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Two *Frauen mit dem Dolche*: Operas by Mikhail Ostroglazov and Vladimir Rebikov Based on the Play by Arthur Schnitzler

Elena M. Shabshaevich,
Moscow State Institute of Music
named after A. G. Schnittke,
Moscow, Russian Federation,
✉ shabsh@yandex.ru,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4608-5081>



Abstract. The article is devoted to two opera works based on the drama by the Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler *Die Frau mit dem Dolche* (*The Lady with the Dagger*, 1901). The Russian composers of the two operas are Mikhail Andreevich Ostroglazov (1907) and Vladimir Ivanovich Rebikov (1910), respectively. The work introduces the opera by Ostroglazov into academic discourse for the first time, while Rebikov's opera is examined in more detail and within a broader context than in previous works. The scholarly interest arises not only from the obscurity of these works, but also from their style and the era of their creation.

A detailed musical analysis is preceded by a brief overview of the operatic legacies of both composers and an exploration of the main themes and character types from Schnitzler's play (such as creativity, dreams, and death). The article presents a scholarly examination of the musical dramaturgy, composition, and style of both pieces. In particular, it notes the composers' adherence to a concise, single-movement structure, through-composed development, impersonal character interpretation, predominance of dialogue, use of leitmotif technique, chamber-like and refined timbral solutions, diversity of vocal intonation types, and a chromatic pitch basis. The comparison concludes with the observation that Rebikov's opera is more artistically convincing through its more organic integration of new stylistic techniques. The conclusion also places these works in the historical context of the relationship between Russian opera at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and symbolist trends in the wider culture. The presented operas by Ostroglazov and Rebikov are among the few surviving symbolist music dramas by Russian composers, which deserve particular and close attention from both scholars and practitioners due to the cultural significance of this transitional period.

Keywords: Mikhail Andreevich Ostroglazov, Vladimir Ivanovich Rebikov, Arthur Schnitzler, *Die Frau mit dem Dolche* (*The Lady with the Dagger*), Russian opera at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, symbolist drama

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Музыкальный театр: вопросы истории

Научная статья

Две «Женщины с кинжалом»: оперы М. А. Остроглазова и В. И. Ребикова на сюжет А. Шницлера

Елена Марковна Шабшаевич,

Московский государственный институт музыки

имени А. Г. Шнитке,

Москва, Российская Федерация,

✉ shabsh@yandex.ru,

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4608-5081>

Аннотация. Статья посвящена двум оперным произведениям на сюжет драмы австрийского драматурга Артура Шницлера «Женщина с кинжалом» (*Die Frau mit dem Dolche*, 1901): Михаила Андреевича Остроглазова (1907) и Владимира Ивановича Ребикова (1910). Опера Остроглазова впервые вводится в научный оборот; опера Ребикова впервые рассматривается столь прицельно, и не сама по себе, а в контексте. Научный интерес связан не только с малоизвестностью этих произведений, но с их стилем и временем создания. Детальному музыкальному анализу предшествует небольшой обзор оперного наследия двух композиторов и разбор сюжетно-смысловых мотивов пьесы Шницлера (типы главных героев, темы — творчества, сна, смерти). Научному осмыслению подвергается музыкальная драматургия, композиция и стиль

обоих сочинений. В частности, констатируется приверженность авторов к сжатой одночастной структуре, сквозному развитию, надличностная трактовка образов, преобладание диалогической формы изложения, использование лейтмотивной техники, камерность и утонченность тембровых решений, разнообразие типов вокального интонирования, хроматическая звуковысотная основа. В итоге сравнения делается вывод о большей художественной убедительности оперы Ребикова, об органичности применения в ней новых стилистических приемов. Заключение статьи помещает рассмотренные в ней произведения в исторический контекст: взаимоотношений русского оперного театра рубежа XIX–XX веков с символистскими тенденциями. Автор приходит к выводу, что немногие дошедшие до нас символистские музыкальные драмы отечественных композиторов этого периода, включая оперы Остроглазова и Ребикова, заслуживают особого и пристального внимания как исследователей, так и музыкантов-практиков.

