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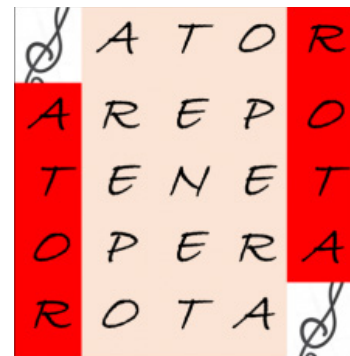
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# Современные проблемы музыкознания

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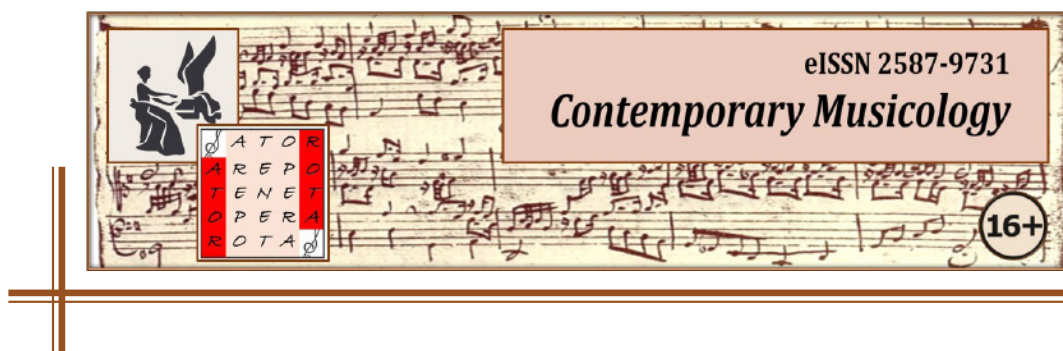
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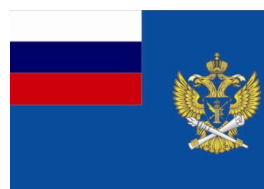
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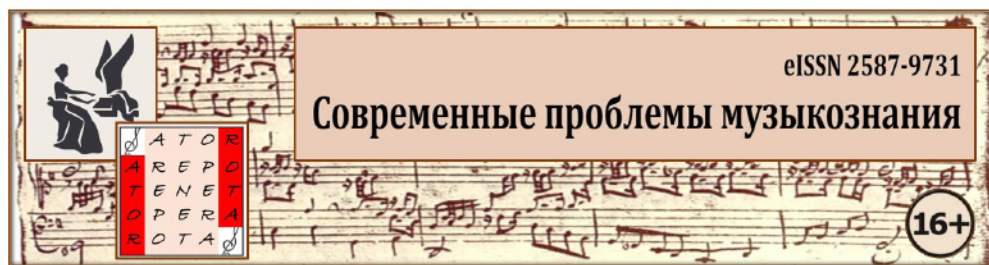
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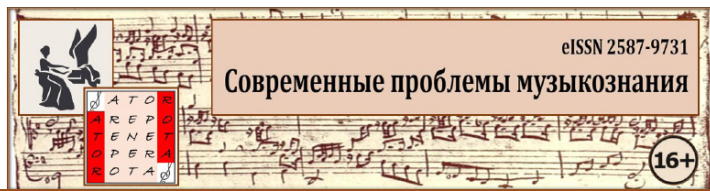
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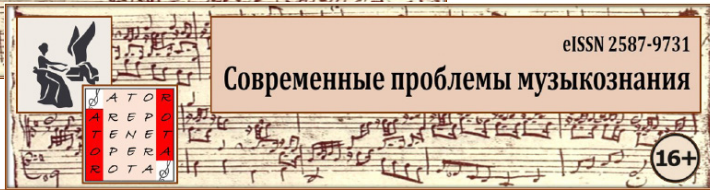
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**Vasily Titov's Two-choir Concertos  
in Light of Nikolai Diletsky's Amplification Theory**

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**Abstract.** Of special relevance in the research of Russian music of the Baroque period are the methods of analysis that appeal to the music theory textbooks of that time. This article examines for the first time the theory of amplification developed by Nikolai Diletsky in his treatise *Musikiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*]: the most significant techniques are disclosed of expansion of composition, which include exact repetition and various types of varied repetition, including modal, metric-rhythmic and melodic transformations of the musical material. It is suggested that the models of the ascending and descending motion, according to Diletsky, the so-called *ascents* and *descents*, are also means of amplification. The main aim of the article is the study of the music of the most significant composer of the *partesny* style, Vasily Titov from the point of view of Diletsky's theory. The main object of the research is provided by eight two-choir concertos by Titov,

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the scores of which have been compiled and edited by the author of the article and are presently being prepared for publication. In this work the techniques of expansion of composition are revealed and characterized, their similarities or differences with the examples offered in *Musikiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*] are established. It is shown that the multitude of techniques of exposition and the development of the material in Titov's music exceed the usual "tutorial" schemes. Thus, the composer seldom turns to precise repetition, instead, applying timbral-textural variation, including *the chorale rule*, i.e., antiphonal juxtaposition of the choruses, basing himself on simple or canonic imitations of the respective choruses. Melodic transformations, such as, for instance, inversions are not only given in consecutive juxtapositions with the prime versions, but also combining together the prime and inverted versions in simultaneous sounding. It is established that Titov expands the ambitus of the models of ascending motion suggested by Diletsky, and also makes broad use of the rule of mixing together the types of motion (*mixta*), forming his own synthetic models. In his artistic realization of the typified schemes, Titov makes use of harmonic and contrapuntal means in a masterful way, achieving great artistic results. The article is accompanied by music examples, which illustrate the theoretical positions.

**Keywords:** Vasily Titov, Nikolai Diletsky, *Musikiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*], two-choir concertos, amplification, *partesny* style

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## Старинная музыка

Научная статья

### Двухорные концерты Василия Титова в свете теории амплификации Николая Дилецкого

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**Аннотация.** Особую актуальность в исследованиях русской музыки эпохи барокко приобретают методы анализа, апеллирующие к музыкально-теоретическим руководствам того времени. В статье впервые рассмотрена теория амплификации, разработанная Николаем Дилецким в «Мусикийской грамматике»: выявлены основные приемы расширения композиции, к которым относятся точный повтор, различные виды варьированного повтора — с ладовыми, метроритмическими и мелодическими преобразованиями материала. Высказано предположение о том, что модели восходящего и нисходящего движения у Дилецкого, так называемые «возшествия» и «низшествия», также относятся к средствам амплификации. Главная цель статьи состоит в изучении музыки крупнейшего композитора партесного стиля Василия Титова с точки зрения теории Дилецкого. Основной объект исследования — восемь двухорных концертов Титова, партитуры которых составлены и отредактированы автором статьи и в настоящее время готовятся к изданию. В работе выявлены и охарактеризованы приемы расширения композиции, установлено их сходство и различие с образцами, предлагаемыми в «Мусикийской грамматике». Доказано, что многообразие приемов изложения и развития материала в музыке Титова превосходит обычные «учебные» схемы. Так, композитор редко прибегает к точному повтору, применяя тембро-фактурное варьирование, в том числе «хоральное правило», то есть антифонное сопоставление хором,

опирающееся на простые или канонические похорные имитации. Мелодические преобразования, например, инверсию, он дает не только в последовательном сопоставлении с основным видом, но и сочетает прямые и обращенные формы в одновременном звучании. Установлено, что Титов расширяет амбитус моделей восходящего движения, предложенных Дилецким, а также широко пользуется правилом смешения типов движения («микста»), формируя собственные синтетические модели. В творческой реализации типовых схем Титов мастерски использует гармонические и полифонические средства, достигая высоких художественных результатов. Статья сопровождается нотными примерами, иллюстрирующими теоретические положения.

**Ключевые слова:** Василий Титов, Николай Дилецкий, «Музыкальная грамматика», двухорные концерты, амплификация

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### Introduction

Vasily Titov (ca. 1650 – 1709) is an outstanding Russian composer of the Baroque period, a master of *partesny* (contrapuntal) writing. The musical oeuvres of the Tsar's choirman sexton in the court of tsars Feodor Alexeyevich and Peter the Great enjoyed success during the composer's life: his compositions were included in the choirboys', the large-scale pontifical and the small parochial choral repertoires during the course of the entire 18th century. He has composed no less than two-hundred *partesny* [contrapuntal] compositions for various choral ensembles, from three to 24 parts: concertos, Divine Services (cycles of church chants of the Divine Liturgy), Evening Prayers, All-Night Vigils, mono-genre cycles (eight-parted Dogmatikons for the Mother of God, *Zadostoyniki* [*Hymns to the Mother of God*] for the Twelve Great Feasts, and Eucharistic Verses).

In recent years, our perspectives of Vasily Titov have expanded: the author of the present article was able to discover new information about the composer's life [1, pp. 34–46], and to attribute to him 14 four-part<sup>1</sup> and 3 five-part concertos, several Divine Services (in three, five, and eight parts) [2, pp. 148–151]. Publications of Titov's compositions have appeared in appendices to diploma thesis<sup>2</sup> and dissertations [4]. Special interest is aroused by his poly-choral style, which has developed in several centers for choir singing in Russia [5, pp. 25–35]. The material for the present article is served by eight two-choir concertos composed during the 1680s and 1690s, for the most part, set to the texts of Psalms.<sup>3</sup>

For contemporary research works studying the *partesny* style, of special relevance are the methods of analysis relying on the music theory

<sup>1</sup> See Plotnikova, N. Yu. (2013). *Tvorchestvo Nikolaya Diletskogo: Novye Otkrytiya* [Nikolai Diletsky's Musical Oeuvres: New Discoveries]. *Music Academy*, 742(2), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Plusnina, E. G. (2015). *Dvukhorneye Kontserty v Tvorchestve Vasiliya Titova* [Vasily Titov's Two-Choir Concertos]. [Unpublished diploma thesis, academic advisor: N. Yu. Plotnikova]. Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory. In this work for the first time a large body of manuscript sources has been brought in, and the texts of the concertos have been examined, along with questions of thematicism and polyphony in the conditions of two-choir antiphony. In the appendix section, for the first time four out of the eight of Titov's concertos for two choruses have been published (*Raduytesya, pravednii* [*Rejoice in the Lord, O Ye Righteous*], *Gospodi, siloyu Tvoeyu* [*The King Shall Have Joy in Thy Strength, Lord*], *Gotovo sedrtse moye* [*O God, My Heart is Steadfast*] and *Ty mi, Khriste, Gospod'* [*You are My Lord, Christ*]). Ibid., pp. 100–144. Subsequently, this subject was turned to by researchers Aleksandra Alexandrina and Anna Bulycheva [3].

<sup>3</sup> The scores of the concertos *Raduytesya Bogu, pomoshniku nashemu* [*Sing Aloud to God, our Strength*], *Vsi yazytsi, vospleshchite rukami* [*O Clap Your Hands All Ye People*], *Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi* [*I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength*] and *Voskliknite Gospodevi* [*Make a Joyful Shout to God, All the Earth*] have been compiled and edited by the author of the article about manuscript sources preserved in various archives: in the Manuscript and Early Printed Edition Section of the State Historical Museum (Synodal Compilation for Church Singers, No. 610 (1–6), 709 (1–6), 712 (1–7), 715 (1–4)), in the Document and Personal Archive Section of the State National Museum of Music (F. 283. Nos. 402, 403, 622, 7–58, 994, 1036), etc.

textbooks of the period of Russian baroque music, among which the central position is taken by *Musikiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*] by Nikolai Pavlovich Diletsky.<sup>4</sup> The aim of the present article is to research Titov's two-choir concertos from the point of view of the theory and practice of amplification expounded by Diletsky. Among the goals is the revelation of the principles of expansion of composition formulated by Diletsky and used by Titov, their characteristic features and comparative juxtaposition, the establishment of similarities or differences of the examples offered in *Musikiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*] with the artistic results in Titov's music.

### *The Term "Amplification" in Rhetorics and in Diletsky's Treatise*

The term *amplificatio* (from the Latin *amplificatio* – expansion, dissemination, also – strengthening, enlargement) was known from the times of antiquity, and in the rhetorical texts of the 12th and 13th centuries started being used for indicating the process of development or extension “of a certain semantic core – the theme, the material”; moreover, it “possessed a new, extremely important meaning”: *amplificatio* turned out to be the main objective of an author.<sup>5</sup>

This expansion was achieved by means of certain techniques part of which harkened back to the figures of Ancient Greek and Roman rhetorics, “*expolitio* and *interpretatio*, the meaning of which is that one and the same thought is expressed several times in succession, but each time in different words. [...] The medieval theorists saw in amplification a certain strained interaction-correlation between the continuity and permanence of ‘thought’ and the variability of its expression; they were fascinated with the paradox, which consisted in the fact that thought in its changeable clothes is simultaneously the same and still different: ‘the same thing’ is separated into different things – *dissimuletur idem*.”<sup>6</sup> Amplification as a figure of speech may be

<sup>4</sup> The first version of Diletsky's work was written in 1675 in Vilna in Polish (has not survived), the second was carried out in Smolensk in 1677. The third was created in Moscow and exists in two versions – from 1679 and 1681. A critical edition of the 1679 was prepared by Vladimir Protopopov: Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [The Idea of Musical Grammar]. In V. V. Protopopov (Ed., Transl.), *Pamyatniki Russkogo Muzykal'nogo Iskusstva* [Landmarks of the Russian Art of Music], Issue 7. Muzyka; the original is preserved in the *Scholarly Research Section of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library*: NIOR RGB. F. 173/1. No. 107. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from <https://lib-fond.ru/lib-rgb/173-i/f-173i-107/#image-41>. The 1681 version was published by Stepan Smolensky: Smolensky, S. V. (Ed.) (1910). *Musikiyskaya Grammatika Nikolaya Diletskogo* [The Musical Grammar of Nikolai Diletsky]. M. A. Alexandrov Printers. In general, Diletsky's treatise has 26 copies.

<sup>5</sup> *Uchenie o Rasshirenii i Sokrashchenii* [The Teaching of Expansion and Contraction]. In E. A. Tsurganova, & A. E. Makhova (Eds.), *Yevropeyskaya Poetika ot Antichnosti do Epokhi Prosveshcheniya. Entsilopedicheskiy Putevoditel'* [European Poetics from Antiquity to the Era of Enlightenment. Encyclopedic Guidance]. Izdatel'stvo Kulaginoy – Intrada, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



expressed in repetition of words at the beginning of sentences, a set of homogenous definitions, an accumulation of synonyms, comparisons, hyperboles, antitheses.<sup>7</sup>

In Diletsky's treatise we are interested in the recommendations having to do with the work with the source material, which in most cases he calls "singing" or "fantasy." After "inventing the fantasy"<sup>8</sup> or "exploration of singing,"<sup>9</sup> the composer begins his work, which he himself expresses by the verbs "to transform" (according to Dahl's dictionary, "prevrashchat" means – "to change, to give another appearance, [...] to alter, to interpret in an opposite or altogether in a different meaning"<sup>10</sup>) or "to translate" ("to rearrange," "to displace," "to shift" or "to shuffle"<sup>11</sup>). The most significant means of work with "fantasy" or "singing" is expounded by Diletsky in a rather concentrated manner in the section *O am[p]lifikatsii sirech o razshirenii peniya* [About Amplification, that is about the Expansion of Singing],<sup>12</sup> and also in the section *O tvorenii* [About Composition], supplementing it with various examples in the other sections of *Grammatika*.

Diletsky makes use of the term amplification when he wishes to describe the methods of work with the material leading to "expansion of singing." Amplification in music may be realized in both monophony, that is in melody, and in a polyphonic texture – in modal solutions, textural perfecting, polyphonic techniques and harmonic plans. In all these cases, we shall speak of various types of repetition, both exact and varied. As Nina Gerasimova-Persidskaya noted, "the discreetness, variegation and repetitive character are indicators of the poetic form-generational principle, which is so characteristic for the partesny concerto; they present its chief difference from the chant, in which continuity and 'the prosaic principle' predominate" [6, p. 95]. In our opinion, the most important techniques of amplification may also include Diletsky's famous ascents and descents – the sequential repetitions,

<sup>7</sup> See *Amplifikatsiya* [Amplification]. (1929). In V. M. Fritsche (Ed.), *Literaturnaya entsiklopediya* [Literary Encyclopedia] (Vol. 1, colmn. 670). Izdatel'stvo Kommunisticheskoy akademii. The encyclopedia cites examples from Lermontov's poetry: "Ya taynyy zamysel laskal, Terpel, tomilsya i stradal" ["I embraced a secret plan, I endured, pined away and suffered" (*Mtsyri*); "On byl pohozh na veter yasny: Ni den', ni noch, ni mrak, ni svet" ["He resembled a clear wind. Neither day, nor night, nor darkness, nor light"] (*The Demon*).

<sup>8</sup> Smolensky, S. V. (Ed.) (1910). *Musikiyskaya Grammatika Nikolaya Diletskogo* [The Musical Grammar of Nikolai Diletsky], p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [The Idea of Musical Grammar], p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> Dahl, V.I. (1882). *Tolkovy Slovar' Zhivogo Velikorusskogo Yazyka* [Definition Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language] (Vol. 3). M.O. Volf, p. 395.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* P. 405.

<sup>12</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [The Idea of Musical Grammar], p. 161. The section devoted to amplification is not present in all of the manuscripts of *Musikiyskaya grammatika*. In some lists, the term "multiplication" is used, undoubtedly, correlating with the term "amplification." See, for example, Smolensky, S. V. (Ed.) (1910). *Musikiyskaya Grammatika Nikolaya Diletskogo* [The Musical Grammar of Nikolai Diletsky], pp. 157–158, 123. However, analysis of the variants of the treatise falls outside the goals of the author of the article. All the subsequent quotations are brought from the publication prepared by Vladimir Protopopov, the citations are given on the pages with the publication of the facsimile and on the translation.

starting from the descriptions of which the composer and theorist began expounding the rules of creation (composition) of music.<sup>13</sup>

In Titov's music, the overwhelming majority of examples is connected with imitational texture, which is predetermined by the very style of the *partesny* concerto and the immense diversity of forms of canonic and figured writing in the works of the "sublime master."<sup>14</sup> However, in this article the various forms of imitation and canons are examined not from the point of view of their present-day classification, but as means, techniques of expansion of the composition.

*Exact Repetition and Timbral-Textural Variation  
in Titov's Double-Chorus Concertos*

The simplest and, at the same time, the most viable method of expansion of the singing is the exact repetition: "yedinako naipache rechi povtoryayushche."<sup>15</sup> In the rhetorical art there exists a special name for the figure of repetition (*palilogia*, from the Greek word, meaning "repetition of words"), but Diletsky does not use it. In his four-parted concertos, he frequently turned to exact translations. Thus, for example, in the concerto *Raduysya, Zhivonosny Kreste* [*Rejoice, Life-Bearing Cross*] in the semantic culmination, at the point of the golden mean each of the words of the verse *oruzhie nepobedimoye* [*invincible armor*] is repeated twice. The verbal and musical repetitions seem to personify the spiritual, invincible force of this armor.

Titov in his compositions for small choral ensembles sometimes brings in precise repetitions,<sup>16</sup> but in his two-choir concertos he tends to avoid this. Upon repetition of the music, he can change the text, while during the repetition of the text, he resorts to intensive timbral or intonational variation.

In the concerto *Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi* [*I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength*], upon repetition of the segments in three parts, the text of the second syntagma changes: *Gospod' utverzhdenie moye i pribezhashche moye* [*The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and My Deliverer*] (mm. 8–10), *Gospod' utverzhdenie moye i izbavitel' moy* [*My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold*] (mm. 12–16), in whole, the two segments reinforce the main idea of this section of the concerto (*Example 1*).

Upon a single repetition of the segment, Titov uses timbral variations of the sound. The threefold *Alleluia* in the character of a kant in the concerto *Raduytesya Bogu, Pomoshchniku nashemu* [*Sing Aloud to God, our Strength*] is subsequently subjected to timbral variation: the tenors sound with the second basses, while the discants sing together with the first basses (*Example 2*).

<sup>13</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [*The Idea of Musical Grammar*], p. 68, 340.

<sup>14</sup> See [7, pp. 68–74].

<sup>15</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [*The Idea of Musical Grammar*], p. 161.

<sup>16</sup> About certain techniques of amplification in Vasily Titov's three-parted Divine Services see Plotnikova, N. Yu. (2012). *Russkoe Partesnoe Mnogogolosie Kontsa XVII – Pervoy Poloviny XVIII veka. Sluzhby Bozhii Vasiliya Titova. Issledovanie i Publikatsiya* [*Russian Partesny Polyphony from the Late 17<sup>th</sup> to the First Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Vasily Titov's Divine Services*]. Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University Press, pp. 31–35.

