

H. Derzhypilska

assistant of the Department of Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations
e-mail: derzhypilska.o.halyna@ukd.edu.ua, ORCID: 0009-0000-5332-2722
King Danylo University
St. Y. Konovaltsia, 35, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, 76018

MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF A CULTURAL EVENT: LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

*The aim of the study is to identify the characteristics of media representation of theatrical events across different segments of the media environment and to examine how their communicative functions vary according to media type, using the coverage of the performance *Romeo & Juliet* by the Frankivsk Drama Theater as a case study.*

The research methodology is based on a combination of general scientific and specialized methods: analysis and synthesis – to explore theoretical approaches to cultural journalism and media communication; content analysis – to examine publications in local, national, and international media; comparative method – to compare different ways in which the performance is represented across various media texts (news articles, multimedia publications, video works, analytical articles); interpretative (hermeneutic) method – to identify the key semantic emphases in journalistic materials; typological method – to classify forms of media representation and define the functions of cultural journalism.

Results. It has been established that the nature of coverage of a theatrical event varies depending on the scale of the media environment. At the local level, the performance is interpreted as an element of the cultural life of the urban community and serves an integrative function. At the national level, it appears as a phenomenon of contemporary culture and becomes the subject of analytical and critical journalism. In the international media environment, the performance acquires symbolic significance and functions as a message about the country conveyed through culture. The expansion of the audience is accompanied by a shift from mere reporting to interpretation and cultural explanation.

Novelty. The study's novelty lies in identifying distinct models of interpreting a theatrical event across different media contexts, which supports viewing cultural journalism as a tool of meaning-making and cultural legitimization of artistic phenomena. The findings can be applied in the training of journalists and cultural editors, in teaching courses on cultural journalism, media communications, and media criticism, as well as in the practice of media coverage of cultural institutions' activities.

Key words: media representation, cultural journalism, theatrical event, media communications, convergent media, international reception.

I. Introduction

Journalism as a sociocultural system is designed not only to inform, but also to comprehend, explain, and interpret events and phenomena of social life, contributing to the understanding of artistic processes and the audiences' cultural development. Modern media are increasingly covering cultural events, turning them into a component of public communication. A theatrical performance no longer functions solely within the framework of a stage production, but acquires an additional «life» in the media environment through news, reports, television programs, interviews, and critical texts. At the same time, in Ukrainian journalism studies, the problem of media representation of theater has not yet received adequate theoretical consideration. The issue becomes even more acute when addressing cultural events not only at the capital level but also in cities and towns remote from the center. This makes it relevant to study the features of media coverage of a theatrical event using the example of the production *Romeo & Juliet* by the Ivano-Frankivsk National Academic Ivan Franko Drama Theater (hereinafter referred to as the Frankivsk Drama Theater).

A theatrical event is less likely than other cultural phenomena to receive coverage in the mass media, since its communicative nature implies the co-presence of performers and audiences in a specific space and time, and the synthetic nature of the stage form complicates its adequate representation in standardized media formats. Existing research mainly focuses either on theater analysis of performances or on general aspects of cultural communication, while the mechanisms of the journalistic interpretation of a theatrical event require separate consideration.

The study by the German theater scholar C. B. Balme examines the public and media existence of theater, where performance functions not only as a stage event but also as an element of the public sphere and cultural discourse, which is formed through its reception and media coverage. In his book, C. B. Balme argues that the theatrical public sphere invariably focuses attention on theater as an

institution situated between the shifting boundaries of the private and the public, informed by debate and agonistic intervention [14]. In cultural studies, the British scholar S. Hall considered the media as a system of representations that does not reflect reality directly but encodes it in specific meaning-making forms. The audience, in turn, decodes the message, interpreting the cultural event [17]. J. Fiske, in turn, considered the media text as an open system of meanings in which meaning is formed through the interaction between the message and the audience [16]. Thus, a cultural event in the media does not have a single meaning but is interpreted depending on the way it is presented and perceived. There is always a media intermediary between the artist and the audience – this key idea is proposed by the media and cultural industries scholar D. Hesmondhalgh [18]. The British scholar considers culture within the framework of the cultural industries, where the media perform an intermediary function between the cultural product and the audience, ensuring its public existence and distribution. The French sociologist of culture P. Bourdieu introduces the concept of the cultural field – an environment in which artists, critics, media, and the public interact, and where critics and journalists are not observers but participants in the cultural process, as they determine the cultural value of a work [15].

