

*From the History of Soviet
Art Criticism*

Original article

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***Panorama of 20th Century Opera: from the History
of One Cycle of the Main Editorial Board of Music
Broadcasting of the All-Union Radio***

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Abstract. The article examines a cycle of programs of the Main Editorial Board of Musical Broadcasting of the All-Union Radio, *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*. Due to a happy accident, the author came into the possession of seven volumes of typescript texts of 96 radio programs, which were subject to depreciation and destruction, due to the expired time-limit of storage. The first was dated January 8, 1968 года, whereas the last went on the air on October 1, 1971. Over a hundred works by composers from Russia and other countries were broadcast during the four seasons of the cycle. These composers included Giacomo Puccini, Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Gheorghe Enescu, Leos Janacek, Zoltan Kodaly, Paul Dessau, Eugen Suchon, Sandor Szokolay and others. The operas were broadcast in their entirety, their synopses were expounded before each act, as the result of which the time duration relayed

Translated by Dr. Anton A. Rovner

for the broadcast ranged up to four hours over the airwaves. Of special attention were the introductory words devoted to the composer's personality and music, the history of the opera's creation and the performances, which could range up to 50 minutes. All the significant researchers of musical theater of that time were engaged into the project. A great role was played by Boris Yarustovsky: his introduction to the cycle of radio programs about the paths of development of the opera genre is directly connected with the monograph *Ocherki po dramaturgii opery XX veka* [*Essays on Dramatic Concept of Twentieth-Century Opera*], the first part of which was published later, in 1971. Besides that, the programs involved the participation of Leo Mazel, Boris Levik, Lev Danilevich, Gigoriy Schneerson, Israil Nestyev, Marina Sabinina, Larisa Danko, Oksana Leontyeva, Ludmila Polyakova and others. Special attention is merited by the original lectures of Gennady Rozhdestvensky devoted to one-act operas by composers outside of Russia and Igor Stravinsky, as well as an overview of Soviet opera, with accentuation of its most important features undertaken in one of the programs by Innokenty Popov, the assistant editor of the newspaper *Sovetskaya kul'tura* [*Soviet Culture*]. The author of the article arrives at the conclusion that in the cycle *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* at the All-Union Radio for the first time in Russian musicology a detailed, academically equipped retrospective review of opera of the first six decades of the 20th century, while the preserved texts merit being published in a separate edition.

Keywords: 20th century opera, All-Union Radio, cycle of radio broadcasts, Boris Yarustovsky, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Innokenty Popov

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*Из истории советского
искусствоведения*

Научная статья

**«Панорама оперы XX века»: из истории одного
цикла Главной редакции музыкального вещания
Всесоюзного радио**

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Abstract. В статье рассмотрен цикл программ Главной редакции музыкального вещания Всесоюзного радио «Панорама оперы XX века». По счастливой случайности в распоряжении автора оказались семь томов машинописных текстов 96 радиопередач, которые подлежали списанию и уничтожению в связи с истекшим сроком хранения. Первая датируется 8 января 1968 года, последняя вышла в эфир 1 октября 1971 года. Более ста произведений зарубежных и отечественных композиторов прозвучали в течение четырех сезонов цикла. Среди авторов — Дж. Пуччини, Р. Штраус, А. Шёнберг, И. Ф. Стравинский, Н. А. Римский-Корсаков, Д. Д. Шостакович, С. С. Прокофьев, Дж. Энеску, Л. Яначек, З. Кодай, П. Дессау, Э. Сухонь, Ш. Соколаи и другие. Оперы транслировались целиком, с изложением содержания перед каждым актом, поэтому время, которое выделялось на передачу, доходило до четырех часов эфира. Особое внимание обращают на себя вступительные слова, посвященные личности, творчеству композитора, истории создания и исполнения опер, которые могли занимать до 50 минут. К проекту были привлечены все крупные исследователи музыкального театра того времени. Большую роль сыграл Б. М. Ярустовский: его введение к циклу передач о путях развития оперного жанра напрямую связано с монографией «Очерки по драматургии оперы XX века»,

первая часть которой вышла позднее, в 1971 году. Помимо этого, в передачах участвовали Л. А. Мазель, Б. В. Левик, Л. В. Данилевич, Г. М. Шнеерсон, И. В. Нестьев, М. Д. Сабина, Л. Г. Данько, О. Т. Леонтьева, Л. В. Полякова и другие. Отдельного внимания заслуживают самобытные лекции Г. Н. Рождественского, посвященные одноактным операм зарубежных композиторов и И. Ф. Стравинского, а также обзор советской оперы с выделением ее важнейших черт, предпринятый в одной из передач И. Е. Поповым, заместителем главного редактора газеты «Советская культура». Автор статьи приходит к выводу, что в цикле «Панорама оперы XX века» на Всесоюзном радио впервые в отечественном музыкознании была представлена детальная, научно оснащенная ретроспектива оперы первых шести десятилетий XX века, а сохранившиеся тексты заслуживают публикации отдельным изданием.

Ключевые слова: опера XX века, Всесоюзное радио, музыка на радио, «Панорама оперы XX века», цикл радиопередач, Б. М. Ярустовский, Г. Н. Рождественский, И. Е. Попов

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Introduction

In 2011, the *Orfey* radio station hosted a cycle of programs led by Nikolai G. Rybinsky,¹ devoted to the history of radio broadcast of classical music in Russia. The radio host began his narration with the date of the first experimental broadcast of the opera *Prince Igor* from the Bolshoi Theater on February 3, 1925. Furthermore, during the course of seven radio programs (the last of which came out on May 28, 2011), Rybinsky told about the brightest pages of this history, which, undoubtedly, deserves special scholarly research. However, up to the present day, its history, for the most part, has not entered the sphere of interest of journalists and editors.² Tatiana A. Tvetkovskaya notes that musicology “up to the present day has passed by an entire sphere of human activity that had broadly made use of music” [5, p. 59]. An exception to this may be seen in Alexander Z. Kharkovsky’s publication from 2015, *Radioperedacha kak obyekt muzykovedcheskogo analiza: podstupy i primery* [*Radio Programs as an Object of Musicological Analysis: Approaches and Examples*] [6], in which the author, while turning to the issue of the dramaturgical function of music in radio programs, reveals the mechanisms of interaction between music and the narration fabric of the radio programs. Unfortunately, in recent years, little has changed in this regard.