8  
Гос - подь ут - верж - де - ни - е мо - е  
Гос - подь ут - верж - де - ни - е мо - е  
и при - бе - жи - ще мо - е,  
и при - бе - жи - ще мо - е,  
и при - бе - жи - ще мо - е,  
Гос - подь ут - верж - де - ни - е мо - е,  
Гос -

13  
подь ут - верж - де - ни - е мо - е,  
подь ут - верж - де - ни - е мо - е,  
и из - ба - ви - тель мой,  
и из - ба - ви - тель мой,  
и из - ба - ви - тель мой,  
подь ут - верж - де - ни - е мо - е,  
и из - ба - ви - тель мой,

Example 1. Vasily Titov. Concerto Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi  
[I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength], mm. 8–16

85  
Ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
Ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
Ал - ли - луй[я]  
Ал - ли - луй[я]  
Ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
Ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
Ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
Ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
[Алли]луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я  
ал - ли - луй[я]

Example 2. Vasily Titov. Raduytesya Bogu, Pomoshchniku nashemu  
[Sing Aloud to God, our Strength], mm. 85–87

For Diletsky, an important technique of amplification is the exchange of the melodies of the parts – a technique well-known back from the era of *Ars antiqua* as *Stimmtausch* [8, p. 49]: “Vremenem rasshireniyu peniya moshchno byti kogda prezhde pel pervy kiy lyubo glas poslezhde vtory posle premenenne” (“At times the expansion of singing is also served by such a technique, when what whichever first part has sung is later transferred to the second”).<sup>17</sup>

Diletsky calls this technique *choral singing* or *the chorale rule*, which ought to be translated as *the chorale rule*, or the rule of antiphonal juxtaposition of choirs.<sup>18</sup> First, he writes about it in the first section of the treatise, citing examples of an endless canon in the bass parts and two double four-part canons.<sup>19</sup> In the section about amplification, he cites examples of three-part texture with crossings in the upper two parts,<sup>20</sup> and then returns to this technique especially and supplements the *Obrazy khoralnyya* (specimens of antiphonal writing) with two-choir imitations.<sup>21</sup> In these three sections, Diletsky emphasizes repeatedly the universality of the technique, since the “chorale singing” may be applied in compositions for three, four, five, six, seven, eight and twelve parts.<sup>22</sup>

In his own compositions Diletsky uses *the chorale rule* very frequently; it could be asserted that this is his favorite technique of amplification. In his two-choir concertos, Titov also embodies this textural idea in numerous and diverse ways. The crossing of the two upper parts against the background of the pedal point textures in the bass parts in the concerto *Ty mi, Khriste, Gospod'* [*You are My Lord, Christ*] (*Example 3*) reminds to a great degree Diletsky's three-part examples (this kind of somewhat “student” technique makes it possible to assert that this is, very likely, one of Titov's early compositions).

Example 3. Vasily Titov. Concerto *Ty mi, Khriste, Gospod'*  
[*You are My Lord, Christ*], mm. 48–51

<sup>17</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [*The Idea of Musical Grammar*], pp. 163, 393.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 87, 350. See Plotnikova, N. Yu. (2014). *Polifoniya Vasiliya Titova* [*Vasily Titov's Polyphony*]. The Scholarly and Printing Center 'Moscow Conservatory,' pp. 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [*The Idea of Musical Grammar*], pp. 350–351.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 393–394.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 241–242, 431–432.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 243–247, 432–434. It must be noted that the example of the four-part canon with the entry of the basses starting from *a, d, G, c* is meant, most likely, for a 16-part ensemble.

The author of *Musykiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*] believed that the support of imitations by pedal points in the bass (*pravilo dudal'noye*<sup>23</sup>) embellishes the sound. In Titov's Concerto *Raduytesya Bogu, Pomoshchniku nashemu* [*Sing Aloud to God, our Strength*] (Example 4) two tenors, imitating trumpet invocations, form a canon of five sections against the background of bass pedals.

Example 4. Vasily Titov. *Raduytesya Bogu, Pomoshchniku nashemu* [*Sing Aloud to God, our Strength*], mm. 58–61

The concerto *Gospodi, siloyu Tvoyeyu* [*The King Shall Have Joy in Thy Strength, O Lord*] opens with a three-part imitation of the type of an “echo”: the theme is stated by the altos, tenors and basses of the first chorus (mm. 1–3), and then — by the second parts (mm. 3–5). In four-part writing, the technique of antiphonal exposition may be realized within the framework of the male choir, in double endless canons, such as in the beginning of the concerto *Raduytesya, pravednii* [*Rejoice in the Lord, O Ye Righteous*] (mm. 1–5) or in the concerto *Gotovo serdtse moyo* [*O God, My Heart is Steadfast*] (Example 5).

Example 5. Vasily Titov. Concerto *Gotovo serdtse moyo* [*O God, My Heart is Steadfast*], mm. 15–18

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 352. The term stems “from the name of the folk wind instrument, the *duda*, a type of bagpipe, on which one tone could be sustained for a lengthy period of time.” Ibid., p. 620.

*The chorale rule* reveals itself the most vividly and effectively in the two-choir imitations and canons, when the repetitions are connected with an antiphonal sounding, when *hor na hore poet* (or, in translation, “the choir sings after the choir”).<sup>24</sup> In the cycle of Titov’s concertos, in such episodes we frequently encounter the two-choir endless canons with part crossings, of the type of *Stimmtausch*, as in the concerto *Vsi yazytsy, vospleshchite rukami* [O Clap your Hands, All Ye People] (mm. 14–16) or *Gospodi, siloyu tvoyeyu* [The King Shall Have Joy in Thy Strength, O Lord], mm. 64–70 (Example 6).<sup>25</sup>

The image displays a musical score for two systems of staves. The first system includes vocal parts for Soprano (D. 1, D. 2), Alto (A. 1, A. 2), Tenor (T. 1, T. 2), and Bass (B. 1, B. 2), along with piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "воз-ра-ду-ет-ся, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло." The second system continues the musical notation with the same lyrics: "воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло, зе-ло. зе-ло, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло. зе-ло. воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло, воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло. зе-ло. воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло. воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло. воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло. воз-ра-ду-ет-ся зе-ло." The score features complex rhythmic patterns and part crossings between the vocal lines.

Example 6. Vasily Titov. Concerto *Gospodi, siloyu tvoyeyu* [The King Shall Have Joy in Thy Strength, O Lord], mm. 64–70

<sup>24</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [The Idea of Musical Grammar], pp. 199, 412.

<sup>25</sup> See, in particular, about the concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye* [O God, My Heart is Steadfast]: Plotnikova, N. Yu. (2014). *Polifoniya Vasiliya Titova* [Vasily Titov’s Polyphony], pp. 77–80.



In this same section of the treatise, Diletsky also mentions the transfer a perfect fourth up from the tenor to the alto, resembling a subject-answer imitation.<sup>28</sup> In the present article, we shall not stop on the figured sections, although they frequently carry out an important expositional function in Titov's concertos *Gotovo serdtse moyo* [O God, My Heart is Steadfast], *Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi* [I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength], *Voskliknite Gospodevi* [Make a Joyful Shout to God, All the Earth].<sup>29</sup> We shall only indicate at the repetitions in the quartal-quintal correlation expanding the composition, but not creating fugato motion – in the concerto *Voskliknite Gospodevi* [Make a Joyful Shout to God, All the Earth] with a transposition of the motive a perfect fourth down (*Example 8*), in the Alleluia from the concerto *Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi* [I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength] with a repetition of the four-measure segment a perfect fifth above with varying the timbre (mm. 87–91), while in conclusion of this concerto, the chain of imitations spans all the parts of the choir in descending order (mm. 138–142), and this repetition on a micro-level is supplemented with what is a rare occurrence for Titov – an exact repetition of the entire segment in mm. 143–148, enhancing its conclusive function (*Example 9*).

Example 8 shows three vocal parts: T. I (Tenor I), T. II (Tenor II), and B. I (Bass I). The lyrics are: ршы - те Бо - гу, ршы - те Бо - гу, ршы - те Бо - гу, ршы - те Бо - гу.

*Example 8. Vasily Titov. Concerto Voskliknite Gospodevi [Make a Joyful Shout to God, All the Earth], mm. 34–37*

Example 9 shows a full choir with parts: D. I (Soprano I), D. II (Soprano II), A. I (Alto I), A. II (Alto II), T. I (Tenor I), T. II (Tenor II), B. I (Bass I), and B. II (Bass II). The lyrics are: ал - - - ли - луй - я, ал - - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - - - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - ли - луй - я, ал - - - ли - луй - я.

*Example 9. Vasily Titov. Concerto Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi, [I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength], mm. 138–142*

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. P. 162, 393.

<sup>29</sup> About the initial fugato in the concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye* [O God, My Heart is Steadfast]. See Plotnikova, N. Yu. (2014). Polifoniya Vasiliya Titova [Vasily Titov's Polyphony], pp. 107–108.



The metric transformations in Diletsky’s music presume a “transformation” of proportional singing (in triple meter) into disproportional (in duple meter) and vice versa<sup>30</sup> (such types of transformations have been found in early baroque canzonas). At the same time, rhythmic variation is connected in his works with the technique of diminution: “Когда был прежде такт во пении аз же противно превращающе поставляю полтакта или во первом пении бысть полтакта, аз же противно сему во превращении поставляю четвертки.”<sup>31</sup>

Titov changes the meter in three out of the eight two-choir concertos, and only once in the *Alleluia* section, without turning to a metrical-rhythmic variation of the thematicism. At the same time, the technique of diminution of the durations from quarter notes to eighth notes may be found in his music, but without the melodic repetition, as in the concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye* [*O God, My Heart is Steadfast*] (Example 10), or with a simultaneous exposition, similar to the sound of large and small bells, as in the concerto *Raduytesya, pravednyy* [*Rejoice in the Lord, O Ye Righteous*] (Example 11).

75

Д. 1  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

Д. 2  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

А. 1  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

А. 2  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

Т. 1  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

Т. 2  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

Б. 1  
ал - ли - луй - я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

Б. 2  
ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я

Example 10. Vasily Titov. Concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye*  
[*O God, My Heart is Steadfast*], mm. 75–80

<sup>30</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [*The Idea of Musical Grammar*], pp. 148, 162, 393.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198. In Vladimir Protopopov’s translation: “The rule for transformation is applied not only regarding the sad and joyful mood, when the sad is transformed into the joyful and the joyful into the sad, but also in terms of the rhythm, when initially there was a whole note, I turn it into a half note, and if the first time there was a half note, then, upon transformation, I place a quarter note.” *Ibid.*, pp. 411.

81

Д. 1 ал - - - - - ли-луй - я, ал-ли-луй-я,

Д. 2 [алли]луй-я, ал - - - - - ли-луй - я, ал-ли-луй-я,

А. 1 ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал[лилуйя]

А. 2 ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал[лилуйя]

Т. 1 ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я,

Т. 2 ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я,

Б. 1 [алли]луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я,

Б. 2 ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я, ал-ли-луй-я,

Example 11. Vasily Titov. *Concerto Raduytesya, pravednyye*  
[Rejoice in the Lord, O Ye Righteous], mm. 81–84

### Melodic Amplifications as a Technique of Amplification

Diletsky describes two melodic transformations — an inversion (“Превращающее пение и се зри положи противно возшествие низшествию, и низшествие возшествию”<sup>32</sup>), which is imprecise, judging from the examples, and retrograde motion (“во пении мощно превратити ноты воспать”<sup>33</sup>). Information about presenting melodies from the end to the beginning is supplemented by him with examples from various texts (for example, *Gospodi, pomiluy* [Lord, Have Mercy] and *Pomiluy, Gospodi* [Have Mercy, Lord]). The others present imprecise palindromes, such as the following: *Boysya Boga, smert’ u groba* [Fear God, death is near the coffin] transformed “backwards” into *Smert’ u groba, boysya Boga* [Death is near the coffin, fear God].<sup>34</sup> This type of interchange of phrases are used, to cite one example, in the *Mnogoperemenny Virsh* [Numerously interchanging Verse] of the poet from the Baroque era Ivan Velichkovsky (here three out of the ten variants are cited):

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 101. In Vladimir Protopopov’s translation: “When varying the melody, use descending motion instead of ascending, and vice versa.” Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 166. In Vladimir Protopopov’s translation: “In music, the tones may be used in reverse order.” Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 165–166, 394–395.

As a field is generously decorated with fruit,  
So a virgin is happily delighted with childbirth  
A field is generously with fruit decorated, as  
A virgin is happily delighted with childbirth  
Generously fruit decorate a field, as  
Happily childbirth delight so a virgin.

This is precisely how in numerous variants Titov presents his thematic these, combining the various types of ascending and descending motion. In the concerto *Gospodi, siloyu Tvoeyu* [The King Shall Have Joy in Thy Strength, O Lord] at first, the variant with the descending motion on a perfect fourth predominates (marked by brackets, its inversion is sounded by D. 1 in mm. 21–22), but then there gradually appears an ascending motion in the same rhythm with the syncopation (marked by brackets in dotted lines), giving new life to the system of imitations (*Example 12*). The juxtaposition of the prime form and the inversion of the theme saturates the two-choir texture. And in the concerto *Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi* [I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength], where certain imitations – for example, those between the two alto parts in mm. 79–80 – may be perceived as being retrograde in free rhythm (*Example 13*).

18

Д. 1 [Твое]ю, си - ло-ю Тво-е - - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е - - ю,

Д. 2 си - ло-ю Тво-е-ю, си ло-ю Тво - е - ю, си[люю]

А. 1 [Тво]е - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е - ю,

А. 2 [Тво]е - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е - ю,

Т. 1 [Твое]ю, си - ло-ю Тво-е - ю,

Т. 2 си - ло-ю Тво - е - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е - ю,

Б. 1 си - ло-ю Тво - е - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е-ю, си - ло-ю Тво-е-ю, си[люю]

Б. 2 [Твое]ю, си - ло-ю Тво-е - ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е-ю, си - ло-ю Тво - е-ю, си[люю]

*Example 12. Vasily Titov. Concerto Gospodi, siloyu Tvoeyu*  
[The King Shall Have Joy in Thy Strength, O Lord] mm. 18–23

79

Д. I  
и от враг мо-их, и от враг мо - их спа-су - - ся,

Д. II  
враг мо-их, и от враг мо - их,

А. I  
[Госпо]да, и от враг мо - их, и от враг мо - их спа-су - - ся,

А. II  
[Госпо]да, и от враг мо-их, и от враг мо - их спа-су - - ся,

Т. I  
и от враг мо-их спа - су - ся, и от враг мо - их,

Т. II  
и от враг мо-их спа - су - ся, и от враг мо[их]

Б. I  
и от враг мо - их спа - су - ся, и от враг мо - их спа - су - ся,

Б. II  
[Госпо]да, и от враг мо - их, и от враг мо - их спа-су - - ся,

Example 13. Vasily Titov. Concerto *Vozlyublyu Tyu, Gospodi*  
[I Will Love You, O Lord, My Strength], mm. 79–83

### “Ascents” and “Descents” According to Diletsky’s Theory and in Titov’s Two-Choir Concertos

One of the most significant techniques of expansion of the composition is expressed by the sequential repetitions, the famous ascents and descents described in the *Musykiyskaya grammatika* [Musical Grammar].<sup>35</sup> A description of these rules is what Diletsky began the *section O tvorenii* [About Creation], considering them indispensable, first of all, “for concert singing.” As a rule, such an exposition is connected with canonical technique, although Diletsky also did not exclude harmonic sequences – “not concert singing,” when “everybody sings together.”<sup>36</sup>

According to Diletsky, the types of ascending and descending motion may be realized in both a condensed, concentrated way and with melodic ornamentation, coloration, they may become the foundation of the bass part as the bases of harmony, or they may comprise the melodic contour. The following fragment of the manuscript shows the ascending model and two means for realizing it (*Illustration 1*).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. P. 68–83, 340–349. Present-day researchers have frequently turned to studying the examples presented by Diletsky [9, pp. 55–57] and have disclosed the number of examples in the variants of the treatise [10, pp. 69–70].

<sup>36</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy* [The Idea of Musical Grammar], pp. 156, 389.

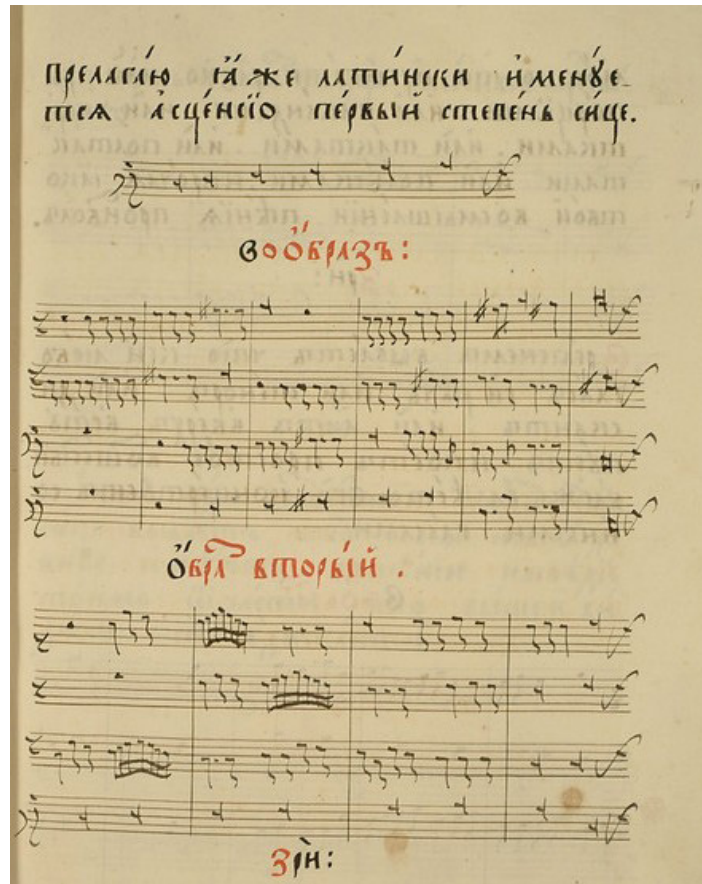


Illustration 1. Fragment of Nikolai Diletsky's *Musikiyskaya grammatika* (NIOR RGB. F. 173/I. No. 107. P. 47)

In the presentations at the conference *The Russian Musical Baroque: Tendencies and Prospects of Research*, musicologists focused on the sources of this technique. Grigoriy Lyzhov and Ekaterina Dmitrieva consider that its prototypes may have been formed by the manuals on figured bass in clavier performance and improvisation, for example, Spiridion's *Rukovodstvo dlya vsekh igrayushchikh na organe, spinete i monokhorde* [*Manual for all Those Who Play the Organ, Spinnet and Monochord*]. This treatise presents, for the most part, a chrestomathy of ascending and descending progressions of bass lines (“cadences”), stepwise or with leaps, with numerous variants of realization [11, pp. 227–229]. Elena Chernova indicates the practice of polyphonic vocal improvisation (the so-called *Contrapunto alla mente*), which was based on the study of sequential “cantus firmus-models” and their contrapuntal realization and has found its reflection in the treatises of Vicente Lusitano,<sup>37</sup> Scipione Ceretto, Adriano Banchieri, Lodovico Zacconi, Silverio Picerli, Athanasius Kircher and other authors [12, pp. 262–268].

Next, we shall demonstrate various forms of realization of the first and fourth types of “ascents” and “descents” discovered by us in Titov's two-choir concertos.

<sup>37</sup> Lusitano, V. (1553). *Introduitione facilissima, et novissima di canto fermo, figurato, contrapunto semplice et in concerto* [...]. Antonio Blado, pp. 13–14.

In the concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye* [O God, My Heart is Steadfast] the subject or proposta of the small canonic segments is based on ascending motion in seconds (*first ascent*), at the same time, most intriguing is the variation of the distance and the intervals between the imitations (one quarter note and half a measure, a perfect fourth and a perfect fifths), as well as the change of ordering of the entries of the lower parts (*Example 14*).

A brilliant artistic manifestation of the scheme of the *first ascent* is the beginning of the *Alleluia* section in the concerto *Voskliknite Gospodevi* [Make a Joyful Shout to God, All the Earth] (*Example 15*): all 8 parts enter at the temporal intervals of half measures from each other, moving in seconds in stepwise motion within the range of an octave. What occurs is a chain of three-part canons of three sections written in simple counterpoint, with one small exception: the real pitch of the fifth and sixth statements is an octave higher, since the proposta is transferred to the descant part (the octave counterpoint + 7 is used). The music conveys the growth of the festive, jubilant mood and the accumulation of the sound mass — a *crescendo* may clearly be used here in performance. At the same time, the proposta itself has, to a greater degree, a descending melodic contour, which, according to Diletsky's terminology, can already pertain to a *mixed rule* (*mixta*).

Example 14 shows a musical score for eight vocal parts (D. 1, D. 2, A. 1, A. 2, T. 1, T. 2, B. 1, B. 2) in G major and 4/4 time, starting at measure 60. The lyrics are: [ра]но. Ис-по-вем-ся, ис-по-вем - ся, ис-по-вем-ся, ис-по-вем - ся, ис-по-вем-ся, ино[вемся].

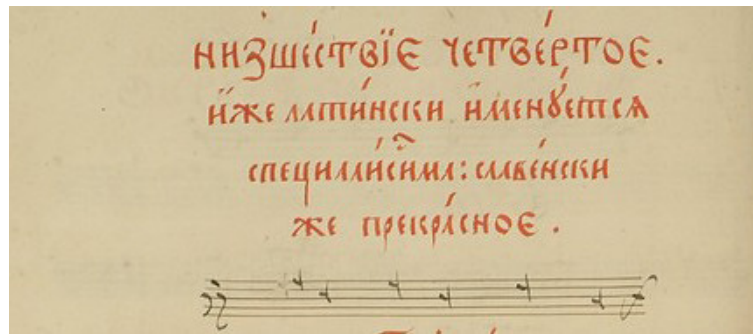
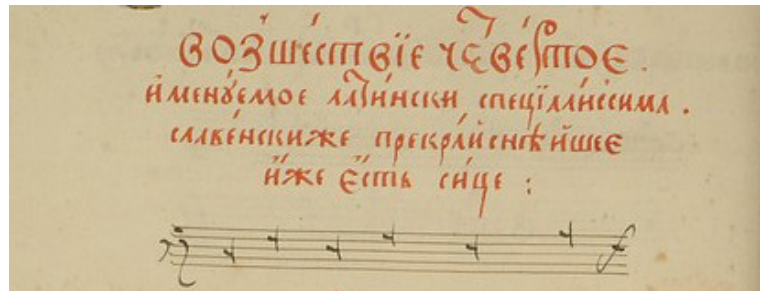
Example 14. Vasily Titov. Concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye*  
[O God, My Heart is Steadfast], mm. 60–63







The fourth types, the so-called “golden sequences,” are highlighted by Nikolai Diletsky in a special way, utilizing two languages: the ascent, “именуемое латински специалиссима, славенски же прекрайснейшее,” [“which is called in Latin specialissima, and in Slavic, the most beautiful”] the descent, “иже латински именуется специалиссима: славенски же прекрасное” [“which is called in Latin specialissima, and in Slavic, the beautiful”]<sup>38</sup> (*Illustration 2, 3*).