Ключевые слова: Михаил Андреевич Остроглазов, Владимир Иванович Ребиков, Артур Шницлер, «Женщина с кинжалом», русская опера рубежа XIX–XX веков, символистская драма

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Introduction

The present article discusses two operas having the same title *The Lady with the Dagger* (*Die Frau mit dem Dolche*) by Mikhail Andreevich Ostroglazov (1907) and Vladimir Ivanovich Rebikov (1910). The works have not previously attracted the attention of either researchers or performers.¹ With regard to Ostroglazov's unpublished work (the manuscripts of the vocal score, full score, and orchestral parts are held in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art²), this lack of attention can be partly explained by the limited accessibility of the material; however, there is also a lack of interest in Rebikov's work, even though its vocal score was published by Jurgenson and the autograph manuscripts of the vocal score and full score are kept in the Russian National Museum of Music.³ The most likely reason for this is that both composers are considered to belong to the so-called "second tier," which leads to a stereotypical perception of their works as being of secondary importance; indeed, to some extent, this is true. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly valuable to view these operas from a historical perspective since they represent unique examples within the operatic art of the Silver Age of engaging with the works of Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931), a contemporary writer who can be seen as representative of Viennese Modernism. Furthermore, both operas have become rare examples of the embodiment of Symbolist tendencies in Russian opera at the beginning of the 20th century.

Before taking a detailed look at these works, let us briefly characterise the operatic work of their authors and its role in the musical process of the so-called Russian Silver Age.

¹ The author of the present article already had the opportunity to draw the attention of the musical community to Rebikov's opera *The Lady with the Dagger* as part of a study of the history of its creation [1] and the embodiment of Schnitzler's plots in Russian opera of the Art Nouveau era [2].

² RGALI [Russian State Archive of Literature and Art]. F. 952 (Jurgenson's notebook). Archival unit 541.

³ Rebikov, V. I. (n.d.). *The Lady with the Dagger* op. 41. Piano score. Autograph. RNMM (Russian National Museum of Music). F. 68. No. 860; Rebikov, V. I. (n.d.). *The Lady with the Dagger* op. 41. Orchestral score. Autograph and copy. RNMM. F. 68. No. 859.

*Operatic Heritage of Mikhail Ostroglazov
and Vladimir Rebikov*

The music of Mikhail Andreevich Ostroglazov (1873–1924), an amateur composer and officer, is now practically forgotten, with the exception of some choral works and songs.⁴ Nevertheless, Ostroglazov is the author of eight operas.⁵ Five of these were published by the P. Jurgenson company: the one-act *The Masque of the Red Death* (1896,⁶ text by K. Savvinov based on the story by Edgar Allan Poe); *Irresistible* (1908,⁷ based on the one-act play by Maurice Maeterlinck *L’Intruse*); *The Phantom* (1916,⁸ based on the text by E. I. O.); *Surgery* (1911,⁹ reprinted 1923, based on the story by Anton Chekhov); the three-act *Late* (1917,¹⁰ based on the composer’s own text). The manuscript of the piano score and the score of *The Lady with the Dagger* (1907) is also included in the so-called “music collection” of Pyotr Ivanovich Jurgenson, but for unknown reasons it was not published. (However, Boris Petrovich Jurgenson bought the rights to almost all of Ostroglazov’s works).

Musicologists have demonstrated little interest in Ostroglazov’s operas other than as part of a general overview of stylistic trends.¹¹

Conversely, the much more noticeable works of Vladimir Ivanovich Rebikov (1866–1920) in the musical life of Russia in the 1900s–1910s left a significant mark in musical history. Rebikov not only

⁴ The romances of Mikhail Ostroglazov are mentioned in the article: [3].

⁵ See the biographical article by A. A. Naumov in the *Orthodox Encyclopedia* [4]. The author states that Ostroglazov wrote, among other things, the opera *Sklirena* based on a plot from the 11th-century history of Byzantium as set out in the story by Alexey A. Smirnov.

