

Music in the Drama Theatre

Original article

UDC 782

<https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-068-085>



**Between a Fairy Play and an Opera:
Razryv-trava (Rip-grass) by Evgeny Goslavsky and
Alexander Schaefer at the Maly Theater (1901)**

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Abstract. The production of Evgeny Goslavsky's *magic fairy tale* carried out by Aleksandr Lensky with his students and colleagues in his repertory company of the Maly Theater presented a producer's experiment, a combination of varieties of several theatrical genres within the limits of one performance. The narrative of the play was based on the fantastic motives of folkloristic epos, which required the use of the typical means of a 19th century stage *fairy play*. On the other hand, the storyline and the language appealed to a poetic style of symbolist and pre-expressionist dramaturgy in the context of which the customary visual effects and machinery appeared as naïve archaic effects. Great expectations in the sphere of synthesis were exerted on Alexander Nikolayevich Schaefer, a composer who was specially invited to St. Petersburg, a graduate of the Conservatory, a chapel

Translated by Dr. Anton A. Rovner

master of the Panayev Theater, who had already composed two of his own operas. The complexity of the musical task was in the subservience of the work to the producer's artistic vision, simultaneously with the application of a maximal amount of professional equipment. What was especially helpful, in the first place, was a knowledge of the fairytale musical scores of Rimsky-Korsakov and Lyadov and, moreover, the ability to adapt to the modest means of the theater's orchestra. The musical score preserved at the Russian National Museum of Music is variegated in terms of the instrumentation in each of the numbers and is not devoid of imitative qualities. While marking the musical potentials of the play and the production, the reviewers expressed their disappointment regarding the insufficient amount of freedom granted to the composer. Nonetheless, it could hardly have been otherwise. The failure of *Razryv-trava* [*Rip-grass*] symbolically marked the instance of a farewell to the old theatrical style and its harsh constraints of genre; the measure of the admissible freedom for the composer, the boundary beyond which the "performance with music" becomes closely interlocked with opera and ballet have yet to be ascertained.

Keywords: incidental music, the Maly Theater, Alexander Schaefer, Aleksandr Lensky, Evgeny Goslavsky, *Razryv-trava* [*Rip-grass*]

For citation: Naumov, A. V. (2024). Between a Fairy Play and an Opera: *Razryv-trava* (*Rip-grass*) by Evgeny Goslavsky and Alexander Schaefer at the Maly Theater (1901). *Contemporary Musicology*, 8(3), 68–85. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-2-068-085>

Музыка в драматическом театре

Научная статья

**Между феерией и оперой:
«Разрыв-трава» Е. П. Гославского — А. Н. Шефера
в Малом театре (1901)**

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Аннотация. Постановка «волшебной сказки» Е. П. Гославского, осуществленная А. П. Ленским с учениками и коллегами по труппе Малого театра, представляла собой режиссерский эксперимент, сочетание в пределах одного спектакля разновидностей нескольких театральных жанров. Фабула пьесы опиралась на фантастические мотивы фольклорного эпоса, что требовало использования типичных средств сценической феерии XIX века. Сюжет же и язык апеллировали к поэтике символистской и пред-экспрессионистской драматургии, в контексте которых привычные визуальные эффекты и машинерия выглядели наивной архаикой. Большие надежды в деле синтеза возлагались на А. Н. Шефера — композитора, специально приглашенного из Петербурга, выпускника консерватории, капельмейстера Панаевского театра, автора уже двух собственных опер. Сложность музыкантской задачи состояла в подчинении работы режиссерскому видению с одновременным использованием максимума профессиональной оснащённости. Пригодились, прежде всего, знание сказочно-фантастических партитур Римского-Корсакова и Лядова, а кроме того — умение приспособиться к скромным возможностям театрального оркестра. Партитура, сохранившаяся в Российском национальном музее музыки, неоднородна по составу номеров, не свободна от подражательности. Отмечая музыкальный потенциал пьесы и постановки, рецензенты сожалели о недостатке свободы, предоставленной композитору. Вряд ли, однако, могло

быть иначе. Неудача «Разрыв-травы» символично маркировала момент прощания со старым театром и его жесткими жанровыми рамками; мера же допустимой композиторской воли, грань, за которой «спектакль на музыке» вплотную смыкается с оперой и балетом, так и остались не выяснены.