*Illustrations 2, 3. Nikolai Diletsky. Idea grammatikii musikiyskoy [The Idea of Musical Grammar], Fragments (NIOR RGB. F. 173/I. No. 107, pp. 54, 60)*

In Titov’s music, the blocks of canonic sequences of various durations form the conclusive section *Alleluia* in the concerto *Gotovo serdtse moye* [*O God, My Heart is Steadfast*], moreover, the sequence in seconds up on the motive with ascending perfect fourths is highlighted by the predominantly descending succession of the entrance of the parts (*Example 18*).

In the concerto *Raduytesya Bogu, Pomoshchniku nashemu* [*Sing Aloud to God, our Strength*], the lengthy wave of ascending motion (five links of sequence in the bass parts with a melodically sung-out perfect fourth with the words “во благознаменитый день праздника вашего” [“in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day”]) leads to a culminating point in the refrain *Alleluia*. In the structure of the canonic sequence in octave counterpoint, Titov doubles the rispostas in major and minor tenths, while the propostas sound in counterpoint with the inversion of the motive (*Example 19*).

Thus, the fourth *ascent* is presented in Titov’s music in numerous examples, which confirms its special role, as highlighted by Diletsky. At the same time, the descending formula can be found much more seldom. In the following example

<sup>38</sup> Diletsky, N. P. (1979). *Idea Grammatiki Musikiyskoy [The Idea of Musical Grammar]*, p. 279.





62

Д. I мно - жес-ве си - лы Тво - е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

Д. II [Тво]е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

А. I мно - жес-ве си - лы Тво - е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

А. II [Тво]е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

Т. I мно - жес-ве си - лы Тво - е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

Т. II [Тво]е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

Б. I мно - жес-ве си - лы Тво - е - я, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

Б. II [Тво]е - я, сол - жу Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе, сол - жут Те - бе,

Example 20. Vasily Titov. Concerto Voskliknite Gospodevi  
[Make a Joyful Shout to God, All the Earth], mm. 62–64

57

Д. 1 [Е]му, вос - пой-те Е-му, вос-пой-те Е - му песнь но[ву]

Д. 2 пой - те Е-му, вос - пой-те Е-му, вос-пой-те Е - му

А. 1 пой - те Е-му, вос - пой - те Е - - - - му

А. 2 [Е]му, вос-пой-те Е-му, вос-пой-те Е - му песнь но - ву, вос - пой-те Е-му, вос-пой-те

Т. 1 [Е]му, вос - пой-те Е-му, вос-пой-те Е - му песнь но - ву, вос - пой-те

Т. 2 пой - те Е-му, вос - пой-те Е-му, вос-пой-те Е - му песнь но - ву,

Б. 1 [Е]му вос - пой - те Е - - - - му

Б. 2 пой - те Е-му, вос - пой - те Е - - - - му

Example 21. Vasily Titov. Concerto Raduytesya, pravednii  
[Rejoice in the Lord, O Ye Righteous], mm. 57–60

49

я - ко Гос-подь Выш - ний стра - - - шен,  
 [Выш]ний стра - - - шен, я - ко Гос-подь Выш - ний стра - - - шен,  
 стра - шен, я - ко Гос-подь Выш - ний стра - - - - - шен я - ко Гос-подь  
 я - ко Гос-подь Выш - ний стра[шен]  
 Выш - ний стра - - - - - шен, я - ко Гос-подь  
 я - ко Гос-подь Выш - - - - - ний стра[шен]  
 я - ко Гос-подь Выш - ний стра - - - - - шен, я - ко Гос-подь  
 Выш - ний стра - - - - - шен, я - ко Гос-подь Выш[ний]

Example 22. Vasily Titov. *Concerto Vsi yazytsi, vospleshchite rukami*  
[O Clap Your Hands All Ye People], mm. 49–52

### Conclusion

Thereby, the model of sequential exposition and development described in Diletsky’s treatise find in Titov’s music both the simplest “tutorial implementation” and a brilliant artistic interpretation. The intervallic schemes “come to life” in the melodically vivid constructions, while the textural manifestation demonstrates a remarkable imitational technique. The research has demonstrated that Titov, undoubtedly, was capable of all the means of amplification recommended by Diletsky in his *Musikiyskaya grammatika* [*Musical Grammar*]. Moreover, he made use of them in his music not as petrified specimens, but he interpreted them artistically, stemming from the texts of his compositions. The diversity of the techniques of expounding and developing the thematicism in Titov’s music transcends the customary norms of musical “grammar.” Both the creation of the musical material and the work with it reveal the uniqueness of Titov’s talent, marked by another one of his contemporaries, who called him a “kingly master,” “vsekh premudrostiyu svoeyu prevosshedshim” [“transcending everybody with his learnedness”] [13, p. 62].<sup>39</sup>

The technique of amplification does not span all the types of repetition. The type of repetition connected with refrain forms remains beyond the scope of this article, although, in general, it is intrinsic to Titov’s aesthetics [14], and also is demonstrated in the two-choir concertos *Vozlyublyu Tya, Gospodi* [*I Will Love You, O Lord,*

<sup>39</sup> The quotation is confirmed with the original: OR GIM. Barsov’s compilation. No. 1341, p. 23 back side.

*My Strength*] and *Ty mi, Khriste, Gospod'* [You are My Lord, Christ]. But the techniques of amplification are aimed at the succession of repeated fragments one after the other, even if they are presented in varied forms. The study of partesny musical compositions in light of the authentic theory of amplification, supplemented by an interpretation of compositional technique from the positions of present-day means of analysis, leads to a deeper understanding of the style and new scholarly results.

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## “Spanish Trace” in the Plot, Libretto, and Stage Performances of Beethoven’s Opera *Fidelio*

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**Abstract.** The article considers the various connections between Ludwig van Beethoven’s opera *Fidelio* and specific elements pertaining to Spanish culture. According to the libretto, the events take place in a state prison near Seville. Beethoven’s librettists (Joseph Sonnleithner, Stephan von Breuning and Georg Friedrich Treitschke) closely followed the original source, Jean-Nicolas Bouilly’s play *Léonore, ou L’amour conjugal*, which had originally been set to music by Pierre Gaveaux (Paris, 1798). If Bouilly’s play is designated as a “historical fact” (*fait historique*), then on the title page of Gaveaux’ opera there appeared a further clarification: “a fact from Spanish history” (*fait historique Espagnol*). It is traditionally believed that the choice of Spain as the setting for both the French original and the German adaptations of the libretto was based on censorship considerations. Indeed, Bouilly had good reasons not to advertise any connection between the plot of *Léonore* and the events of the Jacobin Terror of 1793. However, the “Spanish trace” is still present in Bouilly’s play and in the libretto of *Fidelio*.

Translated by Thomas A. Beavitt

The plot of Bouilly's *Léonore* might contain references to the medieval legend of the 10th century Count Fernán González, who, according to the epic poem composed three centuries later, was freed from captivity by his bride, the Infanta Sancha. Several books on this topic published in Spain during the 18th century were accompanied by illustrations reminiscent of the mise-en-scènes from the prison scene in *Fidelio*. The “Spanish trace” is visible both in the names and in the characters of the opera's heroes, especially Léonore, Pizarro and Florestan (in some 19th-century adaptations of *Fidelio*, Florestan was given either a Spanish aristocratic surname or the name Ferdinando). The staging and costumes for Beethoven's opera also contained features that clearly indicated the era of the late 16th–early 17th century, i.e., the time of the reigns of Philip II and Philip III. Although *Fidelio* was not staged in Spain until 1893, this opera became a repertoire piece in Spanish-speaking countries in the 20th and 21st centuries.

**Keywords:** Beethoven, *Fidelio*, Bouilly, *Léonore, ou L'amour conjugal*, Spain, Opera House, medieval legend, Count Fernán González

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Научная статья

«Испанский след» в сюжете, либретто  
и постановках оперы Бетховена «Фиделио»

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**Abstract.** В статье рассматриваются разнообразные связи оперы Людвиг ван Бетховена «Фиделио» с испанскими реалиями. Согласно либретто, события происходят в государственной тюрьме недалеко от Севильи. Либреттисты Бетховена (Йозеф Зонлейтнер, Стефан фон Брэйнинг и Георг Фридрих Трейчке) следовали первоисточнику — пьесе Жана-Николя Буйи «Леонора, или Супружеская любовь», положенной на музыку Пьером Гаво (Париж, 1798). Если пьеса Буйи обозначена как «исторический факт» (*fait historique*), то на титульном листе оперы Гаво появилось уточнение: «факт из испанской истории» (*fait historique Espagnol*). Традиционно считается, что выбор Испании как места действия и во французском оригинале, и в немецких переработках либретто был обусловлен цензурными соображениями. У Буйи имелись причины не афишировать связь сюжета «Леоноры» с событиями времен якобинского террора 1793 года. Однако испанский след в пьесе Буйи и в либретто «Фиделио» все-таки присутствует. Сюжет «Леоноры» Буйи мог содержать отсылки к средневековой легенде о графе Фернанде Гонсалесе (X век), которого освободила из заточения невеста, инфанта Санча. Книги на эту тему неоднократно издавались в Испании в XVIII веке

и сопровождалась иллюстрациями, напоминающими мизансцены из тюремного акта «Фиделио». Испанский след виден и в именах, и в характерах оперных героев, особенно Леоноры, Пицарро и Флорестана (в некоторых переработках «Фиделио» XIX века Флорестану давали либо испанскую аристократическую фамилию, либо имя Фердинандо). В постановочных решениях и костюмах к опере Бетховена содержались черты, ясно указывавшие на эпоху конца XVI — начала XVII века, время правления королей Филиппа II и Филиппа III. Хотя в самой Испании «Фиделио» поставили только в 1893 году, в XX и XXI веке эта опера стала репертуарной в испаноязычных странах.

**Ключевые слова:** Бетховен, «Фиделио», Буйи, «Леонора, или Супружеская любовь», Испания, оперный театр, средневековая легенда, граф Фернан Гонсалес

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### Introduction

The premiere of Ludwig van Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* (originally titled *Leonore, oder Der Triumph der ehelichen Liebe*) was scheduled to take place at the Theatre an der Wien in Vienna on October 15, 1805. However, on September 30, the censors banned the performance, seeing political sedition in the libretto. Librettist Joseph von Sonnleithner (1766–1835) sent a letter to the censorship department on October 2, in which he pointed out, among other things, that “the action of the opera takes place in 16th-century Spain, and therefore has no connection with modern times.”<sup>1</sup> On 5th October, the production of *Fidelio* was permitted on the condition that some of the more extreme scenes be reworked, which required the text to be resubmitted to the censorship. The delay had the most negative impact on the fate of Beethoven's creation: the premiere took place on 20th November, a week after Vienna's surrender to the Grande Armée, and the opera experienced a crushing failure.

In the original edition of Sonnleithner's libretto there is no precise indication of the time of action.<sup>2</sup> Here the librettist exactly followed the original source, i.e., the play by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly (1763–1842), published in Paris in 1798 and subsequently set to music by the composer and tenor singer Pierre Gaveaux (1761–1825). The action takes place in Spain, in the fairly distant past, but without mentioning a specific date.

While these details are not usually given any particular prominence, their study allows us to place *Léonore / Fidelio* in an unusual historical and cultural context, revealing additional semantic nuances of this outstanding work.

Beethoven could never bring himself to take on a subject that was intrinsically alien to him. He abandoned the opera *Vestas Feuer*, which he had already begun in 1803, due to his dissatisfaction with the quality of Emanuel Schikaneder's poetry, and categorically refused to deal with fairy-tale or fantastic plots, which were gaining popularity at the beginning of the 19th century. In the case of *Leonore*, however, the internal resonance was so strong that the composer reworked the opera twice in an attempt to achieve its success on the stage. On the third attempt it succeeded — the 1814 version established a firm position in the German — and subsequently world — opera repertoire.

How did the text of Bouilly's play come into Beethoven's hands? In 1803, the management of the Vienna Imperial Theatres decided to update the repertoire by staging several modern French operas, which were not only popular with the opera-going public but also rated highly by Beethoven himself. In a letter dated 4 January 1804 to the influential

<sup>1</sup> Fishman, N. L. (with Kirillina, L. V.). (Eds.). (2011). *Beethoven. Letters*. (In 4 Vols., vol. 1: 1787–1811, 2nd ed.). Muzyka, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> Beethoven, L., & Sonnleithner, J. (1805). *Fidelio. Eine Oper in Zwei Aufzügen*. Gedruckt und verlegt bey Anton Pichler, p. 2. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010661239/>

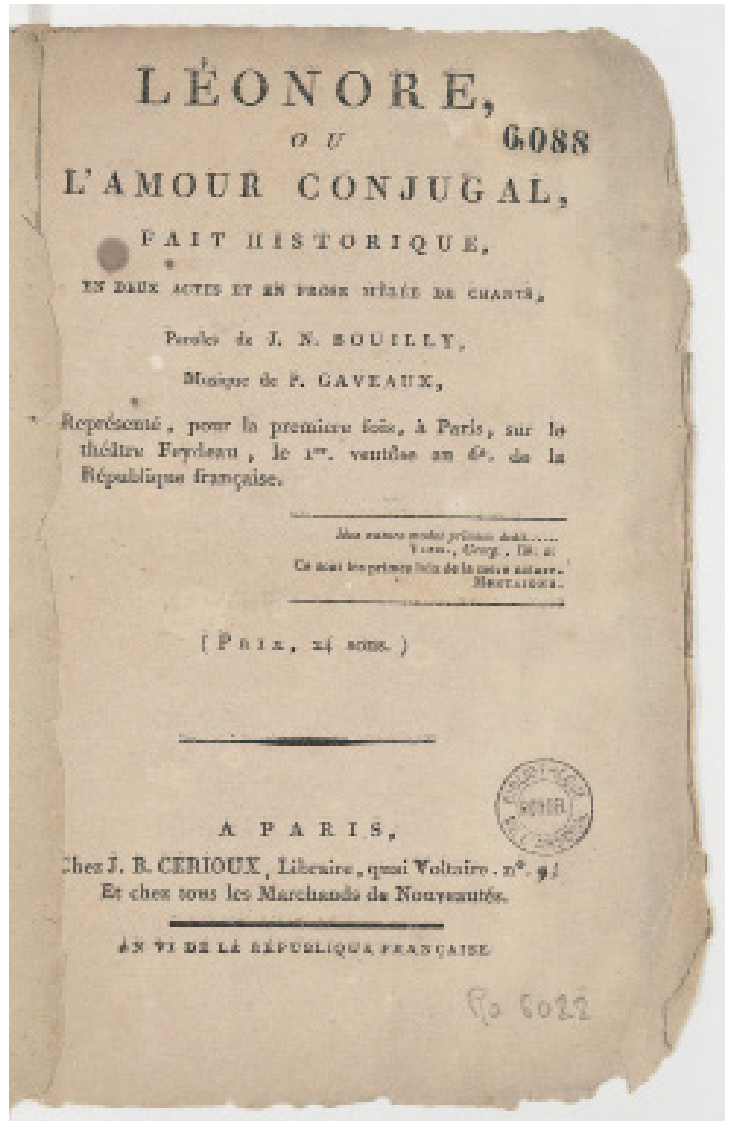
critic Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, he wrote of the “intelligent and witty French opera,” whose brilliance had eclipsed the “empire” of Emanuel Schikaneder, the previous proprietor of the Theater an der Wien.<sup>3</sup>

It turns out to be difficult to establish whether the score of Gaveaux’ *Léonore* was among the new works ordered from Paris. However, it is most likely that a large number of librettos were purchased for review, from which the management selected plays suitable for staging on the court stage and ordered the musical material. Although Gaveaux’ *Léonore* was apparently not among the favourites, Sonnleithner considered the libretto suitable for Beethoven — and it met with the composer’s approval. Sonnleithner made a free translation of Bouilly’s text (in places, in fact, a free reworking of it), and at the end of 1803 Beethoven began work on the opera.

#### “A Historical Fact Set to Music”

On the title page of the original edition of Bouilly’s play, the title *Léonore, ou L’Amour conjugal* is accompanied by the additional explanation: *Fait historique en 2 actes* (“A historical fact set to music, in two acts,” *Illustration 1*).<sup>4</sup>

In the edition of the score of Gaveaux’ opera, which was published in the same year (1798), an important addition appeared: *Fait historique Espagnol* (“Fact from Spanish history,”<sup>5</sup> *Illustration 2*).



*Illustration 1.* Title page of the first edition of the libretto by J. N. Bouilly *Léonore, ou L’Amour conjugal* (1798).

Retrieved from the [Bibliothèque nationale de France – Gallica](https://gallica.bnf.fr/)

<sup>3</sup> Beethoven. *Letters* (Vol. 1), p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> Bouilly, J. N. (1798). *Léonore, ou L’Amour conjugal. Fait historique: en deux actes et en prose mêlée de chants*. J. B. Cerieux.

<sup>5</sup> Gaveaux, P. (1798). *Léonore, ou L’Amour conjugal: fait historique Espagnol en deux actes paroles de J. N. Bouilly. Musique de P. Gaveaux*. J. B. Cerieux.

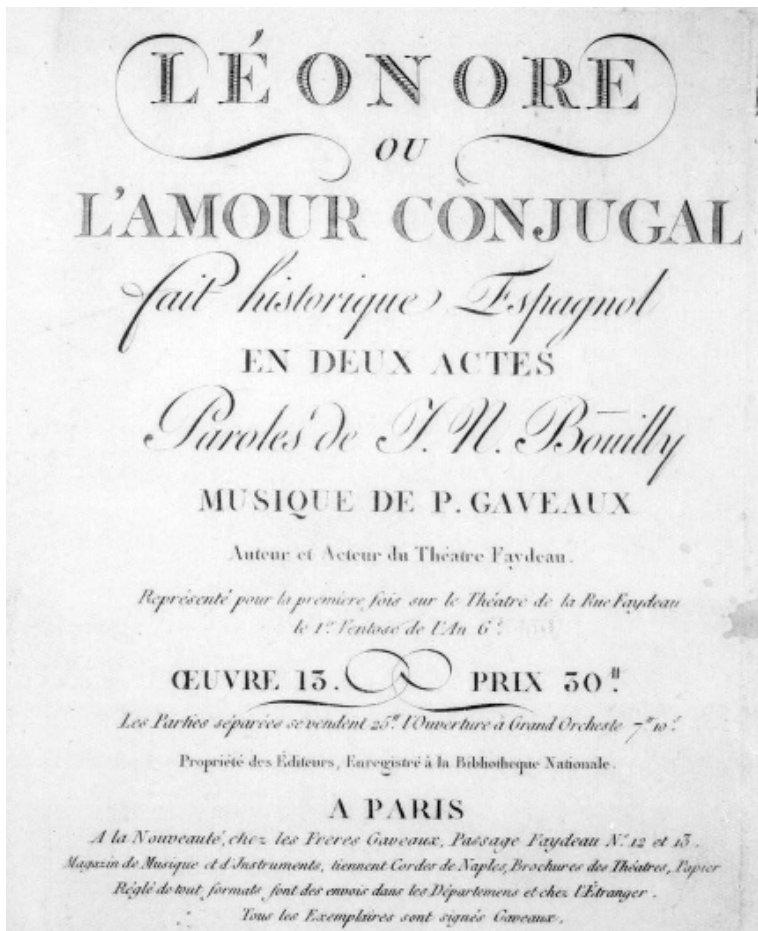


Illustration 2. Title page of the first edition of the score of the opera by P. Gaveaux to Bouilly's libretto *Léonore, ou L'Amour conjugal* (1798).

Retrieved from  
the [Bibliothèque nationale de France – Gallica](#)

Louis-Simon Heron, while loudly proclaiming his commitment to the revolution, is likely to instead have been guided by more selfish and base motives. As Mrs. Elizabeth Mercier, the wife of the arrested defendant, told Bouilly, Heron had previously borrowed a large sum of money from her husband and wanted to avoid repaying the debt. In addition, Heron had made advances to Elisabeth, a young and beautiful lady, but was rebuffed. Bouilly managed to help the Merciers by escorting them to a secret hideout outside the city and exposing Heron's malice to the Parisian authorities. Following the end of the Jacobin Terror in 1794, the Mercier family returned to Paris; before too long, Bouilly, who had become friends with the couple, had married Elizabeth's relative, Eugénie Revel. While Bouilly recounted this riveting tale without extraneous details, these were restored by David Gulliver [1, p. 160–161].

Traditionally, the reference to Spanish history is considered to be Bouilly's concession to censorship demands (as in the case of *Fidelio*). However, in relation to Bouilly's play this is not entirely true, although his French contemporaries, some of whom were personally known to him, are depicted under the guise of Spaniards in *Léonore*.

Although Bouilly's memoirs, published in 1836–37, say nothing at all about the plot of *Léonore*, the informed reader can guess the real events on which the plot was based — the story of the Merciers, who almost succumbed to the Jacobin terror.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1792, Bouilly, a supporter of the Republic, was appointed judge of the criminal tribunal in the city of Tours. In 1793, his office received a denunciation of Jean-Nicolas Mercier, who owned land near Tours. The informer, a certain

<sup>6</sup> Bouilly, J. N. (1836). *Mes Récapitulations* (Vol. 2: 1791–1812). Louis Janet, p. 64–68.

