



**Theatrical performance in the artistic culture of the renaissance (on the example of the painting by s. Botticelli "spring")**

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***Theatrical performance in the artistic culture of the renaissance (on the example of the painting by Botticelli "spring")***

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the study of the principles of stage adaptation of the famous painting "Spring" by S. Botticelli (1482, "Uffizi Gallery, Florence") in the context of the theatrical culture of the early Renaissance and Florence, where the artist lived and worked. The interrelations at the level of the structural elements of the composition and the whole are traced. The semantic and artistic consistency of the characters is considered, the methods of forming their images within the framework of S. Botticelli's style are revealed.

**Key words:** S. Botticelli, Renaissance, stage adaptation, character, artistic image.





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**Representación teatral en la cultura artística del renacimiento (en el ejemplo de la pintura de Botticelli "primavera")**

**Resumen:** El artículo está dedicado al estudio de los principios de la adaptación teatral de la famosa pintura "Primavera" de S. Botticelli (1482, "Galería de los Uffizi, Florencia") en el contexto de la cultura teatral del Renacimiento temprano y Florencia, donde vivió y trabajó el artista. Se trazan las interrelaciones a nivel de los elementos estructurales de la composición y del conjunto. Se considera la consistencia semántica y artística de los personajes, se revelan los métodos para formar sus imágenes en el marco del estilo de S. Botticelli.

**Palabras clave:** S. Botticelli, Renacimiento, adaptación escénica, carácter, imagen artística.





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### **Introduction**

Creativity S. Botticelli always attracts the attention of art historians, scientists, specialists involved in the culture and art of the Renaissance. The painting "Spring", which occupies a central place among his other works of art, is quite well analyzed. The main concept of this article is the idea of synthesis of theatrical art and artistic image of this painting in the context of the Florentine Renaissance.

The purpose of the article is to understand the meaning of the picture as a single medium formed by the artist in accordance with public, cultural - aesthetic and philosophical attitudes (Boyadzhiev G.N., 1973). There is a significant number of works devoted to the work of S. Botticelli and the analysis of his individual works: Ionina N. (2006), Swan. O. (2011), Rykov. A. (2010), Kapko-Foretić. Z. (1998), Pattillo. N. (1954), Barolsky (1994), Lew. A. (2011), Marmor. M. (2003), Kline. J. (2011). However, a comparative interdisciplinary study of the painting "Spring" in both art criticism and theatrical science has not yet been held. The problem of reflecting the theatrical Florentine culture in the artistically imaginative continuum of the picture is poorly understood.

### **Research Methodology**

The creative process is a mystery, even the author sometimes cannot explain how the image is created. Researchers rarely seek the stage adaptation in the plot structure of one painting, emphasizing the image of "Spring." They tend to include in their sphere of interest a much wider area. The author's approach involves consideration of artistic structures and processes of constructing the work of S. Botticelli from the point of view of the structure of the artistic image in general and from the standpoint of the specificity of the creation and its stylistic language in contact with the theatrical culture of Florence.

### **Florentine Renaissance and the addition of the figurative structure of the painting "Spring"**

Beautiful Florence was called the "flower of Tuscany" from ancient times. Florence was considered the most perfect of all the cities of Italy. Florentines glorified their city, transforming buildings, squares, adapted them for luxurious holidays. The main type of festive performances at that time was





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the depiction of a story from a sacred history or legend and a solemn procession on the occasion of some event of an ecclesiastical nature. In Italy, these performances were distinguished by a great variety of subjects, pomp and taste. M.N. Sokolov notes: "theatricality is present everywhere - in the temple architecture resembling lush scenery, in parks that take the form of the theaters of nature, and in new, fascinating plot of urban planning". (1999, p.322). At that time, the Italians were well acquainted with the various personifications of the phenomena of life. They have long been accustomed to a number of names in poetic works and in artistic images. The Italian masters knew well the historical background of any allegory or image, due to the wide dissemination of the class education.

Procession in Italian cities and in Florence was widely spread due to spacious, beautifully paved streets. These were processions of costumed people in carriages and on foot, originally spiritual, and then more and more secular. Holidays in Italy clearly showed a tendency to images of an individual character. Subsequently, the art of inventing characteristic masks, fully embodied in the image, was born. The most flourishing of festive ceremonies begins in the 15th century. This is the time of the High Renaissance. The main theme of creativity was love, elevated to virtue. At this time, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante, Boccaccio created masterpieces and S. Botticelli painted.

