



UDC 792:316.42:008:005.332.4
DOI: 10.63009/noac/1.2026.02

Article's History: Received: 22.01.2026 Revised: 19.05.2026
Accepted 22.06.2026 Published: 29.06.2026

Victor Kozhevnikov*

Postgraduate Student

I.K. Karpenko-Karyi Kyiv National University of Theatre, Cinema and Television

01054, 40 Yaroslaviv Val Str., Kyiv, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1251-2361>

Theatrical awards as an institutional phenomenon of the global cultural space: The case of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award

Abstract. The aim of this article was to analyse theatre awards as an institutional phenomenon in the global cultural sphere, using the Ukrainian theatre award “Kyiv Pectoral” as a case study. The research methodology was based on a combination of cultural, sociological and institutional approaches, utilising qualitative content analysis of academic sources, comparative analysis of international award practices, and structural-functional analysis of the activities of award-granting institutions. The article examined the phenomenon of theatre awards as a component of the global cultural space. It systematises and analyses global, particularly European and American, theatre experience in awarding state and non-state cultural initiatives. The generalisations drawn have enabled an analysis of the local context in which Ukrainian theatre awards operate, identifying their characteristic features, development challenges, potential for change, and markers of modernisation, taking into account global experience. In particular, the Ukrainian theatre award “Kyiv Pectoral” was analysed as an example of the formation of cultural capital and the recognition of professional achievements in the field of performing arts. Theatre awards were considered not merely as a form of encouragement, but as a mechanism of canonisation that defined standards of professionalism, artistic quality and the social impact of theatre. The study focused on the symbolic and reputational functions of the awards, which contributed to the legitimisation of new theatrical practices, trends and names. The normative and communicative functions of theatre awards were identified; key structural issues in the functioning of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award were revealed, in particular the transparency of expert evaluation, the relevance of nominations and the integration of the independent theatre sector. The history of the emergence of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award, its transformations, and its impact on the theatre community of Kyiv and Ukraine as a whole were examined. The need to modernise the award system in Ukrainian theatre in line with international practices was emphasised. A vision of the theatre award as a dynamic socio-cultural structure was proposed, one that should respond to changes in the professional environment and contribute to the sustainable development of theatre. The study presented arguments regarding the functioning of theatre management within state and non-state creative initiatives as an element of cultural policy at the local (municipal) and national levels. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using the findings to modernise the national awards system and improve theatre management tools

Keywords: performing arts; cultural policy; theatre management; theatre awards; independent theatre; symbolic capital; institutional legitimacy

Introduction

In the 21st century, theatre awards have become not only a means of cultural recognition but also a key institutional component in the formation of symbolic capital, which has shaped the social legitimacy of the performing arts. Their role has been increasingly examined within the contexts of cultural management, the sociology of

art, and institutional analysis. In global academia, awards have been viewed as mechanisms for creating a professional canon, strengthening the reputational power of cultural agents, and implementing policies of inclusion and diversity. M. Yakovenko (2022) emphasised that the effective application of management and marketing

Suggest Citation:

Kozhevnikov, V. (2026). Theatrical awards as an institutional phenomenon of the global cultural space: The case of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award. *Notes on Art Criticism*, 26(1), 16-27. doi: 10.63009/noac/1.2026.02.

*Corresponding author (vedexpert97@gmail.com)



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is key to the sustainable development of independent theatres and the expansion of their audience, which had socio-cultural significance for contemporary Ukrainian society. In a study by R. Ikeuchi (2025), based on the 2016 Tony Awards, it was examined how high-profile award ceremonies and cultural visibility can influence public perceptions of racial inequality and public debates surrounding representation in the theatrical sphere. J.F. English (2008) noted that prizes and awards function as an “economy of prestige”: they produce and redistribute symbolic value within culture, influencing canons, artists’ reputations and institutional mechanisms for legitimising artistic practices. S. Trostenko (2025), in her study of the characteristics of the theatre movement during the period 2025–2026, noted that theatre festivals continued to adapt to the conditions of war, whilst preserving their cultural mission and expanding their social role. She also analysed the characteristics of Ukrainian and international theatre awards.

C.O. Nuere *et al.* (2017) summarised 25 years of cultural management development in Europe in their publication and demonstrated the evolution of recognition tools in the cultural sector. The issue of theatrical cultural management has generally remained a relatively “narrow field” within creative industries research in other countries. In this context, works focusing on the development of cultural management systems, institutional modernisation and the role of state support for culture have proved significant. L. Labaronne & L. Leuschen (2021) analysed data from amateur theatre supported by the state, specifically the organisation of a multinational refugee theatre in Switzerland, as an example of participatory projects and organisations that use art and cultural activity as a means of social integration. The study of such experience is highly relevant to contemporary Ukrainian realities, given the significant number of internally displaced persons as well as Ukrainians of various nationalities who have become refugees or received temporary protection status in EU countries. The authors noted that the example of not only the creation but also the sustained development of the “Theatre Malika” demonstrates the formation of official cultural policy as a response to the dramatic challenges of modernity. In Ukraine, attention to institutional forms of cultural recognition has also been growing, but academic research on the topic remains insufficient. O. Mukha & O. Darmoriz (2021) emphasised an interdisciplinary approach to the development of competencies in the field of cultural management. The authors noted the distinction between cultural and creative industries and the functional diversification of cultural management. A. Liashushchenko (2021) emphasised that the contemporary system of state theatre management in Ukraine required an update to its quality-enhancing tools, which could include incentive mechanisms. B.-H. Beniuk (2024) pointed out that the academic discourse on Ukrainian theatre developed more slowly than the journalistic discourse,