The cycle of radio programs of the Main Editorial Board of Musical Broadcasting of the All-Union Radio *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*, to which this article is devoted, was realized, according to Rybinsky’s fair commentary, in one of the most fruitful periods of the history of radio broadcast (the 1960s and the early 1970s). It was opened on January 8, 1968 with an introductory talk by one of the most significant Soviet musicologists, Boris M. Yarustovsky (1911–1978). The final radio program, judging from the available archival materials, came out on the airwaves on October 1, 1971. During the course of that time, the listeners were presented with over a hundred operas by composers from Russia and from other countries created during the 20th century. The author of this article has become the happy possessor of the typescript texts of the introductory conversations to 96 programs of the cycle, compiled into seven bound volumes (*Illustration 1*).³ The most important pages of the history of this cycle will be illuminated in the present work.

¹ The recordings of the radio programs are available at: <https://orpheusradio.ru/programs/music-radio-story> (accessed 10.11.2024).

² Let us highlight a number of scholarly articles examining the phenomenon of musical radio journalism [1], the connection between radio broadcasting and musical education [2; 3], and Tatiana A. Alexandrovna’s book *Zapiski “radiota”* [*Notes of a ‘Radiot’*], which includes essays and memoirs about the author’s work in the musical editorial board of the All-Union Radio (from the 1960s to the 1990s.) [4].

³ The volumes were transferred into the personal archive of the author of the article after their deaccessioning from the funds of the State Literary Museum, when in 2017 they were provided by Nina G. Kreitner (the daughter of composer Georgy G. Kreitner). The texts were acquired by the Kreitner family in the early 1990s. after the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR from July 14, 1990, a reorganization of all the sections took place at the All-Union Radio, many printed materials turned out to be not on demand and were decommissioned.



Illustration 1. Panorama of 20th Century Opera:
in 7 Volumes. 1968–1971.
Photo from the Author's Personal Archive

The cycle *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* enjoyed tremendous popularity. Folia are available from the Chief Editorial Board of the Exchange of Radio Programs, where it was informed that the radio program is directed upon requests to the requests of the radio committees of the Soviet Union, and at first 28, and by 1971, around 80 committees were registered in the lists. The final radio program of the cycle was broadcast on the airwaves on October 10, 1971, and it was dedicated to the centennial anniversary of the birthday of Zakhariy P. Paliashvili and his opera *Daisi*. The text of the talk about it completed the binder of the seventh volume. It began with an advertisement of the upcoming fifth season of the cycle, which, nonetheless, was discontinued.

So what were the reasons for discontinuing the broadcasts? Very likely, a crucial role was played by the resignation of Chaplygin, the editor-in-chief of the section.

During the years when the radio programs of the cycle *Panorama of 20th Century Music* went on the airwaves, the Chief Editorial Board of the Musical Broadcasting of the All-Union Radio was directed by Nikolai P. Chaplygin – graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, composer, conductor, and Merited Activist of the Arts of the USSR (*Illustration 2*). The section of the musical educational programs was directed by Rimma I. Genkina – it was particularly she who coordinated all the texts of the cycle. The editor of the *Panorama of 20th Century Music* during the course of all the years of its existence was Galina K. Zarembo.



Illustration 2.
[Nikolai Petrovich Chaplygin](#)
(accessed: 10.11.2024)

On April 15, 1970, Nikolai N. Mesyatsev was removed from his position, although his activities have been associated up to the present time with the flourishing of the radio in the 1960s, the introduction of multi-program television broadcasts, including in Siberia and the Russian Far East, the transfer to color television and, most importantly, — the creation of a special creative atmosphere in the committee. On April 17, his place was taken by Sergei G. Lapin, whose personality aroused contradicting impressions. The pressure of ideological persecution increased under him. He was the initiator of Chaplygin's dismissal and the removal of Gennady N. Rozhdestvensky from the directorate of the Symphony Orchestra of Radio and Television: the conductor actively defended the musicians in his orchestra who were of Jewish ancestry, while Lapin was a rampant anti-Semite. It could be assumed that the *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* also fell in disfavor.

But there is also another possible reason for the cessation of the cycle — the particular limitation of the presented material. When the cycle was being created, around 50 recordings of 20th century operas were at the disposal of the editorial board. This was imparted at the first radio program. Soon their number increased. This became possible, among other reasons, due to the fact that the State Building of Radio Broadcast and Sound Recording exported some of the recordings and interchanged them with its foreign colleagues. As a result, over 100 compositions were broadcast during the four seasons of the cycle. During the first four years, the broadcasts took place virtually on a weekly basis (with the exception of the summer months and the holidays), first on Mondays, and then, for the most part, on Fridays, starting with 7 PM. Later, at least two programs a month were released, and in 1971 year — one program a month. It was possible that the fund of recordings of the most significant 20th century operas was exhausted. Nonetheless, it is difficult to determine the actual reason for the closing down of *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* from the airwaves.