In modern Ukrainian theater studies, the emphasis is placed on the sociocultural dimensions of theater. Specific forms of representing the spiritual and cultural worldview in contemporary theater journalism in independent Ukraine are examined by V. Halatska [4]. H. Veselovska emphasizes the event-based nature of theatrical performance: «in many productions of contemporary experimental theater, the audience is encouraged to actively participate in the action, to engage in direct dialogue, to express their own opinions, to shape the agenda, and even to make final decisions – namely, what the outcome of the performance will be» [3]. M. Harbuzyuk also considers performance as a process of exchange between the actor and the audience, in which a shared emotional and meaning-making experience is formed; thus, theater functions as a dialogical form of art: «...today we are collectively experiencing trauma in the country, and theater, as an art of energy exchange between the actor and the audience, is the only medium that can contribute to our harmonization and to the harmonization of the cultural space» [1].

II. Research objectives and methods

The aim of the study is to identify the features of the media representation of a theatrical event and to clarify changes in its communicative functions depending on the type of media. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to determine the theoretical foundations for considering the media as an interpreter of a cultural event, to identify the levels of media representation of a theatrical event, and to establish differences in the interpretation of the performance depending on the level and type of media. The object of the study is the media representation of a theatrical event in the contemporary media environment. The subject of the study is the interpretation of the performance *Romeo & Juliet* across different types of media.

The study employed general scientific and specialized methods, such as analysis and synthesis – to elaborate theoretical approaches to cultural journalism and synthesize research on media communication and theater studies; content analysis – to examine media materials covering the Frankivsk Drama Theater's performance of *Romeo & Juliet*. Text, audio, and audiovisual formats are considered as separate media texts, since under conditions of convergent journalism they perform different communicative functions. The comparative method was used to examine the ways in which the performance is represented across different types of media; the interpretative (hermeneutic) method – to clarify semantic emphases and approaches to culturally interpreting the theatrical event in journalistic materials.

The empirical basis of the study consisted of media materials covering February 2021 to June 2025, from the premiere of the performance to the most recent publication identified at the time of writing.

III. Results

The play *Romeo & Juliet* is one of the most popular works in the repertoires of world theater, and the conflict embedded in it has become a universal cultural narrative, recognizable across different sociocultural contexts. It is the interpretative openness of the text that ensures its continual relevance in new historical circumstances and contributes to the emergence of contemporary stage readings, one of which was the production of the Frankivsk Drama Theater.

The canonical nature of the dramatic material directly affects the nature of its media representation. The high level of recognizability of the plot reduces the need for additional explanation of the content and facilitates the audience's entry into the communicative situation, which makes the performance a convenient object of journalistic coverage. For the media, such a production is viewed as an event with an already formed semantic field, within which attention shifts from the retelling of the plot to interpretation, evaluation and symbolic reading. As a result, media texts devoted to stage interpretations of classical works tend to expand the thematic framework and include discussions of social, cultural and political contexts.

Regional media publications record not only the fact of the premiere itself, but also its spatial expansion: the performance extends beyond the theater building and is integrated into the urban environment. The local information portal Galka.if.ua emphasizes the use of the innovation center «Prompylad. Renovation» as a stage location, transforming the theatrical performance into a city event that combines artistic, social, and public communication. The text is supplemented with a detailed photo report from the press conference held in the factory's workshop space, visually reinforcing the unusual location of the event [5]. Another type of media representation appears in the local information portal

Kurs.if.ua, in a piece about the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the Frankivsk Drama Theater and the innovation center «Promprylad. Renovation» [8]. In this material, the theater appears not only as a subject of artistic production, but also as an active participant in urban sociocultural processes. The description of a symbolic «wedding» staged in an industrial space transforms news of the administrative agreement into a cultural event, and the cooperation itself is represented by the media as part of the city's creative industries. While photographs in the Galka.if.ua material emphasize the atmosphere of the artistic event, those in Kurs.if.ua document the social interaction of institutions, shifting the emphasis from artistic experience to institutional communication. Thus, the theatrical event in the materials of these two local online publications is interpreted primarily as an element of city life.