Ключевые слова: театральная музыка, Малый театр, Александр Николаевич Шефер, Александр Павлович Ленский, Евгений Петрович Гославский, Разрыв-трава

Для цитирования: Наумов А. В. Между феерией и оперой: «Разрыв-трава» Е. П. Гославского — А. Н. Шефера в Малом театре (1901) // Современные проблемы музыкознания. 2024. Т. 8, № 3. С. 68–85 <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-068-085>

The Presumed Circumstances

The work discussed in this article saw the limelight for the first time on September 10, 1901 on the premises of the so-called Novy Teatr [New Theater], also called the Shelaputin Theater, named after the owner of the building. The building, essentially a commercial apartment building, was situated on the Teatral'naya ploshchad' [Theater Square], across from the Maly Theater. During the period between 1898 and 1908, the building was rented by the Imperial Bureau as a single filial location alternately used by the opera and the drama theater. The Theater has changed very little, although it has frequently changed renters.¹

The author of the play, Evgeny Petrovich Goslavsky (1861–1917) was a very well-known writer of his time, a playwright and a prose writer. He was a participant of the circle *Sredy* [Wednesdays] grouped together around Nikolai Teleshov, a friend of Anton Chekhov, and a prototype of the “young, talented and the successful litterateur” in a number of Chekhov’s novelettes. Indeed, he had a rather unclouded career, placing special attention to the à la russe motives,² fashionable at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The play *Razryv-trava* [Rip-grass] with the subtitle “a fantastic fairy tale in five acts” (subsequently in the text of the play they are called “tableaux”) presents in itself a conglomerate of traditional folklore motives: “a fairy tale of fairy tales,” as it would be defined in later years. The reviewers of the premiere deemed the play to be a motley

¹ Sergei Zimin’s opera, Konstantin Nezlobin’s drama, the cinematograph *Orion*, the Actors’ Comradeship of Moscow, and MKhAT–2. Starting from 1936 it was the venue of the Central Children’s Theater, presently called the Russian Academic Youth Theater (Rossiyskiy Akademicheskii Molodyozhny Teatr or RAMT). The chronicles of the fate of the construction of the building in 1841 is expounded on the website of the RAMT: <https://ramt.ru/museum/building-history>. Accessed: 15.08.2024.

² Goslavsky’s Daughter Sofya (1890–1979) was a theater and cinema actress, the author of vivid memoirs *Zapiski kinoaktrisy* [The Notes of a Movie Actress] (1974), where, albeit, there is almost no mention of the stage history of her father’s compositions — the memoirist was too young during the years of their dramaturgic popularity.

potpourri of storylines, featuring an eclectic assortment of tsarevnas [princesses], bogatyr [knights], Koshchey and Baba-Yaga, Death itself and the goddess Lada, wood sprites, the Water Elf, mermaids, etc.³ The play is written in verse, diversely stylized in the vein of the Russian epos and lyrical folk songs. For Goslavsky, this is a singular manifestation, since he is predominantly a prose writer. It was possible that his turning to the poetic form served as a justification of a stylistic experiment: the imagery of the text demonstrated a transubstantiation of the influences of symbolism, which at that time had manifested itself in European literature, and the harbingers of expressionism. Both of these stylistic trends were displayed with elements of parody exaggeration and were not entirely comprehended by the theater. The critics pointed out that the creators of the performance in 1901 had an insufficient amount of a sense of humor.⁴

The choice of the work, the guidance of the production, the allotment of the roles, and even the very initiative of the production belonged to Alexander Pavlovich Lensky (1847–1908), an outstanding actor, producer and pedagogue. Among Lensky's students were Olga Gzovskaya, Vladimir Maximov, Alexander Ostuzhev, Vera Pashennaya, Varvara Ryzhova and — Evdokia Dmitrievna Turchaninova (1870–1963), who took part in the performance of *Razryv-trava*. She joined the repertory of the Maly Theater straight from the college bench at the age of 19 years old, playing the role of the “old lady,” and solely with the assistance of Lensky, she was able to deceive the Fortuna of actors and play other roles, as well [1, p. 56–57]. The brightest occurrence for her was when she was able to perform the role of Lel' in 1900 (*Illustration 1*): the performance was one of the three *Snow Maidens* of that season, when three theaters — The Bolshoi, the Maly



Illustration 1. E. D. Turchaninova as Lel' (A. N. Ostrovsky's *The Snow Maiden*). Directed by A. P. Lensky, New Theatre (Moscow, 1900). Photograph by K. Fischer, no. d. [1900]. RGALI. F. 892 (E. D. Turchaninova). Op. 2. Unit of storage 14. Sheet 5

³ The particular features of the storyline were reflected by the cycle of graphic sketches from the nature of S.M. Mukharsky published by the journal *Teatr i iskusstvo* following the premiere. URL: <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=26016536>. Accessed: 12.06.2024.

