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# How the Digital Age Has Transformed the Landscape of Contemporary Russophone Dramaturgy: Tools, Methods of Presentation, Reception

Natalia Skorokhod

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## **Abstract**

The article discusses the impact of digital technologies on the art of dramaturgy, focusing on the changes that have taken place in the landscape of Russophone drama in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Special emphasis is placed on the role of Lubimovka, the annual festival of Russian-language plays as a platform for the collection, presentation, and distribution of dramatic content, as well as for public discussions about both the plays themselves and the social issues they reflect. The author argues that the connection between the theatre and contemporary drama has been weakened recently, and proposes a scientific hypothesis about drama's functioning as an independent, para-theatrical form of artistic expression in the digital age. Additionally, the article analyses how digital technologies have transformed the process of creating and organising documentary drama.

## **Key words**

art of playwriting, digital technology, Russophone drama, Lubimovka festival, digital verbatim

## Preface: Playwriting and Digital Technology

The advent of digital technologies has significantly impacted not only theatre, but also the art of drama. In the last two decades, there have been both explicit and implicit changes in this field. The most obvious ones include the influence of computers and the internet on the way plays are stored and distributed. Firstly, paper drafts and manuscripts have almost disappeared in recent years, and personal computers and digital storage have made it possible for anyone to create electronic libraries of dramatic works. Secondly, the way we create text has also changed. Playwrights can develop their works on their personal computers and publish them on their own websites. As a result, the availability of modern drama has increased significantly, and today any play can gain a high level of recognition, even if it has not been staged or published in print. It cannot be denied that these changes are universal.

All further considerations are connected with the processes that have occurred and are occurring in the field of Russophone drama. In other words, this refers to the creative activity of authors who write in Russian and target a Russian-speaking audience. In the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the territory where authors wrote plays in Russian was mainly linked to the countries of the former Soviet Union, especially Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. However, the events of the past decade and especially Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the massive wave of Russian-speaking emigration have made all geographical boundaries irrelevant. Now, many Russian-speaking authors have dispersed around the world.

The implicit influence of new technologies on Russian-language drama can be explained by the phenomenon of the partial separation of modern plays from traditional theatre performance and the emergence of alternative ways of presenting them, such as authors' reading, directors' interpretations, laboratory sketches, and text installations. The recording or live broadcast of presentations on the internet have become popular, perhaps due to the fact that they are usually more accessible for viewers compared to recorded multi-component theatrical performances which are more difficult to watch in video format.

The pandemic era contributed to the development of precisely such ways of distributing new drama. For instance, the Corona-Drama Festival was organised by playwrights from St. Petersburg in 2020 during the pandemic, and obviously, it was completely done remotely, even during the plays' video presentation. All the actors and directors worked in isolation, all of them were collaborating from their homes. Thanks to that the directors invented new approaches to remote play-readings. In her article published in *Novaia Gazeta*, Evgenia Alexeeva, one of the festival curators, noted:

This new genre of play presentation through video reading was notably updated during self-isolation. It became a combination of a theatrical production, film production, web series, and radio theatre. We edited these videos following the principles of Cannes short films. The Corona-Drama Festival has already held several broadcasts on the VKontakte social network and its official website, Corona-Drama.com. All texts of the plays and video clips

from the festival are posted there. The number of online views has exceeded one hundred and thirty thousand. (ALEXEEVA 2020)<sup>1</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, of course, audiences had no choice but to watch shows online. However, I would argue that interest in video recordings and live broadcasts of plays has increased significantly in recent years, even after home isolation ended. Now, many users prefer to watch a broadcast or a video recording of a play read by actors to reading the text themselves. For example, one can compare the number of downloads of the text with the views of the video recording of the most popular Russian-language play from recent years, *Drug Moj* [My Friend] (STESHIK s.a.), by the Belarusian playwright Konstantin Steshik. The ratio is 67 to 1,123 on the website of the Lubimovka festival (LUBIMOVKA s.a.)<sup>2</sup>. New interactive spectator trends have emerged: the ability for viewers to express immediate reactions to the performance in real-time, in other words, to comment on the play while watching it. This has proven to be an extra attraction for young audiences who are already socialised in the digital age.