The classic information model of journalism is illustrated by a television report from a local media outlet, which serves to inform the audience about the event. In the news story by the TV and radio company RAI [12], Y. Torkonyak and A. Behey announced the upcoming premiere following a press conference organized by the creators of the performance in the workshop space of «Promprylad. Renovation». The event is structured through a journalist's voice-over narration, edited sequences, and on-camera statements by participants, conveying a clear message about the premiere. The television report serves an informative function – it explains the event, names its participants, outlines its significance, and informs the viewer of the main features of the theatrical project.

The publication by the regional branch of the National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine JSC – Suspilne Ivano-Frankivsk – is multimodal in nature, as it contains text, a photo report from the event, and audio material [10]. As a result, the media text forms a complex model of event perception, where different sign systems interact: the text provides factual and explanatory functions, the photo offers spatial visualization, and the audio conveys emotional experience and a sense of presence. The visual component performs not only an illustrative but also an evidentiary function, documenting the spatial organization of the performance and the interaction of the audience with the urban environment. The audio material by journalist Kh. Kukharuk demonstrates another mode of media representation of a cultural event – through sound-based construction. The radio format transforms a theatrical event from a visual-spatial phenomenon into a narrative story, with the emphasis shifting from stage action to its semantic interpretation [11]. Due to the absence of a visual component in the audio material, the event is reconstructed through verbal imagery, intonation, and soundscape, which activates the listener's imagination. The radio report immerses the audience in the atmosphere of the performance and includes comments from lead actors, the production team, and audience feedback. Thus, the media do not simply inform about the performance but construct a complex perceptual experience. The performance exists not only on stage but also in the digital media environment, where different platforms reproduce it through different sensory channels – visual, auditory, and textual.

For the text version, radio journalist Kh. Kukharuk, in collaboration with editor R. Polivchak, adapted the audio report, highlighting the key aspects of the event and her own observations. Unlike news materials, the publication features a distinct authorial component and elements of subjective perception: «...the tender lament of the melody against the rough reinforced concrete mass of the mechanical workshop evokes a shiver. Somewhere in this metaphor, the essence of the performance *Romeo & Juliet* is mirrored» [11]. The regional broadcaster's materials demonstrate that the modern media representation of a cultural event is not confined to a single channel, but occurs through the interaction of different formats. As a result, the theatrical event exists as a networked communication process rather than as a one-time cultural event, thereby changing the way it is perceived depending on the media channel that represents it. The regional broadcaster's materials demonstrate a convergent model of journalism, in which a theatrical event is represented through a combination of text, audio, and photographs. All of these formats perform an informative and explanatory function, reporting on the event, interpreting its meaning, and documenting its development.

At the same time, materials of a different type appear in the local media environment, changing the very mode of the theater's media presence. The video work *Odnym dublem* (One Take) by another local media outlet, Channel 402, does not present a report on a performance but rather the experience of being within the process of a series of events that ultimately led to a theatrical production [6; 7]. Unlike journalistic materials, where the event is described and narrated, here it is reproduced through camera movement, spatial interaction, and temporal continuity, which allows the media to perform not only an informative but also a performative function. The two-part video work *Odnym dublem* combines the features of journalistic material and an authorial media narrative thanks to the skill of journalist O. Kvitneva. The presence of voice-over narration, interviews with participants, event footage, and a montage structure attests to its status as a journalistic product, but the composition goes far beyond the boundaries of a news report. The material covers various stages in the lifecycle of a theatrical project – from the establishment of a partnership between the theater and «Promprylad. Renovation» and the rehearsal process to the premiere itself and audience reception. As a result, the event appears not as a one-time cultural event but as a long-term sociocultural process. In terms of genre, the video work *Odnym dublem* can be defined as a documentary-performative media format that combines elements of journalistic documentation and an artistically organized audiovisual narrative. An important element of media representation is the use of black-and-white video imagery. Such a visual technique distances

the material from standard information presentation and brings it closer to an artistic-interpretative format. The absence of color neutralizes everyday details and emphasizes the plasticity of movement and the emotionality of the image, shaping the perception of the event not as current information but as an aesthetic experience. In this case, journalism becomes a chronicler of cultural production.