⁴ NN (pseudonym ne raskryt) [the Pseudonym is not Revealed]. (1901). Iz Moskvy [From Moscow]. *Novoe vremya*, 9137, September 11.

and the Hudojestvenny [Art Theatre] — competed in their renditions of the play, and with them, correspondingly — Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (who wrote the opera), Piotr Tchaikovsky and Alexander Grechaninov (each of whom wrote incidental music to the performance of Alexander Ostrovsky's play) [2]. The actress sang very well, so all of Lel's songs (in Tchaikovsky's musical score) were sung at the performance, while other numbers, such as, for instance, the Song of Frost, written for a tenor voice, had to be omitted. Turchaninova's vocal giftedness also found its application in *Razryv-trava* [3], wherein it was also possible to hear the voice of her younger sister.⁵

Lensky demonstrated himself not only as a producer, but also as the scenographer of the play's fantastic tableaux, as well as a costume designer, having repeated the experience of *The Snow Maiden* in his other productions at the Novy Theater. Over a hundred remarkable sketches carried out with his hand are preserved in the graphics collection of the State Central Bakhrushin Theater Museum.⁶ Therein, it is also possible to find the sketches for the decorations of the palace scenes carried out by Karl Feodorovich Valts (1846–1929), independently and based on Ivan Feodorovich Savitsky's drawings. They differ by the “operatic quality” of the old schools, but are also very picturesque.⁷

Razryv-trava was staged for several seasons and (unlike *The Snow Maiden*) was popular with the audiences. The fairytale play, which was a big rarity in the repertoire of that time, was presented at children's matinees and invariably attracted a children's auditorium. An immense role in the plays' success was played by the music composed by Alexander Nikolayevich Schaefer (1866–1914). A native of St. Petersburg, a graduate of the Conservatory, where he was a student of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1886), prior to the described events, he was merely searching for his purpose, composing instrumental scores, without any prospects of their performance, and earning a living by giving piano lessons, as well as making transcriptions for 2 or 4 hand piano of other composers' works. At the time of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, he assumed the post of a full-time conductor of the Panayev Theater and composed two operas and a ballet within a single short period of time. One of the most successful performances was the premiere of his *Tsygane* [*The Gypsies*] (1901) that took place under the composer's baton already

⁵ Maria D. Turchaninova (1882–1951) was a graduate of the Moscow Theater College, during the years 1900–1901 she worked as a dancer of the corps-de-ballet of the Bolshoi Theater. Because of her lessons with Emilia Pavlovskaya and the protection stemming from conductor Ippolit Altani, in 1902 she became a soloist of the Imperial Opera. After 1906, after having left the Bolshoi Theater, she sang with success on various stages in Russia, during the years 1908–1915 constantly performing at the Sergei Zimin Opera, then at the Petrograd Muzdrama (see [4, p. 182]).

⁶ It is possible to become acquainted with a few examples at the portal of the State Museum Fund of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=33781139>; <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=33137018>; <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=34452169>; <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=34452193>; <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=33138643>. 15.08.2024.

⁷ Available at: <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=19744280>; <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=34125238>. 15.08.2024.

on another stage — the Folk Building in St. Petersburg.⁸ The libretto in three movements constructed by the composer himself with the insertion of various poems by Pushkin and a small quantity of folk texts preserved the spirit of the “southern poem,” at the same time providing for the theatrical effectiveness of the form, the organic quality of the changes and crossovers, and the airiness of the action, which was so lacking in *Aleko* staged by Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko (1890/1891).

Razryv-trava was Schaefer’s very first theatrical work, which preceded and stipulated his turning to the opera genre.

The Play and the Musical Score

The brief summary of *Razryv-trava* is derived from the authorial annotation,⁹ slightly expanded and divided into tableaux for the sake of ease of perception.

The Mussulman king Hamok, entirely subjugated by his wayward daughter Militrisa, is preoccupied with one sole thought, how to entertain and amuse her. But the Tsar Maiden becomes wearied of everything, her heart becomes ripe for love. This is taken advantage by Koshchey, who discovers her sleeping and transforms her into his instrument against the human race. She commands the bogatyr Siloslav, the son of Tsar Zenzevey to embark upon a journey to collect tribute in the region where her arrow shall fly.

[Second Tableau] Ill luck betides the invincible Siloslav in this instance, since he is captured along with his army, his native land perishes, and his father Zenzevey, his mother Zenzeveikha and Hamok are taken as slaves.

Everybody has betrayed Siloslav, and only his servant-girl Malka [Little] remembers him and wishes to save him. She takes a toad along with her on her journey, and the latter turns out to be the enchanted Forget-me-not Flower, the daughter of the goddess Lada.

[Third Tableau — the battlefield strewn with dead bodies. The meeting of Death and Koshchey. Malka, who arrives and does not become frightened of evil, is renamed as Miloserdka [Kind-Hearted] and sent to Baba Yaga for help].

[Fourth Tableau] Having received from Baba Yaga a soporific crown and the magic “Rip-grass,” Malka arrives at a swamp. There she is met by a roundelay of mermaids and the Water Elf. The evil spirits living in the water, captivated by the purity of Miloserdka’s soul, help her put Death to sleep and resurrect Siloslav.

[In the Finale (The Fifth Tableau in the decorations of the Second), the same former servant-girl saves the conquerors Hamok and Militrisa from the bogatyr’s wrath]. “The Rip-grass has manifested itself... The soul has awakened” — Siloslav utters, comprehending that “Love is stronger than the sword, stronger than death itself.” With a revived soul, he forgives his people, and peace and rejoicing is spread throughout all of his country.

