerhold and Valery Fokin. A creativity competition was provided by the festival organizers for the opportunity of young theatre directors to get to the workshop (masterclass) of Valery Fokin – men seeking admission were too many to admit all of them.

## Reference

The Theatre Olympics takes place in different countries around the world. The first was in 1995 in ancient Greek center – Delphi city, and then the festival moved down the years and was hosted in cities like Shizuoka (1999), Moscow (2001), Istanbul (2006), Seoul (2010) and Beijing (2014). In 2018 The Theatre Olympics will be undertaken in India.

Theatre stages for the festival are spread (scattered) over Wrocław - The European Capital of Culture 2016. There are more than 40 stages: theatres, little studio rooms, even an old bakery and non-operating abandoned railway station.

The heart of the festival is the Jerzy Grotowski Institute. The director, the reform figure alongside Stanislavski and Meyerhold, bore up a principle: theatre is a sacred action. And his phrase "The World as a Place for Truth" became the motto of The Theatre Olympics in Wrocław.

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