Further expansion of the media representation of the performance is linked to its participation in the festival circuit. After the Shakespeare Festival and international theater festivals in Poland and Romania, the performance goes beyond the local cultural context. This leads to a shift in the nature of media attention: the event ceases to be perceived as a regional cultural initiative and comes to be understood as a phenomenon of contemporary Ukrainian theater. In a publication by the nationwide analytical outlet LB.ua, the performance is analyzed in the broader context of Ukrainian interpretations of Shakespeare's works and the cultural experience of war [2]. K. Bilash emphasizes the universality of Shakespeare's text as a language through which Ukrainian theater can articulate its historical experience to audiences abroad. The involvement of international experts in the discussion indicates a shift in the status of the performance: in a commentary by N. Chinpoesh, a researcher of Ukrainian theatrical interpretations of global Shakespeare, the performance *Romeo & Juliet* no longer appears as a local theatrical event but as an example of Ukrainian theater's inclusion in a broader European cultural dialogue (cited in [2]). In N. Chinpoesh's reading, the production appears as a model of experiencing war away from the front line, where theater captures the experience of the community, combining the space of the city, the audience, and the stage action. In an interview with K. Bilash, the Shakespeare scholar states: «We no longer have the luxury of linear time: 'let's wait until the performance is over', 'until the war is over'. No, now we have to do everything at the same time. Observing this means realizing: people here live in a plurality of timelines» [2]. This is why the media representation of this cultural event goes beyond the boundaries of theatrical criticism and acquires cultural and communicative significance, while the Shakespearean text becomes a universal language for its articulation. Festival circulation shifts the performance from the level of a cultural event to the status of a cultural narrative.

Along with materials from cultural journalism, the performance attracted the attention of an intellectual online publication in the humanities, where its analysis goes beyond the boundaries of a theater review. On the literary portal Bukvoyid, the production is interpreted through a system of cultural and symbolic meanings, and the Shakespearean plot is considered a metaphor for contemporary experience [9]. In the publication by O. Kukharuk, the emphasis shifts from informational coverage of the performance to the interpretation of the audience's experience. The author focuses not on the staging of the production, but on the experience of being present in an industrial workshop space, describing audience movement, atmosphere, and the bodily perception of the event. Here, the performance appears as a collective urban cultural event, understood through the narrator's personal perspective. In this publication, the mode of media representation shifts, as the performance is treated not as an event of cultural life or a theatrical experiment, but as a cultural text subject to interpretation. Accordingly, the media becomes an interpreter of cultural meanings. At this stage, the performance ceases to be merely a theatrical phenomenon and begins to function as a cultural text.

If materials from media outlets such as Suspline, Ivano-Frankivsk, LB.ua, and Bukvoyid interpret the performance as a phenomenon of modern Ukrainian theater, then the international news agency Reuters includes it into the global news agenda. In the material by R. Russell, the production is described primarily as a cultural phenomenon that demonstrates the resilience of art in the Ukrainian social context [19]. The emphasis here shifts from the artistic characteristics of the performance to its symbolic meaning. The production is presented through an unusual industrial location and the interaction of the audience with the space, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural activity and resilience. The publication by the American reporter demonstrates the convergent, multimodal nature of the media representation of the event. The material combines textual narration, photographic documentation, and video reportage, as a result of which meaning is formed not only through verbal description, but also through audiovisual experience. At the same time, the distribution of the material across various media platforms reflects the convergent nature of modern journalism: the theatrical event functions as universal media content, suitable for different formats and audiences. In the material by the international news agency Reuters, the performance is no longer represented as a theatrical experiment, but as a message about Ukraine conveyed through culture.