Although Elisabeth Mercier did not dress as a man or join the state prison to save her husband, it seems she must have figured in Bouilly's prototype for the character of *Léonore*. It is not difficult to understand why Bouilly chose to set the action in Spain and greatly alter the recognisable circumstances: the participants in the events were part of his close circle of friends and would not have wanted to become the talk of the town.

However, the reference to the historical nature of the plot is found not only on the title page of Bouilly's *Léonore*. This playwright was generally distinguished by his erudition and love for historical characters, which was repeatedly reflected in the titles of his plays of the 1790s. In this case, as a rule, the discussion was about contemporaries or about figures from the relatively recent past especially the previous century:

- *Jean-Jacques Rousseau à ses derniers moments*, trait historique en un acte et en prose, 1790;
- *René Descartes*, trait historique en 2 actes et en prose, 1796;
- *La Mort de Turenne*, pièce historique et militaire à grand spectacle, en 3 actes, mêlée de pantomimes, combats et évolutions, co-authorship with Jean-Guillaume-Antoine Cuvelier de Tri, 1797<sup>7</sup>;
- *Le Tombeau de Turenne, ou l'Armée du Rhin à Saspach, fait historique en un acte, mêlé de vaudevilles, pantomimes, danses et évolutions militaires*, co-authors Bouilly — Jean-Guillaume-Antoine Cuvelier de Trie and Hector Chaussier, 1799;
- *L'Abbé de L'Épée*, comédie historique en 5 actes et en prose, 1799.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, there are no indications of historical authenticity in the designations of other librettos and plays by Bouilly in which real people are portrayed — for example, *Pierre le Grand, comédie en 4 actes et en prose*. This libretto was set to music by André-Ernest-Modest Grétry in 1790; the composer even tried to create a Russian flavour by using the melody of *Kamarinskaya* in the overture. The libretto of the opera *Valentine de Milan*, written by Bouilly in 1807 for the composer Etienne Méhul, which is not however designated as “historical,” tells the story of another faithful and selfless wife who sought to punish the murderers of her beloved husband (the opera was staged only in 1822).

Why did Bouilly insist on labelling the plot of *Léonore* as “historical”? Did the playwright simply want to throw meticulous readers off the scent,

<sup>7</sup> Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, Viscount de Turenne (1611–1675) was a French military leader who was killed by a cannonball while on reconnaissance.

<sup>8</sup> Abbé Charles Michel de l'Épée (1712–1789), known as the father of deaf education, was widely recognised after his death as a “benefactor of humanity.”



leaving them to independently search for facts in the history of Spain that did not actually exist there? Or was this trail not false at all?

*The Legend of Countess González*

Oddly enough, behind the acutely modern plot of Bouilly's *Léonore* one can discern a medieval basis, which, although already the stuff of legend, can also be considered as historical.

In the 10th century, Castile was ruled by Count Fernán González (c. 910–970), an outstanding politician and military leader, who is immortalised in folk epics and various literary traditions of subsequent centuries. Count González rebelled three times against the kings of León, whose vassal he was (Ramiro II, Ordoño III and Sancho I). While the rebellious count was caught and imprisoned three times in succession, the conflict ended in each case with the reconciliation of the parties.

This episode is connected with the legend of Doña Sancha, the first wife of Count González, who according to the legend helped him escape from prison. In the 13th-century *Poem of Fernán González*, the Infanta Doña Sancha of Navarre is not yet the count's wife, but a girl in love who arbitrarily rescues him from prison and elopes with him on the condition that he marries her and is faithful to her forever. In order to become familiar with the legend of Doña Sancha, a French playwright of the late 18th century did not at all need to read the archaic text of a very long poem. The play *La más hidalga hermosura* was written in the 17th century by Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla but repeatedly published in the 18th century due to its great popularity. It glorifies the brave act of Infanta Sancha, who saved her lover from captivity.

In addition to poetry, various prose stories about Count González and Doña Sancha were published in Spain in the 18th century. In particular, we may mention a small work by Hilario Santos Alonso: *Historia verdadera del conde Fernan-Gonzalez y su esposa la condesa doña Sancha: sacada fielmente de los autores mas clasicos de la historia de España* (Madrid, 1767 and subsequent reprints,<sup>9</sup> *Illustration 3*).

Almost exactly the same title was given to a book published in 1772 by another author, publisher and writer, the Catalan Manuel Joseph Martín.<sup>10</sup> In 1780, Martín published a collection of similar stories in two volumes, whose plots seemingly alternated at random. Thus, in the second volume,

<sup>9</sup> *The True and Wonderful History of Count Fernán González and His Wife, Countess Doña Sancha; Faithfully Extracted from the Works on Spanish History of the Most Exemplary Authors in the History of Spain.* Santos Alonso, H. (1774). *Historia verdadera del conde Fernan-Gonzalez y su esposa la condesa doña Sancha ...* Por Carlos Sopera, y Pio. Retrieved from the *Biblioteca Digital de Castilla y León* <https://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/es/consulta/registro.do?id=14218>

<sup>10</sup> Martín, M. J. (1772). *Historia verdadera del conde Fernán-González, y su esposa la condesa doña Sancha: sacada fielmente de los autores ...* M. Martín. Retrieved from the *Biblioteca Digital de Castilla y León* <https://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/es/consulta/registro.do?id=5292>

consisting of twenty parts, the story of the feat of Doña Sancha was placed between the *History of Judas Maccabee* and the *History of the great lawgiver Moses*.<sup>11</sup>

The engravings on the title pages of both “histories,” by Santos Alonso and Martín, depict the appearance of Doña Sancha in the dungeon in which Count González languishes chained with heavy chains to a stone. This painting evokes direct associations with *Léonore / Fidelio*.

Consequently, the legend of Doña Sancha’s selfless act was well known enough that Bouilly could have had this plot in mind when he classified his play *Léonore* as a historical work.

#### *Names and Characters*

Since the action has been moved to Spain, the characters must have appropriate names. While Bouilly is not entirely consistent in his onomastics, some names are clearly significant.

The most obvious choice of name for the main villain is “Pizar” in the French text — or “Pizarro” in the German. There is undoubtedly a clear reference here to the surname of a real historical figure, Francisco Pizarro y González (1478?–1541), a Spanish conquistador, conqueror of the Inca Empire and founder of the capital of Peru, Lima, where he was killed as a result of a conspiracy by his confidants.

Francisco Pizarro is often perceived as the personification of cruelty and tyranny, although he was probably not particularly egregious in this regard compared with other conquistadors and rulers of his time (including Hernán Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico). In Spain, an apologetic interpretation of Pizarro’s activities prevailed due to his conquests having brought the Spanish crown vast overseas territories and untold riches. The colourful personality of Francisco Pizarro attracted the attention of writers and playwrights. Thus, in 1626–1631



Illustration 3. Title page of *The True History of Count Fernán González* by I. Santos Alonso in the 1774 edition.

Available at: [Google Books](https://books.google.com/books?id=...)  
(accessed 30.10.2024)

<sup>11</sup> Martín, M. J. (1780). *Colección de Varias Historias, asi Sagradas, como Profanas, de los Mas Celebres Heroes del Mundo ... Tomo Segundo*. M. Martín.

Tirso de Molina created the *Trilogía de los Pizarros*, dedicated to three brothers — Francisco (first part: *A single goal solves everything*), Gonzalo, and Hernando. Bouilly, with his erudition and interest in history, clearly did not choose the name for his character by chance, and perhaps was guided by images of Pizarro, including imaginary ones, created after the death of the vice-governor of Peru.

For Austrians of the early 19th century, Spain was a rather distant country, but not entirely exotic. In Beethoven's Vienna, there are clear traces of interaction with Spanish culture: the Spanish and Austrian branches of the Habsburg dynasty, which had separated in the 16th century, continued to regularly enter into marriage alliances. Until the time of Emperor Joseph II (who ascended the throne in 1765, but only ruled solely from 1780 to 1790), the Austrian court was strongly influenced by Spanish etiquette. Spanish names were also present on the map of Vienna. Next to the Hofburg palace complex, the building of the riding school of the Spanish Riding School still stands. And in the suburb of Alsergrund, up until 1902, there stood the so-called "House of the Black Spaniard(s)" (*Schwarzspanierhaus*) in which Beethoven spent the last two years of his life and died on 26th March 1827. The house was part of the complex of buildings of the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat, which was founded by Catalans and operated from 1633 to 1780.

In some classical-era musical works set in Spain, composers made various attempts to convey a national flavour. Christoph Willibald Gluck's ballet *Don Juan, ou Le festin de pierre* (1761) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) use a genuine melody of the fandango, a dance that came to Vienna directly from Spain. Vicente Martín y Soler's comic opera *Una cosa rara* written to a libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte based on a play by Luis Vélez de Guevara enjoyed incredible success. The action takes place in Spain – one of the characters is Queen Isabella. First staged in 1786 at the Burgtheater, *Una cosa rara* broke records for the number of performances and was performed in various European countries. Martín y Soler did not overuse folklore borrowings but tried to convey national colour using Spanish genres (for example, the seguidilla) and by introducing the mandolin into the orchestra.

While there are no obvious Spanish borrowings in *Fidelio*, in the overture to his incidental music for Johann Wolfgang Goethe's tragedy *Egmont*, Beethoven characterised Spain's tyrannical power over the Netherlands with a harsh and menacing sarabande, a triple-metre dance form of Spanish origin. The music for *Egmont* was written in 1810 — that is, after the first two versions of *Fidelio* were created, but before the third appeared (1814). And when comparing the *Egmont* overture with the introduction to the second act of the opera, where the orchestra depicts the darkness and horror of the dungeon in which Florestan languishes,

one can discover something in common, and not only in the “tombstone” key of *F minor*. A hint of the ominous tread of the sarabande can be discerned in the introduction to the scene in the dungeon, which is also in triple time.

The names of the main characters in Bouilly’s libretto and Beethoven’s opera, *Léonore and Florestan*, are not as clearly associated with Spain as the name Pizarro, but some lines can be traced here too.

In Spanish, the heroine’s name would be rendered as “Leonor” — history records a number of princesses and queens who bore this name and were renowned for their virtue. In particular, we may mention Eleanor (Leonor) of Castile, the first wife of the 13th-century English King Edward I Plantagenet. Among other things, she is known for her remarkable courage and selflessness, even to the point of having accompanied her husband on the Crusades. While there is no reason to suppose that her image could have influenced Bouilly (still less, Beethoven), the very name of *Léonore* corresponds to a Spanish heroine of the noblest origins.

*Florestan* is also clearly as belonging to the noble class. This is clearly alluded to in the text of the libretto, when the minister, Don Fernando, who has arrived to investigate, addresses *Florestan* with the words “my friend.” Therefore, they must have known each other in the past and communicated on equal terms, for which reason *Florestan* cannot be a commoner.

The name “*Florestan*” is not Spanish but taken from a French comic opera. While the surname *Flores* is quite common in Spanish-speaking countries, it does not belong to the especially aristocratic ones. Nevertheless, in 18th century French operas, the name *Florestan* was typically given to characters of fairly high social status. In Grétry’s opera *La caravane du Caire* (1783), *Florestan* is a French officer — that is, a nobleman. In another extremely popular opera by Grétry, *Richard Coeur de Lion* (1784), *Florestan* is the name given to the governor of the prison castle at Linz — a position similar to that occupied by Pizarro in *Léonore / Fidelio*. Since Beethoven was familiar with these operas from childhood, especially *Richard Coeur de Lion*, the name *Florestan* would have been perceived by him as noble.

However, in the 19th century, *Fidelio*’s *Florestan* was sometimes called something else. In 1826, the score and piano score of *Fidelio* were published in Paris by the publishing house A. Farrenc (without Beethoven’s knowledge). The opera was supposed to be staged at the Odeon Theatre, but it never actually took place. The text of the opera was printed in French and Italian, and the names of all the characters were changed. The main character became Ellinor, Marcellina became Margherita, *Florestan* became Ferdinand, Jacquino became Fritz, Pizarro was renamed Dolcarre, and only Rocco remained with a recognisable name (Rocque).<sup>12</sup> The practically disappearance of the “Spanish trace” in this version at the onomastic level could be connected, according to Mark Everist,

<sup>12</sup> Beethoven, L. van ([1826]). *Fidélío. Drame lyrique en deux actes, paroles francaises et italiennes. Partition de piano*. Chez A. Farrenc.

with the problem of copyright on the original libretto, which undoubtedly belonged to Bouilly, who was alive, active and could make thus claims for the unauthorised use of his work [2, p. 275].

François Henry Joseph Castil-Blaze, an influential music critic, composer and music historian, was eagerly awaiting the production of Beethoven's opera at the Odeon, but never saw it. In 1846 he published his own adaptation of his beloved work, calling this version *Léonore, grand opéra en 4 actes*.<sup>13</sup> Castil-Blaze's version was staged at the Royal Theatre of Brussels on 1 December 1847. In addition to extensive reworkings using music from other works by Beethoven, this version is also notable for the renaming of the hero: here, he acquires the pompous name of "Florestan D'Elvas, Spanish Señor." The minister, previously known simply as Don Fernando, took on the name Alvarez, while the gatekeeper Jacquino became "Soldier Diego." The recognisable names retained were Léonore, Marcellina (Marcelina), Rocco (Roc) and Pizarro (Pizar). Castil-Blaze also specified the time of action: "Spain, around 1600." Thus in Castil-Blaze's version, the Spanish cultural features were reinforced — at least in the text, if not in the stage design.

By the middle of the 19th century, Beethoven's opera had won a worthy place in the repertoire of Western European theatres — and not only in German-speaking countries. In 1851, *Fidelio* was staged in London by an Italian troupe and in the Italian language. For this performance, Manfredo Maggioni made a free — albeit equirhythmic — translation of the libretto. Almost all the names followed the original, with the exception of Florestan, who was designated as "Ferdinando Florestan, prisoner of the state prison".<sup>14</sup> Apparently, here the name "Florestan" has become a surname. Moreover, Florestan turned out to be almost the exact namesake of the minister, who is named, as before, *Don Fernando*.

Why Florestan was called Ferdinando in the Italian translation is unknown, but perhaps the choice was not entirely random hinted at a reference to Count Fernán González.

The same description of the characters is given in the first translation of the libretto of *Fidelio* into Russian, which was carried out by the poet Apollon Grigoriev at the request of the book publisher Fyodor Stellovsky in 1862. Grigoriev translated from the Italian version, since the publication of the libretto was timed to coincide with the tour in St. Petersburg of an Italian troupe that was performing *Fidelio* in that language. The list of characters includes: "Ferdinando

<sup>13</sup> Castil-Blaze, H. J. (1847, 1er décembre). *Léonore, grand opéra en 4 actes, d'après J. N. Bouilly, paroles de Castil-Blaze, musique de Louis van Beethoven*. Bruxelles, Théâtre Royal.

<sup>14</sup> Maggioni, M. (1851). *Fidelio: An Opera in Two Acts, the Music by Beethoven; the Libretto, with New Recitatives, Arranged by Manfredo Maggioni; as Represented at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden*. T. Brettell, p. 11.

Florestan, a Spanish nobleman, who has been imprisoned in the Seville state prison for several years.”<sup>15</sup> It is significant that in this performance the part of Beethoven’s Leonore was sung by the French prima donna Caroline Barbeau, whose invitation was insisted on by Giuseppe Verdi, who saw in her the ideal performer of his own Léonore — the heroine of the opera *La forza del destino*, which was written for the St. Petersburg stage and staged on November 10, 1862 at the Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre. The action of *La forza del destino* also takes place in Spain — the source of the libretto was the drama by Angel de Saavedra. Although the performance of two operas with a Spanish setting and namesake heroines on the same stage almost one after the other is just a coincidence, the context in any case turned out to be the same.

#### *Place and Time of Action*

When staging an opera on a modern plot disguised as a “historical fact,” a question inevitably arises about the specific realities — the place and time of the action.

Even if Bouilly was well acquainted with the legend of Count González and Doña Sancha, the medieval era was obviously incompatible with the key turn in the development of the plot: as we know, at the decisive moment, Léonore, protecting Florestan from Pizarro’s dagger, snatches a pistol and points it at the enemy. In the Middle Ages, pistols did not exist; they first appeared only in the 15th century to become the personal weapon of the highest nobility in the 16th century. This detail emphasises the aristocratic origins of the main characters. The unknown and poor young man Fidelio not only could not wield a pistol but moreover did not know how to. Therefore, the sudden appearance of a pistol, even if it didn’t fire, must have stunned both Pizarro and Rocco. Of course, for people of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, pistols no longer seemed like rare and expensive weapons, but at the same time not every noble lady knew how to hold a pistol in her hands.

Consequently, the opera’s action can be dated to the 16th or 17th century, giving *Léonore / Fidelio* the features of a historical costume drama in a rather colourful setting. Let us recall once again that Sonnleithner indicated in his appeal to the Viennese censorship authorities that the action takes place in the 16th century. Judging by the costumes depicted in the 1814 edition of the libretto of *Fidelio*, the designers of the play were guided by Spanish fashions of the late 16th and early 17th centuries — that is, the costumes of the era of King Philip II (1527–1598) and his heir, King Philip III (1578–1621) (*Illustrations 4, 5, 6*).

<sup>15</sup> Grigoriev, Ap. (Transl.). (1862). *Fidelio. Opera v dvukh deystviyakh. Muzyka Betkhovena [Fidelio. Opera in Two Acts. Music by Beethoven]*. F. Stellovsky Printing House, p. 2.

A surprisingly precise and at the same time mysterious indication of the time of action is contained in the Russian translation of the libretto of *Fidelio*, which was published in 1891 in Moscow by Pyotr Ivanovich Jurgenson both as a separate booklet and in a pianoforte edition. The translator in a separate edition of the libretto is listed as “P. Kirs”; however, no writer with such a surname and personal initial “P” could be found. This may be a pseudonym or a hoax, since Jurgenson’s real surname on his father’s side is Kirs.

According to this edition, the action of *Fidelio* takes place in 1630.<sup>16</sup> The King of Spain at that time was Philip IV (1605–1665); however, the de facto



Illustration 5. Portrait of King Philip III by Juan Pantoja de la Cruz. Madrid, Prado. Retrieved October 30, 2024, from [Wikipedia](#)



Illustration 4. Portrait of King Philip II by Titian. Naples, Capodimonte Museum. Retrieved October 30, 2024, from [Wikipedia](#)

ruler of the country was the Count-Duke of Olivares, whose power was ended in 1643 (Olivares died in 1645). Appeals to the “good” and “just” king are contained in the opera’s libretto, both in the first act (Rocco justifies allowing the prisoners to stroll in the prison yard by celebrating the king’s name day) and in the second (the minister is authorised to conduct the investigation on behalf of the monarch). However, in the text published by Jurgenson, the finale of the second act for some reason must take place against the backdrop of a statue of the Castilian king Pedro I the Just, or the Lawgiver (*El Justiciero*): “In the middle of the stage is a statue of Don Pedro (the Lawgiver), the 14th-century King of Castile. The background of the set represents a view of a small Spanish town in around 1630.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sonnleithner, I. (1891). *Fidelio. Opera L. Betkhovena v 2 d. [Fidelio. Opera by L. Beethoven in 2 Acts]* (P. Kirs, Transl.). P. Jurgenson Publishing House, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Without going into the intricacies of Spanish history, this detail could be easily overlooked, but it carries symbolic weight. Pedro I actually ruled in the 14th century; however, his original nickname was “the Cruel” (*El Cruel*). He ruthlessly exterminated his personal enemies and rivals, decisively suppressed rebellions, and was eventually killed by his half-brother Enrique. Pedro received the flattering nickname “the Just” not because of the great love of his subjects, then, but rather because of the fear inspired by his formidable personality.



Illustration 6. Scene from the second act of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. Engraving from the 1814 edition of the libretto

It remains unclear why, when staging *Fidelio*, if the year of action is stated to be 1630, the stage should be adorned with a statue of this monarch, who was not at all distinguished for his mercy. The only reasonable explanation is to follow a foreign source that reflected the realities of a particular performance. After all, Jurgenson's piano score was not made according to Beethoven's score, but according to the edition of François-Auguste Gevaert, who replaced the spoken dialogues in *Fidelio* with recitatives, as was customary for a grand opera of the 19th century. Gevaert's version of *Fidelio* was staged in Brussels in 1889

(the premiere is confirmed to have taken place on March 11, but no information about the scenography could be found).

In addition to the general indication of the opera's location, Bouilly's libretto contains a specific geographical reference: a state prison a few miles from Seville. The same remark is present in all versions of Beethoven's opera.

Was this localisation purely conventional, following the example of Beaumarchais' comedies about a Seville barber named Figaro, or did such a prison really exist? And why is it important to clarify that the prison is a state prison?

The musicologist and cultural scholar Esteban Buch explains this detail in detail in his essay on the historical context of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Based on definitions from dictionaries of the first half of the 19th century



(the *Dictionary of the French Academy* and the *Dictionary of the Brothers Grimm*), one can draw an unambiguous conclusion: state prisons contain prisoners who have committed crimes against the state and its interests. That is, prisoners of such a prison become prisoners for political rather than criminal reasons; moreover, the conditions of detention here are much harsher than in a regular prison, where the prisoner's relatives can ease his suffering with money or donations of food and other items. State prisons existed not only in Spain, but also in France and other countries. However, as Buch notes, such prisons continued to operate in Spain until the end of the 18th century; therefore, Bouilly may have had one of them in mind: either the Alcázar de Segovia castle, located near Madrid, or the Castle of San Jorge, the infamous Inquisition prison located in Seville and operating until 1785 [3].

There is no information about the scenery in which Gaveaux' *Léonore* was staged in Paris in 1798, but some information about the scenery and costumes in the first productions of Beethoven's *Fidelio* has survived that show obvious references to Spain, which are more likely to be of the late 16th century than later.

