

# Sources of The Emergence of The First Children's Theater

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**Abstract:** The main features of the origins of the earliest children's theatre have been scientifically and theoretically analyzed in the directions of development of children's dramaturgy in Russia, Western Europe, America, Japan, and other countries.

**Keywords:** Theater, drama, Europe, America, fairy tale, legend, Renaissance, category.

**Introduction:** The very first children's theatre began with a home theatre. It was founded in 1779 by Andrey Timofeevich Bolotov in the Tulska Governorate of Bogoroditsk, and he wrote the dramas "Tears" and "Unfortunate Orphans" for the first time. After this, I.A. Krylov wrote the play "Lessons for My Daughters" in 1807. The first children's theatre in Russia was opened in 1918 by Lunacharsky in the Russian cities of Leningrad and Moscow. The earliest repertoires in these theaters began with fairy tale plays. The famous fairy tales of Andersen and Metelkin, Krylov's fables, and children's songs with melodies (of Mussorgsky, Grechanin, and Lyadova) were demonstrated through pantomime. After that, the theater's repertoire included "The Nightingale" based on Andersen's work, "Tom Sawyer" based on M. Twain's work, "Colors" based on Remizov's work, Chumachenko's "Joseph the Beautiful," Scrib's "The Bear and the Pasha"[2:11], and several other performances. By 1935, 87 professional children's theaters had opened in Russia.

Children's theaters in Western Europe and America not only emerged under the influence of this initiative but also adopted Soviet plays for children, many of which embodied internationalist ideas. For example, one of the famous plays for the young audience theater, the play "The Little Negro and the Monkey" by N. Sach and S. Rozanov, was successfully staged abroad and contributed to the opening of the first children's theaters in Prague, Istanbul, and many other cities. [3:19]. In 1923, director M. Billijanka founded the "Youth World" theater in Poland. There, they staged

Meterlink's "The Blue Bird" and Tagore's "The Mail." The Krakow theater's repertoire includes plays such as Schwarz's "The Little Red Riding Hood," Shvirshchinskaya's "The Queen of Porcelain," Senkevich's "In the Woods and Deserts," D. Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe," Collodius's "Pinocchio," and others. In the 1960s, this theater became known as the "Three Generations Theatre." In 1935, a children's theatre was opened in Czechoslovakia, led by M. Melanova, with the play "The Little Negro and the Monkey" by N. Sach and V. Rozanov. In 1953, the theater began to be named after the poet J. Volker, and its director and chief director was V. Adamek. The theater's repertoire mainly includes works by Czech and Russian playwrights, for example, Steglik's "House of Gingerbread," S. Mikhalkov's "Zaitse-Zaznayka," Y. Volker's "The Stolen Sun," Sotnik's "One Terrible Day," Klitsper's "The Wonderful Hat," and others.

We have studied the origins of children's dramaturgy based on the earliest folk traditions, examining it from a scholarly perspective through the lens of world dramaturgy. Specifically, we have examined its division into several stages.

Before the advent of modern children's theater in the USA, there were such forms of folk art as theatrical staging, puppet shows, and folklore performances, which often attracted children and were used for educational purposes. In the early stages, theatrical performances for children were more of an entertainment character and often became part of large cultural events such as fairs and holidays.

Beginning in the 17th century, various forms of folk theatrical performances emerged in America, including traveling theaters, where children sometimes became spectators. However, in those early years, theatrical works for children did not yet exist as a separate genre, and children were viewers of general performances intended for a wide audience.

Starting from the mid-19th century, more attention began to be paid to children's theatre in the USA. At this time, the children's theatre is distinguished from ordinary performances for adults, and the first wave of works created specifically for young audiences emerges.

In the 1840s, the first theater company for staging children's performances appeared. One such step was the establishment of the Children's Theater in New York City. The theatre began to actively utilize literature, adapting famous works for children's sensibilities, and in this way, the foundations of children's theatre were laid, directed towards educational and upbringing goals.