The Medici family ruled in Florence at the time. S. Botticelli became a court painter. He organized tournaments, hunting, and theatrical productions. Botticelli was friends with Giuliano Medici, the cousin of the ruler of Florence. Giuliano was in love with Simonetta Vespucci, the first beauty of Florence. The artist immortalized her image in many of her drawings. The early death of Simonetta and the sudden death of Giuliano affected the perception of the artist, became his personal tragedy. A premonition of the inevitability of wilting is evident in Botticelli's painting. The dual feeling of beauty and tragedy is felt in the painting "Spring". The artist emphasizes the theme of love as a virtue. The figures of the three Graces symbolize love of the earthly and heavenly, its wisdom as a whole, as the basis of life. The image of Simonetta is repeated several times in the female portraits of Chloris, Flora, Grazius and Venus as the artist's farewell to something bright in his life, as a desire to perpetuate his beloved image for centuries. W. Shakespeare called his time as "universal hypocrisy". Interpersonal relations acquire the character of a theatrical performance. "The situation of the emergence of theatricality beyond the theater, the blurring of the boundaries of the theater, necessitated a theatrical act of increased conventionality, emphasizing its playful character". (Suvorova L.G., 2015, p.275).





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### Stage adaption of characters in the plot structure of the work

The key character of the picture was Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. The artist embodies the smoothness of movements through lines that not only give birth to a pattern, but also determine the entire composition, based on the rhythm. Thus, the work of S. Botticelli is likened to dance, and this aspect of theatricality should not be unnoticed. Dance is represented by rhythmic, expressive movements, usually arranged in a certain composition and performed, as a rule, with musical accompaniment; this is plastic art, in which the main means of creating an artistic image is the movement, position and foreshortening of the body of the dancer. Dance in the paintings is noticeable by the way the clothes of Graces develop and by the smooth movements of their bodies. S. Botticelli is a recognized master of linear rhythm architecture. He specifically placed the figure of Venus in the center of the picture. The artist embodied in the image of the goddess the beautiful Simonetta, similar either to the Madonna, or to the goddess. Her posture, the inclination of her head and the strange gesture of her hand set the motion to the whole picture. The moment of unsteady crankiness of the characters of S. Botticelli makes it possible to liken them to the refined choreography blossoming in the Renaissance court culture as an embodiment of restraint and subtle beauty. The rulers of the Italian city-states, such as the Medici, Sforza, Este and Gonzaga, paid much attention to the magnificent spectacles, which give an opportunity to interpret the world in a peculiar way, which brings to life a new cultural activity. An important role in the development of court dance was played by the appearance of professional dance masters who taught high-ranking nobility and were arbitrators in the field of etiquette, manners and had no small influence on the atmosphere at court. Life and work of the master in this environment, reflected on the artistic images of the painting "Spring". The famous American dancer A. Duncan recalls: "This time my imagination was captivated by S. Botticelli. I spent several days looking at the famous painting "Primavera" ("Spring"). Inspired by it, I created a dance in which I tried to translate the necessary motives, inspired by it. I thought that when I danced this picture, I would send everyone the message about love, about spring, about the birth of life ... Later I tried to turn my thoughts on "Primavera" by Botticelli into "Dance of the Future".(Duncan A., 1994, p. 349 )

In addition, the picture shows not only the slow rhythm of the movements of the figures, but also their stylization. Their garments are associated with halls or gardens, in which ladies and gentlemen





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slowly danced; their thoughts did not allow chaotic unorganized movements. These ideas are embodied in the thoughtful composition of the painting "Spring", where each character has a certain place. S. Botticelli, like a professional dancing master, rehearsed with his heroes separate pas and figures and directed the movements of groups of figures on the canvas. The artist opened a special relationship of specific expressive means of the frame. The whole picture consists of separate episodes, the figures being arranged as fragments and symbols: standing Spring and the flocking Flora, slowly turning Gracia, looking upwards Mercury, running Zephyr and Chloride, flying Cupid. There is an inner deep roll between them, manifested in how life and fiction fuse, in the artist's ability to attract the viewer's view into the fabric of what is happening. The two-dimensional plane of the picture and the preservation of its surface are not the only way of linking the painting to the plot. S. Botticelli's decorative manner of painting remains within the framework of stamping and tends to aesthetic design of a real space like a carpet or a tapestry designed to decorate the walls of the dance hall.

Another aspect of theatricality is seen in the fact that the picture resembles the plot of a theatrical production - the mystery. Genre forms of masquerades, momeries and carnival processions were a favorite entertainment in the Middle Ages, especially spread during the Renaissance. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such ideas were arranged in noble houses and turned into costly city festivals. Carnivals had a tremendous impact on the addition of the imaginative structure of the picture. Especially magnificent were triumphs - the representations put on mythological subjects with application of skillfully executed decorations. Triumphs in the domains of the Medici family were developed as luxurious performances arranged outside the palace walls in the open air of garden and park ensembles and palace pavilions. The best architects and artists were invited to design them. In addition, small groups of dancers performed during court feasts and festive gatherings in Italy and France; In France, such performances were given the definition "entremets", in Italy – "intrommessi", that is, "Intercession". Initially, these dance performances could be seen at balls, and later in theaters, called "intermezzo" or "interlude".