As for the decoration of the dungeon in which Florestan languishes, Beethoven's contemporaries had before their eyes an amazing local "attraction" that was used to entertain and at the same time horrify visitors to Vienna. A similar excursion is described in the memoirs of Vasily Mikhailovich Ivanov, quartermaster of Empress Elizabeth Alekseyevna, who accompanied her during her trip to the Vienna Congress in 1814–1815. On October 8, 1814, taking advantage of his free time, Ivanov and two companions went to inspect the Franzensburg castle, located near the imperial country residence of Laxenburg:

We (i.e. Prince A. M. Golitsyn, N. M. Longinov and I<sup>18</sup>) arrived at this castle, which is surrounded by a lake, on a ferry. The huge Gothic gates were locked: I knocked on them with the ring, upon which they were immediately opened by the sentry. The venerable commandant of the castle showed us all the sights of this place: a small church, the rooms of the former Emperors, towers, long galleries, lift-up sofas that rise from the first floor to the second, knights' rooms and a clandestine chamber, which recalled the terrible times of the Inquisition. Then the Commandant showed us the tower through which defendants were lowered into a deep dungeon. Curious to see this terrible place, we entered the gloomy gaol: heavy chains were bolted to the walls, and instead of chairs and beds there were bare stones. Huge vaults, barely illuminated by the rays of the sun, lead to underground caverns. Looking attentively at this abode of horror, I saw under one vault a prisoner sitting in a white shroud; his hands and feet were burdened with fetters, a red cross was embroidered on his left shoulder, a white hood was on his head; a pale,

<sup>18</sup> Nikolai Mikhailovich Longinov (1780–1853) was Elizaveta Alekseevna's secretary from 1812. Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Golitsyn was part of the imperial couple's retinue at the Congress of Vienna. .

exhausted face, wild looks and overgrown beard gave him a desperate look; I approached him – suddenly the prisoner rose from the stone and, rattling his chains, stretched out his hands to me, as if begging for compassion. An involuntary tremor came over me. On closer inspection, I was surprised to see a skilfully crafted wax statue operating through a hidden mechanism. The piercing dampness and foul air induced us to quickly leave this prison.<sup>19</sup>

This castle (*Illustration 7*) was never a prison and had no connection with the Inquisition. Generally speaking, it was built in 1798–1801 as an “amusement” by order of Emperor Franz II (after 1804 – Franz I). Franz decided to recreate something Gothic-medieval near Laxenburg that would be at the same time luxurious, majestic and terrifying. Hence the theatrical embodiment of the “trial of the Inquisition” over a Knight Templar (the prisoner’s outfit clearly indicates his belonging to this order). The underground prison, which made such a strong impression on eyewitnesses, was created on the model of real medieval dungeons, also called “cisterns”, since there was a well inside [4, p. 47–48]. The word “cistern”



*Illustration 7.* Franzensburg Castle.  
Painting by Eduard Gurka, c. 1838.  
Retrieved October 30, 2024, from [Wikipedia](#)

<sup>19</sup> Ivanov, V. M. (1833). *Notes Kept during the Journey of Empress Elizabeth Alekseevna through Germany in 1813–1815*. (Part 2). I. Glazunov Printing House, p. 12–13.

is constantly present in the libretto of *Fidelio*, and we can only guess whether Beethoven himself saw the impressive installation in Franzensburg or heard about it from his acquaintances (the castle, as can be seen from Ivanov's memoirs, was not closed to visits by outsiders). It is reasonable to assume that the producers of *Fidelio*, who designed the performances at the Theater an der Wien in 1805 and at the Kärntnertortheater in 1814, visited Franzensburg Castle and saw the automaton representing the prisoner.

### *Fidelio in Spain and in Spanish-Speaking Countries*

It would seem only to be expected that a work with such a plot should have achieved success in Spain. But the fate of *Fidelio* in this country turned out to be even more difficult than in Russia, where Beethoven's opera was staged as early as 1818 (although during the 19th century it was never included in the regular repertoire).

During Beethoven's lifetime, the political and cultural situation in Spain did not leave any opportunity for the performance of a work as problematic in content and challenging for singers and orchestra as *Fidelio*. By entering into an alliance with Napoleon, Spain doomed itself to several years of French rule (from 1808 to 1813, Joseph Bonaparte was the King of Spain) and to a long period of wars and armed uprisings. Even after the Battle of Vitoria, a city in the Basque Country, when the French were defeated and Joseph Bonaparte left Spain, the struggle for power continued; under such conditions, the Spaniards had no time for new musical theatre, especially in German, which for a long time was perceived by Spaniards with great difficulty.

Various aspects of the reception of Beethoven's work on the Iberian Peninsula are explored in the collective monograph, published in 2021 in Madrid and edited by Teresa Cascudo García. The monograph opens with a section by Michael Christoforidis and Peter Tregear that reconstructs the political context of the 1820s in connection with the Viennese productions of Beethoven's works, including *Fidelio* (1822, Kärntnertortheater). As the authors note, the resumption of the opera chronologically coincided with the Congress of Verona, at which the countries participating in the Holy Alliance (Russia, Austria and Prussia) decided to support the French military intervention in Spain with the aim of suppressing the revolution there. In this situation, the Spanish setting of *Fidelio* acquired additional significance, since the sympathies of the German liberals were on the side of the Spanish constitutionalists [5, p. 26–27].

The history of the reception of *Fidelio* in Spain is the subject of an independent study by Francisco Manuel López Gómez [6]. Beethoven's work was virtually unknown in this country until the mid-19th century. Information about the opera was disseminated there in a bizarre way following the publication

in 1842 of a Spanish translation of Eugène Sue's novel *Paula Monti*, in which the characters perform fragments from Beethoven's opera. In Paris, the opera-going public had become acquainted with *Fidelio* back in 1829 during the tour of the opera troupe from Aachen. Beethoven's symphonies, which had also been performed at Parisian concerts a year earlier, were already becoming fashionable.

From 1866, Beethoven's symphonies began to be performed in Spain. Soon biographical notes about the composer appeared in magazines, including information about his only opera; from 1867, concert programs began to include different versions of the overtures to *Fidelio* [6, p. 94–95]. However, the first production of the opera in Spain took place only in 1893 at the Teatro Real in Madrid. It was warmly received by the public and critics. Conducted by Juan Goula, the solo parts were sung by Teresa Arkel (Léonore), Josefina Huguet (Marcelina), Emilio de Marchi (Florestan), Francesco Navarrini (Rocco), Alfonso Mariani (Pizarro) and Antonio Oliver (Jacquino). Judging by the list of names, not only Spanish but also foreign performers took part in the premiere.

This performance cannot be called authentic: the text was sung in an Italian translation, spoken dialogues being replaced by recitatives; moreover, the opera was divided into three acts, although it was the original two-act version that was performed [6, p. 98]. Other details about the preparations for the Madrid premiere of *Fidelio* are given in an article written by Carolina Queipo and José María Domínguez [7, p. 149–163].

However, *Fidelio* never become part of the permanent operatic repertoire in Spain. Following the Madrid premiere in 1893, there was only one additional production in Barcelona at the Liceu Theatre in 1921, which was in German. Perhaps they saw no need for their own interpretations of *Fidelio*, since, thanks to the spread of radio broadcasts and recordings in the 20th century, Spanish music lovers could get to know it in the best German and Austrian performances, which were considered benchmarks. However, certain figures in Spanish culture had a special passion for Beethoven's opera and knew it well.

A surprising and touching testimony to the deep interest in *Fidelio* is preserved in the archive of the famous Spanish playwright and librettist Guillermo Fernández-Shaw Iturralde (1893–1965). This consists in a typescript of his unrealised film script based on the plot of *Fidelio* [8].

Fernández-Shaw proposed that *Fidelio* be set in 18th-century Spain during the reign of King Ferdinand VI (1713–1759) or that of his brother Charles III (1716–1788). The central figure of the script was the Marquis de la Ensenada (Zenón de Somodevilla), a powerful state adviser to both kings. Florestan and Leonor have become representatives of Seville's high society — Don Florestan de Monteflorido ("From the Flowering Mountain"), Marquis of Guadalquivir, and his young wife, Doña Leonor de Mendoza. Their enemy and persecutor turns out to be the Corregidor

of Seville, Don Juan de Sandoval. The Corregidor's henchmen abduct Florestan at night from his bedroom and take him away to an unknown location. Dressed in men's clothing and taking the name Fidelio Mendoza, Leonor sets out on a journey with her faithful servant Trapillo in the hope of finding the place where Florestan is being held. After experiencing many romantic adventures, riding horses and listening to the songs of Andalusian gypsies, the heroines finally arrive at the Seville prison where Leonor is hired as an assistant to "Uncle Roque." The further development of the plot follows that of Beethoven's original opera. The prison manager, Don Luis Pizarro, who is alarmed by the news of the arrival of the minister Don Fernando de Céspedes, decides to immediately execute the secret prisoner, Florestan, who is being held in prison without trial or investigation. After saving her husband from this fate, Leonor explains to the minister that Florestan was imprisoned for his friendship with the disgraced Marquis de Ensenada [8, p. 19]. The once all-powerful politician was arrested on the night of July 20, 1754, accused of treason and exiled first to Granada and then to Cadiz. Since he still had many influential supporters, the Marquis of Ensenada was able to return to court in 1760 following the accession of Charles III, but by that time he had lost his political weight.

Fernandez-Shaw's script did not envisage the genre of a film-opera; instead, the plot of *Fidelio* served as an external canvas and transformed into a purely Spanish story, albeit with a distinctly Andalusian flavour. However, as is clear from the project, the film was supposed to open with the sound of Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture No. 3, which was often included in concert programs as an independent work.

Since the end of the 20th century and into the beginning of the 21st century, *Fidelio* has been staged in Spain several times. In 2006, a highly spectacular production using computer effects was staged at the Queen Sofia Palace of the Arts in Valencia (directed and designed by Pierre Alli, conducted by Zubin Mehta); this performance, with the magnificent Waltraud Meier in the leading role, was a huge success and was recorded on video disc. During the 2007–2008 season, the opera was performed at the Teatro Real in Madrid, while in 2009, a concert performance took place in Seville, at the Teatro Maestranza, under the direction of Daniel Barenboim.

In Latin American countries, the only performance of *Fidelio* in the 19th century was in 1891 in Mexico City in English [9, p. 592]. A full production then took place in Buenos Aires (1927, in Italian, with sets by Nicolas Benois); since then, the opera has periodically returned to the stage of the Teatro Colón (in 1933, 1937, 1943, 1950, 1953, 1958, 1966, 1970, 1980, 1988, 1997, 2003, 2016). The popularity of *Fidelio* in Buenos Aires, which is completely atypical for Spanish-speaking countries, can be explained by the high international reputation of this theatre and the international composition of the local audience, where representatives of the German and Italian diasporas play a significant role.

In 2020, when the world celebrated the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, *Fidelio* was staged in various Latin American countries, including even those where a full-fledged theatrical production of this work would be unthinkable. A concert performance of an abridged version of *Fidelio* with piano accompaniment was organised by the local Philharmonic Society took place in the Bolivian capital, La Paz [10]. Thanks to the recording posted by the organisers on the portal *YouTube*, one can see with what care and love the Bolivian artists mastered the most difficult parts in German, and with what sensitivity to Beethoven's style Carlos Tejada performed the piano part.

In Mexico, the National Institute of Fine Arts and Letters and the National Opera Company staged a vibrant and contemporary production of *Fidelio* in 2021 (directed by Mauricio García Lozano, set designer Jorge Ballina, conductor Nixa Baresa). Without innovative pretensions, the directors created a performance about the realities of a typical Latin American dictatorship of the 20th century. The Spanish-language subtitles helped to bring the classical opera closer to the current situation. The musical level of all the performers met the highest standards (Léonore – Monica Chavez; Florestan – Francisco Araiza).



Illustration 8. Finale of *Fidelio* (Mexico, 2021). Screenshot from the performance recording on [YouTube](#) (accessed 30.10.2024)

We have seen that the plot of *Fidelio*, as relevant as it is universal, allows for any nationally coloured interpretation. However, it seems quite natural that the “Spanish trace” that was initially present in the libretto should find various embodiments in the opera theatre of subsequent centuries.

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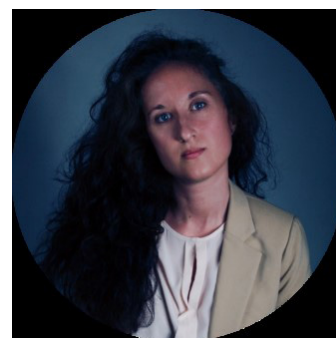


**Georges Bizet in the Service of the Opera:  
More than “Just” a Composer?**

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**Abstract.** Georges Bizet occupies an important place in the history of French musical theatre thanks to his works such as *Carmen* and *Les pêcheurs de perles*. However, the musical career of this bright and original composer includes not only his own compositional oeuvre, which is relatively modest in terms of the number of works he created, but also his work in adjacent spheres. The article discusses the editorial and correction work on the works of other authors, which Bizet began to carry out in the mid-1850s and was especially active in the 1860s and early 1870s. Bizet worked on transcriptions (piano-vocal reductions, arrangements for solo piano and duets for 4 hands, orchestration and additional compositions) of opera works by other composers for French music publishing houses — primarily Choudens and Heugel.

Translated by Thomas A. Beavitt

The article also examines Bizet's participation in the rehearsal and production process of opera performances by his colleagues and friends – in particular, Charles Gounod and Ernest Reyer. By turning to the composer's epistolary legacy and the memoirs of his contemporaries, as well as by analysing some of the available operatic arrangements made by Bizet, we gain the opportunity to take a closer look at French musical and theatrical life of the second half of the 19th century as well as the private work of a musician of that time: work that was not always socially or legally recognised, but which nevertheless demonstrated the quality and professionalism of its producer. Moreover, a discussion of Bizet's piano arrangements is important both in the context of the existence of this kind of music, as well as from the point of view of the educational and development functions that it fulfilled. No less significant for Bizet's career was his assistance and participation in rehearsals of his compatriots' performances in Parisian and other theatres: acting as an accompanist and "assistant composer", Bizet could observe the opera "kitchen" from the inside and thus avail himself of the opportunity to prepare the ingredients for his own musical and theatrical masterpieces.

**Keywords:** Georges Bizet, opera transcriptions, proofs for music publishers, rehearsal work

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*Музыкальный театр:  
вопросы истории*

Научная статья



**Жорж Бизе на службе у оперы:  
не только композитор?**

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**Аннотация.** В истории французского музыкального театра Жорж Бизе занимает важное место благодаря таким своим произведениям, как «Кармен» и «Искатели жемчуга». Однако музыкальная карьера этого яркого и самобытного автора включает не только собственное, относительно небольшое по количеству созданных сочинений, композиторское творчество, но и работу в других околооперных сферах. В статье речь идет о редакторско-корректорской работе над произведениями других авторов, которую Бизе начал выполнять в середине 1850-х годов и особенно активно вел в 1860-е и начале 1870-х. Ее результатом стал ряд транскрипций чужих оперных сочинений (клавиров, переложений для фортепиано соло и дуэта в четыре руки, оркестровок и досочинений) для французских музыкальных издательств — прежде всего Антуана Шудена и Жака Леопольда Эжеля. В статье также рассматривается участие композитора в репетиционно-постановочном процессе во время подготовки оперных спектаклей его коллег и друзей — Шарля Гуно и Эрнеста Рейера. Обращение к эпистолярному наследию композитора и воспоминаниям его современников, а также анализ доступных оперных переложений Бизе дает возможность

более пристально взглянуть как на французскую музыкально-театральную жизнь второй половины XIX века, так и на частную работу музыканта того времени — работу, не всегда утвержденную социально и юридически, при этом демонстрирующую качество и профессионализм ее производителя. Кроме того, разговор о фортепианных переложениях Бизе важен как в отношении контекста бытования такого рода музыки, так и с точки зрения учебно-просветительских задач, которые она выполняла. Не менее значимым для карьеры Бизе видится и помощь-участие в репетициях спектаклей его соотечественников в Парижских (и не только) театрах: выступая в роли концертмейстера и «помощника композитора», Бизе мог наблюдать оперную «кухню» изнутри и имел возможность возделывать почву для собственных музыкально-театральных шедевров.

**Ключевые слова:** Жорж Бизе, переложения опер, корректуры для музыкальных издательств, репетиционная работа

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### Introduction

Georges Bizet (1838–1875), who achieved a great deal for French musical theatre in the course of his rather short life, went down in history primarily as the author of *Carmen* and *Les pêcheurs de perles*. The “shadow” of *Carmen* involuntarily follows the name of Bizet in musicology: his operatic masterpiece has been the subject of a huge volume of research. Among relatively new publications, we can mention such significant works as the collection *Carmen abroad. Bizet’s opera on the Global Stage* [1], which is dedicated to the fate of Bizet’s opera on various world stages, and the monograph by Richard Langham Smith *Bizet’s Carmen Uncovered* [2], which examines not only the history of the creation and first production of the opera, but also the “Spanish” context that influenced the concept and nourished its style.

Scholars are also beginning to take an interest in other aspects of the French musician’s creative biography, paying particular attention to archival documents. Thus, Hugh Macdonald published a translation of Bizet’s letters and diaries written during his stay in Italy and commented on them [3]. In one of his articles [4], Lesley Wright turns to the analysis of the publications of Hector Berlioz and Ernest Reyer that discuss the work of Bizet in the French periodical *Journal des débats*: in assessing the composer’s work, the author focuses on the special shades of musical criticism, which is full of allusions, hints and subtexts. While the contribution of Russian musicology to discussions of Bizet’s oeuvre is more modest, here too one can note a recent informative article by Elena A. Arutyunova and Anna V. Bulycheva, in which, based on an analysis of the reaction of the French press to the premiere of *Carmen*, the myth about the failure of this opera in 1875 is debunked [5].

The present article will discuss other areas of activity of the French master, which are mainly related to editorial work, as well as other areas of assistance he provided in staging operas of his contemporaries. Throughout his life, Bizet was able to observe the French musical and theatrical world from different angles: as an apprentice and an author, as an assistant and a participant, as an advisor and a critic. Let us take a closer look at this constant — if not to say quotidian — work of the composer.

### *Bizet as arranger*

The main problem associated with Bizet’s creative legacy is the poor state in which his archive has been collected and preserved. The present study relies primarily on published sources consisting in the composer’s letters, as well as the various documents and facts from Bizet’s biography cited in the monographs of Mina Curtiss [6], Winton Dean [7], Rémy Stricker [8], Hervé Lacombe [9] and Hugh Macdonald [10]. In addition, an important role in the work is given to the analysis of scores, piano scores and other arrangements published

by the publishing houses Choudens and Heugel with whom the composer collaborated. Many (but unfortunately not all) of these can be found in sheet music form in the digital music library *IMSLP: Petrucci Music Library*.<sup>1</sup> Some information on Bizet's arrangements is available on Hugh Macdonald's website *The Bizet Catalogue*.<sup>2</sup>

An even greater problem is the question of authorship: confirming the precise fact of Bizet's input in the works of works by other authors that he edited, prepared for publication, completed and orchestrated is complicated by the frequent absence of his name on the title page as editor-arranger. This becomes obvious when working directly with the notes of the publishing houses: not every such official publication indicates Bizet's participation. Researchers also mention this. Thus, Hugh Macdonald writes:

Although Bizet worked extensively as an arranger and transcriber throughout his career, he certainly did far more of this work than we know. To give some idea of the extent of this: whereas he published, in his lifetime, about 1500 pages of his own music, he published at least 6200 pages of music by other composers in arrangements of every kind, including reductions of his own operas, but not including arrangements that carried no name [10, p. 58].

Thus, Bizet worked with the works of other authors, and operatic opuses occupy an important place in this work. Here is a list of famous arrangements by Georges Bizet:<sup>3</sup>

Partition chant et piano

1. Charles Gounod. *La Nonne sanglante*, five-act opera (1855, Choudens)
2. Ernest Reyer. *La Statue*, three-act comic opera (1861, Choudens)
3. Charles Gounod. *La Reine de Saba*, four-act grand opéra (1862, Choudens)
4. Ernest Reyer. *Erostrate*, two-act opera (1862, Choudens)
5. Pascal Prosper. *Le Cabaret des amours*, one-act comic opera (1862, Choudens)
6. Charles Gounod. *Mireille*, five-act opera (1864, Choudens)
7. Victor Massé. *Le Fils du Brigadier*, three-act comic opera (1867, Choudens)
8. Camille Saint-Saëns. *Le Timbre d'argent*, four-act fantastic opera (1867, Choudens)

<sup>1</sup> Category: Bizet, Georges (n.d.) *Petrucci Music Library* [https://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Bizet,\\_Georges](https://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Bizet,_Georges)

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald H. (n.d.) *The Bizet Catalogue*. <https://talus.artsci.wustl.edu/bizet/ref/>

<sup>3</sup> Cited from a recent monograph on Bizet by H. Macdonald [10, pp. 268–269], as well as from information on the website of the catalog of Bizet's works, created by the same musicologist (Macdonald H. (n.d.) List of Transcriptions in Alphabetical Order of Composer. *The Bizet Catalogue*. <https://talus.artsci.wustl.edu/bizet/transcripts/>). Unfortunately, some dates are tentative. There are small (per year) discrepancies in these sources. Due to the lack of musical materials, we will limit ourselves to considering only piano-arrangements in this article. Nevertheless, it is worth saying that in addition to the transcriptions and orchestrations mentioned above, monographs on Bizet and the composer's letters also mention such a type of duet arrangements as a violin reduction, used in learning ballet scenes; as well as arrangements for harmonium and piano.