and that much of the content reflected the influence of traumatic wartime experiences on creative decisions, particularly regarding the functioning of awards. H. Lypkivska (2020) analysed the All-Ukrainian Theatre Festival and the “GRA” Award, describing its operational mechanism and participant statistics. The author noted that the festival revealed key trends in contemporary theatre life – decentralisation, the personalisation of creative processes, and the absence of broad institutional frameworks. Within this framework, awards served as a tool for strengthening the professional environment. The study by E. Mammadova & A. Abdullayev (2025) highlighted the economic potential of theatre, emphasising the link between cultural capital and award systems as a source of social and economic influence.

Thus, an analysis of academic sources has shown that, within the global humanities, theatre awards have been examined primarily in the context of the economics of prestige, cultural policy and the sociology of art, whereas in Ukrainian academic discourse they have remained a marginal subject of research. Academic publications have largely focused on general issues of theatre management or cultural policy, without offering a systematic analysis of awards as institutional mechanisms of recognition. The aim of the study was to analyse theatre awards as an institutional phenomenon within the global cultural sphere, using the Ukrainian “Kyiv Pectoral” award as a case study. The research objectives were: 1) to analyse contemporary approaches to understanding award mechanisms in the cultural sphere; 2) to examine the functioning of Ukrainian theatre awards in a comparative context; 3) to assess the significance of the “Kyiv Pectoral” as a component of national cultural policy. The novelty of the study lay in a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of the award as a socio-cultural institution in the context of post-Soviet transformations. The research methodology was based on a qualitative content analysis of academic publications concerning theatre as a socio-cultural institution in general, and the role of awards and prizes in the cultural sphere. A comparative analysis of international experience with theatre awards made it possible to identify the main features of their implementation in various countries around the world, with an emphasis on the cultural characteristics of each state. Furthermore, management methodologies for the formulation of theatre awards and the subject of the study were analysed, and a structural-functional approach was applied to the study of cultural institutions. A SWOT analysis to evaluate the subject of the study and the theatre award enabled the identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the operation of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award. Thus, in order to achieve the research aim, data on the “Kyiv Pectoral” theatre award was analysed, along with the experience of theatre awards in the USA (Tony Awards), France (Les Molières), Germany (Deutscher Theaterpreis Der

Faust), the UK (“Laurence Olivier Awards”; “Evening Standard Theatre Awards”), Italy (Premio UBU), Spain (Premis Butaca), Greece (the Karolos Koun Award), as well as the award of the All-Ukrainian Theatre Festival-Award “GRA”.

■ Theatre awards as an institutional mechanism for recognition. An analysis of the experience of organising theatre awards around the world

The Tony Awards, USA – a nomination system covering 26 main categories, including “Best Play”, “Best Musical”, “Best Direction”, “Best Actor/Actress” and others. The nomination process was carried out by a special committee comprising approximately 50 theatre professionals appointed by the Tony Awards Administrative Committee, which is required to review all new Broadway productions of the season and determine the nominees by secret ballot. The rules of the awards stipulate that a theatre claiming the title of “Broadway” must have a seating capacity of at least 500, be primarily dedicated to presenting legitimate theatrical productions, and be recognised as “Broadway” by the Tony Awards Administrative Committee. Although the Tony Awards have traditionally been associated with commercial Broadway theatres, independent and non-commercial theatres have also played an important role in the US theatre landscape. Many productions that went on to receive Tony Award nominations and wins were initially staged in independent or non-commercial theatres, such as the New York Theatre Workshop, Second Stage Theatre and others. These theatres often served as incubators for new works that later moved to Broadway stages. Consequently, for an independent theatre production to be considered for a Tony Award nomination, it had to be staged at one of these theatres. This meant that independent theatres without access to such venues could be limited in their ability to secure a nomination. The Tony Awards also recognised the achievements of independent and regional theatres through special awards. In particular, since 1976, the “Regional Theatre Tony Award” has been presented, recognising outstanding achievements by non-commercial theatres across the country. This award recognises the contribution of independent theatres to the development of the theatrical arts in the USA (Tony Awards, n.d.). This experience could be useful for Ukrainian theatre awards, such as the “Kyiv Pectoral”, in developing mechanisms to integrate independent theatres into the system of national recognition.