Another mode of non-obvious influence in the digital age is the emergence of a new approach to creating plays. Playwrights have begun to actively incorporate (internet) links to other texts, images, video recordings, films, and commercials into their work, turning the play into a hypertext. These hypertexts can only be fully understood in a digital format. For instance, plays such as *Ya Svobodn* [I am Free] by Pavel Pryazhko<sup>3</sup>, *London* by Maxim Dos'ko (DOS'KO s.a.), and *Ikonostas.mp3* [Iconostasis.mp3] by Daniel Gurski (GURSKI s.a.), are not meant to be read in a paper version. However, the transformation of hypertext into cybertext is not only inherent in drama but also in other types of verbal arts, and this phenomenon, as argued by Espen J. Aarseth (1997), gives rise to a new reading approach.

The use of artificial intelligence and its capabilities has inspired a number of playwrights to incorporate text-generating programs and neural networks into their works. In Ekaterina Avgustenyak's play *Lorem Ipsum* (AVGUSTENYAK s.a.) and Elena Demidova's play *Textogenerator 'Dal'nie Rodsnvenniki'* [Text generator 'Distant Relatives'], the authors have successfully utilised these technologies.

The simple and free availability of typographic means of expression is used by some authors for the creation and presentation of texts. The so-called 'graphic play', which has its origins in rarities like the handmade books of Russian futurists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is now becoming a common phenomenon. The most interesting examples of this are the works of Gleb Kolondo *Vitya v Strane Kartonnih Chelovechkov* [Vitya in the Land of Cardboard Humans] (KOLONDO s.a.), and Artyom Materinskii, *I. 9 let* [I. 9 Years] (MATERINSKIJ s.a.). These works were presented in the Fringe/Interdisciplinary Program of the Lubimovka Festival in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

1 The cited quotation, as well as all subsequent quotations, was translated into English by the author of the study.

2 This is the data for the period from September 2021 until January 2024.

3 This play is not available now on the internet, but it has been described many times by researchers of Belarus drama. See e.g. (LAPPO 2020: 90–92).

However, as mentioned above, these changes are not only related to drama, but also to literature in general. I will therefore not discuss these changes in detail. One of the most unexpected developments was the rapid increase in the importance of annual festivals of Russian-language plays such as Lubimovka and Remarka [Remark] in Moscow, Pervaya Chitka [The First Reading] in St. Petersburg or Eurasia in Ekaterinburg. This led to the emergence of movements of playwrights, such as the expansion of festival activities during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This expansion led to a division of drama into various artistic practices that are almost independent of theatres and provided a platform for presenting plays using digital technologies.

## The Lubimovka Festival and its growth in the age of social media

It is reasonable to focus on the most representative example of the development of the largest festival of Russian-language plays called Lubimovka. Today, in the middle of 2024, Lubimovka humbly presents itself as follows: ‘The Lubimovka Independent Playwriting Festival is a nonprofit international project by Russian speaking playwrights’ (LUBIMOVKA s.a.). It sounds like a description of one of the many events organised by the Russian-speaking community in the fourth wave of emigration from Russia. However, for more than three decades, the Lubimovka Festival, the main annual competition for Russian-language plays, has become a significant cultural event in Russia, within which new ideas and theories about drama have been born. These include not only aesthetic but also ethical, media, digital, pedagogical, curatorial, and cultural ideas and theories. There are several similar festivals in Russia, however, since the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Lubimovka has been the most respected festival and the one that most quickly and adequately reflects all the changes in various aspects of reality. Regarding our topic, it is crucial that the transformation of the festival into a significant part of cultural life in Russia occurred during a time when digital technologies were becoming widespread in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

For the first few years after its inception in 1992, Lubimovka was a small gathering of young playwrights who met once a year at the Stanislavsky estate named Lubimovka, located on the banks of the Klyazma River. The event was organised by the Theatre Union of Russia as an open competition, with a selection process that identified a shortlist of plays from among the applications. A few of these plays, which were diverse in terms of aesthetic direction, were read, analysed, and discussed during the event. Occasionally, theatrical projects would emerge from these discussions. However, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the festival was gradually becoming significant not only as a theatrical event, but also as a social and cultural phenomenon in Russia.