⁶ The date is given according to the catalogue of the Russian National Library. Retrieved August, 20, 2025, from <https://nlr.ru/e-case3/sc2.php/note/lc/6178/28>

⁷ The date was established based on the announcement of the completion of the opera in the *Russkaya muzykal’naya gazeta* [*Russian Musical Newspaper*]. 1908. No. 20–21, 18–25 May. Column. 482.

⁸ Date according to the Russian National Library catalogue. Retrieved August, 20, 2025, from <https://nlr.ru/e-case3/sc2.php/note/lc/6178/44>

⁹ Date according to the Russian National Library catalogue. Retrieved August, 20, 2025, from <https://nlr.ru/e-case3/sc2.php/note/lc/6178/61>

¹⁰ Date according to the Russian National Library catalogue. Retrieved August, 20, 2025, from <https://nlr.ru/e-case3/sc2.php/note/lc/6178/42>

¹¹ In the monograph by Tatiana N. Levaya, *The Ghost* and *The Mask of the Red Death* are briefly mentioned as unsuccessful examples of the interpretation of symbolist plots [5, p. 37].

wrote a significant number (nine in total) of diverse works in the opera genre (although, as far as we can judge from the available data, only the first one — *The Christmas Tree* — and the last one — *A Nest of the Gentry* — were staged), but also became known as a theorist of musical and theatrical art. He widely explained his views and convictions in this area to develop his own theory of “musical psychography,” in which his positions in relation to words and music, the role and character of the vocal part and orchestra, etc., were set out.¹² While noting the contradictory nature of Rebikov’s work, most researchers acknowledge his innovative aspirations, sensitivity in the implementation of emotional nuances, and freshness of harmonic language.

Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about the circumstances of the composition of Ostroglazov’s opera. However, the history of the creation of Rebikov’s composition is reflected in sufficient detail in the composer’s correspondence with his friend and publisher Boris Petrovich Jurgenson.¹³ In particular, it is known that his work on the opera, which was carried out with great passion, was completed in less than two months; the clavier and vocal scores were completed in November–December 1910. The opera, which marked the beginning Rebikov’s late period of creativity, contributed to the emergence of a number of new musical and theatrical works, which the composer called “dramas of the spirit” (including *Alpha and Omega*, *Narcissus*, and *Arachne*).

As far as we know, neither opera has ever been staged. While there is unreliable information about a possible production of Ostroglazov’s work, it has not yet been confirmed. There were also plans to stage Rebikov’s opera at the Zimin Theatre, but these did not come to fruition.

¹² Rebikov’s main operatic views, as based on his articles in periodicals and autobiographical notes *From My Life*, are covered in detail in the monograph by Olga M. Tompakova [6], the textbook by Valentina A. Loginova [7], and also in the dissertation by Angelina A. Rybina [8].

¹³ Although Ostroglazov and Rebikov had a common publisher, Boris P. Jurgenson, the latter, as it appears from studying his correspondence with Boris Petrovich, learned of the existence of Ostroglazov’s opera only in the process of preparing for the publication of his own opera. For more information on the history of the opera’s publication, see [1].

Schnitzler's Play "Die Frau mit dem Dolche"

The one-act play entitled *Die Frau mit dem Dolche* (*The Lady with the Dagger*, 1901) is part of Arthur Schnitzler's cycle *Lebendige Stunden*. As a prominent representative of Viennese Art Nouveau, Schnitzler reflected in his work the main features of its poetics: attention to the subtlest nuances of the spiritual life of the characters, including the subconscious level of the psyche, i.e., sleep, as well as an appeal to existential questions, including the theme of death, and a special interest in themes related to the role of art and the artist.

The specifics of the drama plot were discussed in the previously published article: [1, p. 57]. Let us recall that it revolves around a painting by an unknown artist depicting a woman holding a dagger in her raised hand.