Images in the picture of S. Botticelli are fictional, but endowed with secret meaning. Everything that happens is like a costume, theatrical action. Mythology of the canvas images is the plot of the birth of a new life, the transfiguration of nature and the beginning of spring. The theatricality of the story is emphasized by the antique clothing of the characters, Venus stands out against their background, clothed in a sumptuous Renaissance costume. Only blind Cupid at the top emphasizes her divine principle. Three graces personify beauty, purity and love, Mercury is considered the guardian of secret





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knowledge. The image of Simonetta is seen in female portraits; the image of Mercury resembles Giuliano. The contemplative expression of the faces of the characters is not a simple illustration; it seems to clarify the inner theme of the philosophy of life, which has become the mood of the entire canvas.

The peculiarity of the composition of the picture is the fact that the figures are not visually connected to each other, but their unity is generally felt in the general gradual rhythm as in the old dance. The artist managed to convey the unreality of what is happening, the airiness and sacredness of the whole plot. Theatrical art and its specificity largely determines the stage space and S. Botticelli successfully solves it. The decoration of the picture is a magic forest, in the ornamentation of which the fruits, leaves and fabulous flowers are closely intertwined. It seems that the curtain is open, and the characters are ready for dialogue with the viewer. This composition, depicted in S. Botticelli's painting, was a kind of prototype of the dance interlude, which later became a popular independent form of the ballet entre in the 17th century. The painter creates a background in the picture, relying on the visual context; director or choreographer, forming a real stage environment, think about the complexity of the existence of the actor and his environment in more detail, synthesizing them. The qualitative characteristics of the environment and its artistic image in both versions essentially depend on the embodied design. In the interpretation of the plot, S. Botticelli appears more as a stage designer than a painter. Details and objects are not used in their everyday purpose, nor for giving the situation a great visibility. The action of the characters on the canvas, as well as the actor's performance and the stage environment in the play, contain exactly the elements that are capable of providing a symbolic movement of the creative ideas of the work. The picture of S. Botticelli is created according to the plot of ancient myths and is filled with the personification of life, glorifying the beauty of the human body. However, the exact meaning of the picture is still a matter of controversy. The theatricality of the embodiment of the plot, its mysteriousness makes it possible for everyone to reveal it in own way. The painting remains in the framework of another dimension, a worthy world masterpiece.

### Conclusion

The identification of the theatricalized culture of the Renaissance and the painting of S. Botticelli led to the characterization of the new genre of the "living picture". The theatrical element of Florence





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influenced painting, creating new forms. However, painting also influenced theatrical art, creating patterns of similarity in accordance with traditional characters. Theatrical performance tends towards expressive means of painting, similar definitions are used, such as "scene", "picture", "action", etc. By depicting a continuous flow of reality, the theater at the same time divides it into separate pictures, scenes, acts, discrete units. Drawing on the picturesque canvas is also a stopped, snatched from the reality. In both cases, such a unit is a spatially closed substance that tends to "stop in time". The performance gravitates toward painting and splits distinctly into individual pictures formed according to the laws of compositional imagery on a picturesque canvas, and the scenery becomes similar to the pictures independently playing the play, and do not serve only as a backdrop for the acting. Dialogue of theater and painting in the context of the theatrical culture of Florence reflects the continuous internal process of mutual exchange of symbols and means of expressiveness. The world is permeated with the theater, theatricality of architecture, the painting that unites their scenography, the theatricality of the festival, the ritual, the etiquette arises, theatrical metaphors are created, theatrical plastic is used, the chains of theatrical images and codes are based on direct or associative reference to these images. Characters are both movable and static, distances do not matter, time is shortened. This picture is created for peace and solitude, it is the only "special" that all people seek forever for the soul, as the motivation for the hidden desires, forever unfathomable.

There are points of contact with the creative method of directorial theatricalization as a way of bringing the plot of a picture, like a script, to an artistic figurative form of representation, through a system of pictorial, expressive and allegorical means. The dramaturgy of the first and second scenes of the painting with the heroes placed in the picture, and the scenery similar to the environment, indicate the formation of the original stylistic language of S. Botticelli, turned to theatrical forms, to some scenic conventionality inscribed in the cultural context of the theatrical era of the early Florentine Renaissance.





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