⁸ The performance took place on December 17, 1901. See: (Bez podpisi) [Without a Signature]. (1901). *Russkaya muzykal’naya gazeta* [Russian Musical Newspaper], (51–52), 1332–1333.

⁹ Goslavsky, E. P. *Kratkoe izlozhenie pyesy-feyerii E. P. Goslavskogo Razryv-trava* [Brief Expounding of the Fairytale Play *Rip-grass*]. RGALI. F. 150. Portfolio. 2. Unit. 2. Typescript w/o. d. [after 1901]. L. 27.

The play reminds of a film scenario; the selfsame method is intrinsic to other librettos written at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries.¹⁰ The characteristic features of the positive and the negative characters are sharply con-tracted with each other in their literary expressivity: the goddess Lada and the mer-maids expound by means of vague allegories, the spoken lines of Death, Yaga and Koshchey are permeated with naturalistic horror, while the Water Elf and the wood spirits present themselves in comic roles. With the transferal from one world to another, the poetic proportions change in size — the more complex the imagery, the longer the line. The eclecticism of verbal expression predetermines Schaefer's musical rendition. The musical score of *Razryv-trava* is preserved in the Russian National Museum of Music,¹¹ where it was passed from the musical library of the Maly Theater in the 1950s. It includes 19 numbers for chorus, orchestra, solo singing and declamation with accompanying:

1. Introduction (Prelude for Strings with Harp and Fanfares for Wind Band [Banda]¹²)
2. Chorus and Dance (SATB with Orchestra)¹³
3. Monologue of the Astrologer (melodrama with orchestra *You Couldn't Reach Farther with your Hand*)
4. Interlude to the Second Tableau (*The Court of Hamok and Militrisa*)
5. Militrisa's Choral Song *How the String Went on a Racket* (SATB, soprano solo)
6. Interlude to the Third Tableau (*The Steppe Covered with Dead Bodies*)
7. Darkness and Monologue of Death *The Scythe is Working, the Scythe is Swishing* (Melodrama with Orchestra)
8. Intermezzo *Dense Forest*
9. Appearance of the Hut on Chicken Legs and Baba Yaga (Orchestra, then Melodrama)
10. Yaga's Scene with the Children (Melodrama with Chorus)
11. Yaga's Incantation over the Brazier and Lada's Monologue-Prophecy (Melodrama with Orchestra)
12. The Mermaids' Chorus *Yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo, girls, wake up!* (Soprano and Alto with Orchestra)

¹⁰ After a decade following the premiere, Alexander Ivanovovich Yurasovsky (1890–1922) wrote to the playwright about the intention to revise his composition into a text for an opera, asserting that the changes required would be so minimal that he would not have any claims for the authorship as a composer. Yurasovsky A. I. Pis'ma Goslavskomu E. P. [Letters to Evgeny Goslavsky] RGALI. F. 150. Portfolio. 1. Unit. 35. Autograph, 1911–1912. 4 S. Published: [5, pp. 165–167]. The opera was not composed. Only the plan expounded in the letter, i.e., the typesetting of the necessary deletions with the aid of which it is easy to reestablish the conception.

¹¹ Schaefer, A. N. *Razryv-trava*. Feyeriya [Fairytale Play] [on the cover]; Muzyka k volshebnoy skazke [Music to a Magic Fairy Tale] [on the title page]. Musical score. RNMM. F. 165. No. 261. Manuscript copy, 1901, August 1. 89 s.

¹² The orchestra of the 3rd Dragoon Sumy Regiment headed by A.K. Markwardt took part in the performances. The overall sum of payments from the beginning of September to the end of the year comprised 1906 rubles. *Glavnaya kniga smetnyh raskhodov (Moskovskoy kontory Imperatorskih teatrov) na 1901 god [The Chief Book for Budgeting Expenditures (of the Moscow Office of the Imperial Theaters) for 1901]*. RGALI. F. 659. Portfolio. 8. Unit. 44. Manuscript on the letterhead. Notes from December 4, November 16, and December 4, p. 232, 235.

¹³ Leonid Vasilyev's chorus was involved in the productions. *Glavnaya kniga smetnyh raskhodov [The Chief Book for Budgeting Expenditures]*. ... Notes from October 3, November 4, December 4, p. 235.

13. The Mermaids' Roundelay *Who, like a Swan, Softly, Suavely* (with a Chorus of Sopranos and Altos)
14. Song of the Mermaid *At Dawn, at the White Morning Dawn* (soprano solo + Clarinet)
15. Interlude to the Fifth Tableau (Strings with Harp, then Banda)
16. Melodrama and War Song of Siloslav's army (TB)
17. Melodrama to Siloslav's Monologue *Wonderful Spring Daybreak*
18. Militrisa's Monologue (soprano solo or rhythmicized melodrama)
19. March (Finale).