The Molière Awards (Les Molières) are France’s most prestigious theatre awards, established in 1987 on the initiative of leading figures in the theatre community. They are organised by the non-profit association Les Molières. The award is presented annually with the support of the French Ministry of Culture and in partnership with the national broadcaster France 2, which ensured extensive coverage of the event. State involvement

ensured the award’s legitimacy and contributed to its influence in the country’s cultural life. In 2004, in response to criticism regarding the transparency of the award process, the structure of the Les Molières Association was reformed: a new Board of Directors was established, comprising representatives from both the public and private theatre sectors, as well as independent experts. This step helped to boost confidence in the awards and ensured a more balanced representation of the various players in the theatre industry (Les Molières, n.d.). Professional associations played a key role in the functioning of the Molière Awards. They were involved in forming the jury, determining the evaluation criteria and selecting the nominees. In particular, the Les Molières association worked closely with organisations such as Syndec (National Union of Artistic and Cultural Enterprises), SACD (Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers) and Adami (Association of Performing Artists). This collaboration ensured a professional approach to evaluation and contributed to the development of the theatrical arts in France. The Molière Awards covered a wide range of theatrical genres and forms, including drama, comedy, musicals, youth theatre and others. The selection criteria took into account the number of performances, the size of the theatre and other factors. For example, private sector theatres were required to stage at least 60 performances in a venue with over 90 seats, whilst state theatres were required to stage at least 25 performances in a venue with over 200 seats. These criteria were designed to ensure the quality and professionalism of the participants, but they also sparked debate regarding the accessibility of the award for smaller and independent theatres (Les Molières, n.d.). In response, the Molière Awards introduced special categories and awards, enabling a broader coverage of diverse theatrical initiatives. The Molière Awards have become an example of effective collaboration between the state and professional associations in supporting and developing the theatrical arts. Their structure and selection mechanisms ensured high quality and professionalism, whilst promoting inclusivity and diversity.

The “Der Faust” Award (officially known as the Deutscher Theaterpreis Der Faust) is Germany’s leading national theatre award, which has been presented annually since 2006 for outstanding achievements in the performing arts and as an example of an interdisciplinary approach in contemporary theatre management. It was founded by the German Theatre Association (Deutscher Bühnenverein), the German Academy of Performing Arts (Deutsche Akademie der Darstellenden Künste) and the Cultural Foundation of the German States (Kulturstiftung der Länder). The award aims to recognise innovative and interdisciplinary approaches in theatre arts that reflect contemporary trends in the cultural sector. One of the key features of the “Der Faust” award has been its emphasis on interdisciplinarity. From 2022, a new category was added to the main

ones – “Genrespringer” (genre innovators) – which recognised works that went beyond traditional theatrical forms. This allowed for the recognition of projects that combined various art forms, technology and new media, contributing to the development of theatre as a multi-disciplinary space. For example, in 2022, the Herborcht/Mohren duo received an award in the “Genrespringer” category for the project “Das Schaudapot” (Akademie Schloss Solitude, 2022). This project combined the functions of a theatre, an archive, a research centre and a public space, creating a new model of interaction with the audience. “Das Schaudapot” became an example of how theatre can go beyond the stage, integrating social and cultural aspects into its activities. Another example was the nomination of Professor Anselm Dalferth in 2024 for the project “Die Erde über mir” (The Earth above me..., n.d.). This is a musical-theatrical production that combined music, text, movement and space to create a holistic artistic expression. The jury described it as an “exceptional interdisciplinary musical theatre production”. The “Der Faust” Award not only recognised artistic achievements but also influenced management practices in theatre. It facilitated the introduction of new models for organising the theatrical process, which took into account interdisciplinarity, flexibility and innovation. This included the development of new formats for collaboration, the integration of various art forms and the use of modern technologies in theatrical activities. The “Der Faust” Award became an example of how a national theatre award can stimulate the

development of interdisciplinary approaches in the arts. Its focus on innovation, the combination of different genres and forms, and the support of new management models made it an important tool in the development of contemporary theatre.

The Laurence Olivier Awards are the UK’s most prestigious theatre awards, presented annually for outstanding achievements in London’s professional theatre. Established in 1976 as the Society of West End Theatre Awards, it was renamed in 1984 in honour of the distinguished British actor and director Laurence Olivier. The awards were administered by the Society of London Theatre (SOLT), which formed annual juries for various categories: theatre, opera, dance and affiliated theatres. The juries consisted of professional panelists – journalists, casting directors, arts administrators and other specialists – as well as selected members of the public who were great admirers of London theatre. The selection process involved drawing up a long list of nominees, which was then shortlisted through voting by SOLT members and panellists. The winners were determined by a subsequent vote. A Special Award for Outstanding Contribution to Theatre was presented annually. The Laurence Olivier Awards became not only a recognition of artistic achievement but also an important tool for theatre management. In the British context, the Laurence Olivier Awards served as a benchmark of artistic quality and an indicator of leading trends in theatre, and analysis of the awards revealed the dynamics of change within the profession (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Concept of the Laurence Olivier Award

Source: Official London Theatre.com (n.d.)

The “Evening Standard Theatre Awards” became the oldest theatre award in the United Kingdom, established in 1955, and an example of a regional award similar to the “Kyiv Pectoral”. The award was presented annually for outstanding achievements in London theatre and was organised by the newspaper Evening Standard. It was considered the equivalent of the Drama Desk Awards on Broadway, as it recognised achievements in both major and independent theatres in London. Since its establishment, the Evening Standard Theatre Awards have honoured

the best theatrical productions and performers in London. Between 1955 and 2025, it became an important event in the city’s theatrical calendar, contributing to the recognition of both established and emerging talents. The Evening Standard Theatre Awards had a significant influence on theatre management in London and the United Kingdom as a whole (Kate Bush Encyclopedia, n.d.)