Mikhail Durnenkov<sup>4</sup> (born 1978), a writer, playwright, screenwriter, curator and teacher as well as a key figure who was closely associated with the Lubimovka festival at the time, confirms that

Since 2012, the festival has become a place for public gatherings, not only for theatre professionals, but also for the audience. Lubimovka unites people and creates a special atmosphere around the festival and beyond it. This is thanks to the rise of social media. We, as a team, have gone online and started inviting new writers. We thought that social media was everywhere, and we would find writers in the most unexpected places. And it worked! Until 2012, about 200 plays were submitted to the competition each year. But since then, their number has increased dramatically to 700–800. As far as I remember, 825 was the highest number. This is Lubimovka's record! [...] Of course, we were surprised by how many people wrote plays, but we were even more surprised by how many people – actors, theater students, sociologists, philosophers, and those who were not directly connected with drama or theatre – began to come and listen to the stage readings of plays. (SKOROKHOD in prep.)

The impact of social networks has made participation in the competition more accessible for Russian-speaking writers, and it has influenced the content and structure of the festival program. Due to the significant increase in the number of submissions at Lubimovka, the organisers established several festival programs instead of just one. In addition to a main program where new plays are presented, an off-program featuring new works by more established authors was introduced. In 2013, the Fringe/Interdisciplinary program was added, showcasing plays with innovative forms. As mentioned earlier, this competition has demonstrated how the use of new technologies influences the emergence of innovative tools and techniques in drama.

Other interesting aspects of the new festival format were clarified during the dialogue with Mikhail Durnenkov. On the one hand, he mentions the de-professionalization of playwriting, and on the other, the acquisition of the social role of presenting and discussing plays at the festival:

Suddenly, the discussion about the play, which took place immediately after the reading, became as important as the actual reading of the play. The audience wanted to be and became an integral part of the festival. As for me, I was particularly fascinated by the fact that sociologists began to participate, as it was important for them to see the country through the lens of Lubimovka's play. (SKOROKHOD in prep.)

In just a couple of years after 2012, the festival had become a platform for public discussion. The discussion was organised as follows. Immediately after the performance, the moderator who was usually one of the art directors of the festival came on stage. They invited the author of the play, the director, the performers, and a representative

4 After the playwright expressed negative feelings about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a criminal case was opened against him under the article for discrediting the armed forces of the Russian Federation. Now he and his family reside in Finland. (SHILOV 2022)

from the team of readers-selectors, and led a discussion about the play between them and the audience through their questions.

In addition, the appearance of the Lubimovka YouTube channel and the recordings and live broadcasts of festival events made these presentations and discussions accessible to people all over the world. Some of the most interesting comments from viewers of the live broadcast were read out during the live discussion, which encouraged more and more potential contributors to join the Lubimovka community.

It is worth noting that the professionalism of the playwright and the aesthetic merits of a play are no longer the only criteria for selection for the main programme of the festival. This has given everyone the opportunity to express themselves through dramatic forms, even those who do not have a strong literary talent, as Durnenkov supposes.

At the festival, there is a shortlist which is publicly presented in Moscow every year in September in the form of stage readings. This list includes about thirty or more new plays. This is, as mentioned, a representation of our current reality. While some plays may have been better or worse in terms of professionalism, each one had its own unique qualities. The selection criteria for these plays were developed by our team and were posted on the Lubimovka website.

The criteria for selecting plays for the main program at the festival are very simple. As far as I can remember, the play must have either a new language, a new theme, or a new perspective on an old theme. It might also be a new view of reality, or a portrayal of a new type of character. The word 'new' appears in all these criteria, and since 2012, Lubimovka has lived and grown thanks to this focus on the new. This has provided a seasonal update, reflecting real-life events, which is why sociologists have turned to us for insight. Sometimes, the plays may not be perfect professionally, but they offer a fresh perspective on topics that have not been explored before. They offer a unique journey into society and its problems, such as those faced, for instance, by fishermen in Kamchatka... (SKOROKHOD in prep.)

At the same time, efforts were underway to improve the festival's website so that the shortlisted plays could be easily downloaded throughout the year. This led to simplified access to new texts for theatres and directors. As a result, in the second half of the 2010s, several artistic directors of theatres, including some celebrities, publicly stated that they read plays selected for the festival every year. Despite the fact that Russian theatre in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century leaned towards classical works and adaptations of prose, young playwrights were gradually attracting the attention of not only small companies, but also mainstream theatres.

In addition, a new generation of stage directors has emerged, and these young directors are interested in working with emerging playwrights. As a result, some theatres have begun to specialise in contemporary plays in the second half of the 2010s. Archiving the materials from the festival has made it easier for theatre professionals to access recent drama and provided extensive material for sociological research. There

is a library on the Lubimovka website, where you can find all the plays that have won awards, as well as short author bios.