The first theater in New York was founded in the middle of the 18th century, around 1750, by the leading actors Walter Murray and Thomas Keane, in a theater on Nassau Street in Lower Manhattan, with a resident theater company for about 280 people. They performed William Shakespeare's plays and ballad operas such as "The Beggar's Opera." In 1752, William Hullum sent a team of twelve actors from Britain with his brother Lewis to the colony as governors.

They established a theater in Williamsburg, Virginia, and opened the theater with the plays "The Merchant of Venice" and "The Anatomie." The company relocated to New York City in 1753, performing ballad-opera and ballad-farce, such as "Dayman and Fillida."

During the War of Independence, theater activities in New York City were suspended. However, after the war ended, the theater was restored in 1798, when a 2,000-seat park theater was built on Chatham Street in the area of present-day Park Road. The second largest theater, the Bavari Theatre, opened in 1826,[2] after which other theaters began to open.

Starting from the 19th century, a theatrical genre based on classical works and fairy tales also emerged for children's audiences. During this period, famous European and Russian works like "The Nutcracker" or the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales began to be staged for children. At the beginning of the 20th century, children's theater began to take shape in the USA as a separate and important type of theater. In 1903, one of the first children's theaters in New York was founded - "The Children's Theatre of New York." During this period, the theater industry, oriented towards a family

audience, began to develop, and puppet theater also began to actively operate.

One of the notable events of this period was the work of the New York Children's Theatre. Both classical works and original plays written specifically for children began to be performed here. In the 1930s, US theaters began to actively develop children's dramaturgy, and a new approach to theatrical production for children, encompassing play, education, and moral education, took shape.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, children's theatre in the USA developed based on social changes and the demands of the times. In recent decades, numerous theaters and programs have emerged that stage plays involving various ethnic and cultural groups, including children with disabilities, as well as children of different nationalities.

The emergence of plays for children in England is linked to several important stages in the development of theatrical art and changes in the social and cultural life of society. Children's plays began to take shape as a distinct genre in Great Britain in the 18th century.

The first examples of children's theatre in the 17th-18th centuries were English children's theatre, which had not yet reached such a level of development. However, in some cases, adult plays are adapted for children. For example, in those times, masks that could be used for children, as well as mythological and historical plays, were widespread.

With the development of children's literature and education in the 18th century, plays intended for children's audiences began to appear. These works were mainly aimed at encouraging children's time and giving them advice, and their purpose was to give advice and upbringing. One of the earliest known examples is the play "The Story of Tom Thumb" (1744), written for children.

Theater has always been a part of every culture. Therefore, it's impossible to predict exactly when the children's theatre will begin. However, from the perspective of the written play, Bennett believes that the children's theatre emerged in Europe at the end of the 19th century, adopting the form of "Tour companies staging folk and magical tales" (2005, p. 12), and that Barry's play "Peter Pan" (1904) was the first to gain widespread recognition in Great Britain. Another successful theatre for children is Milne's "Toad Hall Frog" (1929).

The Polka Theatre, another well-known children's theatre, began its work in Great Britain in 1967 as a touring company. However, after the Order was successfully reviewed by the English Council of Art, the

Polka Theatre opened a children's theatre in 1979 in the permanent theatre space of Wimbledon, using various forms of art to create new works for children.

The task of the Polka Theater is "to awaken the imagination of children from all segments of society and to awaken a sense of discovery... education and participation are at the heart of the activities of the Polka Theater, calling children to research and creative development" (Polka, 2017). In 1994, the Polka Theatre won the Vivienne Duffield Theatre Award, resulting in the creation of a program called "Curtain-Up," which offers free tickets to low-income schools. It is estimated that more than 90,000 children visit Polka annually to explore the fun and exciting theater.

The emergence of plays for children in France is linked to the development of theatrical art and pedagogical thought. The first plays specifically designed for children appeared during the Enlightenment period, when special attention was paid to the upbringing and education of the younger generation.

The first play written for children is "Le Petit Théâtre de l'enfance" (The Little Theatre of Childhood), created in 1756 by Jean-Marie Leprens de Beaumont. Leprens de Beaumont was a renowned writer and educator who placed great emphasis on educating children through literature. His/Her plays are dedicated to teaching children ethics and rules of conduct through theatrical stages.

