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Ethnological Images in Eimuntas Nekrošius Theatre

Summary

Eimuntas Nekrošius (1952–2018) is a Lithuanian stage director who won worldwide fame. The article deals with the Lithuanian identity manifesting itself in the productions by this stage director using ethnographic data in his five performances that marked the pinnacle of his creative work: the performances are based on the following dramas: *Hamlet*, *Otello*, *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and *Song of Songs* from the Bible.

Eimuntas Nekrošius drew much of his creative inspiration from Lithuanian traditional and professional culture. As he was born in a Lithuanian village, finished secondary school in a provincial town of Šiluva, he was familiar with the images of everyday life and customs from his early childhood and later they were revived in his imagination when reading ethnology books and works of fiction – books by Marius Katiliškis, Saulius Šaltenis, Leonardas Gutauskas and works by other Lithuanian writers. On the basis of all this, Nekrošius created Lithuanian ethnic stylistics by staging literary productions not only by local but also foreign authors – works of English, German, Kirghiz, ancient Jewish writers. Deep Catholic faith brought from Šiluva is clearly distinct in the conception of his productions, distinguishes itself in the humanistic assessment of the events being

represented. Reading works by the philosopher Antanas Maceina helped Eimuntas Nekrošius express the national identity.

Lithuanian ethnic influence is particularly noticed in the stage properties and actor's movements. The place of a thing in a performance varies: sometimes it is central and sometimes peripheral. Prevailing theatrical images encompassing the whole contents of the history being represented play a significant role:

In his performances Eimuntas Nekrošius used a great number of movements taken over from Lithuanian folk games. For example, *Macbeth* speaking with his head bent down, when representing the beginning of his downfall, is taken from the game „Climb to the flitch“ played by the young people of the village; *Faust's* walking with his eyes closed and hands outstretched forward symbolising his scientific searches, is created according to a game that was popular in the countryside; the devils' turning somersaults before a romance between *Faust* and *Margaret* starts; witches' dancing the polka after *Macbeth* has been trapped. And many others. All this renders dynamics and Lithuanian authenticity to the performances. The ethnic images revealed in the article show that Eimuntas Nekrošius was a carrier of the Lithuanian identity in the modern world.

Keywords: Eimuntas Nekrošius, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Faust*, Lithuanian identity, rural culture, the Balts.