On the other hand, there was a third aspect of the changes in the dramatic paradigm, as already mentioned, directly related to the use of latest technologies. Plays that had a considerable resonance at the Lubimovka festival, not even having a theatrical embodiment, were able to enter the media space.

For instance, in 2018, *28 Dnej: Tragedia Menstrual'nogo Tsikla* [28 days: The Tragedy of the Menstrual Cycle] (SHILYAEVA s.a.), a play by a psychologist Olga Shilyaeva was selected for the main program and presented at the Lubimovka festival. This text was written in the style of an ancient tragedy, in which the female protagonist, through dialogue with a chorus of women, expressed her feelings about each day of her menstrual cycle. She shared her thoughts on pain, desire, and mood swings as well as on her relationship with her partner. The heroine spoke so openly and freely about her body's bleeding and pain, that it shocked the audience, even in Moscow, where theatre spectators can be considered more liberal than in other cities in Russia. The play generated a significant media buzz, with a large number of downloads and over a thousand views of the presentation during the Lubimovka Festival. There was also a lot of discussion and commentary about the play. Journalists described the play as a 'feminist oratorio'.

The author herself stated that while writing the text, she was in dialogue with the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, for whom the menstrual cycle appeared to be a performance that is played in a woman's body monthly. She wrote: 'It seems to me that in *The Second Sex* by S. de Beauvoir it was stated that the menstrual cycle has its own dramatic structure, and that a woman's body serves as the stage for this monthly performance. The question then arises: where is the woman as an individual in this act?' (KISELEV 2019). Despite Olga Shilyaeva's attempt to explore the issue of women's individuality in her play, which is a natural topic for drama as a genre, there were many opponents of this type of subject in the Russian public sphere. The popularity of the play did not help *28 Dnej* become a theatrical hit, and only one theatre in Moscow dared to stage it<sup>5</sup>.

Another aspect that is evident here is the existence of Lubimovka as a well known and very popular platform for broad public discussion. This led to the festival eventually becoming involved in political issues. According to Mikhail Durnenkov, the festival's opposition to the Russian government did not stem from political reasons, but rather from the very nature and purpose of the institution:

Well, of course, Lubimovka has always been and continues to be a completely liberal institution. This is because we give everyone the opportunity to express themselves and we value all voices. And now, imagine that a homophobic law is passed in Russia. The playwrights immediately react and write plays about the LGBT community. They submit their plays to our

5 In 2019, directors Yuri Muravitsky and Svetlana Mikhailishcheva produced the play on the stage of Theatre.doc in Moscow.

festival, and we include some of these texts in the program of the Lubimovka Festival, because we believe it is important at that time. Yes, yes, yes, yes, we understand that this is the agenda of today. So, while we didn't have a political message or political orientation initially, we found ourselves becoming a political circle due to the gradual strangulation of freedom in Russia. This was the mission of the festival to give a voice to everyone, and as the situation became more difficult, we became an unwilling political platform. (SKOROKHOD in prep.)

This situation of increasing aggression from the Russian government, not only towards internal protests and dissidents, but also towards freedom of speech, could only lead to a crisis. Even a few years before the war, Mikhail Durnenkov accurately described the social atmosphere in Russia:

Nobody feels confident about the future in this country, not a single person. And so, each person seizes what they can at every opportunity, every moment, because tomorrow . . . there's a very characteristic proverb for Russia, which is 'Never say never!' . . . You could end up in poverty or in prison at any moment... (CURTIS 2020: 70)

On February 24, 2022, several playwrights, directors, and actors associated with Lubimovka took to the streets to protest against the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many of them were detained, including Yuri Shekhvatov, who was at the time one of the artistic directors of the festival. He spent thirty days in prison before leaving Russia, as did many other playwrights and theatre-makers. The future of the festival was in jeopardy, and the private foundations that had been financing it annually stopped their support. In 2022, Lubimovka had a few options: to stay in the public sphere and cooperate with the government in a non-political capacity, to go into internal exile and continue non-public activities, or to emigrate and continue as a festival. The latter option was chosen. Mikhail Durnenkov remembered: 'There is a third option to take Lubimovka out of Russia and to preserve the principle of freedom. Well, it's a sharp political move, because... you know, the declaration of freedom might be seen as a criminal act in Russia. [...] A political gesture, yes' (SKOROKHOD in prep.).