The “Premio Ubu” became Italy’s most prestigious theatre award, recognising achievements in Italian theatre. The award was organised by the Ubu Association

with the support of cultural institutions. A distinctive feature of the award was its emphasis on innovation and support for young talent; it was founded in 1977 by theatre critic Franco Quadri. The name of the award was a reference to Alfred Jarry's play "Ubu Roi", symbolising an avant-garde spirit and experimentalism. Initially, the award also covered cinema and opera, but from 1979 it focused exclusively on the theatrical arts. Following Franco Quadri's death in 2011, the organisation of the award was taken over by the "Ubu per Franco Quadri" association, which continued his work, maintaining a critical approach and a focus on innovation in theatre. The Ubu Award was presented annually based on the results of a vote by a wide range of theatre critics, researchers and specialists. The selection process consisted of two stages: first, a shortlist of nominees was drawn up, followed by a final vote to determine the winners. This approach ensured objectivity and took into account diverse perspectives on the contemporary theatre scene (UBU Awards, n.d.).

The "Premis Butaca" Award in Catalonia recognised achievements in Catalan theatre. The award was organised with the participation of the audience, who voted for the nominees, which helped to engage the public in the theatrical process and foster the development of independent theatres. The Premis Butaca is also an interesting example of a regional award, established in 1995 in Catalonia. Its distinctive feature was that the winners were determined solely by audience voting, making it unique among other theatre awards in Europe. The aim of the award was to recognise outstanding achievements in the theatrical arts, focusing on the audience's opinion as the primary criterion for evaluation. The award was initiated by the presenters of the radio programme "Des de la butaca" on the local radio station Premià de Mar. Since its inception, it has become a significant event in the cultural life of Catalonia. Since 2006, the "Premis

Butaca" award ceremonies have been held in various cities across Catalonia. Winners were determined by an open public vote, a feature that set the award apart from other European theatre prizes (Butaca Awards, n.d.).

The Karolos Koun Award (Greece) was organised by the Association of Greek Theatre and Music Critics with the support of the Municipality of Athens and has been presented annually since 1988. The award was named after the Greek theatre director Karolos Koun (1908-1987), the founder of the Athens-based Theatro Technis. The establishment and administration of the award were initiated by the Association of Greek Theatre and Music Critics in cooperation with OPANDA – the Organisation for Culture, Sports and Youth of the Municipality of Athens. The selection of laureates was carried out by a jury composed of theatre and music critics from Greece. In addition to the main nominations, the award included special distinctions and honorary mentions for contributions to the development of theatre and music (Association of Greek Theatre and Music Critics, award regulations; Days of Art in Greece, 2023).

The All-Ukrainian Theatre Festival-Award "GRA" is a cultural and artistic event established by the National Union of Theatre Workers of Ukraine in 2018 with the aim of recognising the most outstanding creative achievements in the field of theatre. The event has been held annually on a competitive basis, based on the results of the previous calendar year, with the award granted following the outcomes of the festival. The initiative had the ambitious goal of creating a national theatrical equivalent of the Academy Awards; however, organisational difficulties between 2022 and 2025, the high cost of participation and staging, and other parameters of the festival-award limited the applicability of the "GRA" experience to the tasks facing the theatrical community of Kyiv. Table 1 presents a comparison of the main features of theatre awards in Europe and the United States.

Table 1. Comparative table of the main characteristics of leading theatre awards in Europe and the USA

Name of the award	Budget/Financing	Entry requirements	Number of nominations	Prize awarded to the winner	Jury format	Features (evaluation criteria)
Tony Awards (USA)	Sponsorship, sale of broadcasting rights	Productions that have opened on Broadway in theatres with a capacity of 500 seats or more	26	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Professional jury	Artistic quality, innovation, commercial success
Molière Awards (France)	Support from the French Ministry of Culture	French theatrical productions	~20	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Professional jury	Contribution to national dramaturgy, interpretation of classical works, innovation
Der Faust (Germany)	State funding, support from cultural foundations	Theatres recommended by the Bühnenverein association	8 main categories + special categories	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Professional jury	Interdisciplinarity, innovation, artistic excellence

Table 1, Continued

Name of the award	Budget/Financing	Entry requirements	Number of nominations	Prize awarded to the winner	Jury format	Features (evaluation criteria)
Laurence Olivier Awards (United Kingdom)	State funding, support from cultural foundations	Professional theatres in London	~25-30 categories	No monetary award; the winner receives a prestigious statuette and status	Professional jury + specialised panels by genre	Assessment includes the artistic quality of the production, directorial interpretation, acting performance, scenography, and innovation; the award shapes the canon of British theatre and influences the commercial success of productions
Evening Standard Theatre Awards (United Kingdom)	Sponsorship, media support	London theatrical productions	~10	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Professional jury	Contribution to the development of theatre, innovation, acting performance
Premio Ubu (Italy)	Support from cultural associations	Italian theatrical productions	~16	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Professional jury	Innovation, support for emerging talent, experimental forms
Premis Butaca (Spain – Catalonia)	Sponsorship, support from local authorities	Theatrical productions in Catalonia	~19	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Audience voting	Popularity among audiences, quality of production, acting performance
Karolos Koun Awards (Greece)	Support from the Municipality of Athens, cultural associations	Greek theatrical productions	~6	Statuette; no monetary award provided	Professional jury	Contribution to national dramaturgy, support for emerging talent, interpretation of classical works

Source: Tony Awards (2025), Premio Ubu (2025), Premis Butaca (2025), Les Molières (n.d.), Der Faust (n.d.), Official London Theatre.com (n.d.), Kate Bush Encyclopedia (n.d.)