Yet another question may be asked — why was it that particularly at the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s such a cycle appeared at the All-Union Radio. An answer to it may be found in Viktor A. Yuzefovich's article *Teatru v efire byt'* [*Theater on the Airways Must Happen*], published in the journal *Sovetskaya muzyka* [*Soviet Music*] (No. 2 for 1968). The author emphasizes the important role of radio in the extension of the circle of lovers of music theater: "Thirty-five years ago, opera was transmitted on the airways for the first time. The beginning of this was formed by broadcasts of performances at the Bolshoi Theater. From that day, opera has acquired an auditorium of millions of listeners" [7, p. 58].⁴ Among the new forms of its existence, Yusefovich mentions

⁴ Let us specify the chronology of the phenomena connected with the Russian radio theater by basing ourselves on Elena Vdovina's article [8]. The date of its emergence is considered to be December 25, 1925, when the radio performance *Večer u Marii Volkonskoy* [*The Evening at Maria Volkonskaya's*] was released, devoted to the centennial anniversary of the insurrection of the Decembrists at the Senate Plaza in St. Petersburg [8, p. 57]. In March 1927, the decree of the Sovnarkom [Soviet of the People's Commissariat] of the USSR ("The Law of the Freedom of the Microphone") provided the right of broadcasting on the radio all musical and drama performances presented in theaters and concert halls without any special recompense for the performers or the organizers [Ibid., p. 60]. And, finally, as Yuzefovich indicates, the first time opera was broadcast on the airwaves was "thirty-five years ago" [7, p.58], that is, in 1933.

radio performance, montage, and concert performance, which were carried out with the efforts of the artists from the radio, and emphasizes that already back in the 1930s, concert performances of operas enjoyed tremendous success.⁵ Most intriguing is the scholar's opinion that some operas even gained ground, when performed that way. He provides as examples Alexander S. Dargomyzhsky's *The Stone Guest* and Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*. According to Yuzefovich, an important event that occurred in the late 1950s, was the arrival of "the tireless promoter of opera" Samuil Ya. Samosud in the role of director of the new Radio Symphony Orchestra— due to his efforts and those of his successors, the best compositions of the classics by Russian composers and those from other countries and the "return to life of a number of Soviet opera works" took place [7, p. 58]. The chief task the author tried to solve, when preparing his article, was to attract the attention of the directors of musical television broadcasting and the leading activists of the Composers' Union of the USSR for discussing the issue of creating a radio opera theater. He provides rather convincing arguments of the practicability of opening, and even a tentative billposter of the theater *Opera v efire* [*Opera on the Airwaves*], albeit, noting that "as of now, these are just dreams" [7, p. 61]. Yuzefovich's article came out virtually at the same time as the first programs of *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* were aired, which bears witness to the fact that the foundation for broad promotion of the opera genre on the radio had already been created in the country.

However, another circumstance is also essential. In addition to the task of popularization of music, the new project pursued a more important aim — an educational and enlightening one. One immediately remembers the slogan of the late 1920s, "Art — to the Masses!", which may be rephrased as "Opera — to the Masses." Particularly radio, the media that during those years was available in virtually every home and in every apartment, was the most effective means for achieving this goal. Thereby, the emergence of *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* was a timely and appropriate occurrence.

The Texts of the Radio Programs

Let us turn directly to the manuscripts. Despite the fact that the audio recordings of the introductory talks were demagnetized in the middle of the 1970s (there are special manuscript notes about this fact available in the texts), nonetheless, over two thousand typescript pages allow us to form an impression about the cycle. They contain editorial corrections, at times, serious ones, as well as the correct stresses of the first and last names put down on them — it is apparent that these are particularly the texts on the basis of which the recordings were made. The greater part of them is preceded by a Bulletin of the Committee for Radio Broadcast and Television affiliated with Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Chief Editorial

⁵ The history of the Russian opera radio theater from the 1930s to the 1950s is the object of discussion of a specific number of pages of the website *ClassicalForum.ru*, on which the recordings of those years are downloaded: Predlogoff, V. (2011, July 15). Opera na radio: operny radioteatr – unikal'ny zhanr i yego istoriya [Opera on the Radio: the Opera Radio Theater – a Unique Genre and its History]. In *ClassicalForum.ru. Opera i klassicheskaya muzyka*. [Opera and Classical Music]. <http://classicalforum.ru/index.php?topic=3654.0>.

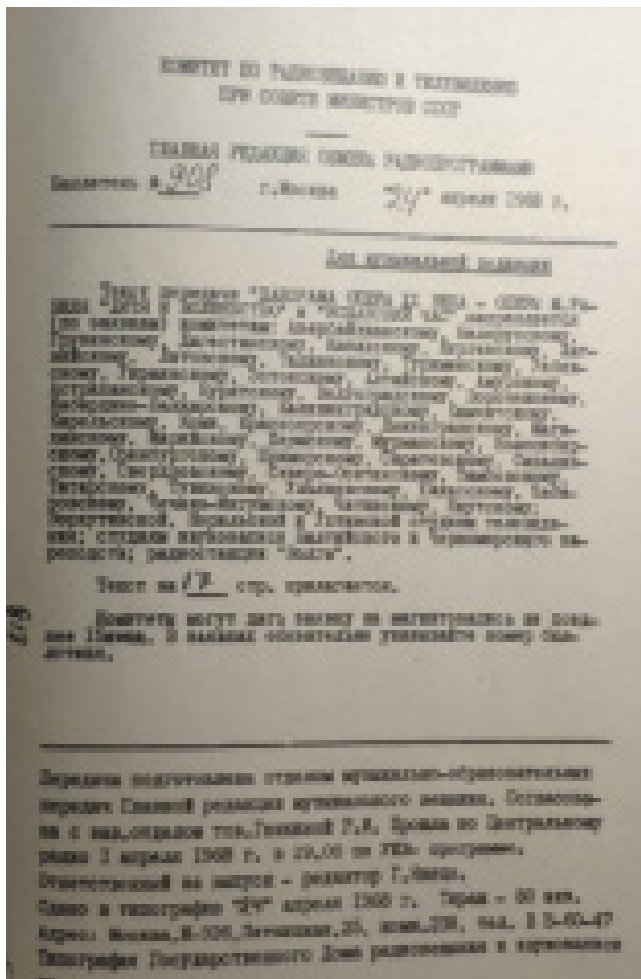


Illustration 3. The page preceding the text of the radio program.