Partition piano solo:

1. Auguste Mermet. *Roland à Roncevaux*, four-act opera (1865, Choudens)
2. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *Don Giovanni*, two-act *dramma giocosa* (1866, Heugel)
3. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *L'oca del Cairo*, two-act *opera buffa* (1867, Heugel)
4. Ambroise Thomas. *Mignon*, three-act *comic opera* (1866, Heugel)
5. Ambroise Thomas. *Hamlet*, five-act *grand opéra* (1868, Heugel)

Partition pour piano à 4 mains:

1. Charles Gounod. *Faust*, five-act *lyric opera* (1861–62, Choudens)
2. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *Don Giovanni*, overture (1866, Heugel)
3. Ambroise Thomas. *Mignon* (1868, Heugel)
4. Ambroise Thomas. *Hamlet* (1869, Heugel)

Partition orchestre:

1. Charles Gounod. *Reine de Saba*, №9 *Récit et Cavatine* (1861–62, Choudens)
2. Otto Nikolai. *Les Joyeuses Commères de Windsor*, three-act *comic opera*, some scenes (1862, Choudens)
3. Fromental Halévy. *Noé* (1869–70, published in 1886, Choudens) – completion and orchestration of a three-act *grand opéra*
4. Hippolyte Rodrigues. *David Rizzio*, overture to a three-act opera (1866, unpublished)
5. Charles Gounod. *Roméo et Juliette*, some of the orchestration of the five-act *lyric opera* (1872, Choudens)
6. Charles Gounod. *Philémon et Baucis*, orchestral suites on music from a three-act opera (1860, 1874, Choudens)

Bizet's main activity as a transcriber took place during the 1860s. During this time, he worked on orders for several French music publishing houses (primarily Choudens and Heugel).

Most biographies of the composer cite a polite letter of request from Bizet to the publisher Antoine Choudens (autumn 1862) detailing the honorarium for the work he had done:<sup>4</sup>

I wish I were in a position never to have to raise these questions of money, which fill me with horror. [...] The sum you offer me is insufficient. My minimum is 1800 francs; that is to say my board and lodging at my father's. [...] if we put our accounts in order rigorously, we shall arrive at a total slightly larger than I myself believed; for instance:

Erostrate.....	200
Le Cabaret.....	100
The symphony for four hands (two weeks of work) something none of your friends would do for you.....	200
Id for two hands.....	100

<sup>4</sup> Since there is also a letter to his mother (dated February 16, 1860), in which Bizet discusses the financial side of his independent life (the conversation is about renting an apartment for 300–400 francs), we can compare these amounts with the approximate recompense received from Choudens: it would not be an exaggeration to say that this payment is very moderate.

Putting together the parts of the Italian arrangements of Faust, of Philémon, correcting the proofs at 2 frs. per hour, amounts to a lot more than.....100 and I am not mentioning *Les Joyeuses Commères de Windsor*, for which I wrote more than sixty pages of orchestration, which would seem to be poorly paid at the price of 100.<sup>5</sup>

There are also other “telling” figures — the volume and number of edited pages, mentioned by Bizet in letters to his student and friend Edmond Galabert (for example, in letters from January or February 1867): “Excusez-moi du retard que j’ai mis à vous répondre, mais j’ai corrigé trois mille six cents pages d’épreuves pour l’orchestre de *Mignon!*”<sup>6</sup> Or: “...j’ai à diriger la publication de *Mignon*, réduire la partition piano solo, une partition de six cents pages, deux épreuves; douze cents, les parties séparées, huit cents, la partition piano et chant etc., etc. Il faut enrayer; je suis malade.”<sup>7</sup> In a letter to another of his students, Paul Lacombe (November 1869), Bizet writes:

...j’ai beaucoup travaillé depuis trois mois; j’ai eu l’aplomb de me charger de Noé, opéra posthume de Halévy. Halévy a laissé trois actes à peu près faits, mais il a fallu tout instrumenter..., presque tout deviner – et j’ai à composer un quatrième acte assez court, et j’espère avoir fini le 30 novembre, ainsi que l’exige mon traité avec le Théâtre Lyrique.<sup>8</sup>

In his communications with Galabert, Bizet gives himself the latitude to be most frank about his editorial work. Among them, the following can be found:

Je travaille toujours à force. Les épreuves se multiplient, je ne sais d’où elles sortent; c’est de la génération spontanée, le diable me porte! (October 1866).<sup>9</sup>

Croyez-moi; rien ne tient (?) contre les inquiétudes matérielles de la vie. On peut tout supporter, chagrins, découragements, etc. Mais cette inquiétude de tous les instants qui abrutit, qui diminue l’homme. Je n’ai jamais connu la misère, mais je sais ce que c’est que la gêne, et je sais combien cela frappe sur l’intelligence. (January 1867).<sup>10</sup>

Je suis abruti: je termine l’arrangement à 4 mains d’Hamlet!.. Quelle besogne! (June 1868).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World*. Knopf, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> Galabert, E. (Ed.). (1909). *Georges Bizet. Lettres à un ami, 1865–1872*. Calmann-Lévy, p. 103.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105–106.

<sup>8</sup> Imbert, H., & Bizet, G. (1894). *Portraits et études; Lettres Inédites de Georges Bizet*. Librairie Fischbacher. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25863/25863-h/25863-h.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Galabert, E. (Ed.). (1909). *Georges Bizet. Lettres à un ami...*, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.



It is clear that this work was both a burdensome and necessary (primarily from a financial point of view) activity for the musician. However, judging by the feedback from his colleagues' letters, he performed it well.

Here is Ambroise Thomas's response to Bizet's support for his opera *Hamlet* in a letter dated 4 March, 1868: "I can't tell you, mon cher ami, how much I am touched not only by your praise, but by the sympathy, the spontaneous affection, I find in your splendid letter".<sup>12</sup> Charles Gounod wrote to Bizet in November or December 1861 regarding his editing of *La Reine de Saba*:

Tous mes airs de ballet sont maintenant assez orchestrés pour que tu puisses les arranger, ou à peu près; mais avant cet arrangement de piano, je viens te demander de m'en faire un autre provisoire, et qui est on ne peut plus pressé: je veux parler de cette monstrueuse réduction pour deux violons, sur laquelle on fait étudier la danse au théâtre.<sup>13</sup>

Ernest Reyer not only thanks Bizet for his help and support, but also openly asks for compositional advice (July 1862): "There is no accompaniment at the end, just a few chords to guide you. I didn't think there was any use in sending you more than that. <...> Write to me quickly what I should do about the introduction, which will certainly not be an overture".<sup>14</sup>

### *Types of arrangements*

Bizet's magnanimity and enthusiasm in connection with the works of Reyer and Gounod will be discussed later, but for now let us turn our attention to the types of Bizet's arrangements that were requested by the publishing houses of Choudens and Heugel:

- 1) piano–vocal scores — arrangements for singing with piano, in French publishing houses called *partition chant et piano*;
- 2) arrangements for piano without singing (*partition piano-solo*);
- 3) four-hand piano arrangements (*transcription pour piano à mains*).

Such adaptations, which are typical of the 19th century, were created for popularisation, pedagogical and practical purposes. Commenting on the situation with the publication of *piano-vocal opera scores* in Europe, starting from the 1770s, Thomas Christensen names several fundamental changes in the cultural environment that contributed to this process [11, pp. 75–76]:

- the increased value of music as an important component of operatic drama;
- a stabilisation of the opera score by merging music and drama into a single whole, a clear order of musical numbers in the performance that precludes the possibility of rearranging them;

<sup>12</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World...*, p. 219.

<sup>13</sup> Gounod, Ch. (1899, December 15). *Lettres de Georges Bizet. La Revue de Paris*, 36(24), 677–703, p. 693.

<sup>14</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World...*, p. 117.

— improvements of the piano as the main instrument for performing operatic arrangements;

— demand from consumers — performing pianists of various kinds: both members of the professional community (singers, conductors, directors, intendants, who, according to Christensen, needed piano-vocal scores for rehearsing purposes “especially as operas were produced beyond the major opera houses in smaller towns, provinces, and colonies.” [11, p. 76]), and for amateur dilettantes who wanted to perform examples from the operatic heritage of the 18th–19th centuries in the format of music-making.

No less popular in Bizet’s time were the publications of operas in the form of *arrangements for piano without singing*. These generally consisted in a two-handed instrumental version, where all the vocal parts were placed inside the piano part or excluded altogether (in the case, for example, of some recitatives). As an illustration of the latter fact, we can offer a comparison of the piano score of Auguste Mermet’s opera *Roland à Roncevaux*, arranged by Adolf Simon (*Choudens*, 1865) and the arrangement for piano without singing (*Choudens*, 1865, *Illustration 1*) carried out by Bizet. Thus, in Act I of the opera, Bizet removes the lengthy scene before the Shepherd’s Song of Roland (pp. 22–28 of the piano-vocal score, including the Shepherd’s and Page’s recitative lines, the Shepherd’s short arioso, and the chorus’s lines) and after it (Saida’s arioso, pp. 36–38); he excludes Saida’s recitatives before and after her romance (p. 45–46, 50), Alda’s recitative before her aria (p. 51) and the Page’s recitative before the duet (p. 59), as well as the recitative fragments in the finale (pp. 78, 80–82, 86–91), etc. The most significant cuts affect Act II of the opera: here Bizet elides the preliminary solo, ensemble or choral recitatives. In this act, he also reverses the positions of the ballet and the ballad with the choir. In total, Bizet’s piano version reduces cuts around 65 pages of Simon’s musical text. As a result of Bizet’s piano arrangement, Mermet’s opera is transformed into a collection of pieces (*catalogue des morceaux*), which is eloquently indicated in the table of contents.

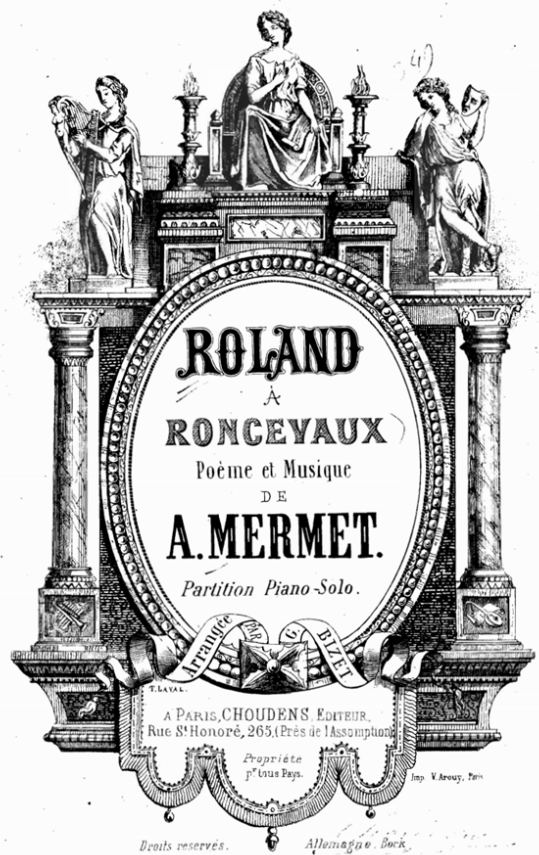


Illustration 1. A. Mermet. *Roland à Roncevaux*, arrangement for piano by G. Bizet, title page. Paris: Choudens, n.d. [1865], 144 p.

The vocal parts of both solo and ensemble opera can always be identified in this type of arrangement thanks to the notation that highlights the melodic lines in the texture or provides some additional indication of who is performing this part and what words are being spoken. Of course, with instrumental parts (for example, solo timbres in an orchestra), nothing is so clear: their designation in a piano arrangement is, as a rule, absent. An exception is Bizet's arrangement of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*: as will be seen in the examples below, this musical text indicates both the characters performing a particular part and the instruments playing in a particular place in the orchestra. In the arrangement of Thomas's *Mignon* or Mozart's *L'oca del Cairo* such instrumental markings are no longer found; only the mention of the singing role and the part of the text that he or she should perform remains.

With this kind of modification, the opera opus and its musical components are transformed from a large stage canvas into a compact chamber piece, which, of course, affects its sound: a change in the timbre of the solo part, performing a recitative on one note of the keyboard, reducing the texture of the accompaniment or melody (in ensembles and choirs), adding a pedal to the accompaniment, strengthening the piano texture in "orchestral" episodes, etc.

Here, for example, is what the recitative of Mignon from Act 1 of Thomas's opera of the same name looks like — in the piano-vocal and the piano-without-singing versions (*Examples 1, 2*).

(réplique)  
 Demain je ne serai plus là  
 De-main, dis - tu, qui sait où nous se-rons de-main? L'a-ve-

MIGNON  
 nir est à Dieu le temps est dans sa main. WILHELM (Parlé) Ils m'ap -  
 Quel est ton nom?

pel - lent Mig - non, Je n'ai pas d'autre. nom.

Example 1. A. Thomas *Mignon*, Act 1, Mignon's recitative before a romance. Piano-vocal score by A. Basile. Heugel, 1867

Andantino ♩ = 112

MIGNON De-main, dis - tu, qui sait où nous ser-rons de- main? L'a-ve-

nir est à Dieu, le temps est dans sa mains. Ils m'ap -

WILHELM (Parlé)  
Quel est ton nom?

pel - lent Mig- non, Je n'ai pas d'autre. nom

Example 2. A. Thomas *Mignon*, Act 1, Mignon's recitative before a romance.  
Arrangement for solo piano by G. Bizet. *Heugel*, 1866

And here is a small arioso of the baritone Lothario from the introduction in Act 1 of *Mignon* (Example 3):

♩ = 126

Lothario

Fu-gi- tif et trem- blant, je vais, de porte en por - te, Où le ha- sard me

Piano

6 *cresc.* *p*

gui - de, où l'o - ra - - ge m'em - por - te; Des mi- se -

9

ra - bles Dieu prend soin.

Example 3. A. Thomas *Mignon*, Act 1, introduction, Lothario's stances.  
Piano-vocal score by A. Basile. *Heugel*, 1867

In the version for piano without singing, this theme sounds in the treble clef in the first octave; the texture resembles a song without words (*Example 4*):

♩ = 126 "Fu-gi-tif et trem blant, je vais, de porte en por-te."  
(STANCES)  
LOTHARIO *p*  
*cresc.*  
*p*

*Example 4.* A. Thomas Mignon, Act 1, introduction, Lothario's stances.  
Arrangement for solo piano by G. Bizet. Heugel, 1866

Let us now turn to the example of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. This is how the scene of the duel between Don Juan and the Commendatore from the introduction of Act I appears — in the first German edition of the piano-vocal score (*Example 5*) and in its French version for piano without singing as carried out by Bizet (*Example 6*).

mi war - te - fo bald foll dir deins' Trotz verghin.  
*ff* *p*

*Example 5.* W.A. Mozart. *Don Giovanni*. Introduction, scene of the duel with the Commendatore. Piano-vocal score by K. Tsulener. Schott, 1791

Example 6. W.A. Mozart. *Don Giovanni*.  
Introduction, scene of the duel  
with the Commendatore. Arrangement  
for solo piano G. Bizet. Heugel, 1866

For comparison, we can cite the same scene from the piano–vocal score<sup>15</sup> published by *Choudens* (Example 7), made at the end of the 19th century in connection with the production of Mozart’s opera in French at the Opéra-Comique:

Example 7. W. A. Mozart.  
*Don Giovanni*. Introduction, scene  
of the duel with the Commendatore.  
Piano-vocal score. *Choudens*, 1896

<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the author of the keyboard arrangement is not indicated. The author of the French translation is L.V. Durdilly.

Below are fragments of the trio from the introduction (*Examples 8–10*) with the dying Commendatore in several edition versions. Let us add to the comparison a fragment of the score of the first edition (*Example 11*) to recall the orchestral composition: pulsating triplets in the accompaniment of the violins, a staccato bass in the low strings on the first and third beats, sustained sounds of the accompaniment of the French horns, bassoons and second violins with violas. As a side note, in the original score after this scene there is a recitative secco; while this is preserved in the French-language piano-vocal score published by *Choudens*, in the version for solo piano by Bizet and in the first German edition of the piano-vocal score, it is absent.

Andante. 19

*Don JUAN.* *sotto voce.* Ah! la scène est si tris - te!

*LE COMM.* O vieil - les - se en - ne - mi - e! Las - sas -

*LEPOR.* Sort fu - nes - te!

*Andante.* Hé - las! con - tre toute at - ten - te, Oui, cette

sin - me prend la vi - e, Oui, ma

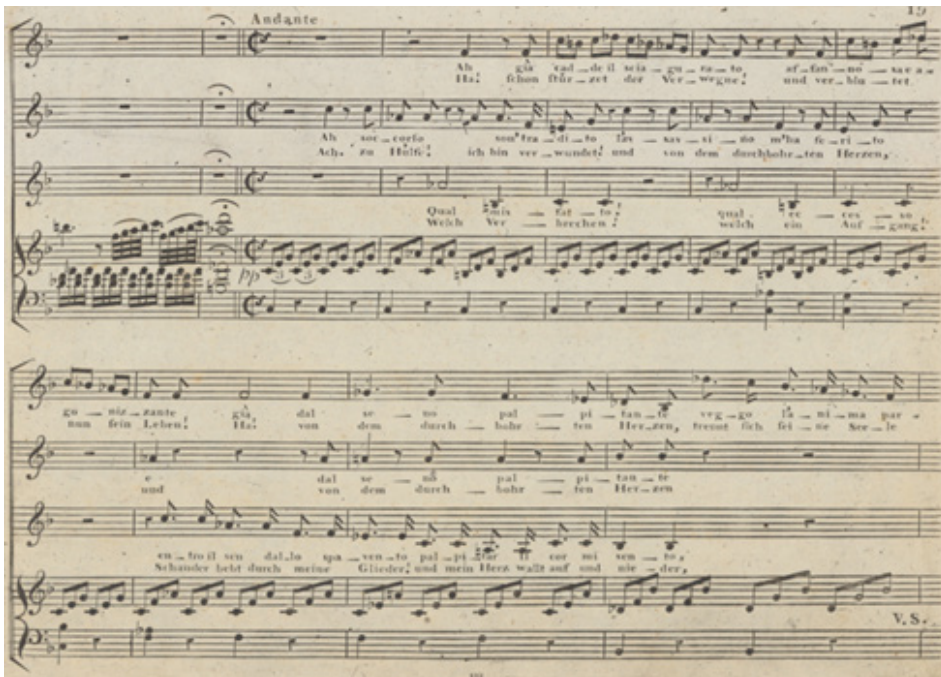
som - bre dra - me! A l'aspect d'un meurtre in -

a - me pal - pi - tan - te De son corps sa ven - vo - ler, De son

rage i - nas - sou - vi - e, De mon

fû - me l'é - pou - van - te est dans mon â - me! Et je n'o - se - pas par

Example 8. W. A. Mozart. *Don Giovanni*. Introduction, trio after the duel.  
Piano-vocal score published by *Choudens*, 1896



Andante

Ab ge-äd-deil-tes ge-tö-to, of-fen-ge-sar-tet  
Hilf ihm früh-zeit der Ver-wege; und ver-mä-ter

Ah-wei-ße! son-der-di-ge-tes-sav-ti-ge-mä-feri-to  
Ach, zu Hilfe! ich bin ver-wundet! und von dem durchbohr-ten Herzen;

Qual-Weich Ver-berchen! qual-weich ein Auf-gang!

ge-nöz-zante! gü-dal von dem durch-pal-pi-tan-ten verg-ge-lä-mi-ma-ge-  
nem fei-n Le-ben! Hilf von dem durch-pal-pi-tan-ten Her-zen, trennt sich bei-der Her-ze

e-und dal-se-nd durch-pal-pi-tan-ten

en-fo il sen dal-lo spa-ven-to pal-pi-tan-ten car mi ven-to  
Schwerd-licht durch meine Glieder; und mein Herz walt auf und ab der;

V. S.

Example 9. W. A. Mozart.  
*Don Giovanni*.  
Introduction, trio after the  
duel. Piano-vocal score  
by K. Tsulener. Schott, 1791



Andante.

Quart  
Cors  
BPS  
pp  
LE COMMANDEUR. LEP. DON JUAN.

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

Haut:  
ORCH.  
Cors.

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \* Ped. \*

BUS

Example 10. W. A. Mozart. *Don Giovanni*.  
Introduction, trio after the  
duel. Arrangement for solo piano G. Bizet.  
Heugel, 1866



56

Andante.

Andante.

Ab! giù es - se il sia - gu - ra - to, af - fan -  
Ma! non es - se fran - zar, di - to! Gio - re

Ab, Soc - corso! son tra - di - to! Pas - sa - si - no m'ha fe -  
Ah, no! Ma! Ma! Ah, no! Ma! Ma! Ah! ah! fah - le Te - de.

Qual mi - fat - to! qual ec -  
Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma!

Example 11. W. A. Mozart. *Don Giovanni*. Introduction, trio after the duel. Score. Breitkopf und Härtel, 1801

As can be seen, not only is the detail of the orchestral texture carefully captured in Bizet's piano version (the presence of four independent voices in the piano version), but the difference in accent markings is also sensitively traced and additional tone colours are enhanced in the piano sound by means of the pedal.

*Four-hand piano arrangements* are also connected with pedagogical and educational problems. And there was certainly demand from amateur musicians for this kind of ensemble (four hands playing one instrument). *The Oxford Companion to Music* states:

Piano-duet reductions of operas and opera highlights (e.g. by Donizetti and Verdi), as well as symphonies and other orchestral works, were made in a large number in the 19th century, winning wide popularity as a means by which amateurs could familiarize themselves with the Classical and Romantic repertory before the advent of recording [12, p. 954].