The data in Table 1 have made it possible to identify differences in the structure, principles governing the composition of juries, and mechanisms for legitimising theatre awards across different national contexts. A comparative analysis has shown that the effectiveness of award-giving institutions is directly dependent on the level of institutional autonomy, the transparency of procedures, and the involvement of professional communities. Summarising the analysis of international experience in organising theatre awards, the following key institutional parameters can be identified: the existence of clearly defined evaluation criteria; the institutional independence of the jury; the integration of the independent theatre sector; and the communicative openness and public nature of procedures. These parameters have become the basic benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of national award systems.

Features of the organisation of theatre awards in Ukraine.

The history of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award

The late 1980s and early 1990s marked a significant period in the history of Ukraine and in the development of

Ukrainian theatre. One of the key factors that initiated a new chapter in the history of theatre in Ukraine was the policy of perestroika proclaimed by the leadership of the USSR, which affected all public spheres of society, including theatre. The policy of glasnost, introduced alongside perestroika, enabled artists to address pressing social issues that had previously been silenced. Theatre became one of the public platforms where these issues were openly discussed. As a result of glasnost, interest in national history increased year by year – stages began to feature productions based on works by previously banned authors, including Mykola Kulish. For instance, in 1989 in Kharkiv, after a long period of prohibition, his play “Myna Mazailo” was revived, and in 1991 director Serhii Proskurnia created a television version of the production (UkrInform, 2012). There also emerged greater opportunities to engage with and analyse contemporary global trends in theatre, as the Cold War came to an end and the USSR began opening its borders, particularly for artists. The stages of national and regional theatres proved insufficient to fully reflect the dynamic social movements of the late twentieth century. This period represented a genuine “grassroots”

revolution in Ukrainian theatre, which was also supported “from above”, enabling the creation of numerous new theatres, particularly in Kyiv. In 1987, the Podil Theatre was established under the direction of Vitaliy Malakhov, in 1988 – the “Koleso” Theatre under the direction of Iryna Klishchevska and the first resident theatre “Suziria”, which still exist in 2025 and have already been recognised as academic (Kiev Academic Theatre “Koleso”, n.d.; Turistic Hub. Kyiv digital, n.d.). At these new theatre venues, directors and actors had greater opportunities to experiment with various genres and forms of theatrical art. Thus, when Ukraine declared independence in 1991, Ukrainian theatre found itself in a renewed state compared to the Soviet period. Overall, the institutional context for the functioning of theatre initiatives and professional communities in Ukraine was shaped by state cultural policy and the activities of professional associations. The general parameters of the state of the performing arts in Ukraine are summarised in a limited number of analytical overviews. Among these is an international English-language publication by the European (Polish) initiative “East European Performing Arts Platform” (Peresunko, 2010).

The rapid development of theatre arts in Kyiv in the late 1980s and early 1990s required careful analysis and synthesis; thus, the creation of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award was a logical outcome in the search for various methods to carry out such an analysis. Examples of theatre awards that existed in various countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s inspired the creation of a new motivational component for Ukrainian artists, in addition to positions and titles. The list of founders of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award and organisers of its first edition, along with a description of their status in the cultural sphere at the time of its establishment, was as follows: Mykola Rushkovsky – Soviet and Ukrainian theatre and film actor, theatre teacher. Through his efforts, the Theatre-Studio “Suziria” was established, and in 2000 the New Drama Theatre in Pechersk was founded. Mykola Hubienkov was an actor; Mykhailo Chemberzhi served as First Deputy Head of the Main Department of Culture of Kyiv from 1989 to 1994, during which he created and led the Kyiv City Arts Committee; and Timur Ibraimov, a theatre and film actor, participated in the establishment of the “Koleso” Theatre. As of 2025, he remained the only individual still involved in the award since its founding. It was through the efforts of these figures that, in 1992, in collaboration with the National Union of Theatre Workers of Ukraine and the Main Department of Culture of the City of Kyiv, the ‘Kyiv Pectoral’ Award was established. The first award ceremony took place on 27 March 1993 – on International Theatre Day. Thus, the tradition of awarding and presenting the prize specifically on Theatre Day was established. It was significant that in 1993, one of the best dramatic productions was recognised as “The Lady Without Camellias”, directed by Roman Vityuk, whose work had been viewed with ambivalence in

Ukraine during the Soviet era. Timur Ibraimov outlined the circumstances surrounding the creation of the “Kyiv Pectoral”, particularly the roles of Mykola Hubienkov, Mykhailo Chemberzhi, and Mykola Rushkovskyi in its organisational and institutional formation in the early 1990s. He also emphasised the necessity of reforming and revitalising the award in light of its enduring symbolic significance for the theatrical life of Kyiv (Creative Ukraine, 2026).

