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ROMAN LISTOPAD



- Ukrainian theater and cinema actor
- Starred in the films «The Secret Diary of Simon Petliura», «Wataha», «Chernobyl»

UKRAINIAN CINEMA PLAYS AN EDUCATIONAL ROLE FOR THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE AND THE WHOLE WORLD

Roman, you are a Ukrainian theater and film actor, and you got your profession after graduating from the Theater and Art College of Dnepropetrovsk. Tell me, when did the passion for acting begin? Was there some significant moment that turned your mind, or did the desire to become an actor grow gradually? Who supported you at that moment?

I love cinema! As a child, I watched all the films that were on TV several times, imagining that I was the hero of one of these action films that saved the world or fought villains. I made up a script for myself or took some fragment from a film. I like to make up stories and create situations where I can act and create a fantasy world around me. Then, however, I did not know that this is called acting, and in general I did not really understand how people get on TV.

Apparently, my mother, when she saw that I was doing action tricks, waving my legs, running around the apartment, brought me to acrobatics. This, in principle, helped me later both at the theater university and at work in the film industry. Then there were lots of other clubs that shaped me as an actor. And I also remember that I had a notebook where I pasted clippings from magazines about actors, their biographies and filmography – all the information.

Then I knew practically nothing about the theater; there were no actors in my family and my environment at that time. But one day my class and I went to the House of Culture for the play «Cipollino» (this is a play by the Italian writer Gianni Rodari), and then I saw people who played on stage and showed the story of the hero Cipollino. I realized that they were doing the same thing as me, only they were adults, there were lots of them, and they performed that story to the viewer. I realized that I wanted to be there – on stage with them, to show together, to create that story. And what was the most interesting: I was absolutely not embarrassed by the fact that one character's head looked like an onion, and the second one looked like a tomato. That theatrical and vegetable performance, you know, completely delighted

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me. Apparently, then I decided that I wanted to become an actor. Over time, already at high school, I began to study at the theater studio and entered the theater university, which I graduated with honors, with Red Diploma.

As for support, my parents did not put up barriers for me, they simply accepted my choice. And somewhere in my fantasies, it seemed to me that all those Hollywood stars, actors whom I pasted into the notebook, told me: “Come on, you can do it, you will succeed, we believe in you.”



The urgent issue of 2022 – the desperate struggle of the Ukrainian people for their independence – is reflected in the film «The Secret Diary of Symon Petliura». The historical drama tells about the life and work of the chief ataman of the troops and the leader of the Directorate of the UNR, as well as his emigration to France. Tell us about your participation in filming. Does this secret diary really exist, or is it the scriptwriters' idea? What locations were involved? In general, do you think that Ukrainian historical cinema plays its educational role in gaining real independence by Ukraine and unites the Ukrainian people?

In the film «The Secret Diary of Simon Petliura» I had an episodic role, where I played blacksmith Jean, whom everyone loves and respects, and not only in his street, but throughout the town. You can

see how my character appears at the very beginning of the film and pushes a cart out of the Eiffel Tower. And then begins its history and development of events. The part of the film scene in which I took part was filmed at the Kyiv Film Studio named after Dovzhenko. The whole street was built, paving stones were laid out, fake houses stood, and real retro cars of those years drove along the fake street in the pavilion. This is a large-scale Ukrainian project with wonderful costumes, impressive scenery and talented actors.

As for the diary itself, they didn't show it to me personally. I think it's better to ask the filmmakers about it. But you must admit that when there is some kind of mystery around that you can believe in, it always excites the imagination.

I think that Ukrainian cinema plays a really large educational role not only for the Ukrainian people, but for the whole world, because we all know that many facts in the history of Ukraine were hushed up and destroyed by all sorts of uninvited empires. Thanks to historical projects, we reveal the history, instill love for the traditions and culture of Ukraine. It is very important to preserve this and pass it on to the younger generation; I think that cinema is one of the best options to achieve this goal.



EVERY ACTOR DREAMS OF SEEING HOLLYWOOD WITH HIS OWN EYES

Recently the viewer was presented with a television mini-series in the genre of historical drama, created by the American television channel HBO in conjunction with the British television network Sky. The disaster film, the conspiracy thriller "Chernobyl" (2019, Great Britain, the USA) from the screenwriter Craig Mazin of "Very Scary Movie" and "The Stag-party in Vegas" recreates a portrait of those events, skillfully maintaining the golden mean between fiction and documentary. Could you lift the veil of secrecy, how and where the series was created, who invited you to participate in the filming? Do you have ambitions to be realized in the most powerful forge of cinema, Hollywood?