In addition, such types of arrangements were often used in educational repertoire. Christensen writes:

It is hardly surprising that duet transcriptions would become staples at music conservatories and academies throughout Europe and America. [...] Not only could duet arrangements be pressed into service by professors to help their students in repertory study, they were ideal for improving ensemble playing. By sight-reading a transcription with a partner, the budding pianist could learn to play in tempo, balance dynamics and textures, and coordinate phrasing and agogics. [...] a large number of orchestral and operatic transcriptions did in fact make up the repertory of student duet collections [13, p. 265].

The researcher cites the following words from the pianist and musicologist Antoine Marmontel (whose students at the Paris Conservatory included Georges Bizet) about the benefits of duets: their performance will not only expand the repertoire but will also help students acquire “nobility of style and a majesty of interpretation that music written for the instrument, whose sole aim is often just virtuosity, can never give.” [13, p. 265]

An example of this kind of duet music is Bizet’s four-hand arrangement of dances from the opera *Hamlet* by Thomas. This is a piano ensemble with two self-sufficient parts, in which each performer has something to play. Here we have full-sounding chords, virtuoso passages, playing with dynamics, attention to piano registers, and mastery of the instrument’s timbres. In connection with this arrangement, it is worth remembering that Bizet, the future author of *Jeux d’Enfants*, was a brilliant pianist [14]. Thus, the composer’s sensitivity on the one hand and the practice of a virtuoso pianist on the other provide a certain “working base” for his editorial activities.

In general, the fairly significant changes in the musical text in Bizet’s arrangements concern both the reduction and the addition of new tone colours to the piano sound. It is curious that the arrangements of opera opuses “work” in both directions: in some cases, they certainly simplify (or even impoverish — in terms of timbres and complexity of texture) the original score and in so doing reduce the degree of the emotional and meaningful component of the operatic work, while in others, the piano embodiment of the composition is imbued with operatic style and content (which Christensen also points out [11, p. 79]), which subsequently influence romantic piano genres, making their dramaturgy, texture, and melody more complex and diverse. There is also a third aspect to this question: the pedagogical and educational goals that the adaptations fulfilled. In connection with piano scores (although this statement is also true for other types of transcriptions), Christensen writes:

The importance of the piano-vocal score as the disseminator of musical literacy and ideology in the nineteenth century can scarcely be overestimated. It became the primary means by which most amateur musicians came to know, judge, and reproduce works they could experience — if they were lucky — only one or two times in live performance [11, p. 84].

*Operas – sources of transcriptions*

In addition to the pragmatic-financial issue, Bizet's editorial work had another — side, not so obvious, but obviously nourishing for the composer: it was about the opportunity to closely get to know and study various musical-theatrical works of his compatriots and to understand their subsequent stage fate. Thus, in letters we can find the following words from Bizet (letter to Marie Trélat, summer 1868): “But in spite of my bad humor Thomas's music has sometimes triumphed! It is really admirable — this *Hamlet*”.<sup>16</sup> Or (letter to an unknown addressee, October 1867):

It is charming! True opéra-comique [*Le Timbre d'argent*], slightly tinged with Verdi. What imagination! What inspired melodies! Of Wagner, of Berlioz nothing, nothing at all. This Saint-Saëns scorns us with his opinions. You will be bowled over. Two or three of the pieces are a little vulgar in idea, but they are very appropriate, and are saved by the immense talent of musician. It is a real work and he is a real man, that one.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that Bizet had already “discovered” the secret of a good musical performance even before he began actively working with the works of other authors. In a letter to his mother dated 19 March, 1859, the 20-year-old composer writes:

Tu attribues à la faiblesse des *libretti* [author's italics] la suite d'insuccès dont sont victimes nos meilleurs auteurs depuis quelques années; tu as raison, mais il y a une autre raison: c'est qu'aucun de ces auteurs n'a un talent complet. Aux uns, — à Massé, par exemple, — il manque le style, la conception large. A d'autres, — à David, je suppose, — la triture musicale et l'esprit. Aux plus forts, il manque le seul moyen que le compositeur ait de se faire comprendre du public d'aujourd'hui : le *motif* [author's italics],<sup>18</sup> que l'on appelle à grand tort l' “idée”. On peut être un grand artiste sans avoir le motif, et alors il faut renoncer à l'argent et au succès populaire ; mais on peut être aussi un homme supérieur et posséder ce don précieux, témoin Rossini. Rossini est le plus grand de tous parce qu'il a, comme Mozart, toutes les qualités : l'élévation, le style, et enfin... le *motif* [author's italics]. Je suis pénétré et persuadé de ce que je te dis, et c'est pourquoi j'espère. Je sais très bien mon affaire, j'orchestre très bien, je ne suis jamais commun, et j'ai enfin découvert ce *sésame* [author's italics] tant cherché.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that, having subsequently edited a lot of other people's operatic works, Bizet never came to doubt this secret.

<sup>16</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World...*, p.220.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> As the editor of the Russian translation of the composer's letters, G. Filenko, notes: “By motif, Bizet means melody, musical themes.” Filenko, G. T. (Transl.) (1963). *Bizet J. Letters*. State Music Publishing House, p. 372.

<sup>19</sup> Bizet, G. (with Ganderax, L.) (1907). *Lettres de Georges Bizet: Impressions de Rome, 1857–1860; la Commune, 1871*. Calmann-Lévy, pp. 144–145.

As a musical editor and proofreader, Bizet dealt with works of different composition and dramaturgy: large, comic and lyric operas. Here, for example, is the cast of the “grand” opera *La reine de Saba* by Gounod:

— Three female roles, including *chanteuse falcon*,<sup>20</sup> *1re dugazon*<sup>21</sup> and the part of the duenna;

— Six male roles, including two tenors, one of which is designated as *fort tenor*;<sup>22</sup> a baritone and three basses, having the following specifications — *1re Basse de Grand Opéra*, *1re Basse d’Opéra Comique*.

The cast of Saint-Saëns’s fantastic opera/lyric drama *Le timbre d’argent*<sup>23</sup> is as follows: the leading role is played by a dancer (!), as well as two sopranos, five (one main and four secondary) tenors, a baritone, and a bass.

The cast of Reyer’s *La statue* requires a dramatic soprano such as a *chanteuse falcon* or *chanteuse légère*, first tenor, two *trials*,<sup>24</sup> a baritone or *basse chantante*, comic bass.

The list of authors, contemporaries of Bizet, with whose works he worked, includes both the names known today as Charles Gounod, Camille Saint-Saëns, Ambroise Thomas, and the less familiar or practically unknown names of Ernest Reyer (1823–1909), Auguste Mermet (1810–1889), Victor Massé (1822–1884), and Pascal Prosper (1825–1880).<sup>25</sup> We may also consider the name of the short-lived German composer Otto Nicolai (1810–1849), one of the scenes of whose comic opera *Les Joyeuses Commères de Windsor* Bizet orchestrated for the Choudens publishing house [10, pp. 70, 114]. In addition, there are several authors with whom Bizet had conditional family ties: paying tribute to his teacher and father-in-law Fromental Halévy (1799–1862), Bizet completed and revised his opera, *Noé*. He also orchestrated the overture from the opera *David Riccio* (Example 12), composed by his wife’s uncle, the stockbroker and historian of Christianity Jacob-Hippolyte Rodrigues (1812–1898).

Gounod’s name occupies the undisputed first place in this series. In 1854, 16-year-old Bizet, then a student at the Paris Conservatory, received an assignment from his teacher Gounod to make a keyboard arrangement

<sup>20</sup> Dramatic soprano named after the French singer Marie Cornélie Falcon (1814–1897), who specialised in dramatic roles in grand opera.

<sup>21</sup> Lyric mezzo-soprano of light, pure timbre, named after the French singer Louise Dugazon (1755–1821).

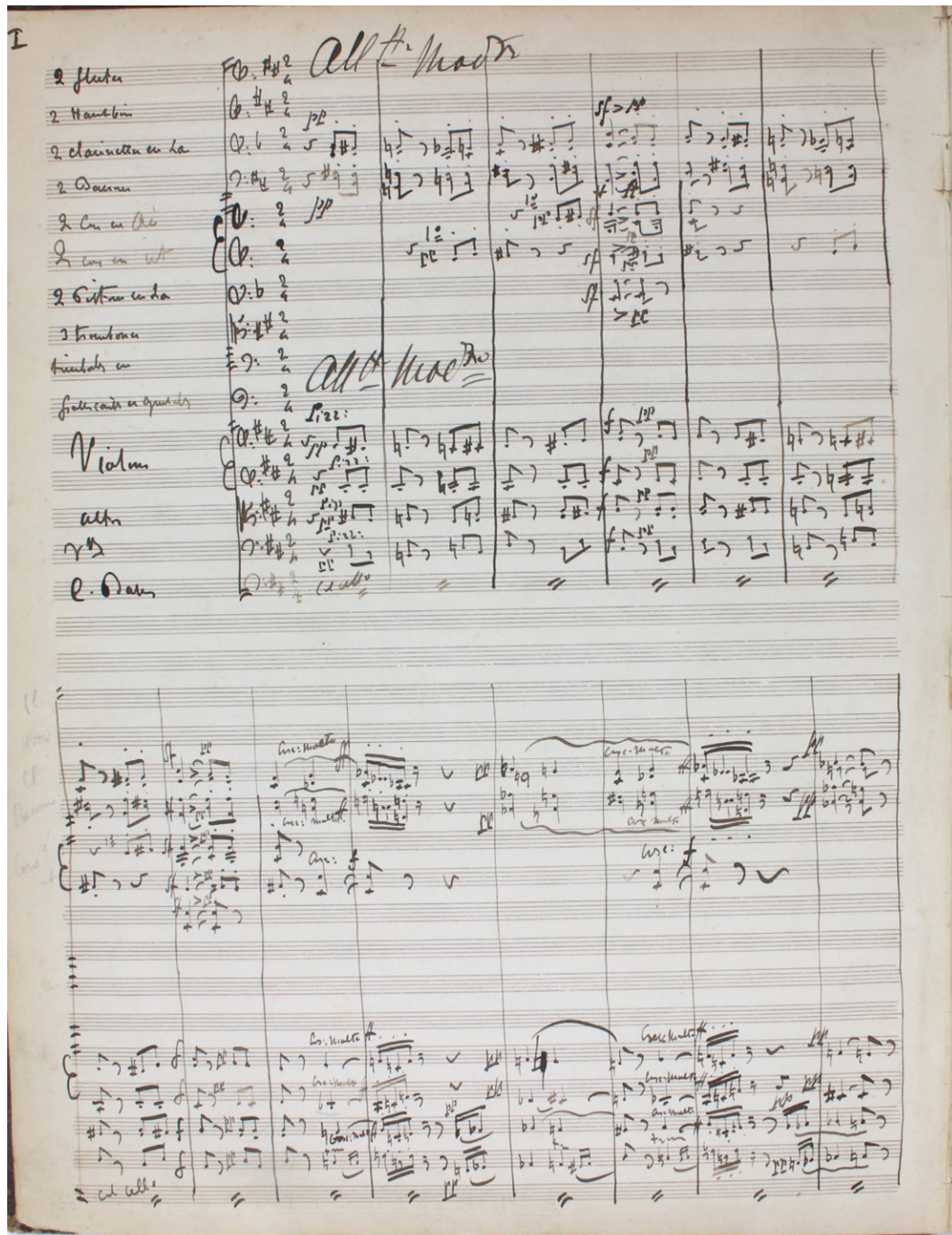
<sup>22</sup> Lyric-dramatic “strong” tenor.

<sup>23</sup> The composer’s first operatic opus on a rather terrifying reinterpreted “Faustian” plot, created by the librettists of *Faust* and *Les contes d’Hoffmann*.

<sup>24</sup> You can read about this type of tenor in my article [15].

<sup>25</sup> Pascal Prosper wrote his romance (mélodie) *Carmen* to a text written by Barbier.

of his little oratorio *Tobie*, and a year later, of the opera *La nonne sanglante*. Thus, starting out as Gounod's apprentice, Bizet eventually became his indispensable assistant. However, this assistance would end in 1873, when Bizet made a keyboard arrangement of Gounod's music for the drama *Jeanne d'Arc* and also took part in the revival of *Roméo et Juliette* at the Comic Opera.



Example 12. J.-I. Rodriguez. Overture to the opera *David Rizzio*, intro. Orchestration by G. Bizet. Photograph of the first page of the manuscript.

Rodriguez, J.-I. (n.d.). Overture de *David Rizzio*. Autograph musical manuscript signed ("Georges Bizet"). *Antiquariat Inlibris*. Retrieved November 25, 2024, from <https://inlibris.com/item/bn59537>

While Bizet expressed gratitude to Gounod for the opportunity to help him and the influence of his mentor is noticeable in some of his works (for example, in the Symphony in *C-dur*), he was certainly no blind follower or weak-willed shadow of his elder colleague, understanding well his own self-worth. The following words of Bizet, spoken in 1872 (work on *Carmen* would begin a year later), are often quoted: “My dear Gounod, <...> You were the beginning of my life as an artist. I spring from you. You are the cause, I am the consequence”.<sup>26</sup> However, these words have an important continuation: “I can now admit that I was afraid of being absorbed, and you must have noticed the effect of these misgivings. Today I think I am more master of my craft, and I no longer feel anything but the benefits of your salutary and decisive influence”.<sup>27</sup>

### *Participation in the preparation of productions*

Bizet’s open-hearted spirit of cooperation, which we mentioned earlier, involved not only editorial work on operas by other composers, but also assistance in staging the works of his colleagues: from his letters, it can be deduced that he took an active part in the rehearsals of several works, including those for whom he himself had made keyboard arrangements. These include Gounod’s operas *La reine de Saba* (Paris, Grand Opera, 1862) and *Roméo et Juliette* (Paris, Comic Opera, 1873), as well as Reyer’s operas *La Statue* (Paris, Lyric Theatre, 1861) and *Erostrate* (Baden-Baden, 1862; Paris, Grand Opera, 1872). As MacDonald writes, “*La Statue* gave him his first experience of working within the Théâtre-Lyrique on the production of an opera, mixing with composer, librettists, singers and the director, and putting his formidable musical skills to good use” [10, p. 61].

Both Reyer and Gounod appreciated the assistance they received from Bizet. Gounod wrote:

Cher Bizet, J’apprends que Roméo vient de faire son apparition devant le public de l’Opéra-Comique, et je croirais manquer à l’amitié que je te porte autant qu’à celle que tu m’as témoignée, si je ne te remerciais de la part essentielle que tu as prise à cet accouchement, part à laquelle doit revenir, sans nul doute, bonne quantité du succès de l’œuvre et de la représentation (25 January 1873).<sup>28</sup>

And here is Reyer’s review (June 1862): “Thank you a thousand times for what you say about my score [it’s about *Erostrate*]. Your friendship for me makes you see the thing through a telescope, but I am, nevertheless, flattered and pleased”.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World...*, p. 342.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 342–343.

<sup>28</sup> Gounod, Ch. (1899). *Lettres de Georges Bizet. La Revue de Paris...*, pp. 762–763.

<sup>29</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World...*, p. 117.

Bizet helped with the production, took part in rehearsals, and helped the singers practiced their parts. Let us recall that the composer's father, Adolphe Bizet, was a vocal teacher; Georges Bizet certainly had friendly relations with some of his students. One of these was Hector Gruyer (Guardi), a tenor whose career Georges Bizet closely followed and supported, periodically returning in letters to his successes or failures. Let us cite some of the composer's most striking statements.

Gounod est peut-être le seul compositeur qui puisse donner des conseils utiles à un chanteur; c'est aussi le seul homme capable de comprendre les hésitations et les découragements d'un jeune artiste. C'est en tous points ce qui pouvait arriver de plus heureux à Hector. [...] Qu'il tâche donc enfin de surmonter tous ces petits obstacles qui le font douter de lui. [...] Malgré tout, qu'il ait courage. J'ai excellent espoir pour le Théâtre Lyrique. La musique de Gounod doit lui aller. Ainsi donc de l'aplomb, du caractère, en un mot, et il est très sûr de son succès. (Letter from Bizet to his mother from Rome, 8 February 1858).<sup>30</sup>

J'attends avec une fiévreuse impatience un événement si important pour mes deux meilleurs amis : tu devines que je veux parler de toi et de Gounod, — de *Faust*, en un mot. [...] J'aurai certainement de grandes émotions dans ma vie, mais je ne désirerai jamais plus une réussite que je ne désire celle de *Faust*. [...] C'est bien gentil à toi de m'avoir donné une foule de détails sur les répétitions. L'histoire de ton si m'a ravi. Il y a de bonnes petites réflexions philosophiques à faire là-dessus. [...] Pour celle-ci, cher Hector, je souhaite qu'elle soit la plus belle de ta vie: tu vas être peut-être l'homme à la mode, ce qui n'est rien ; mais tu seras aussi l'interprète fidèle du meilleur musicien de ce temps-ci, tu seras le seul ténor capable de comprendre et de faire comprendre Gounod, ce qui est énorme. (Letter from Bizet to Hector Gruyere from Rome, 31 December, 1858).<sup>31</sup>

Je comprends la colère de mon cher Hector, mais je suis sûr qu'il fera grand effet dans Richard [Grétry's *Richard Cœur de Lion*]... Il peut au moins y faire entendre sa voix ; il ne lui en faut pas davantage pour avoir un grand succès. Console-le de ma part. Surtout, qu'il ne perde pas courage. (Letter from Bizet to his mother from Rietri, 3 July, 1859).<sup>32</sup>

Ce que tu me dis d'Hector ne m'étonne pas beaucoup. Il fait une bêtise. Non pas que je n'admire beaucoup le talent de Boulanger comme compositeur, — c'est un de nos meilleur, — mais qu'entend-il aux voix?... Rien, sans doute... Puisqu'il (Hector) faisait tant que de quitter celui qui lui avait consacré tant de temps et prouvé tant d'affection, il devait venir ici chercher une méthode nouvelle, — qu'il n'aurait pas trouvée, car il n'y a ici ni méthode ni rien qui y ressemble. Enfin, je crains qu'il n'y ait plus à avoir que des regrets. (Letter from Bizet to his mother from Rome, 5 January 1860).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Bizet, G. (with Ganderax, L.) (1907). *Lettres de Georges Bizet...*, pp. 31–32.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 115–116, 119.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 216–217.

On m'a écrit qu'Hector avait chanté l'air de *Fidelio* avec une voix superbe, mais sans intelligence et sans goût. [...] Depuis, sa voix même lui a fait défaut: c'est triste! (Letter from Bizet to his mother from Rome, 26 May 1860).<sup>34</sup>

Bizet worked with the bass Jules Gaffiot (Belval, *Illustration 2*) on his part of Solomon in the opera *La reine de Saba*. Gounod writes in August 1861:

...je savais que tu avais vu Belval et que tu avais bien voulu t'occuper de son rôle, ainsi que je l'en avais exprimé le désir de sa part, et je t'en remercie beaucoup: vois-tu, cher enfant, ton cœur et ton talent m'ont gâté, et je ne sais plus me passer de toi; tu es la forme si parfaite de toutes mes intentions que je ne saurais me traduire ni m'interpréter comme tu le fais toi-même.<sup>35</sup>

Acting as an opera accompanist and “assistant composer,” Bizet demonstrates not only talent, but also generosity, noting in one of his letters from 1858 to Hector Gruyer: “Gounod is not a man of action; he has that in common with the majority of great artists. He needs someone close to him with the right point of view and sure, sane judgement.”<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, Bizet certainly had his own interest in this work: it is known that, having some rehearsal experience behind him, he deservedly claimed the position of accompanist at the Grand Opéra, which the composer wrote about in a letter to Edmond Galabert in 1871. It was the source of some rancour to him that the appointment to this position never took place. Bizet's attempt to obtain a position in Baden-Baden, where he went to help Reyer with rehearsals of *Herostratus*, also failed: he met the impresario Édouard Bénazet (thanks to whom, for example, Berlioz was performed in Baden-Baden), but no appointment followed.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

*Illustration 2.* A. Albert. Belval as Solomon: costume sketch.

Retrieved from the

[Bibliothèque nationale de France – Gallica](https://gallica.bnf.fr/)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 252–253.

<sup>35</sup> Gounod, Ch. (1899). *Lettres de Georges Bizet. La Revue de Paris...*, p. 691.

<sup>36</sup> Curtiss, M. (1958). *Bizet and His World...*, p. 79.



### Conclusion

Georges Bizet's skills as a music editor were in demand throughout his career. With considerable experience in transcriptions and proofreading for music publishers, he could be considered as a self-sufficient and well-paid specialist. It is only to be regretted that this activity in 19th century France was still far from being established in terms of its legal and social status.

An important place in Bizet's career was also occupied by his "behind the scenes" rehearsal activities: as the author of keyboard arrangements of several French operas, he was often obliged to be present at their rehearsals as an accompanist and assistant. The question of the financial side of this activity remains open since such information in the analysed sources is scanty. Nevertheless, even from this side of his career, Bizet could well be considered a valuable specialist: judging by the reviews of colleagues and the opinion expressed by the composer in letters, his advice and recommendations were appropriate, useful and professional. In addition, by helping with rehearsals of his compatriots' performances, Bizet saw the opera "kitchen" from the inside and had the opportunity to cultivate the musical and theatrical "ingredients" for "cooking up" his own future chefs d'oeuvre.