The numbers are full-fledged in length, each one of them comprising no less than 60 measures. If the various fanfares and signals are demarcated into separate fragments, as it is sometimes done in incidental music, the number of the movements would double. Schaefer was not interested in the fragmentation from the material aspect, the musical score was evaluated by each number, regardless of their respective sizes and without any prospective payments, such were the overall rules of those years. He was paid 400 rubles in silver for it with the condition of revising it for a smaller ensemble than he originally had thought.¹⁴ The amount of money was large, but the question of the honorarium initially assumed an insignificant position. More important was the question of status, the establishing of contacts with the Imperial Scene, relevant to an equal degree to both the playwright and the composer, which is testified by their correspondence (the letters one of only one of the parties has been preserved).¹⁵ The storming of the bulwark lasted for exactly three years:

September 11, 1898, St. Petersburg

Dear Evgeny Petrovich, I like everything you have sent me, and I have eagerly set to work. Try to have an effect as much as you can on Khlyustin,¹⁶ so that he would consent to a great Russian dance on the stage, instead of the mazurka – I am writing to him about this (apparently he refers to No.2 from the musical score, also see further on. – A.N.). Before I complete the entire work, I would not even think about a trip to Moscow. I will write about this in due time. My present address is: Finland railway station Udel'naya, Yaroslavsky prospekt, 59. Alexander Nikolayevich Schaefer [S. 1].

September 23, 1898, Udel'naya

Dear Evgeny Petrovich, I have received all of your letters, the number of my building is correct (No. 59). Thank God, the inspiration for your *Razryv-trava* does not depart from me, and it seems that I have been successful with the new numbers for the music, as well. Everything that I finish during the course of this week, on the 27th of this month, I shall end to you to Moscow through [1 illegible] the Office of Imperial Theaters. I quite agree with you regarding Khlyustin's artistic intuitiveness (?), I had felt this even before you have.

¹⁴ *Glavnaya kniga smetnyh raskhodov [The Chief Book for Budgeting Expenditures]. ... Notes from August 24. P. 150.*

¹⁵ Schaefer, A. N. *Pis'ma Goslavskomu E. P. [Letters to Evgeny Zalavsky]*. RGALI. Fund 150. Portfolio 1. Unit 32. Auyograph, 1898–1900. 6 S. Published for the first time. Authorial punctuation. The references to the document's sheets are listed at the end of each letter.

¹⁶ Ivan Nikolayevich Khlyustin (1862–1941) was ballet artist and choreographer. During the years 1898–1903 he was the chief ballet master of the Bolshoi Theater.

Vladimir Petrovich¹⁷ is being summoned to Moscow during the next few days, you should speak to him about everything, when you see him.

I have a liking for Avranek¹⁸ in absentia, and would be very happy, myself, if he would take part in the production of the music and *Razryv-trava*.

I hope that you and everybody would remain pleased with my music; I only know that I have done everything with absolute eagerness that could only be possible in such a short duration (I began this extensive work on June 3 and finished it on July 18); I send my heartfelt wishes to Moscow towards the beginning of our endeavors. Remember me in absentia to my acquaintance, your brother.¹⁹ As soon as I finish my latest work and get through many of my other affairs, I shall possibly try to come to Moscow, as soon as I can, about which I shall let you know [S. 2–3].

January 31, 1899, St. Petersburg

Dear Evgeny Petrovich, when shall I receive from you the revision of the scene with the skomorokhs [Russian folk minstrels] (for the beginning, the dances of the skomorokhs), [I word illegible], the response and the second monologue of the Astrologer.²⁰ I am awaiting for news [S. 4].

November 9, 1899, St. Petersburg

Dear Evgeny Petrovich, I have recently begun to take action with great energy in regards to the new director of the Imperial Theaters, Prince Sergei Mikhaylovich Volkonsky,²¹ about our *Razryv-trava*, which has been kept off-stage, and my other works, which have been neglected since that time.²² The new director is allegedly very open to contact and has a very compassionate attitude towards young authors. He himself is an educated man, and is adeptly interested in literature and music.

If you yourself cannot come to St. Petersburg now in order to see him in person, convey to him your dissatisfaction in regards to the blocking of *Razryv-trava*, deliver the play for him to read (I have already passed on the music to him), then send him by mail (to the address: Alexandrinsky Theater Plaza, Building of the Directorate of the Imperial Theaters) both the play and your explanations in regard to the past fate of *Razryv-trava*. The Prince has appointments with people in need of seeing him daily on Wednesdays between 11 and 12 o'clock.

In a word, remain in force, one way or the other, right away, while the situation remains ripe. I am waiting for your immediate reply. Remaining devoted to you, AS [L. 5].

January 15, 1900, St. Petersburg

Dear Evgeny Petrovich, could you be so kind as to inform me, whether or not you have seen the director of the theaters, Prince Volkonsky in Moscow? Have you handed him your play *Razryv-trava*? will you come to St. Petersburg, and when? Your AS [S. 6].