Between 1995 and 2025, the organisation of the award was carried out by the Kyiv branch of the National Union of Theatre Workers of Ukraine in cooperation with the Department of Culture of the Kyiv City State Administration. The award was presented annually, with funding for the ceremony and prizes allocated from the budget of the city of Kyiv. The chief organiser of the award was the prominent theatre manager, People’s Artist of Ukraine, and head of the Kyiv City organisation of the National Union of Theatre Workers of Ukraine, Professor Oleksii Pavlovych Kuzhelnyi. An active role in the work of the award was also played by O. Bezghin, I. Hensytska, L. Oltarzhevska, and Ya. Partola. The award was presented in the following categories: Best Production, Best Chamber Stage Production, Best Children’s Production, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Scenography, Best Musical Concept of a Production, and Best Choreography. Between 1995 and 2025, 31 ceremonies were held (the 2020 ceremony took place online due to quarantine restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic). Most frequently (23 out of 31), the award ceremonies were held at the Ivan Franko National Academic Drama Theatre (National Union of Theatre Artists of Ukraine, n.d.)

As of 2025, the procedure for awarding and presenting the “Kyiv Pectoral” prize is governed by Decision No. 6905/6946 (2023) of the Kyiv City Administration. The prize was awarded in 14 categories to mark World Theatre Day on 27 March. The five-member organising committee was approved each year by a special Order of the Director of the Department of Culture of the Kyiv City State Administration. The organising committee was headed by co-chairs representing the award’s organisers: the Department of Culture and the Kyiv Local Creative Branch of the National Union of Theatre Workers of Ukraine. The organising committee appointed two groups: a panel of experts and an administrative and organisational group. After reviewing the performances that took place in Kyiv from 1 January to 31 December of the year preceding the award ceremony on 27 March, the panel of experts submitted its recommendations to the organising committee regarding the awarding of prizes in 14 categories. The Regulations do not specify the procedure for forming the expert group or the methods used by the experts to evaluate the performances. Funding for the award by the city was earmarked for “organising events to present awards and honour the laureates”. Nor

do the Regulations state that only national and municipal theatres may participate in the competition, although in reality this was the case. Since 2022, the award has not been presented, and no award ceremonies have been held (Kyiv City State Administration, n.d.). As of 31 December 2025, there are no official digital resources for the award available in the public domain; there is no record of a dedicated website or public digital archive for the award.

The “Kyiv Pectoral” Award has occupied a special place in Ukraine’s theatrical landscape as a symbolic recognition of achievements in the performing arts. Established in 1992, it became not only a professional award but also a marker of the capital’s cultural identity. The award’s name draws on the Scythian pectoral of the 4th century BC – an artefact of spiritual grandeur that symbolised a connection to the origins of Ukrainian culture. This approach reinforced the award’s image as the heir to a high artistic tradition. At the same time, its concept echoed the ancient dramatic competitions of

Ancient Greece, where theatrical achievements were assessed as part of the public life of the polis and victory in them held both artistic and civic significance (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, n.d.). In the field of cultural management, the “Kyiv Pectoral” served to legitimise artistic practices and quality standards. The presence of over 10 categories stimulated competition and artistic exploration in the theatre. The award ceremony took on a ritualistic character, transforming the event into a symbol of the theatre season and attracting the attention of the general public. Despite political and social transformations, the award retained its significance, remaining an enduring cultural brand. It also served as a cultural archive, documenting the theatrical history of Kyiv and Ukraine. Thus, the “Kyiv Pectoral” had not only professional but also profound cultural and symbolic significance – as an instrument for shaping the national theatrical canon and strengthening the cultural identity of society. Table 2 outlines the main issues regarding the functioning of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award.

Table 2. Analysis of the functioning issues of the “Kyiv Pectoral” award using the SWOT analysis method

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. The cultural and symbolic significance of the award. 2. The presence of a motivational component for participants: both non-material and material aspects. 3. The discovery of new names. 4. Contribution to the popularisation of theatrical art in the capital of Ukraine	1. Lack of inclusion of Kyiv’s non-state theatres. 2. Insufficient transparency in matters concerning the formation of the jury and the financing of its activities. 3. Insufficient transparency in the system of evaluation and the awarding of nominations
Opportunities	Threats
1. Engagement of new stakeholders and integration of the non-state theatre sector. 2. Reform of participant selection criteria. 3. Reform of participant evaluation criteria. 4. Establishment of a clear procedure for the formation of an expert council and the financing of its activities. 5. Use of digital tools for evaluation and the awarding of nominations; digitalisation of the evaluation and nomination process	1. Martial law and the risks associated with it: • possible difficulties with funding; • physical danger due to shelling and large-scale attacks; • disruptions to energy supply due to shelling and large-scale attacks; • interruptions to heating. 2. Lack of a quorum in the Kyiv City Council to adopt a new regulatory document that would allow the existing issues in the functioning of the competition to be addressed. 3. Lack of awareness among part of the theatrical community of the need to address the existing problems in the functioning of the award