I was invited to the series «Chernobyl» by the casting director, who knew at that time that I had already filmed for the American film company HBO (Home Box Office) before. She said that there would be a couple of shooting days in Ukraine, and the team would go directly to Chernobyl itself, where they filmed the material for the epilogue. Since most of the filming took place in Lithuania, many actors from Europe and mainly from Lithuania were involved.

The main roles were played by such stars as Jared Harris, Emily Watson, Stellan Skarsgård. And when you are on the same platform with such people, talented actors, you get such a motivational charge, inspiration that you want to develop yourself, move on and be a professional. When we filmed my episode, Jared Harris was next to the director, and as I was passing by, he said «Good!» and shook my hand. I don't know, maybe he liked my five second head turn and assessment of the event, or he saw my shining enthusiastic eyes from the ongoing process, but at such moments you understand that you are moving in the right direction.

I think every actor dreams of seeing Hollywood with his own eyes and participating in the process of creating world American cinema, and, of course, I am no exception. Today I communicate with a person from California who is related to film production. We discuss some ideas, but let's not get ahead of ourselves just yet, let it remain intrigue. The main thing is that you have found a job that you love and are ready to devote your whole life to it, you should not stop there and you should constantly work on yourself, set new goals, move only forward towards your dream.

Another of your roles is in the TV series «Wataha» (Poland), filmed in the genre of action, thriller, drama, crime, which premiered in 2014; and the third season has been released recently. How does the Polish approach to filmmaking differ from the Ukrainian one? Was the international experience useful to you?

We are talking again about the series that was filmed by the film company HBO, so it is impossible to compare, it is more about the financing and the scale of the production which shoots the series. The companies such as HBO and Netflix are giants, they can afford to employ high-level professionals,



MOST OF THE FILMING OF THE SERIES "CHERNOBYL" (2019, GREAT BRITAIN, THE USA) TOOK PLACE IN LITHUANIA

and this applies not only to the actors, but to the entire team. In the series «Wataha» I played the role of Thomas, my scene was together with the main character of the entire series, the character Viktor Rebrov, played by the wonderful Polish actor Lesha Glekhota. The series was filmed on the territory of Poland, and some scenes were filmed in the Bieszczady Mountains, this is an insanely beautiful place.

As for comparison, one of the best film schools in Europe is located in Poland, while in Ukraine the specifics of universities are more focused on theatrical activities. The Poles approach the filming process very seriously and responsibly, if it is written in their script that the character is a Ukrainian, they will definitely invite a Ukrainian actor. But I want to note that our guys are at a fairly high level, we have very professional cameramen who are invited to shoot all over the world. And, of course, the difference is in fees; in Europe they are much higher.

Was the international experience useful for me? Of course, I appreciate every moment in which I can learn and learn

something new about my profession. And even more so if this is an international project, in which guys are from different countries: England, France, Germany and Poland. You not only practice your English, but also make professional acquaintances. You observe how your colleagues from other countries work, who have a different approach, a different school of acting. And you can try a new approach – experiment, find something for yourself and apply it in your work.



THEATER IS A COLLECTIVE WORK. 10% INSPIRATION AND 90% WORK

Are there moments when inspiration leaves you? If yes, what do you do in such cases? Has the current situation in Ukraine affected your inner worldview? Do you have a personal recipe how to stay in the maximum possible resource state?

At such moments, I immediately switch on the kettle, make a cup of tea or coffee and try to let go of this emotional tension. I try to switch to something, watch movies and listen to music. But working at the theater, when you are in rehearsal,

you simply cannot afford to switch to something, because your colleagues are working with you on stage, and you must be in the process. Theater is a collective work. As my teacher at the theater university said: 10% inspiration and 90% work. The attitude to the surrounding reality due to the current situation in Ukraine completely influenced me. There is no more peace; there is a war... in which Ukraine will definitely win, because you and I know that good always triumphs over evil.

What about the resource state, I advise you to write your own schedule and follow it, to create the most stable state for the body. I try to wake up and go to bed at the same time as it is possible, because the acting profession requires you to keep yourself in good shape all the time. In the morning I go to the gym, it helps me concentrate and energize myself for the whole day, and then I go to rehearsal in the theater. If I don't go to the gym, then I go out for a run, the main thing is to follow the same scenario in the morning. When the filming process begins, I need to come to the playground at different times; it can be early in the morning or in the middle of the day. But thanks to the fact that I stick to a certain schedule in time, my body is active in the morning, both physically and emotionally. Sometimes I compare the resource state with financial well-being, and, as you know, finances love stability. Stick to a comfortable schedule for yourself, set goals, and you will definitely succeed.