The story unfolds around this artifact: first in a modern gallery, then in a Renaissance art studio. In both cases, the same characters act as if transported in time: Pauline (Paola), her lover Leonhard (Lionardo), and husband (in the modern space, a certain playwright; in the past, the artist Remigio, the author of the painting). As the action progresses, it becomes clear that the impetus for the creation of the painting was Paola's murder of her lover [1, p. 57].

The characters portrayed in the play are quite remarkable for the Art Nouveau era. The female image personifies the elemental principle, while the male image — the playwright, the apprentice, the artist — represents the creative principle; they are artists in the broad sense of the word. The theme of creativity is central to the play, as well as to the entire cycle of which it is a part, which was entitled *Lebendige Stunden* (*Living Hours*).

In *Die Frau mit dem Dolche*, we are talking about the priority of art over life: it is the painting that becomes the root cause of life events that have occurred, both in the past and in the future. The artist Remigio, like his nameless double, Paulina's husband, a playwright, who is not present as a character, is completely absorbed in creativity; for him, the role played by his wife plays is that of a muse or source of inspiration. For Paulina/Paola, art is also a priority. The death of the lover Lionardo is a sacrifice made for the sake of the formation of the concept, representing the last detail that will allow the artist to bring the necessary emphasis to the work of art.

The ambivalence of time and place of action is important for understanding the play: it takes place simultaneously at a vernissage (private view) in the early 20th century and in a Renaissance art studio.

As in other works of the Art Nouveau era, especially those of Schnitzler himself, the theme of death becomes the main meaning-forming theme in *Die Frau mit dem Dolche*. It is precisely with death that the object in the title (the dagger) is connected; it is death that becomes a kind of key event, a “pointe,” which explains all the preceding events, as well as, possibly, predicting the subsequent ones (Paulina agrees to go on a date with Leonhard and, most likely, their date will end in murder) [2]. It is characteristic that death is associated with love experiences; many researchers (see, for example, [9; 10]) note the antinomy of Eros and Thanatos to have been a favourite topic in Viennese art at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

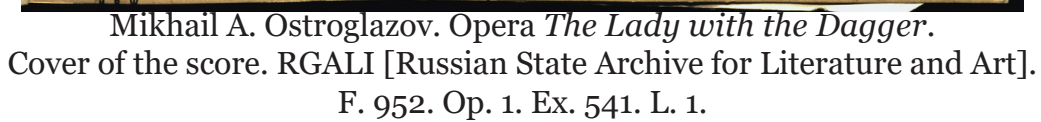
Operas by Ostroglazov and Rebikov:

Dramaturgy, Composition, Interpretation of Operatic Forms

The librettos for both operas, which were written by the composers themselves, were based on retellings of Russian translations published in the early 1900s.¹⁴

The drama required almost no cuts or rewrites. Schnitzler’s play, which is presented in one act, is very compact, having no side plots other than the love story. Both composers retain the three scenes present in Schnitzler’s work, which form an arch: the action is bookended by the two scenes in a modern art gallery, while the scene involving a Renaissance workshop is the centre. Thus, the composition displays clear features of a tripartite structure with a shortened reprise (the third scene is very concise). In Ostroglazov’s work, the form can be considered concentric due to the reverse order of presentation of the main thematic material in the third picture.

¹⁴ Published by *Zhizn'* [Life] (translated by Mikhail Svobodin, 1902) and *Pol'za* [Benefit] (series *Universal'naya biblioteka* [Universal Library], No. 95, translated by Augusta Gretman and E. Yu-ge, 1908).



Both operas are through-composed without caesuras.

The intimacy of the literary basis is reflected in the style. Neither of the operas feature choruses. The number of characters is very limited: these are the lovers Paulina and Leonhard and their 16th century “doubles” Paula and Lionardo (the roles are performed by the same actors: mezzo-soprano or soprano and tenor in Ostroglazov’s production, soprano and tenor in Rebikov’s production), and Paula’s husband Remigio (baritone). In his correspondence with Jurgenson, Rebikov particularly emphasised the “pragmatism” of the cast and consequent possibility of staging it even in a non-repertory theatre.