Source: compiled by the author

In order to continue operating effectively, the “Kyiv Pectoral” Award requires substantial reform, including the adoption of a new version of the Award Regulations. International practice has demonstrated effective models of theatre awards based on a combination of transparent evaluation criteria, institutional support, audience engagement and innovative management. In particular, awards such as the Tony Awards, Der Faust, Premio Ubu and Butaca have successfully adapted their formats to changes in the socio-cultural context, supported independent theatres, developed the audience base and invested in young theatrical talent. These practices may be relevant to the reform of the “Kyiv Pectoral”. Given the state of war, limited budget and the need for transparency, the proposed concept for renewal was timely and contained progressive solutions: optimisation

of nominations, with an emphasis on innovation, independent theatres and social impact, which corresponded both to the experience of the Premio Ubu and Faust, and to the contemporary needs of Ukrainian society. The hybrid jury format combined professional evaluation (as in the Tony or Faust awards) with audience voting (as in Butaca) via online tools – an effective way of democratising the process whilst maintaining expertise. Budgetary and logistical adaptability – the intimate scale of the ceremony, partnerships with arts venues, digital broadcasting and transparent funding – aligned with the contemporary practices of the Faust and Evening Standard Awards, which reduced costs whilst maintaining prestige. Domestic tourism and digitalisation served as a strategic direction for promoting theatre in the context of post-war recovery and the easing of physical

restrictions on movement. Thus, the “Kyiv Pectoral” had the potential to transform into a modern, open and influential institution of cultural recognition, combining local values with the best international practices of theatre management. To this end, the following steps were proposed to create a renewed concept for the award, which can be systematised as “Key Proposals for Reforming the Award”. Diversifying the nominations to nine categories will broaden the scope for encouraging creativity. The main categories could be: (title) “Performance of the Year” – (award) Pectoral statuette, certificate, cash prize; “Audience Choice Award” – Pectoral statuette; “For Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Theatre in Kyiv” (honorary Pectoral statuette); and “Audience Choice Award” (Pectoral statuette, certificate). Optional additional nominations may include: “Best Independent Theatre of the Year”, “Theatrical Innovation of the Year”, “Emerging Stage Award”, “Social Theatre”, and “Best Contemporary Play”. Changes to the jury composition and the evaluation system will enhance trust in the process and encourage the involvement of the expert community. The award jury will consist of seven independent experts who do not participate in the competition programme. It is recommended that the jury include specialists from Kyiv, other cities in Ukraine and, where possible, international representatives. Evaluation should be conducted via a Google Form, with results automatically processed in a Google Sheet, which experts complete immediately after viewing the performance, on the condition that they cannot be altered subsequently. For the “Audience Choice Award” category, there should be an open online vote, the results of which are also tallied digitally. This aligns with the concept of the award, ensures audience participation and provides a realistic reflection of public opinion. The format and logistics of the ceremony must be adapted to promote greater openness and the integration of digital technologies. The main components should be an intimate awards ceremony with an online broadcast, collaboration with independent theatres, cultural venues and online platforms, and mixed funding: grants, patrons, crowdfunding and partnerships. The creation of a digital archive of the awards with open access and an interactive web platform for communication with the theatre community will ensure the preservation of the experience gained and “constant engagement” with target audiences and stakeholders on a 24/7 basis. The expected outcomes of the modernisation will ensure the establishment of a transparent, modern system of theatrical recognition, support for independent (non-state) theatre, the engagement of new audiences, particularly young people, the strengthening of Kyiv’s reputation as a theatre capital, and the creation of a transparent evaluation system.

R. Kostin (2024) analysed theatre as a complex socio-cultural instrument that reflects and transforms social processes, contributes to the formation of national identity and intercultural dialogue, and serves as a

platform for discussing pressing social issues and offering criticism. I. Bezhin (2005) analysed the intersection of art and the market, highlighting the commercialisation of artistic expression. The author critically assessed the influence of market forces on artistic value and the autonomy of artists, offering reflections on the economic dynamics shaping the art world. B. Fogel & B.A. Crawford (2025) focused on the entrepreneurial aspects of arts management in non-profit theatre. The researchers identified key leadership traits that have become essential for success in this sector, notably adaptability, innovation and strategic vision, and provided practical recommendations for cultural leaders working in the non-profit theatre sector. D. van der Plicht (2015) analysed how theatre awards influenced the run lengths of musicals in London’s West End between 2005 and 2013. The researchers demonstrated that winning Olivier Awards and WhatsOnStage Awards is associated with longer runs, whilst nominations without a win at the WhatsOnStage Awards may be linked to a reduction in run length following the awards ceremony. O. Karulin (2017) analysed the popularity of theatre productions in Estonia between 2010 and 2015, defining popularity through external economic capital (number of admissions) and internal symbolic value (theatre award nominations). M. Hodge (2020) examined musicals that were nominated for or won the Tony Award for Best Musical and demonstrated that nominations and wins in this category had a significant positive impact on the run length of their original Broadway productions. The author also described the key features of how awards function in this sector. R.T. Warne (2018) analysed how Tony Award nominations and wins influenced the financial success and run length of Broadway productions, demonstrating that receiving a nomination or winning significantly increased weekly box office takings and reduced the likelihood of a production closing. A. Bohdanovych & O. Annichev (2025) analysed contemporary approaches to managing theatre organisations in an unstable environment. Thus, theatre awards have a positive impact on the financial success and run length of productions, as well as on the popularity of theatre productions, as measured by attendance and internal recognition. At the same time, these awards help to preserve the cultural autonomy of the theatre, support independent theatres and contribute to the development of the theatre industry through entrepreneurial and innovative strategies.