Panorama of 20th Century Opera:
In 7 Volumes. (Vol. 2, p. 257).

Photo from the Author's Personal Archive

of the Interchange of Radio Programs. At the bottom of the front page, as a rule, information is placed about the date of the broadcast of the program (Illustration 3). At the end of the text the data of the numbers of the tape clips and their timings are given.⁶

The content of the cycle astounds, first of all, by the list of names of the composers and the titles of the compositions it presents: they include both the famous ones — Giacomo Puccini, Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Feodorovich Stravinsky, Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov, Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich, Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev, Gheorghe Enescu, Leoš Janáček, Zoltán Kodály, Paul Dessau, Eugen Suchoň, Sándor Sokolay, as well as composers who are presently forgotten — Karl Birger Blumdal (*Angara*), Veli Muhadov (*Konets krovavogo vodorazdela* [*The End of the Bloody Divide*]), and Jakov Gotovac (*Ero s onoga svijeta* [*Ero the Joker*]). The programs included recordings made on the best stages of the world with outstanding singers. Here is only a small selection of the examples:

Samuel Barber. *Vanessa*. The soloists (Eleanor Steber,⁷ Nicolai Gedda), the chorus and orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera. Dimitris Mitropoulos, conductor.

Benjamin Britten. *Peter Grimes*. The soloists (Peter Pears, chief role) and orchestra of the English National Opera. Benjamin Britten, conductor.

Antonin Dvorak. *Rusalka*. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Prague National Theater. Zdeněk Chalabala, conductor.

Paul Constantinescu. *O Noapte Fortunoasă* [*A Stormy Night*]. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Bucharest Theater of Opera and Ballet. Mircea Popa, conductor.

⁶ Unfortunately, not all the texts are provided with detailed information.

⁷ The correct spelling is Eleonor Stibor; the text of the article preserves the spelling provided in the original text of the radio program.

Manuel de Falla. *La Vie Breve*. The Opera Theater of Spain,⁸ the Orchestra of the Barcelona Opera. Ernesto Halfter. Salud — Victoria de Los Angeles.

Francis Poulenc. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Opera Comique national theater. André Cluytens, conductor. Therese — Denise Duval.

Giacomo Puccini. *La fanciulla del West*. The soloists (Minnie — Birgit Nilsson), the chorus and orchestra of the Milan *La Scala* Theater.

Giacomo Puccini. *Il Trittico*. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Roman Opera (Michele — Tito Gobbi). Vincenzo Bellezza, conductor.

Giacomo Puccini. *Gianni Schicchi*. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the San Carlo Theater (Naples). Francesco Molinari-Pradelli, conductor.

Giacomo Puccini. *Turandot*. (Recording of the performance of the La Scala theater during their tour in Moscow in 1964). Soloists — Birgit Nilsson and Bruno Prevedi. Gianandrea Gavazzeni.

Giacomo Puccini. *Madama Butterfly*. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera Theater (Pinkerton — Richard Tucker, Sharpless — Giuseppe Valdengo). Max Rudolf, conductor.

The Music theater of Kurt Weill and Bertold Brecht. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Documentary recording of the premiere production in Leipzig in 1930.

Igor Stravinsky. *The Nightingale*. The chorus and orchestra of the Washington Opera Society. Igor Stravinsky, conductor.

Igor Stravinsky. *Mavra*. The soloists and orchestra of the Columbia gramophone company. Igor Stravinsky, conductor.

Eugen Suchoň. *Krútnava [The Whirlpool]*. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the National Theater in Bratislava. Zdeněk Chalabala, conductor.

Paul Hindemith. *Mathis der Maler*. Soloist — Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Orchestra of the Berlin Radio. Leopold Ludwig, conductor⁹.

Arnold Schoenberg. *Erwartung*. Helga Pilarcik (soprano) and the Symphony Orchestra of the Washington Opera Society. Robert Craft, conductor.

Arnold Schoenberg. *Die Glückliche Händ*. Robert Oliver (bass) and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra. Robert Craft, conductor.

Richard Strauss. *Daphne*. The Vienna State Opera Chorus and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Carl Bohm, conductor.

Richard Strauss. *Capriccio* and fragments from *Der Rosenkavalier*. The soloists (Elizabeth Schwartzkopf, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Nicolai Gedda) and the London *Philharmonia* Orchestra. Wolfgang Sawallisch, conductor.

Richard Strauss. *Salome*. Salome — Birgit Nilsson and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Georg Szolti, conductor.

In addition to that, the programs included the recordings of the best Soviet opera companies, including the Bolshoi Theater, the Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko Music Theater, the Kiev Opera Theater, the State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet of the Kirgiz SSR, and the Opera Theater of the Estonian SSR. Among the soloists presented on the programs was Galina Vishnevskaya, Artur

⁸ The precise name of the theater is not indicated.

⁹ In the same program, Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* and the finale of the symphony *Harmonia Mundi*, under the composer's direction, were broadcast.