Thus, it can be said that the first plays for children appeared in France in the middle of the 18th century, and one of the main figures of this process was Joan of Arc Leprens de Beaumont.

In France, as in other countries, the first forms of theatrical performances for children appeared in the context of fairy tales and legends. The most famous works that could be used for children were theatrical fairy tales and fables, historical plays. These performances were usually aimed at an adult audience, but their plots and elements were also interesting for children.

Furthermore, in the 17th century, the first revised versions of famous works for children appeared. Thus, French writers began to utilize mythological and literary themes familiar to children through books and oral narration.

The development of children's theatre and children's literature in Germany was also linked to the Enlightenment, where attention to children's education was of paramount importance. One of the first famous children's plays in Germany was the "Kindertheater" (Children's Theatre), created in 1776 by Christian Felix Weisse.

Christian Felix Weise was a German writer, poet, and educator who was actively engaged in creating works for children. His poems written for children's theatre were dedicated to teaching children ethics, kindness, and rules of conduct through theatrical stages. Weise is considered one of the founders of children's literature and theater in Germany.

Thus, the year 1776 is considered a significant period in the history of children's theatre in Germany, and Christian Felix Weise is considered one of the first authors to create songs specifically for children.

If in Italy in the 18th and 19th centuries theater gradually adapted folk tales and legends for children, then in the 20th century children's theater became an independent and important genre. Today, Italian children's theatre continues to develop, encompassing diverse themes and not only entertaining children but also providing opportunities for a deeper understanding of the world around them.

The emergence of plays for children in Greece, as in other countries, is linked to the development of theatrical art, pedagogy, and the social concept of childhood. However, in Greece, with its rich theatrical tradition, the formation of children's theatre had unique characteristics related to the development of ancient theatrical culture, education, and social systems, as well as the adoption of childhood.

However, in Ancient Greece, there was no theatre specifically designed for children as a genre. The role of the theatre in children's upbringing was not direct, but rather education through participation in mass performances and religious ceremonies.

In the 19th century, with the growing interest in developing children's education and upbringing programs, theaters focused on children's audiences began to appear in Europe. In Greece, the national theatrical tradition developed during this period, and gradually, the importance of creating works for children began to be recognized.

The establishment of theaters for staging songs for whole families, including children, is becoming an important event. Although theaters in Greece in the 19th century were still mainly oriented towards adult audiences, more and more theatrical productions began to adapt classical works for children. Songs often incorporate folklore elements, folk tales, myths, and legends, making them appealing to young audiences.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the development of children's theatre began in Greece. Social changes associated with industrialization and urbanization, as well as the growing interest in raising children, have led to the adoption of theatre as an important tool for

educating and nurturing a new generation.

Greek playwrights began to write plays for children, aimed at both entertainment and the cultivation of moral values. At this time, performances adapting traditional Greek myths, folklore, and history for young audiences emerged.

One of the most popular theaters for children in Greece is the Children's and Youth Theater in Athens, which actively staged songs for children's audiences, including contemporary songs by Greek and foreign authors. The emergence of plays for children in Japan is linked to the development of modern theater and education systems from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Unlike traditional forms of Japanese theatre focused on older audiences like No, Kabuki, and Bunraku, children's theatre in Japan began to take shape under the influence of Western trends in education and art.

One of the first plays for children in Japan is "Pavloniy Guli" (Japanese: Kyri no Hana), written by Odzaki Koyo in the 1890s. Odzaki Koyo was a famous Japanese writer and playwright who made a significant contribution to the development of modern Japanese literature and theater. His poems written for children were aimed at stimulating and, at the same time, educating young audiences, nurturing them in the spirit of morality and love for art.

Beginning with the Meiji period (1868-1912), when Japan began to actively adopt Western models in the fields of education, art, and culture, theater became more diverse, and a trend began to create individual works for children.

During this period, organizations focused on children's education and upbringing began to take shape, and theaters began to realize the possibility and necessity of showcasing special productions for children. However, until the end of the 19th century, children's songs were still rare in Japan, and there was no separate children's theatre. Instead, children gained the opportunity to see a reflection of folk tales and legends intended for the general public.

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