As a result, the festival, which has been held for thirty years every September in Moscow, is now organised outside of Russia. Lubimovka, in exile, still presents the best new plays in a format of stage readings and discussions with the public about the plays after their presentations. However, the geographical diversity of the locations where the festival is held has become much wider.

In the season of 2022/2023, Lubimovka events were held in Narva, Tartu (Estonia), Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), Haifa, Tel Aviv (Israel), Paris (France), Belgrade (Serbia), Istanbul (Turkey), Berlin (Germany), Granada (Spain), etc. The next season started in Helsinki (Finland) and continued in Tbilisi (Georgia), Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), and Paris (France). The next events of the festival are expected to be in Frankfurt am Main, Munich (Germany), Los Angeles (USA), etc.

## Digital phase in documentary drama

It is obvious that the topic of war in connection to the life and fate of an average person is reflected in most of the plays of 2022 and it became the main subject of public discussions. That is why, in 2022, the Lubimovka festival opened a special program of anti-war plays. This fact increases the risk for those authors who live in Russia and Belarus to participate in the festival openly but the possibility of the new ways of digital communication solves even this problem.

Using various communication platforms and with the help of virtual private networks (VPN) and nicknames, playwrights from totalitarian states and authors in exile are able to participate in the festival. Any playwright from Russia or Belarus can join readings and discussions, allowing them to participate and speak while being physically distant from the location of the festival. This allows the geographically separated community of Russian-speaking playwrights to maintain their connection, and their collaboration has not yet broken down. Thanks to new technologies, playwrights on the other side of the border are able to bring their voices to the world, minimising the risk of repression.

For example, I witnessed such a communication during my visit to Finland last year, when at the Lubimovka Festival in the Finnish city of Jyväskylä (August 23–24, 2023) a sketch based on an anonymous author's work written by Margarita S. and directed by Taisiya Kostyuk was presented. The documentary play *Poiski Sexual'nogo Partnera Veчерom 21 Sentyabrya* [Search for a Sexual Partner on the Evening of September the 21<sup>st</sup>] was a comedy based on the real Tinder correspondence of a major Russian city's residents. And at the same time, it had a very strong dramatic effect thanks to everything that happened on the day of the announcement of partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation. The show performed by very young actors rediscovered a seemingly obvious truth for the viewers: while the war remains the war, life goes on. The young performers from Finland played their Russian peers in search of a partner for a night or lifelong love with enthusiasm, sharing their idea that they have nothing to lose, because life has just started. As short as a song, this story expresses a primary and understandable desire to live, rejecting everything that stands in the way, be it political, ideological, or the will of fate. After the performance, the discussion of the play took place, which turned into a performance in itself (reminiscent of a spy thriller). With a darkened face and her voice altered with the help of AI Voice Changer technology, the playwright answered questions from the audience.

Considering the last example, it is worth discussing another aspect of the impact of digital technologies on contemporary Russophone drama. It is now obvious that new technologies have transformed the tools and even the principles of creating a documentary play. Since a significant portion of human communication has shifted to social media, playwrights have begun to actively engage with these platforms. Additionally, the various platforms for commenting on any internet content has become a rich resource for collecting content for a documentary play. Thus, partially or completely, the internet sources replace direct communication with people through the so-called

‘verbatim technique’ or authentic documents with their digital equivalents.

On the one hand, this ‘digital verbatim’ approach deprives a documentary play of certain benefits such as the natural intonation of human voices. On the other hand, it allows playwrights to reflect on real-life events more quickly and in more diverse ways. Furthermore, the combination of different documentary sources and fictional elements within the same play can create unexpected dramatic effects.

A compelling example of this effect is the play *Crime#Always Arm Ukraine* (2022) written by Esther Bol [Asya Voloshina] (born 1985). The play was written three months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and has by now been translated into multiple languages and published in Israel, France, and the Czech Republic. At first, the text was published on the website of the Lubimovka Festival, it was included in the list of winning anti-war plays. Mikhail Durnenkov, who is now one of the organisers and judges of this competition, believes that *Crime* was the strongest play in the program from the beginning. In reading the play it is clear that all the materials used by the author to create the text were related to the digital reality.