¹⁷ Most likely, Vladimir Pogozhev (1851–1935) was the administrator of the St. Petersburg Bureau for the Imperial Theaters in 1881–1907, the compiler of the *Project of the Regulations about the Imperial Theaters* (1900), subsequently a museum and archive activist and memoirist.

¹⁸ Ulrich Iosifovich Avranek (1853–1937) was cellist and conductor. From 1882 he was a choirmaster, then until the end of his life the Chief Choirmaster of the Bolshoi Theater.

¹⁹ The most well-known among the Goslavsky brothers, after Evgeny, was Piotr Petrovich (1871–1919) — a portrait artist and a graphic designer for books.

²⁰ In the published version of the play and in Schaefer's resulting musical score, the Astrologer's monologue is the only one present.

²¹ Prince Sergei Volkonsky was appointed as director in July 1899.

²² By that time, according to the review of *The Gypsies* in *Russkaya muzykal'naya gazeta* [*The Russian Musical Newspaper*] (see above), Schaefer had composed the opera *Tizba* [*Thisbe*] and the ballet *Ostrov fantazii* [*The Island of Fantasy*], which have remained unproduced; *Ostrov fantzii* was revised into an opera for the Folk Building.

The following acts of the usual repertoire “tragicomedy” have been affixed in the diaries of Vladimir Arkadyevich Telyakovsky, the last director of the Imperial Theaters, who replaced Volkonsky in 1901. He got the matters off the ground in a very energetic fashion [6, p. 544; 7, p. 32, 40–42]. The play was accepted for production in the spring of 1901, the score, as we know from the attribution of the archival example, was copied by August 1,²³ the rehearsals started on the 2nd



Illustration 2. E. D. Turchaninova as Militrisa (*Razryv-trava* by E. P. Goslavsky). Directed by A. P. Lensky, New Theatre (Moscow, 1901). Photograph by K. Fischer, no. d. [1901]. RGALI. F. 892. Op. 2. Unit of storage 14. L. 1

and went every day, sometimes twice a day, except for August 24, 27, 29, and 31 and September 3–4. The musicians were brought in on September 1, the dress rehearsal was given on the 8th, and the world premiere — on the 10th.²⁴ It was subsequently performed 12 times in a row, with benevolent reviews from the press, and then 10 more times, prior to the New Year, after which already the performances were given more seldom. The fruitful communication with the composer was terminated, without having been able to be secured, but the reasons for this had nothing to do with mercantile considerations (see [8]). Schaefer did not collaborate any more either with the Maly Theater, or the Imperial Bureau, and did not ever write again for the drama stage.

In 1906, when he was serving as a conductor already at the Folk Building of Tsar Nicholas II in St. Petersburg, *Razryv-trava* was produced there, and was revived there several times, as well, with the same music, during the course of the decade. The fire of 1917 destroyed the library of the Folk Building, and only the posters and several photograph-postcards have survived (*Illustrations 2–4*).²⁵ The latter make it possible to assert that the performance was an approximate

²³ The copyist of the orchestral and choral parts Nikolai Sokolov was paid 35 rubles and 74 kopecks in November-December. *Glavnaya kniga smetnyh raskhodov* [*The Chief Book for Budgeting Expenditures*]. ..., p. 158.

²⁴ *Zhurnal rasporyazheniy po Imperatorskim moskovskim teatram za 1901 god* [*Journal of Decrees concerning the Imperial Moscow Theaters for the Year 1901*]. RGALI. F. 659. Panorama 2. Unit 651. Printer's, pp. 215–253.

²⁵ Available at: <https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=38891530>. Accessed: 15.08.2024.

replica of the ones in Moscow (the simulation of the productions of the “model” Imperial Stage comprised a substantial part of the activities of the Folk Buildings). The play was not forgotten after 1901, was published by Rassokhin’s lithographical theatrical agency, was regularly produced somewhere in the provincial cities up to the early 1920s,²⁶ judging by the number of performances, did not present a failure.

*A Fairytale Opera with Music.
Concerning the Issue of Genre.*

Works akin to *Razryv-trava* placed theaters into difficult situations. The stage “miracles” were perceived by the public and the critics as attributes of fairytale plays, essentially, an entertaining genre, one that was “low” in the established aesthetic evaluation.²⁷ The music of fairytale plays, in correspondence to the disposition of the plotline, necessarily contained: national-exotic processions, choral singing, dancing, as well as portrayals of storms, tempests, volcano eruptions, etc., as well as fantastic “extramundane” scenes. Schaefer modeled such compositions (we hesitate to call them dramas) for the Folk Building. For example, in 1906 together with producer Alexei Yakovlevich Alexeyev-Yakovlev (1850–1939) staged *The Mysterious Island*, based on Jules Verne, which, according to the newspaper announcements, included all the enumerated episodes:



Illustration 3. E. M. Sadovskaya as Malka-Merciful (*Razryv-Trava* by E. P. Goslavsky). Posted by A. P. Lensky, New Theatre (Moscow, 1901). Photograph by K. Fischer, no. d. [1900]. RGALI. F. 892. Op. 2. Unit of storage 361. L. 2

²⁶ We are basing ourselves on the posters from the collection of the State Central Bakhrushin Theatre Museum and the announcements in the press.