Conclusions

Following a study of theatre awards as an institutional phenomenon within the cultural sphere, and using the “Kyiv Pectoral” award as a case study, a number of generalisations were formulated. The “Kyiv Pectoral” Award functioned as a stable instrument of professional legitimisation within the capital’s theatre community and was governed by an updated regulatory document from 2023. At the same time, the analysis revealed structural

problems: a vaguely defined mechanism for forming the expert panel, a lack of detailed evaluation criteria, and limited integration of the independent sector. A comparative analysis of international experience helped to identify institutional differences. The American model (Tony Awards) demonstrated clear procedural regulations, a broad nomination system and a separate category for regional theatres. The French Les Molières award combined state support and professional associations, ensuring a balance between sectors. The German Deutscher Theaterpreis Der Faust emphasised interdisciplinarity and innovation, as reflected in its special categories. The British Laurence Olivier Awards and Evening Standard Theatre Awards implemented a model combining a professional jury with public influence. The Italian Premio Ubu functioned as an expert-critical platform, whilst the Catalan Premis Butaca was based exclusively on audience voting. The Greek Karolos Koun Awards had municipal support and a professional jury with a focus on national drama. Thus, the effectiveness of award institutions depended directly on the transparency of procedures, institutional autonomy, and the involvement

of professional communities and the independent sector. The modernisation of the “Kyiv Pectoral” should include updating the nomination structure, standardising evaluation criteria, and expanding the representation of non-state theatres, which will help strengthen the capital’s cultural capital and enhance the competitiveness of the Ukrainian theatre scene. The inclusion of audience voting via online tools will ensure democratic processes and greater audience participation in shaping theatrical trends, as well as helping to popularise theatre among younger audiences. Prospects for further research lie in a comparative analysis of other examples of Ukrainian theatre awards and their impact on cultural identity.

● Acknowledgements

None.

● Funding

None.

● Conflict of Interest

None.

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Віктор Кожевніков

Аспірант

Київський Національний університет театру, кіно і телебачення імені І.К. Карпенко-Карого

01054, вул. Ярославів Вал, 40, м. Київ, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1251-2361>

Театральні премії як інституційний феномен світового культурного простору: на прикладі премії «Київська пектораль»

■ **Анотація.** Метою статті став аналіз театральних премій як інституційного феномену світового культурного простору на прикладі української театральної премії «Київська пектораль». Методологія дослідження ґрунтувалася на поєднанні культурологічного, соціологічного та інституційного підходів, із застосуванням якісного контент-аналізу наукових джерел, компаративного аналізу міжнародних преміальних практик та структурно-функціонального аналізу діяльності преміальних інституцій. У статті розглянуто феномен театральних премій як складової світового культурного простору. Систематизовано та проаналізовано світовий, зокрема європейський та американський театральний досвід преміювання державних та недержавних культурних ініціатив. Проведені узагальнення дозволили проаналізувати локальний контекст функціонування українських театральних премій, визначити їх характерні риси, виклики розвитку, потенціал до змін та маркери модернізації, зважаючи на світовий досвід. Зокрема, проаналізовано українську театральну премію «Київська пектораль» як приклад формування культурного капіталу та визнання професійних досягнень у сфері сценічного мистецтва. Театральні премії розглядалися не лише як форма заохочення, а як механізм канонізації, що визначав стандарти професіоналізму, художньої якості та соціального впливу театру. В межах дослідження було акцентовано увагу на символічній і репутаційній функціях премій, які сприяли легітимації нових театральних практик, тенденцій та імен. Було визначено нормативну та комунікативну функції театральних премій; виявлено ключові структурні проблеми функціонування премії «Київська пектораль», зокрема питання прозорості експертного оцінювання, актуальності номінацій та інтеграції незалежного театального сектору. Було досліджено історію виникнення премії «Київська пектораль», її трансформації, а також вплив на театральну спільноту Києва та України загалом. Було наголошено на потребі модернізації преміальної системи в українському театрі відповідно до міжнародних практик. Запропоновано бачення театральної премії як динамічної соціокультурної структури, що має реагувати на зміни у професійному середовищі та сприяти сталому розвитку театру. У дослідженні було запропоновано аргументи функціонування театального менеджменту державних та недержавних творчих ініціатив, як елементу культурної політики на локальному (міському) та національному рівнях. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у можливості використання отриманих висновків для модернізації національної преміальної системи та вдосконалення інструментів театального менеджменту.

■ **Ключові слова:** сценічне мистецтво; культурна політика; театральний менеджмент; театральна нагорода; незалежний театр; символічний капітал; інституційна легітимація