The images of the protagonists in Ostroglazov and Rebikov ostensibly appear to be over-individualised. However, in representing ideas of fate, passion, retribution, etc., they appear more like symbols than living characters. This seems similar to the central images of Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*: the same love triangle comprised of a woman and her men, one of whom is her husband, while the other is her lover (low and high voices, respectively). The conventionality of the characters is exacerbated by the “double frame” set by the plot: since Paulina/Paula, Leonhard/Lionardo are very similar in terms of their musical characteristics, they can be easily “rearranged” or even swapped. In both composers, the image of Remigio stands out especially in terms of timbre: in the thematics that characterise him, a large role is given to brass instruments, which also seems symbolic, referring to the semantics of this group in barocco opera. The premonition of a tragic ending in terms of a fatal predetermination of what is happening are characteristic of both Ostroglazov’s and Rebikov’s works. However, like in *Pelleas*, this predetermination is not the consequence of a consistent build-up of plot collisions and emotional escalation, as typically happens in verist and expressionist works.

In Rebikov’s version of *Die Frau mit dem Dolche*, it is the composer’s own ideas about musical-psychographic drama that are realised. In his opinion, which he repeatedly expressed both in his autobiography *Iz moej zhizni* [*From My Life*] and in various published articles, the main thing in such dramas is to convey the feelings of the characters and clearly instil the mood.¹⁵

¹⁵ Rebikov, V. I. [1912–20]. *Iz moej zhizni* [From My Life]. *RNMM* [Russian National Museum of Music]. Fond 68 (Rebikov). No. 78. L. 201; Rebikov, V. I. (1910). *Orfej i vakkhanki* [Orpheus and the Bacchantes]. *Russkaya muzykal'naya gazeta* [Russian Musical Newspaper], (1); Rebikov, V. I. (1913). *Muzykal'nye zapisi chuvstv* [Musical Recordings of Feelings]. *Rossijskaya muzykal'naya gazeta* [Russian Musical Newspaper], (48).

The main operatic form used in Rebikov's opera is the dialogue. The style of the vocal parts is declamatory, with virtually no arioso moments. There is little in the way of melodic character; rather, the principal mood is conveyed, and if the characters' feelings are similar, then the melodic lines are similar as well. In addition to singing, speaking voices are used. In general, the vocal part, as Rebikov asserted, should perform a purely informational task, conveying the text as such.

Of much greater importance for him is the orchestra, which carries the main emotional load. "The orchestra will first hypnotise the listener, instil certain feelings in him, and against the background of this feeling that has arisen in the listener's heart, it will be easy for him to believe in the truth of the words of the character," Rebikov believed.¹⁶ In addition, the orchestra performs a leading dramatic function, both carrying out the basic thematic material and developing it. In this sense, Rebikov is a follower of Wagner (which he himself readily admitted) and Debussy (which, on the contrary, he vehemently denied). Wagner's influence is evidenced by Rebikov's letters to his publisher: the composer requests the piano score of *Siegfried*, inquires as to the availability of a booklet setting out the main themes of the *Ring*, and draws the addressee's attention to the presence of leitmotifs in his new drama, even giving several musical examples.¹⁷ The opera uses themes of fate, Paulina's memories, Leonardo's love, and passion (for a description of them, see [8, pp. 118–121]), which are consistently carried out with certain changes throughout the entire score.

Leitmotifs are also of significant importance in Ostroglazov's work. They are heard already in the opera's introduction: the first, with a knocking rhythm in sixteenth notes, can be considered an embodiment of the image of impersonal fate; the second, featuring an expressive descending sixth, represents suffering. Next, the theme of love appears (in Leonhard's arioso "Why, dear, did you give me hope in my heart?" in the first scene), followed by a chordal motif that characterises Remigio (in the second scene). The leitmotifs, which serve not only a semantic but also a structural function, create several arches:

¹⁶ Rebikov, V. I. [1912–20]. *Iz moej zhizni* [From My Life]. *RNMM*. Fond 68 (Rebikov). No. 78. L. 202.