²⁷ About the French fairytale plays and the English extravaganzas in 19th century theaters abroad see [9].



Illustration 4. S. I. Yakovlev as the Water Spirit (Razryv-grass by E. P. Goslavsky). Directed by A. P. Lensky, New Theatre (Moscow, 1901). Photograph by K. Fischer, no. d. [1901]. RGALI. F. 2402 (N. L. Tiraspolskaya). Op. 1. Unit of storage 230. Sheet 11

— Interludes:

After the 4th Tableau (*At the stake. The Process of Burning the Rajah's Wife*).
The Indian Cemetery. Large Procession of Indians with Singing.

After the 9th Tableau (*The Leader of the Redskins*). Gigantic Natural Ladder.

After the 12th Tableau. *The Open Sea* (a Moving Panorama with Singing).

— Characteristic Dances:

In the 3rd Tableau (*The Rajah's Widow*), in the 6th Tableau (*Snake Worshippers on the Island of Borneo*), in the 7th Tableau (*In the Chinese Tavern and the Opium Smoking Room*).

— Conclusory Scene (*Three Weddings at Once*):

The ballet *Among the Flowers*),²⁸ produced by I. V. Aslin, the dancers: Sonina (the Butterfly), Stepanova (the Rose), Nikiforova (the Maybug), Astradamtseva (the Lilly-of-the-Valley), the flowers, the butterflies, the beetles, the zephyrs, the little stars, etc.

Solo numbers: *The Revitalization of the Flowers, Waltz, The Appearance of the Flowers, Jealousy Scene*

Group Numbers: *Dances of the Butterflies, General Waltz, Finale and Apotheosis*.

— Musical numbers between the tableaux [during the pauses between the actions]:

²⁸ Apparently, the music is partially derived from the earlier work, *Ostrov fantazii* [*The Isle of Fantasy*].

Allegro Maestoso by Adolf Jensen;
Two Dances from the opera *Feramors* by Anton Rubinstein;
Indian Dance from the opera *Les pêcheurs du perle* by Georges Bizet;
Bachanale from *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saëns;
Cortège fantastique by Moritz Moszkowski;
The Storm [*Peer Gynt's Homecoming* from the second Suite from *Peer Gynt*]
by Edvard Grieg;
Gallop from the ballet *Harlequinade* by Riccardo Drigo.²⁹

As it may be observed, the musical material, both the authorial and “from the selections,” was distinguished by its eclecticism, which to a certain degree was the requirement of the genre. *Razryv-trava* did not have such a diversity of colors. The sound accompaniment was provided only to the crucial scenes; it assumed the position not of background decoration, but one that was firmly close-knit with the words and the actions. This is easily confirmed upon an acquaintance with the musical score: unlike many similar cases, there is no necessity of picking up the play in one's hands to understand the content from the beginning to the end. And still, in the first stratum of perception we find the fairytale play, which a priori could not lay any claims to any seriousness or significance of utterance, while in 1901 this was expected of a drama theater. Goslavsky's play and Schaefer's music contained such a potential, but could not overcome the stereotype.

The perception of *Razryv-trava* became more refined due to its interim position in the repertoire of the Maly Theater and the biography of Lensky the producer: between Tchaikovsky's *The Snow Maiden* (1900) and Arensky's *The Tempest* (1905, see [10]). In *The Tempest*, all the aforementioned techniques of musical composition were preserved, but acquired a more well-ordered, logically vindicated appearance. Nobody would label either *The Snow Maiden* or *The Tempest* as a fairytale play in the “farcical” sense, so their noble indication fell on *Razryv-trava*.

Repetition or Study?

Having been a student of Rimsky-Korsakov at the “middle” stage of his pedagogical activities, Schaefer based himself on the experience of the master's mature orchestral scores of the late 1880s and 1890s. It was already not as much *The Snow Maiden* as *Mlada*, *Christmas Eve* and *Sadko* that became the antecedents of the fantastic musical world of Schaefer's scores. The oriental, infernal, and aquatic that have at times a citatory similarity with Rimsky-Korsakov's works, especially in terms of the orchestration. This is by no means a critical remark. The belonging to a tradition does not exclude self-sufficiency, movement forward or individual discoveries, especially in a genre not mastered by one's predecessors. The same type of experience explains the interpretation of the choral numbers allowed by the playwright, but interpreted in a very creative manner.

²⁹ *Programmy spektakley teatra SPb. gorodskogo popechitel'stva o narodnoy trezvosti* [Programs of Performances of the St. Petersburg Theater of City Trusteeship Concerning People's Sobriety]. RGALI. Fund 837. Portfolio 2. Unit 1423. Seal of censorship November 25, 1906. S. 7.