Eisen, Evgeny Kibkalo, Alexander Vedernikov, Ivan Petrov, Alexei Maslennikov, Dmitri Gnatyuk, Zurab Anjaparidze, and Piotr Amiranashvili. Special recordings were carried out with the participation of the soloists, chorus and the Opera-Symphony Orchestra of the All-Union Radio and Central Television.

No less remarkable is the amount of time that was allotted for the programs — up to four hours of air time, which seems unthinkable in present-day radio. The operas were transmitted in entirety, with detailed presentments of the synopsis before each act. But the most important element was in the introductory comments, which characterized the composer's artistic portrait and illuminated the history of the creation of the respective compositions and their manifestations on stage. The content of these introductory lectures was of very high quality, and the outstanding scholars of the country became their authors.

Boris Mikhaylovich Yarustovsky

It may be presumed that it was Boris Mikhaylovich Yarustovsky who presented himself as the initiator of the emergence of the *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*. The first program of the cycle was opened particularly with his introductory talk. In this speech, we can discover the obvious connection with the monograph *Ocherki po dramaturgii opery XX veka* [*Essays on Dramatic Concept of Twentieth-Century Opera*], which was published subsequently (1971, [9]). In essence, the book was the result of the work on the cycle: extensive quotations from the introductory speech are included in the beginning chapters of the first part of the book (*Illustration 4*).

Let us indicate Yarustovsky's key theses characterizing contemporary opera.

First of all, the musicologist analyzes the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theater, the Metropolitan Opera and the Grand Opera, noting the priority of classical opera over contemporary opera. Occasionally, on theater festivals there are “glimpses” of “super-novelties by avant-garde composers, which arouse rapturous reviews and accolades from the Western press, but almost inevitably finish their stage lives after the second or third performances.”¹⁰ Operas by contemporary composers

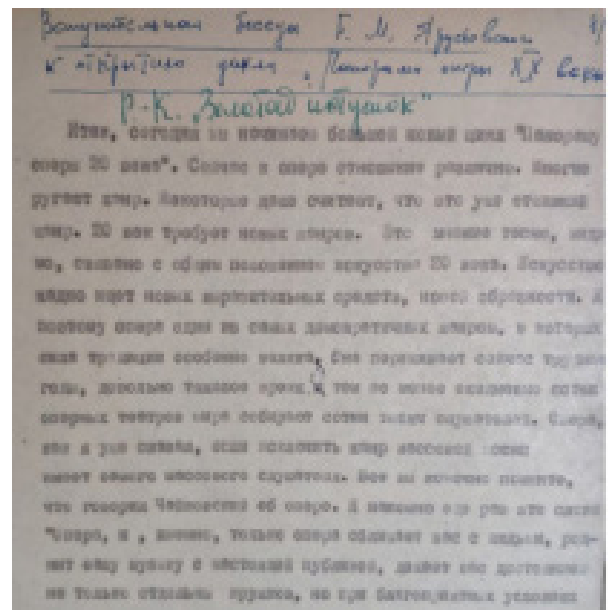


Illustration 4. The initial page of the first radio program of the cycle.

Panorama of 20th Century Opera:

In 7 Volumes. Vol. 1. P. 7.

Photo from the author's personal archive

¹⁰ Yarustovsky, B. M. (1968–1971). Vstupitel'naya beseda k otkrytiyu tsikla *Panorama opery XX veka* [The Introductory Talk towards the Opening of the Cycle *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*]. *Panorama opery XX veka* [*Panorama of 20th Century Opera*] (In 7 Vols, vol. 1), p. 8.

appear “on the opera stage in the forms of short-time debutants of 5 or 6 premiere performances.”¹¹

Yarustovsky (*Illustration 5*) arrives at the conclusion that the social resonance of contemporary operas is quite modest, which is why the critics periodically proclaim about the creative death of the genre of opera or, at any rate, about its crisis. “Wherein lie reasons of such a conservatism? [...] In the genre of opera, most powerful is the strength of tradition, good tradition, the splendid tradition of the vocal parts, which appeal so much to the broad listener. Contemporary opera in this sense is much more complex in its apprehension.”¹² The decisive complexification in the 20th century of the musical language “put a strain on the interactions of opera and the public, deepened the contradictions between the individualistic techniques of the genre’s reform and its democratic social nature.”¹³

As in important tendency, the researcher highlights the composers’ aspiration to depart from convincing life-resembling action, referring to the operas of Richard Strauss, Debussy and Schoenberg. “The action becomes limited to primarily an inner, very intricate psychological sphere, and the poetic, textual side to a certain extent subjugated the music to itself.”¹⁴ In connection with the operas of Janáček,

