FROZEN TIME AND EMOTIONAL DISTANCE: STAGING INTIMACY IN DMITRII ZENKOV'S WASTED PLAY WASTED

Valeria Buslaeva
Theatre Studies Department,
Russian Institute of Theatre Arts - GITIS,
Moscow, Russia
teatroved@gitis.net

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the stage production Wasted, directed by Dmitrii Zenkov. It is based on the play Wasted Jewels by Roman Dymshakov. The play was shown at Akademsko Dramsko Pozoriste, and produced by Kamon-Kamon-Theatre in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2024. The review wants to find out how the director sees the play through simple sets, a focus on the actors, and the emotions between the characters. Also it pays close attention to how the production makes a space where the link between two people is the main way to explore ideas about closeness, being alone, and not being emotionally stable.

The performance happens in a space that is not clearly defined and has no clear time or place. This lets the director focus on how the two characters, Igor and Lika, interact and shows that their story is something everyone can relate to. The director uses a simple set, lights that have meaning, and sounds that are planned out to make a setting where the characters' minds are the main thing driving the story. The actors use their bodies to show quick changes between calm talk and strong feelings. This is a key way of showing how unsteady their relationship is.

The article argues that Zenkov's way of putting the play on turns a story about a couple into a look at time that seems to stand still and a lack of emotional connection. The play presents the characters as people who are adults but act like teenagers. This shows the stress between wanting to be stable and failing to keep strong bonds. The study shows how the director uses simple stage language to make the audience feel the intimacy and vulnerability on stage more strongly.

The article also thinks about why these plays are important in the current international theatre world. The play was made by artists working away from their home country. It shows how theatre communities of people living in other countries are growing and spreading ways of making art across borders. The play can be seen as part of a worldwide conversation about theatre where old ways of doing things are kept, changed, and shared with viewers. By mixing new playwriting ideas with a style of acting that is open

and flexible, the play shows how migrant theatre efforts add to the variety and flow of culture in the global art world.

INTRODUCTION

This research looks at migrant theater and how simple stage solutions can show the struggle of existence in modern plays. The play *Wasted*, directed by Dmitrii Zenkov, can be described as a game of circumstances. In the intimate performance space, two characters exist: Igor (Ivan Klimyuk) and Lika (Anastasia Chekh). Strange and slightly awkward—one in baggy trousers with a metal detector, the other in a pareo with a camera around her neck—they attract each other (and, at the same time, the audience) with their unusual, "freakish" nature. They speak in youth slang and behave like teenagers, like grown-up children forced to live an adult life. The actors create their characters with a certain clumsiness, using assertive and sharp gestures, fluctuating between quiet conversations and sudden outbursts of shouting and exclamations. Changes in physical patterns match the psychophysical way of acting. Here, body speed and movement create dramatic timing and meaning. Also, the emotional stress felt when acting shows the mental and physical strength and hidden actions present in theatrical creation (Savchenko, 2021; Oganov, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This review study employs a comprehensive theatrical analysis, combining direct performance observation with an examination of the production's semiotic and psychophysical layers. By analyzing the interaction between scenographic minimalism and the actors' physical patterns, the research identifies how the directorial method translates the "New Drama" aesthetic into a study of emotional distance and intimacy on the stage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A chance meeting on the beach evolves into cohabitation and marriage, then pregnancy, and after the loss of the child, everything ends with the desire to divorce. This "step," or perhaps even a leap from love to hate, is what the director explores. The exact location remains unknown, there are hardly any references to time—yet none of this really matters. The situation could take place anytime, anywhere, and with anyone. There are no domestic details; the scenography is limited to two transparent tubes with LED strips inside and a pair of soft seats on wheels; this aesthetic of abstraction reflects broader trends in the scientific reception of contemporary Russian-language drama, where the focus shifts from social context to the fragmented consciousness and internal identity crises of the characters (Solovyova, 2013). There is nowhere to hide, leaving the audience face to face with two people, stripped bare of their emotions, attempting to connect. Staged emotional closeness works as a

carefully planned display of theatrical intimacy (Steinrock, 2020; Smith-Cortelyou, 2023). All that remains for these characters is simply to exist within the circumstances of their lives.

The play Wasted Jewels by Roman Dymshakov, a representative of the Ural School of Dramaturgy—a movement that played a pivotal role in the emergence of "New Drama" by focusing on raw emotional realism and the lives of marginalized characters (Sotnikova, 2019)—tells the story of a man searching for lost treasures on the beach and selling them. Yet, the meaning goes far beyond that. Dmitrii Zenkov keeps only the first part of the title for his production. Here, anything can be considered *wasted*: Lika and Igor's relationship, human emotions in general, or even the characters themselves, trapped in the monotony of life. Almost casually, in passing, flirting at their first meeting, they just as easily decide to be together, and in the end, they part with the same ease, as if there were no quarrels, no struggles, no emotional turmoil. As if the years they spent together were just a game, an imitation of life—making it just as easy to accept its ending.

"Not life, but a false promise that it will happen someday," says Lika about their relationship. Yet, within this *false promise*, there is also hope, expectation, and a desire to fix, build, and resolve things. The paradox is that time here seems frozen—as if on pause. Several times, the characters hum *"I want to be forever young"*, and it is through this game that they try to stop the clock, staying young and carefree for as long as possible. It's no coincidence that they initially appear as eccentric teenagers: they do not belong in this world, so they create their own. This existential withdrawal is a defining feature of the modern conceptosphere in drama, where characters exist in a state of permanent alienation from a stable reality, seeking refuge in subjective emotional constructs (Selyutina, 2013). Yet even together, they cannot truly exist—they remain strangers to each other, and the "normal" world rejects them as well.

This is emphasized by the sharp transitions from calm, relaxed moments to emotional outbursts and heightened tension, reflecting the emotional volatility that studies have associated with the prevalence of anxiety and psychological pressure within the acting profession (Zenkov, 2025). The background music further reinforces this duality: on one hand, it is electronic relaxation music, but on the other, it carries an underlying tension and unease.

CONCLUSION

Using minimal set design, lighting, and sound, the director focuses on the inner world of the characters—the interaction of two forces (male and female, or adult and child), the search for harmony between them, and the unraveling of the mystery of emotional bonds and deep attachments. Director Dmitry Zenkov's approach is a key part of Russian-language

expatriate theater. It shows how a director can keep cultural traditions alive as they adjust to a global setting. His work shows the special role of migrant artists, who create a fresh, open international discussion that connects people worldwide by removing old stage conventions.

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