Another conspicuous factor of the genre's "elevation" is Schaefer's incorporation of the attributes of programmatic symphonic writing. With a small amount of abridgments, *Razryv-trava* may be performed as an orchestral suite (similar to *Antar* or *Scheherazade*), and it was undoubtedly composed with such an implication. It has several symbolic themes, and those are connected with the protagonists, but function freely, not being affixed with the action, as leitmotifs are. It could be said that such themes accentuate the fairy tale's ethical aspect, while the interlude-like episodes answer for the readability of the musical storyline. The themes of Militrisa ("the evil beauty," a premonition of the image of Salome), Malka-Mikoserdka ("sacred love"), Siloslav ("the tempestuous bogatyr"), the tritone motive of Death, Baba Yaga's staccato and Koshchey's glissando pass through the entire musical score. Good is presented, following the tradition of Glinka, by structurally framed song elements, while evil is identified by textural-timbral "recognition signs." The entire through thematic material is composite in the orchestral introduction and the interludes to the tableaux. The components of symphonic development have brought the music for the drama closer to pantomime and ballet, they provided the composer with the possibility of writing seemingly over the storyline, to strengthen the motives and to bringing his own strata of content, and at the same time they led him away from the particularities of theater. When the conductor received the musical score from St. Petersburg, he virtually was not able to change anything in them.³⁰ The composition is integral in its structure and hermetic in its dramaturgy. From the perspective of 20th century theater, this quality cannot be considered an absolute merit: upon the arrangement of the fragments at a distance from each other, the connections between them are severed, when they are incorporated into the performance. They cease to be recognized, all the more so, because the through themes give way in their vividness to the episodic themes.

The main musical accents of the performance fell on the melodrama-narrations of the Astrologer, Death, and Baba-Yaga, and therein the tradition of 19th century romantic drama was manifested, the verse-written *Razryv-trava* not being alien to it. Most beautiful are the song interludes, wherein Militrisa-Turchaninova sings with a female chorus, and the coloratura solos of the mermaid, supported by the clarinet cadenza (the part was performed by Turchaninova Jr., there has even been a recording made on a gramophone record, unfortunately, with the accompaniment of a piano, instead of an orchestra³¹). It is noteworthy that in one of the fragments (No. 18), the actress was suggested not to sing, but to declaim, observing the measurements in the music. Freely rhythmic speech against the background of the music remained the leading expressive means, and stakes were placed against it in the further experiments of the Maly Theater, as well.

³⁰ The additional numeration in the score gives the grounds of supposing that the Banda numbers were brought in additionally (No. 1a, 15a): they particularly are inserted with separate numbers and copied with a different handwriting. In contrast to this, the thematic material of the wind ensemble, — wherever it is not limited merely to fanfare symbols, — is derived from the primary musical material.

³¹ Gramophone Concert Record. G. C. 23155, 1901 (?). The phonogram (A.N. Schaefer. *Pesn' Rusalki* [Song of the Mermaid] may be found on the Internet. URL: <https://www.russian-records.com/search.php>. Accessed: 15.08.2024.

Summation: the Opera and the Play

The similarity to a fairy opera, which in the production and the solution of global moral issues, had historical priority towards the beginning of the 20th century and was technically more advanced, provided hindrance to a serious evaluation of *Razryv-trava* as a literary and musical work, as a new utterance in incidental music. There had already been a precedent of that kind, in the competition of the three *Snow Maidens*, when Rimsky-Korsakov won in 1900. This was asserted in the aforementioned article by Engel [2] and was confirmed by posters, where the opera was preserved for over ten years, while the dramatic performances based on Ostrovsky's fairy tale left the stage almost immediately. Subsequently, time after time, *Koshchey the Immortal*, *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*, and *The Golden Cockerel* became more than mere musical scores — they expressed the attitudes of mind of the epoch. It is illustrative that during the time of the performances of *Razryv-trava* on the Moscow stages, (1901–1904) the Arts Theater rejected the idea of incorporating the “big music” in the performances, while the Bolshoi Theater — the third participant of the competition of *The Snow Maidens* — noticeably withdrew from the Russian fabulous, fantastic subject matter towards Italian operas on melodramatic plotlines.

Schaefer's attempt to create music for the performance on the basis of a synthesis of various genre models and principles did not harm the integrity of the performance. At the same time, it marked a moment of crisis, the necessity of determining the role and the position of music in the producer's theater of the 1900s and the 1910s. Lensky's collaboration with the composers became an important step along this path, forestalling the appearance of the famous masterpieces of Ilya Alexandrovich Sats on the stage of the Moscow Arts Theater.

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The article was submitted 14.06.2024;
approved after reviewing 27.08.2024;
accepted for publication 10.09.2024.

Статья поступила в редакцию 14.06.2024;
одобрена после рецензирования 27.08.2024;
принята к публикации 10.09.2024.