The convergent media report by the international news agency Reuters brings an innovative Ukrainian production of Shakespeare's tragedy into the global news space, while in an article in the international theater journal *Critical Stages*, the First Ukrainian Shakespeare Festival in Ivano-Frankivsk – where the performance *Romeo & Juliet* was also presented – is interpreted as a form of cultural dialogue between Ukraine and Europe in the context of war [13]. The author of the article, Polish cultural scholar and Shakespeare scholar E. Bal, considers various contemporary Ukrainian productions of Shakespeare's works as a form of cultural communication with the West that performs the function of cultural self-determination and integrates the national theater into global cultural discourse. The scholar reflects on the Frankivsk Drama Theater's production of *Romeo & Juliet* through the lens of «patriarchal and feminist readings of Shakespeare»: «...in the 2021 production of *Romeo and Juliet*, the masculine

world returns with redoubled force as an imperative of fate... However, I do not consider this an interpretive anachronism, but rather a sign of the time and place in which the play is staged» [13].

Shakespearean text is considered a universal cultural language, enabling Ukrainian artists to communicate with Western audiences while distancing themselves from the Russian cultural tradition. At this level, the very function of media representation changes. Whereas in the information media environment a performance is regarded as a cultural event, in expert international discourse it emerges as a means of asserting cultural agency. Theater is interpreted not merely as an artistic practice, but as a means of integrating Ukrainian culture into the European cultural sphere. Media representation thus shifts from reporting on culture to presenting culture. Consequently, in the article published in the international theater journal *Critical Stages*, a theatrical event acquires the significance of cultural diplomacy, and its media representation becomes part of shaping the image of Ukraine in the global cultural arena.

IV. Conclusions

The results obtained indicate that the media representation of a theatrical event has a multi-level structure and its communicative functions vary depending on the scale of the media environment. In a convergent media environment, a theatrical event ceases to be a standalone news item and transforms into a multi-format media narrative. At the local level, the performance appears as a sociocultural event of the urban community and serves an integrative function. At the national level, it is interpreted as a phenomenon of contemporary culture and becomes the subject of analytical and critical journalism. At the international level, the performance acquires symbolic significance and functions as a message about the country conveyed through culture.

Thus, changes in the geographical scope of the media are accompanied by a change in the mode of existence of a cultural event: from social experience to cultural narrative, and ultimately to a tool of cultural communication. The media not only disseminate information about the performance but also transform its meaning, shaping different models of its reception. Prospects for further research include the study of media representation of other types of performing arts and the comparison of various cultural institutions within the digital media environment.

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Держипільська Г. О. Медіарепрезентація мистецької події: локальний, національний та міжнародний рівні

Метою дослідження є виявлення особливостей медіарепрезентації театральної події в різних сегментах медіапростору та з'ясування зміни її комунікативних функцій залежно від типу медіа на матеріалі висвітлення вистави «Romeo & Juliet» Франківського драматичного театру.

Методологія дослідження спирається на комплекс загальнонаукових і спеціальних методів: аналіз і синтез – для опрацювання теоретичних підходів до культурної журналістики та медіакомунікацій; контент-аналіз – для вивчення публікацій локальних, національних і міжнародних медіа; порівняльний метод – для зіставлення способів репрезентації вистави в різних типах медіатекстів (новинні матеріали, мультимедійні публікації, відеороботи, аналітичні статті); інтерпретаційний (герменевтичний) метод – для з'ясування смислових акцентів у журналістських матеріалах; типологічний метод – для класифікації форм медіарепрезентації та визначення функцій культурної журналістики.

Результати. *Встановлено, що характер висвітлення театральної події змінюється залежно від масштабу медіапростору. На локальному рівні вистава інтерпретується як елемент культурного життя міської спільноти та виконує інтеграційну функцію. На національному рівні вона постає як явище сучасної культури й стає об'єктом аналітичної та критичної журналістики. У міжнародному медіапросторі театральна подія набуває символічного значення й функціонує як повідомлення про країну через культуру. Розширення аудиторії супроводжується переходом від інформування до інтерпретації та культурного пояснення.*

Новизна полягає у виявленні моделей інтерпретації театральної події в межах різних медійних контекстів, що дає підстави розглядати культурну журналістику як інструмент смислотворення та культурної легітимації мистецького явища. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані в підготовці журналістів і культурних редакторів, у викладанні курсів з культурної журналістики, медіакомунікацій і медіакритики, а також у практиці медіависвітлення діяльності культурних інституцій.

Ключові слова: медіарепрезентація, культурна журналістика, театральна подія, медіакомунікації, конвергентні медіа, міжнародна рецепція.