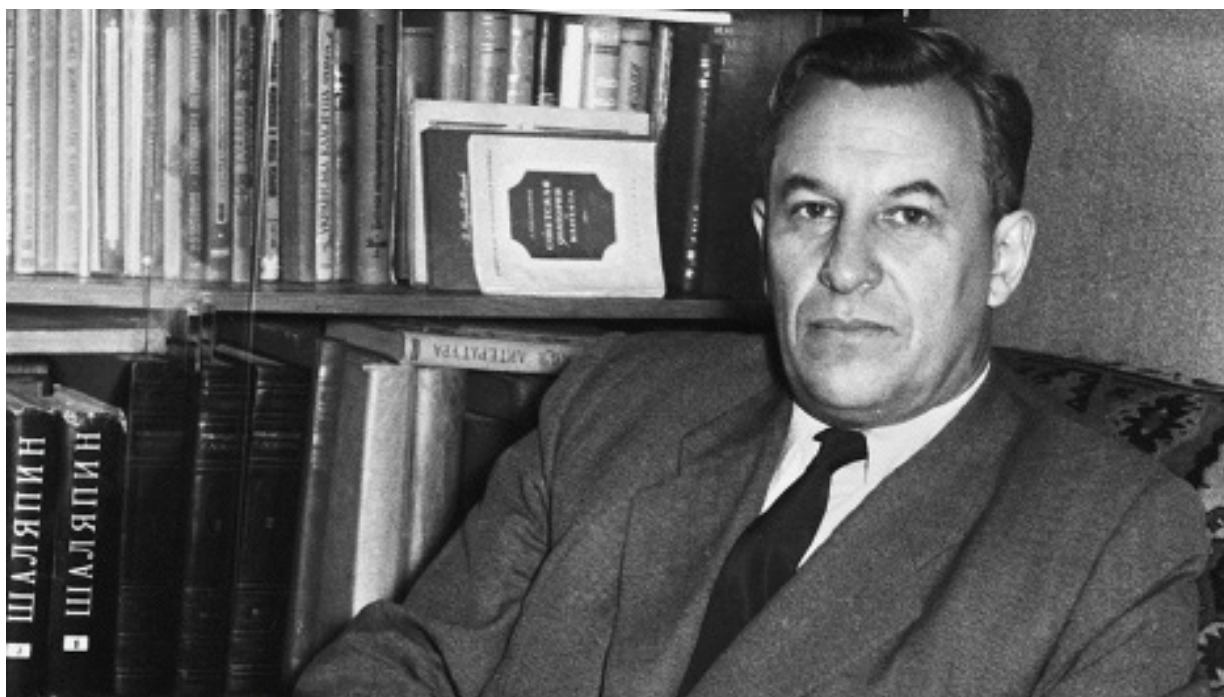


Illustration 5. [Boris Mikhaylovich Yarustovsky](#)
(accessed: 10.11.2024)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 7.

¹³ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

Kodály, Enescu and Gershwin, he lays emphasis on the line of original revival of opera on the basis of creative usage of little-known folk traditions.

Yet another feature is “the violation of the harmony of synthesis, the synthetic nature of the opera genre [...] In the practice of the 20th century, it very frequently it was possible to observe an intentional hypertrophy of one of the components of music theater. In some cases, the literary, poetical side protruded, in other cases, the music was ‘crowded out’ by the original theatrical spectacle, and still in others – there was the triumph of the visual artist, who astounded everybody with some kind of sensational discovery...”¹⁵ Thanks to Sergei Diaghilev’s ability, opera “became flooded with the choreographic element [...] Choreography assumed equal rights with the vocal sphere...”¹⁶

But, most likely, the most important for reflection on the cycle turned out to be the following utterance of Yarustovsky:

We are fully aware that... the panorama of operas presented to us will have one essential deficiency – it is distinguished by a well-known heterogeneity. But I think that here there is both a minus and a plus, since we wish you to sense the entire complexity of the picture of contemporary opera, all the fancifulness of the interconnections in it of the diverse influences, directions, national and other tastes. And I think that... only this would give you a genuine perception of that complex, but interesting life that the opera genre is now undergoing.¹⁷

About the Content of the Cycle

It was difficult to discover any logic in the assortment of opera compositions presented in the programs. Only in a few cases, it could be asserted about the aspiration to present several works in a row by one composer. Thus, some works by the selfsame composer were broadcast one after the other, such as, for instance, three operas by Prokofiev (*Semyon Kotko*, January 10, 1969, *The Duenna*, January 17, 1969, *War and Peace*, January 24, 1969), three by Britten (*Peter Grimes*, April 18, 1969, *Albert Herring*, April 25, 1969, and *The Turn of the Screw*, May 15, 1969), two installments of two operas each by Richard Strauss (*Der Rosenkavalier*, March 18/25, 1968, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, April 1, 1968; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, November 14, 1969, and *Arabella*, November 21, 1969), and two by Janáček (*Výlety páně Bručkovy* [*The Excursions of Pan Brouček*], March 5, 1971, and *Osud* [*Destiny*], May 18, 1971). For the most part, the content of the cycle presented a rather diverse picture.

Thus, one set of programs was opened by Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera *The Golden Cockerel* (January 8, 1968), which Yarustovsky labeled the last work of the opera classics that indicated at “the path towards the new sound world of 20th century opera.”¹⁸ This was followed by:

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 14–15.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

Giacomo Puccini *Madama Butterfly* January 15\22, 1968.¹⁹

Claude Debussy *Pelleas et Melisande* January 22\27, 1968.

Manuel de Falla *La Vie breve* and *El retablo de maese Pedro* February 12, 1968.

Leoš Janáček *Její pastorkyňa* February 19, 1968.

Richard Strauss *Elektra* February 26/29, 1968.

Indeed, it is possible to find any logic, only, perhaps, to mark the principle of stylistic contrast and the diverse national palette. All in all, during the four seasons on the airwaves, eight operas by Richard Strauss were broadcast, seven by Janáček, six by Prokofiev, five operas each by Puccini and Britten, three each by Stravinsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, two each by Schoenberg, Shostakovich,²⁰ Sokolay, Ravel, Milhaud, Poulenc, Menotti, Weill, Kodály, De Falla, Paliashvili, as well as a large number of single compositions by various other composers. In addition, Karl Orff's stage cantatas, as well as Leonard Bernstein's and Frederick Loewe's musicals were included in the cycle. There were also a few synoptic programs: the aforementioned introductory program, as well as those devoted to Orff's Weill's and Brecht's music theater.