¹⁷ Rebikov, V. I. [1910, November, 29]. *Pis'mo k B. P. Yurgensonu* [Letter to B. P. Jurgenson]. *RNMM*. Fond 94 (Yurgenson) P. I., Yurgenson B. P. No. 1581. Dated according to the date of receipt according to the stamp of Jurgenson's company.

the material from the introduction forms the broadest circle, the theme of love serves as the second “tier,” while the theme of the orchestral interlude forms the third. The chords associated with Remigio are placed at the golden section point.

As in Rebikov’s version, it is the orchestra that carries out Ostroglazov’s main semantic and compositional functions. At the same time, the vocal parts of the latter are sustained in a more traditional arioso-declamatory style, with languid “Tristan-like” build-ups and fade-outs. As with Rebikov, the main operatic form is dialogue, sometimes including extended ariosos.

The orchestration in both operas is generally chamber-like, which corresponds to the general style of the works, but in Ostroglazov it is a little “weightier” (three trombones and a tuba versus two trombones and a tuba in Rebikov). Both composers use brass instruments primarily when Remigio appears, but in Ostroglazov brass also marks a number of other tense moments associated with Leonardo. Among the unusual timbres in Rebikov, we note the celesta, harp and piano, which emphasise the supratemporal layer, especially in the interludes that switch time and place of action; in Ostroglazov, in similar moments, three bells of different pitches sound against a quiet background of brass, which seems to be a more naturalistic display of the “clock strike” mentioned in the play. In Ostroglazov’s opera, percussion instruments are represented by timpani and cymbals, while in Rebikov’s opera, although they are limited to timpani, their use is very significant: one blow stands out in particular at the moment when Paula kills Leonardo. Both composers demonstrate a marked tendency towards timbral differentiation, making use of the established semantics of individual timbres while also following impressionist tendencies in orchestration.

Although the pitch organisation of the two operas appears outwardly similar, both being based on chromaticism, their essential approach differs. Ostroglazov employs chromatic tonality, at times incorporating elements of centric technique (such as the outlining of ninth chords in various keys with altered tones in interludes). In contrast, Rebikov’s opera, as is often the case in his works, is founded on chromatic modality based on various types of scales, among which the whole-tone scale is especially prominent.

In Rebikov, parallelisms of intervals and chords are also significant. The central element can be considered the tritone. Tonal features are present only to a limited extent; of particular significance is the moment in the interlude before the third scene of the opera, where a sustained organ pedal on F-sharp major creates an effect of tense anticipation for a tonal foundation.

Thus, in terms of the main parameters of musical dramaturgy, composition and style, the works of Ostroglazov and Rebikov are extremely close. At the same time, Rebikov's opera is distinguished by its greater stylistic originality, at least in the present author's opinion, and the sometimes too extravagant innovative musical solutions typical for this composer seem entirely justified by the dramatic situations they articulate. Ostroglazov's opera appears somewhat more trivial and secondary, notably in melody and harmony.

*Operas by Ostroglazov and Rebikov
in the Context of the Pursuits of the Era*

Having identified the dramatic and compositional features of the two *Ladies with a Dagger*, it seems appropriate to consider them at a higher historical and cultural level in the context of the implementation of Art Nouveau tendencies in the Russian opera theatre at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Let us therefore focus our attention on symbolism as the leading movement of the 1890s–1900s.

As compared with the other Russian musical genres of the Silver Age, symbolist manifestations are generally less noticeable in opera. In the later works of the luminaries of the classical stage of Russian opera, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (*The Queen of Spades*, *Iolanta*) and Nikolai Andreevich Rimsky-Korsakov (*Kashchey the Deathless*, *Kitezh*, *The Golden Cockerel*), symbolism interacts with traditional genre and stylistic features of psychological drama, fairy tale, and legend.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that the surge of interest in Maurice Maeterlinck, the most prominent representative of symbolism, is especially evident in Western European opera literature: Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902),

¹⁸ In this context, from the research of recent years, I would like to highlight the reflections of Vladimir V. Goryachikh on the opera *The Queen of Spades* [11]. For other examples of manifestations of Art Nouveau in the Russian opera theatre at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, see the monograph by Irina A. Skvortsova [12].