The genre of this play is difficult to define, as it incorporates elements of a documentary, autofiction, melodrama, and even funeral lament. The author has created the play using a variety of materials. The text is composed of carefully selected testimonies from real people, media reports, user comments, the heroine’s correspondence with her friend and grandmother who are both staunch supporters of Putin, as well as her own Facebook posts.

It is crucial to note that all these events, actions and testimonies occurred during the early stage of the war, when fear and confusion were the overwhelming emotions among both individuals and media. To illustrate this, I am quoting extracts from the beginning of *Crime*<sup>6</sup>:

NOVAYA GAZETA TELEGRAM CHANNEL

Russia’s official media watchdog orders all media outlets covering the ‘special operation’ in Ukraine to use ‘information received only from official Russian sources’.

breath

TRISHA please. tell me

YOU (to Trisha)

As I understood, he’s helping everyone into the basement. They didn’t evacuate. There wasn’t time. His apartment building is right in the center of Kyiv, Trisha.

breath

NOVAYA GAZETA TELEGRAM CHANNEL

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov: ‘No one is talking about an occupation. That word cannot be applied in this context. The rest is up to the people of the Ukraine.’

The timeframe of the Russian ‘operation’ will be determined by Putin and ‘depend on its

6 Translated by Ricardo Marin-Vidal. In the quotation from the play the original spelling is kept.

results and expediency.’

‘Ideally, the Ukraine should be liberated, cleansed of Nazis,’ said Peskov.

breath breath

TRISHA oh my god

TRISHA

can you reach him at least?

YOU

Hello, Oleksandr.

Is it alright that I’m writing to you? I’m sorry. I saw you online. How are you?

OLEKSANDR

Дуже дякую за увагу вибухи офігенні. Very grateful for your attention the explosions are awesome.<sup>7</sup>

YOU (to Oleksandr) Are you in Kyiv?

TRISHA

i’m trying to understand how to just walk around and live

TRISHA

how to get work done

YOU (to Oleksandr)

I’m sorry, I probably shouldn’t ask.

YOU (to Oleksandr) I’m sorry

YOU (to Oleksandr)

Just one thing. Can you tell me, please (unread.)

YOU (to Oleksandr)

what Ukrainian Telegram channels I should read? (unread.)

YOU (to Oleksandr) news channels (unread.)

YOU (to Oleksandr)

to get at least some information (unread.)

breath. (BOL 2022: 5–6)

The rapidly changing documentary landscape creates a situation of immense tension, as if the protagonist is simultaneously under artillery fire and in the midst of discussions on social media and in the news media. At the same time, she is overwhelmed by emotions related to her lover, who has been fighting in the defence of Kiev and has not been online for ten days and no information is available to her about his whereabouts.

7 In the English version, this remark was taken from the original text of the play without any translation. In the Russian version, Esther Bold wrote this remark in Ukrainian and translated it herself into English. The translation was printed in grey.

If this fictional plot – a girl’s messages to her missing lover – had not been placed within a dense stream of documentary materials, the play would have been another ordinary melodrama. However, by equipping the love story with a documentary context the play is elevated to a tragic level and an apparent cultural code is triggered here. As the action of the play progresses, a plethora of documentary sources begins to work like an ancient chorus, with which the protagonist, unlike in Sophocles’ *Antigone* or Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, has no opportunity for dialogue. In *Crime*, the polyphonic chorus does not see or hear the character, and all the heroine’s appeals and cries to the world go unheard.

Thus, in Ester Bol’s play *Crime*, the new technologies become actors, and the simplicity and ease of communication that they bring to humanity illuminate the issue of the total disconnect between the objective world and the person’s subjectivity in a new and very deeply troubling way.

## Conclusion

Thus, the use of digital technologies has led to the development of Russian-language drama into a separate form of para-theatrical practice. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, unlike theatres, drama festivals have become a point of collection, presentation and distribution of dramaturgy, as well as a platform for broad public discussion of both the plays themselves, their aesthetic formulae and the social issues that are reflected in them. Due to the fact that the plays that had little or no theatrical embodiment, but were given voice and received a great response at playwright festivals such as Lubimovka, began to enter the media space.

Moreover, thanks to the new possibilities provided by technology, a large international movement of Russian-language playwrights has formed, which continues to operate even in the face of geographical separation and strict censorship in totalitarian states such as Russia and Belarus.

In addition to the ways in which digital technologies are used in playwriting, as discussed in the introduction, it is worth noting that the new technologies have changed the tools and even the principles behind creating a documentary play.

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