Shortly before the completion of the second season (on June 6, 1969) a program about the paths of development of Soviet opera was broadcast on the air prepared by Innokenty Yevgenyevich Popov — a music critic, a student of Viktor Abramovich Tsukkerman, the deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Sovetskaya kul'tura* [*Soviet Culture*], and starting from 1974 — the editor-in-chief of the journal *Muzykal'naya zhizn'*. The field of his perspective included Prokofiev's operas *War and Peace* and *Semyon Kotko*, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk Uyezd* [*Katerina Izmaylova*], Tikhon N. Khrennikov's *In a Storm*, Dmitri B. Kabalevsky's *Master from Clamecy*, Sergei M. Slonimsky's *Vireneya*, Vytautas J. Klova's *Pilėnai*, Otar V. Taktakishvili's *The Soldier*, Villem Kapp's *Lembitu*, Veljo Tormis' *Swan's Flight*, Veli Muhadov's *The End of the Bloody Divide*, Vano I. Muradeli's *October*, and Vytautas Laurušas' *Strayed Birds*. The talks are accompanied by fragments from these compositions.

Among Popov's curious utterances, let us cite the following: "Contemporaneity has always thrust itself forward into the opera theater with difficulty,"²¹ "The philosophical-intellectual sphere is less intrinsic to it [contemporary opera. — L. G.]". As an example to this, he brings the opera *Faust* by Charles Gounod — a work

¹⁹ The indication of two dates is the result of the fact that not all the texts contain information about of the broadcasts of the radio programs. Moreover, the texts hemstitched into the volumes are not always situated in chronological order, and in a number of cases the numeration of the volumes is not correct. The situation is aided by the content of the respective radio program, due to which it becomes possible to understand, what was broadcast in the previous programs, as well as to find out the numbers of the tape reels indicated at the end of the texts.

²⁰ The opera *The Nose* was broadcast on December 12, 1969 in performance by the soloists, chorus and orchestra of the Prague Radio, five years prior to the production of Boris Pokrovsky and Gennady Rozhdestvensky at the Chamber Music Theater in 1974.

²¹ Popov, I. E. (1968–1971). [Radio program from June 6, 1969]. *Panorama opery XX veka: V 7 t.* [*Panorama of 20th Century Opera: in 7 Volumes*], vol. 1, p. 255.

in which the composer “took off the table the profundity of Goethe’s novel.”²² Another comment is noteworthy: “The composer’s active intrusion into the sphere of the libretto must be hailed.”²³

Among the names relevant in this connection, he mentions Vitaliy S. Gubarenko, Alexander N. Kholminov, Kirill V. Molchamnov and Rodion K. Shchedrin.

Popov also touches upon the diverse issues of the history of the music theater, including tradition and innovation in the genre of opera, the evolution of the operatic vocal style, as well as the correlation of the literary source and the libretto. In conclusion, the critic determines the main features of the new operas by Soviet composers:

1. Prospective research of new intonational strata of folk melodicism.
2. The search for new contemporary forms of traditional opera cantilena.
3. Crystallization of new, closer connections between the musical-dramaturgical and the dramaturgical-plotline elements.
4. Expansion of the thematic sphere of Soviet opera.²⁴

Besides Yarustovsky and Popov, all of the other significant researchers of music theater of that time were also drawn to the opera cycle — Leo A. Mazel, Boris V. Levik, Lev V. Danilevich, Grigoriy M. Schneerson, Izrail’ V. Nestyev, Valentina Dz. Konen, Marina D. Sabinina, Larisa G. Dan’ko, Alexei I. Kandinsky, Oksana T. Leontyeva, Ludmila V. Polyakova, and others. De Falla’s operas and Richard Strauss’ *Capriccio* were presented by the editor of the All-Union Radio, Vsevolod V. Timokhin. “Everybody turned to him as to an encyclopedic musical reference book,” Alexandrova writes. “In addition to working on the radio, he also wrote articles for the journals *Sovetskaya muzyka* [*Soviet Music*] and *Muzykal’naya zhizn’* [*Musical Life*] and was the author of several books on the art of vocalism, both the Russian variety and the world type” [4, p. 24].

In a number of cases, the discussion of opera was presented as a dialogue between a composer and a scholar. Such were the conversations of the Merited Activist of the Arts of the Kirgizian SSR, musicologist and public figure Viktor S. Vinogradov with Vladimir G. Feré about the opera *Aïchurek*,²⁵ or with Veli Muhadov about his composition *The End of the Bloody Divide*, and such was the dialogue of Marina D. Sabinina with Vladimir I. Rubin about the musical tragedy *The July Sunday* (*Sevastopol*, 1942).

²² Ibid., p. 271.

²³ Ibid., p. 273.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 278.

²⁵ The opera *Aïchurek* (*The Moon Beauty*) was the first Kirgiz opera, composed collaboratively by three composers — Vladimir Vlasov, Abdylas Maldybayev and Vladimir Feré. The libretto is based on the storyline from the Kirgiz epos, *Manas*. The premiere took place in 1939.

A special branch of the introductory commentaries was formed by the reflections of the composers about their works and those of their colleagues. Thus, of special interest is the lecture of Georgian composer Otar Vasilyevich Taktakishvili devoted to Zakhariy P. Paliashvili *Absealom and Eteri*, as well as his description of his own opera *Mindia*. Luigi Dallapiccola's opera *Il prigioniero* was presented by Edison V. Denisov. Sometimes unusual forms of presentation of the material were used, such as, for instance, in the program about Zoltán Kodály's opera *Hári János* on May 6, 1968. For this program, a recording was carried out of the performance in Russian of musical fragments from it by the soloists, the Opera-Symphony Orchestra and the Chorus of the All-Union Radio and Television under the direction of Evgeny Akulov. They were connected with each other by conversation dialogues, for which end artists from the Evgeny Vakhtangov were invited.

Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Special attention is merited by the unique texts of conductor Gennady Nikolayevich Rozhdestvensky, who presented eight programs of the cycle:

February 29 (26?), 1968. Richard Strauss. *Elektra*. The Dresden Opera, Carl Bohm, conductor.