Monna Vanna by Émile Abry (1907) and Henri Février (1908), *La Mort de Tintagiles* by Jean Nouguès (1906), and *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* by Paul Dukas (1899–1906). Echoes of this enthusiasm can also be seen in the work of some Russian composers of the 1890s generation, though within the operatic genre such examples are rare: Ostroglazov's *The Irresistible* (after *L'Intruse*, 1907), Sergei Rachmaninoff's unfinished opera *Monna Vanna* (1906–1908), Alexander Gretchaninov's *Sister Beatrice* (1910), and Alexei Davydov's *Beatrice* (1910).¹⁹ With regard to Schnitzler, apart from the two versions of *Die Frau mit dem Dolche* by Ostroglazov and Rebikov, there was also Yuri Pomerantsev's opera *Beatrice's Veil* (1907). One should also mention Sergei Prokofiev's *Maddalena* (based on a play by Baron Lieven, itself influenced by Oscar Wilde, with two versions: 1911 and 1913).

The surprisingly small number of Russian composers' references to symbolist drama sharply contrasts with its effect on Russian drama: the Silver Age left remarkable examples in the works of Andrei Bely, Alexander Alexandrovich Blok, Dmitry Sergeyevich Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius, Innokenty Fedorovich Annensky, Konstantin Dmitrievich Balmont, and Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov.

There are several possible explanations for this situation. The main one seems to be the inherent conservatism of the opera theatre: it is not for nothing that only a negligible amount of what was written was ever realised on stage. The habits of the domestic public were too closely tied to the traditions of Russian classical opera, with its "grand style" and realistic, social focus.

Thus, despite their possible artistic imperfections, the works of those commonly referred to as *figures minores* gain considerable significance for musicology due to their representation of distinct and incisive signs of the younger generation of Russian composers' quest for new directions. Therefore, the numerous common features of the two *Ladies with a Dagger* are indicative: they outline vectors, demonstrate clear directions.

¹⁹ For more details on the reception of Maeterlinck's work in Russia, see [13].

Both Ostroglazov and Rebikov reflect a keen sense of fresh trends in art. Their operas, including those discussed above, clearly display such important features of symbolism as mystery and unknowability. The characters are distinguished by the unpredictability of their actions and emotions. In the line of interaction between the protagonists and the other world, the emphasis is not so much on the confrontation between man and fate as on the contact and interaction of the two worlds. The resulting themes of metamorphosis and mutual transformation, including their refracted expression through motifs of reflection (both temporal and spatial) and duality are typically “modernist”; also popular in this discourse are the motifs of illusion and transience. The theme of destructive beauty becomes most important; here, we are not only talking about physical beauty, but also that created by man — that is, a work of art.

Most noticeable in these operas is the gravitation towards symbolist musical drama in its “Debussy” version — as a “drama of silence”. Such tendencies of the operatic art of the early 20th century as dramatic compression of the action, a tendency towards one-partness, and laconicism of expression are also characteristic.

Both Ostroglazov and Rebikov sharpen the already tense atmosphere of what is happening with their use of nervous, impulsive music. Both composers exercise a full palette of modern means of intonation, harmonic and timbre colours.

Conclusion

As we already know, the symbolist musical drama in Russia was not destined to receive a vivid implementation in future works of art. The other priorities that were established in their place are a subject for a separate discussion. Nevertheless, the two *Die Frau mit dem Dolche* operas considered in the article significantly complement our understanding of the Russian opera theatre of the early 20th century, as well as revealing potential avenues for its development. It is also hoped that attracting the attention of the musical community may establish of historical justice and gives these works the chance to see the limelight.

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Information about the author:

Elena M. Shabshaevich — Dr. Sci. (Art Studies), Full Professor, Philosophy, History, Theory of Culture and Art Department.

Сведения об авторе:

Шабшаевич Е. М. — доктор искусствоведения, профессор, кафедра философии, истории, теории культуры и искусства.

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