April 1, 1968. Richard Strauss. *Ariadne auf Naxos* (the version from 1916). The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor.

April 15, 1968. Alban Berg. *Wozzeck* [only the conductor's text has been preserved; there is no information available about the program or about the performers].

June 10, 1968. Leoš Janáček *Z mrtvého domu* [*From the House of the Dead*]. The chorus and orchestra of the Opera Theater in Prague, Bohumil Gregor, conductor.

November 15, 1968. Richard Strauss. *Daphne*. The Vienna State Opera Chorus and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Carl Bohm, conductor.

October 3, 1969. Benjamin Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (in English). The Bolshoi Theater of the USSR, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, conductor. Soloists: Elena Obraztsova, Galina Oleinichenko, Alexander Ognivtsev, Evgeniy Kibkalo. [the introductory statement was a dialogue of Rozhdestvensky and Leontyeva].

November 28, 1969. Igor Stravinsky. *The Nightingale*. The chorus and orchestra of the Opera Society of Washington, Igor Stravinsky, conductor; *Mavra*. Orchestra of the Columbia gramophone company, Igor Stravinsky, conductor.

December 19, 1969. Leoš Janáček. *Věc Makropulos* [*The Means of Makropulos*]. The soloists, chorus and orchestra of the National Theater in Prague. Bohumil Gregor, conductor.

His introductory speeches attracted the audiences by their abundance of divertive details and volubility of tone. In Rozhdestvensky's brilliant introductory essays on the radio, as well as at the philharmonic concerts, there was also room for an intricate humor, as well as for the discussion of very complex materials, since he usually spoke about performance of rare and little-known compositions. In one of the volumes with the texts of the radio programs, a curious manuscript page was preserved,

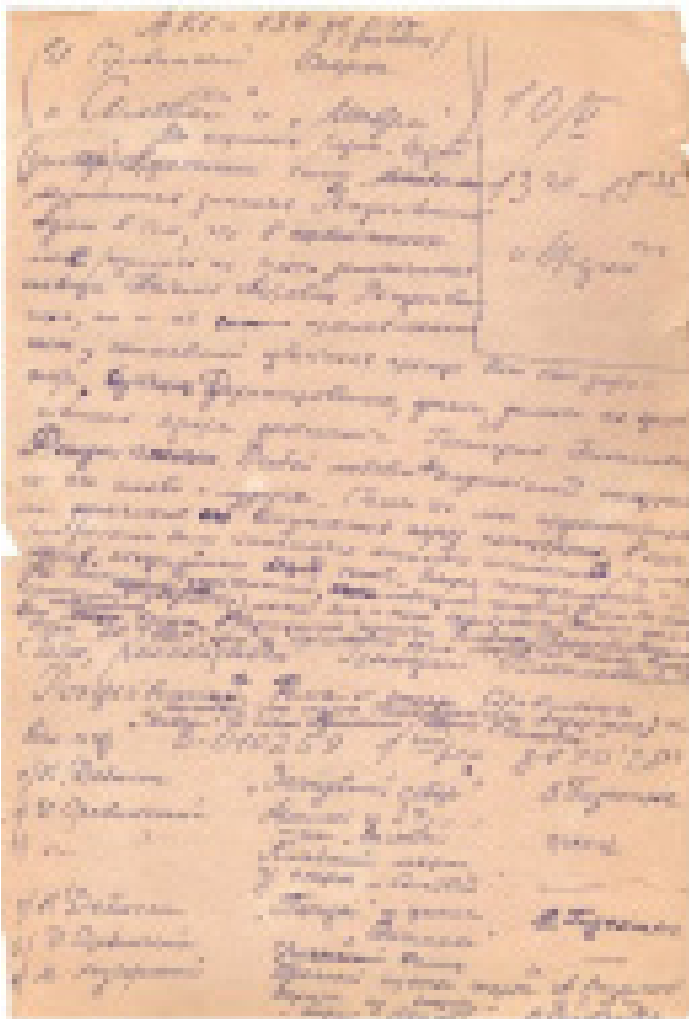


Illustration 6. Manuscript page inserted into one of the volumes of *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*.

Photo from the author's personal archive

which testified of the resonance created by Rozhdestvensky's lectures in this cycle. It is the introductory text to one of the programs for *Orfey* radio, which was broadcast on May 10 (the year is unknown). The text includes an utterance: "Special devotion is also aroused in the listeners by his [Rozhdestvensky's. — L. G.] words about music... Many people remember his most interesting lectures-talks in the radio cycle of editor Galina Zarembo *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*, one of which we would like to offer to your attention." It is referred to the programs of the cycle devoted to Stravinsky's operas *The Nightingale* and *Mavra*, performed under the composer's direction. In the lower part of the sheet of paper, there is a list of musical fragments that were sounded on the air. Next to Stravinsky, there was Debussy and Mussorgsky: the incorporation of the operatic work into the broad context of the composer's musical oeuvres and those of his contemporaries was characteristic for Rozhdestvensky's lectures (*Illustration 6*).

Summary

Despite the fact that the cycle *Panorama of 20th Century Opera* was created over fifty years and was addressed to a very broad circle of radio listeners, the high professional level of the talks that were led on the air, confirming the musical educational directedness of the programs, astonishes us up to the present day. The authors of the introductory lectures touched upon many important, at times, problematic aspects of the development of opera at the contemporary stage. Undoubtedly. Many of them deserve to be published in a separate edition. In all likelihood, most important is that the content of the texts, indeed, makes it possible to adduce an integral panorama of 20th century opera and reconstruct the important details of the cultural situation of the 1960s and the 1970s.

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