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EDN OEVALA



**China in Soviet Opera:  
Sergei Vasilenko's *Son of the Sun* and Its Stage Fate**

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**Abstract.** The attitude of the general public and musical circles to the work of Sergei Nikiforovich Vasilenko (1872–1956) changed more than once. Now that it becomes possible to consider his work more objectively, it is attracting the increasing attention of performers and researchers. One of Vasilenko's most interesting works yet to receive critical reappraisal is his opera *Son of the Sun* [*Sin Solntsa*] (1929). A year after its premiere at the Bolshoi Theatre, the opera was largely forgotten; however, as the present work sets out to demonstrate, this was primarily as a result of political and not artistic factors. Up until now, *Son of the Sun* has not been the object of detailed musicological analysis. Fortunately, the score, archival materials and critical responses to the production have been preserved. By turning to them, one can reconstruct the atmosphere of its creation to provide this important work with an unbiased assessment and answer the question about the reasons for its

Translated by Thomas A. Beavitt

unhappy stage fate. The relevance of *Son of the Sun* today is determined by another circumstance: it is the only Soviet opera whose subject matter is connected with China: the libretto by Mikhail Galperin is based on the events of the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1901. As well as drawing on elements of romanticism, impressionism, and modernism, Vasilenko’s music reveals a keen interest in Chinese folklore: in addition to repeatedly quoting themes from Chinese folk music, the composer finds new ways of working with them that correspond to the nature of the material itself. In the musical dramaturgy of the opera, four independent lines can be distinguished: ethnographic, lyrical, revolutionary–ideological and “topical”. In the last of them, the composer comes close to the genre of *Zeitoper*, which became popular in European musical theatre during the 1920s and 1930s. The study of Vasilenko’s forgotten opera on the eve of its 100th anniversary shows that *Son of the Sun* has many merits that justify its more thorough study and new attempts to bring it to stage.

**Keywords:** *Son of the Sun*, Sergei Vasilenko, Soviet opera, China in music, *chinoiserie*, East in music, opera genres, opera dramaturgy, stage fate of opera, *Zeitoper*, Boxer Rebellion

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Музыкальный театр:  
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Научная статья

**Китай в советской опере: «Сын Солнца»  
С. Н. Василенко и его сценическая судьба**

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**Аннотация.** Отношение публики и музыкальных кругов к творчеству Сергея Никифоровича Василенко (1872–1956) менялось не раз. Сейчас произведения композитора наконец стали рассматриваться объективно, его музыка привлекает внимание исполнителей и исследователей. «Сын Солнца» (1929) — одно из несправедливо забытых сочинений Василенко. Через год после премьеры на сцене Большого театра опера сошла с подмостков и была забыта — как доказывается в статье, прежде всего в силу политических, а вовсе не художественных причин. До сих пор «Сын Солнца» не становился объектом специального музыковедческого анализа. К счастью, сохранилась партитура, архивные материалы и отклики на постановку. Обратившись к ним, можно восстановить атмосферу создания, дать этому сочинению непредвзятую оценку, а также ответить на вопрос о причинах его несчастливой сценической судьбы. Актуальность «Сына Солнца» сегодня обусловлена еще одним обстоятельством: это единственная советская опера, связанная с Китаем. Либретто Михаила Петровича Гальперина основано на событиях восстания ихэтуаней 1899–1901 гг. Музыка Василенко опирается на традиции романтизма, импрессионизма, модерна, но при этом насыщена интересом к китайскому фольклору: композитор не просто многократно цитирует народные темы, но находит новые способы работы с ними, соответствующие

природе самого материала. В музыкальной драматургии оперы выделяются четыре самостоятельных линии: этнографическая, лирическая, революционно-идеологическая и «злободневная». В последней из них композитор вплотную подходит к явлению *Zeitoper*, ставшему популярным в европейском музыкальном театре 1920–1930-х годов. Обращение к забытой опере Василенко в преддверии ее 100-летия показывает, что «Сын Солнца» имеет немало достоинств, а потому нуждается и в изучении, и в исполнении.

**Ключевые слова:** «Сын Солнца», Сергей Василенко, советская опера, Китай в музыке, шинуазри, Восток в музыке, оперные жанры, драматургия оперы, сценическая судьба оперы, *Zeitoper*, восстание ихэтуаней

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### Introduction

The name of Sergei Vasilenko (1872–1956), a talented and at times highly regarded composer, conductor, mentor and teacher, fell into undeserved obscurity following his death. Currently, assessments of his work are being revised; as a result, Vasilenko’s music is increasingly being performed and studied, conferences are being held,<sup>1</sup> and a website dedicated to his work has been created.<sup>2</sup>

Vasilenko made his mark as a composer and conductor during the early years of the 20th century. An heir to the traditions of the Russian school of composition, who studied under Sergei Taneyev, Vasily Safonov and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, he received the gold medal of the Moscow Conservatory for his diploma work, the cantata<sup>3</sup> *Legend of the Great City of Kitezh and the Quiet Lake Svetoyar* [*Skazaniye o velikom grade Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoyare*] (1902) [1, p. 249].<sup>4</sup> Already in this work, the features characteristic of his future work were defined: vivid timbres and a desire for exoticism.

In 1906, Vasilenko began teaching composition and instrumentation at the Moscow Conservatory, at which he would remain for the next 50 years. During the pre-revolutionary years, he was part of the Russian artistic elite, a member of the Literary and Artistic Circle [3, p. 154], and associated with Savva Mamontov, Valery Bryusov, Mikhail Vrubel, Viktor Borisov-Musatov and others. Features of the latest trends of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (impressionism, symbolism, modernism) were evident in the composer’s best pre-revolutionary works including the symphonic poem *The Garden of Death* (after Oscar Wilde) [*Sad smerti* Op. 13] (1907–08) and the vocal suite *Invocations* [*Zaklinaniya*] (1909).

In 1917, the direction of Vasilenko’s creative aspirations changed dramatically: in his own words, he “was the first among Moscow composers who came... with an offer to provide his services to the state.”<sup>5</sup> As a result,

<sup>1</sup> In March 2022, in the composer’s hometown of Lipetsk, the Scientific and Practical Conference *S. N. Vasilenko and His Time* was dedicated to the 150th anniversary of his birth.

<sup>2</sup> Vasilenko S. N.: Composer. Bringing the Legend to Life. Retrieved December 2, 2024, from <https://vasilenko-legend.ru/tvorchestvo/obwestvennaya-deyatelnost/>

<sup>3</sup> The cantata was later transformed into an opera [1, p. 249].

<sup>4</sup> From here on, the dates of creation of the works are given according to the *Chronological Index of Works by S. N. Vasilenko* from the book by Georgy Polyanovsky [1, pp. 248–264]. In a recent article by Pavel Karpov, a slightly different formulation of the title and the following dates are given: 1901 — performance of the cantata *Skazaniye o grade velikom Kitezhe i tikhom ozere Svetoyare* from the piano score at Vasilenko’s final exam, 1902 — premiere of the orchestral version of the cantata at the Symphony Assembly of the Musical Society, 1903 — first performance of Vasilenko’s opera of the same name, created on the basis of the cantata [2, pp. 129–133].

<sup>5</sup> Vasilenko S. N.: Composer. Bringing the Legend to Life. Retrieved December 2, 2024, from <https://vasilenko-legend.ru/tvorchestvo/obwestvennaya-deyatelnost/>



Vasilenko headed the Concert and Organisational Bureau of Moscow, was one of the initiators of the creation of the music editorial office of the All-Union Radio, wrote the first Uzbek opera (together with Mukhtar Ashrafi) and ballet, *Concerto for balalaika and orchestra* [*Balalaika Concert*, op. 63] (1931), *Arctic Symphony* (1935) and *Kolkhoz Suite* (1953), and was awarded two Orders of Lenin and the Stalin Prize 1st degree for his work. The stylistic shift from late romanticism and modernist movements to the principles of socialist realism occurred so quickly in Vasilenko's work that at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century his name was generally associated with conformism and creative opportunism. But today new facts about the composer's biography have emerged that demonstrate the full complexity and tragedy of his relationship with the Soviet authorities [4, p. 82].

*Plot of the Opera Son of the Sun:  
Political and Cultural Context*

The second of the six operas written by Vasilenko, based on a libretto by Mikhail Petrovitch Galperin (1929), is the only work in this genre created in the USSR that is connected with China. The appeal to China was not accidental: the East attracted Vasilenko over the course of his entire creative life. According to Zuo Zhenguan, he felt early on that “the era of Westernisation was over” and that it was time for non-European musical cultures to “inject fresh blood” into Western music [5, p. 15]. The composer's predecessors of the opera were *Maori Songs* (1913), *Exotic Suite* (1916), *Two Oriental Melodies* (1918), *Armenian Serenade* (1921), incidental music for the play *The Legend of Joseph the Beautiful*, *Oriental Dance* for clarinet and piano (1922), the ballet *Noya* (1923), *Eight Japanese Melodies*, *Opium Flowers* (Chinese melody) (1924), *Three Sinhalese Melodies*, *Melodies of the Kazan and Ural Tatars*, *Chines of the East*, incidental music for the play *Chu Yun-wai* (1926), as well as the *Hindu* (1927) and *Chinese* (1928) suites. Vasilenko not only wrote in a certain “oriental” style, focusing on the traditions that had developed during the 19th century and processing the melodies of various peoples, but also made a serious studied of the music of the East. In 1919–1923, he lectured on the history of music at the First Moscow University [1, p. 74], where, in particular, he introduced listeners to the ancient musical culture of the Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Assyrians, as well as investigating its development in China, Japan, India, and Oceania. In his future oeuvre, the “Eastern period,” in the words of the composer, would continue in his work for many more years [Ibid.].

The basis for *Son of the Sun* was taken from the memorable events of the “Boxer Rebellion” of 1899–1901, which took place against the background

of European dominance in China.<sup>6</sup> In the opera, these events become the backdrop for a love story: a feeling arises between representatives of two warring camps, the American woman Aurora and the Chinese sage Lao-Sin.

During the 1920s, Chinese motifs became popular in Soviet art for two reasons. On the one hand, the increased interest in China was determined by the political agenda of the 1920s. In 1922, the IV Congress of the Comintern decided to create a united anti-imperialist front in which China, which had chosen a path similar to Russia's, became the USSR's closest ally. Following the abdication of Emperor Pu Yi (1912), revolutionary changes began; in 1924, the Kuomintang Party took a course towards cooperation with the USSR. As political scientist Alexander Vladimirovich Lukin notes, "until the end of the 1920s, the Soviet authorities saw the Chinese as friendly representatives of the 'proletariat' of the neighbouring country" [8, p. 196].

On the other hand, the 19th-century traditions of romantic exoticism and associated new wave of chinoiserie or "Chinese style" that flooded European art at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries had not yet been extinguished. In Russian literature, the most striking manifestations of romanticised chinoiserie arose in the poetry of Nikolai Gumilyov, while in music, Stravinsky's opera *The Nightingale* made similar cultural reference. New aspirations were rethought in 1926–1927 in the mainstream of modernist "meta-exoticism" (a term coined by Chu Jinyi [初金一]) in the paintings of Pyotr Konchalovsky and Natalya Goncharova (see more details [9, pp. 52–84]), picked up by the poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky and Mikhail Svetlov were then reflected in Reinhold Glière's ballet *The Red Poppy*. According to Edward Tyerman, the ballet was intended to shift an "erotic narrative into a political one, substituting for the generic trope of the desirable foreign prince the salvational narrative of Soviet Russia's transformative influence on semicolonial China" [10, p. 119]. The stage fate of *The Red Poppy* in the 1920s is symptomatic: during the first Moscow production of the ballet in 1927, the design of the performance was still largely maintained in the pre-revolutionary traditions of chinoiserie, but by 1929, the Leningrad directors were specifically emphasising the "alarming atmosphere of the growing struggle, fraught with the danger of an explosion" [11, p. 136].

In reviews of the premiere of *Son of the Sun*, contemporaries also noted the consonance of the depicted events with what was happening in Soviet Russia:

<sup>6</sup> The Boxer Rebellion (义和团运动, Yìhétuán yùndòng) was an anti-European, anti-imperialist, and anti-Christian movement in northern China in 1899–1901. The uprising was led by the religious and mystical secret society 义和团 Yìhétuán ("Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists"), which called for the destruction and expulsion of foreigners (see [6]). The Yìhétuán were trained in hand-to-hand combat, for which reason Europeans called them "boxers". The rebels committed mass murders of Christians, destroyed churches, spiritual missions and European embassies, and occupied Beijing and Tianjin. Following the Eight-Power Alliance's war with China and the betrayal of Empress Cixi (慈禧太后), the rebellion was eventually suppressed [7, pp. 353–356].

“China’s struggle today has the same basis.”<sup>7</sup> Rodion Makarov’s sets for Vasilenko’s opera were far from romantic exoticism and emphasized the idea of the old-world destruction (*Illustrations 1, 2*).



*Illustration 1.*

*Son of the Sun*. Uprising scene. Set design by Rodion Makarov<sup>8</sup>



*Illustration 2.*

*Son of the Sun*. Scene from Act 1. GOTOB 2, 1929<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Worker Correspondent Shavkutenko (1929). Mashinotrest. Vdgonku za sovremennost’yu [Mashinotrest. In Pursuit of Modernity]. *Sovremenny Teatr* [Modern Theatre], (26–27), 383.

<sup>8</sup> Image from the collection of the St. Petersburg State Theatre Library. Retrieved December 2, 2024, from <https://teatrbiblio.wixsite.com/mysite/сын-солнца>

<sup>9</sup> Image from the collection of the St. Petersburg State Theatre Library. Retrieved December 2, 2024, from <https://teatrbiblio.wixsite.com/mysite/сын-солнца>

While Glière's ballet *The Red Poppy* and Vasilenko's opera *Son of the Sun* became the main works on Chinese themes in Russian music of the post-revolutionary period, their stage fates turned out to be rather different. Although the situation turned out in favour of the ballet, from the point of view of its artistic merit, Vasilenko's score is not inferior to Glière's. *The Red Poppy*, later to be edited and renamed *The Red Flower*, became firmly established in the Soviet musical and theatrical repertoire, while *Son of the Sun* did not appear on stage after 1930.

There are a few reasons for such a clear difference in the subsequent fates of the respective works.

First of all, Vasilenko turned to China two years later than Glière, so the novelty effect no longer excited the imagination of viewers. It is also necessary to remember that the opera genre on the domestic stage of those years was in the shadow of ballet: newspapers wrote about the "extraordinary love for ballet now observed on the part of the democratic part of the public, who buy up tickets for all ballet performances"<sup>10</sup> (the audience even allowed themselves to quarrel, demanding a repetition of their favourite dances, as happened at one of the public rehearsals of the Mariinsky Theatre, during which demands were heard from the audience "to bring the dancers and orchestra to heel"<sup>11</sup>). But the main reason for the swift and unfair oblivion of the *Son of the Sun* for many years was, as we shall see, political.

The first critical reviews of Vasilenko's opera after its premiere on May 24, 1929, at the Bolshoi Theatre (GOTOB 2<sup>12</sup>) were positive. Thus, Leonid Obolensky, in a detailed review written for the magazine *Sovremenny Teatr* [*Contemporary Theatre*], noted the "serious and talented music" and "development of colossal ethnographic material,"<sup>13</sup> while "worker correspondents" in the same publication admired the performance of Alexander Pirogov (Lao-Sin), the scenery, as well as the "revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses" shown on stage.<sup>14</sup> The literary and artistic satirical magazine *Chudak* gave Vasilenko's "Chinese" opera an aphoristic but ambiguous assessment: "the music is good, the singing is poor, the production is bad, and the plot is rubbish."<sup>15</sup> (We may note here that it was the music that was rated as successful.)

<sup>10</sup> Skandal v Mariiinskom teatre [Scandal at the Mariinsky Theatre]. (1918, May 30). *Novaya Petrogradskaya Gazeta* [*New Petrograd Newspaper*], (108), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid..

<sup>12</sup> Second State Opera and Ballet Theatre, branch of the Bolshoi Theatre.

<sup>13</sup> Obolensky, L. (1929). "Sin Solntsa." Opera S. Vasilenko [*Son of the Sun*. Opera by S. Vasilenko]. *Sovremenny Teatr* [*Modern Theatre*], (22–23), 348–349.

<sup>14</sup> Worker Correspondent Viktorov (1929). Chuvstvuetsya revolyucionnyj ehntuziazm [One Can Feel the Revolutionary Enthusiasm]. *Sovremenny Teatr* [*Modern Theatre*], (26–27), 383.

<sup>15</sup> Foreigner Fedorov. (1929). Nepogreshimaya formula [Infallible Formula]. *Chudak*, (23), 11.

During a year (since the May 24, 1929, till June 29, 1930), *Son of the Sun* was performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre no less than 29 times,<sup>16</sup> which certainly testifies to its serious success.<sup>17</sup> There were also plans to stage the opera in Tiflis and the Far East.<sup>18</sup>

However, by the autumn of 1929, the tone of printed reviews had changed dramatically and was becoming increasingly aggressive. In September, the *Proletarian Musician* denounced the composer for his “obvious desire to push through philistine, petty-bourgeois music, sometimes even directly hostile to us, under the guise of proletarian production”;<sup>19</sup> in December, he declared that the opera “plays a clearly reactionary role” and even represents “a libel on the idea of revolution.”<sup>20</sup> The main claims are made not from artistic, but from ideological positions. Such formulations in the main proletarian musical publications of those years meant an automatic death sentence for the *Son of the Sun*.

The sharp change in the critics’ position towards the opera was not accidental. It coincides precisely with a serious deterioration of relations between the USSR and China: in the summer of 1929, shortly following the premiere of the *Son of the Sun* at the Bolshoi Theatre, a conflict broke out on the Chinese Eastern Railway, resulting in an armed confrontation and a rupture in diplomatic relations between the countries. Thus, at the turn of 1929–1930, a crisis period began in the history of Soviet-Chinese musical contacts [12, p. 43].

Here again, we may compare the fates of the *Son of the Sun* and *The Red Poppy*. Even during the process of work, Glière and the group of directors initially demonstrated a willingness to fight when faced with negative assessments of their ballet. A large-scale campaign launched to ideologically justify the ballet in the press and among workers at factories and plants resulted in a public demand issued by the proletarian public to continue work on the production [11, p. 127–128]. According to Olga Tuminskaya, “*The Red Poppy* became the brainchild of proletarian ideology in dramatic art” [13, p. 23]. Later, the composer, in response to new unambiguously stated requests, repeatedly reworked both the plot and the music of *The Red Poppy* (the second version appeared in 1948; the third, now

<sup>16</sup> Bolshoi Theatre. Electronic archive. Retrieved December 2, 2024, from <https://archive.bolshoi.ru/entity/PERFORMANC?sa-query=Сын%20Солнца&sort=90>

<sup>17</sup> While in the monograph by Polyanovsky it is stated that the opera was performed at GOTOB-2 for three years [1, p. 113], a study of the complete list of performances from 1929–1932 from the Electronic Archive of the Bolshoi Theatre refutes this statement: *Son of the Sun* lasted on stage for just over a year, the last performance taking place on June 20, 1930.

<sup>18</sup> Perspektivy opernogo sezona v Tiflise [Prospects of the Opera Season in Tiflis]. (1928). *Zhizn' iskusstva* [Life of Art], (40), 10; Far Eastern Theatre in the Upcoming Season. (1929). *Zhizn' iskusstva* [Life of Art], (31), 11.

<sup>19</sup> Za dal'nejshee nastuplenie [To the Further Offensive]. (1929). *Proletarskij muzykant* [Proletarian Musician], (3), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Vygotsky, N. (1929). “Sın solntsa” (k postanovke v GOTOBe) [Son of the Sun (for Production at GOTOB)]. *Proletarskij muzykant* [Proletarian Musician], (4), 30.

retitled *The Red Flower*, in 1957). In addition, an ideologically impeccable positive image was introduced into the plot — the Soviet Captain and sailors aboard his ship carrying the ideas of struggle and freedom. This idea was also emphasised in Glière's score: the musical characteristics of the Soviet sailors were expressed in the themes of two famous songs of the revolutionary era — Yablochko and Internationale. In this way, the authors of *The Red Poppy* protected themselves from political attacks and accusations of ideological unreliability, remembering that “truly Soviet’ means propaganda, serving social construction and changing everyday life” [14, p. 100].

The plot and music of *Son of the Sun* turned out to be much more vulnerable from an ideological point of view.

There is turmoil in Beijing's European Quarter. Lord Milberry, Baron and Baroness Gross, the French singer Edith Saliers, Lady Salisbury, missionary Von Kirsten and Colonel Shirkov are alarmed. Aurora, the daughter of the commander of the American troops, General Hamilton, has forgotten her fiancé, Lieutenant Watter, and spends her days wandering alone through the Chinese quarters, where an uprising is being prepared. It turns out that she is in love with the temple's minister, the Chinese sage Lao-Xing, who is known as the “Son of the Sun.” Love for a girl from the enemy camp places Lao-Xing outside the law, and the bonze top brass under the leadership of Tai-Tsung condemn him to suicide. Without telling Aurora about the court's verdict, Lao-Xing meets her for the last time on the shore of the lake, then says his prayers, takes poison and ends his life. The uprising begins. Aurora, unaware of the death of her beloved, hurries into the Chinese alleys to her certain death. The rebels seize the European Quarter and smash the embassies.

As can be seen from the summary, the plot of the opera is only formally connected with the ideals of the new proletarian art. Although it is about an uprising against European imperialism, its main driving forces are shown not to be the working class, but rather the Chinese bonze priests. The opera's portrayal of the opposing camp, comprising representatives of Western European embassies and the Russian tsarist colonel Shirkov, seems even more hostile from the point of view of the Soviet viewer. The starring couple comprising the daughter of an American general and a priest of the Sun cult, also fails to not correspond to the proletarian canon of positive heroes of that time.

The events of the opera are based on plot motifs typical for Western adventure novels about the Boxer Rebellion of 1900: the initial sense of danger, the restriction of movement for Europeans only to the territories of their concessions and then to the British diplomatic mission in Beijing, the dressing of the main characters in Chinese clothes, etc. [15, p. 98–129].

### *Music*

In many respects, Vasilenko's opera remains closely connected with the traditions established during the Romantic period. First of all, it should be noted that *Son of the Sun* belongs to the type of opera whose rich, brightly timbred

and independent orchestral part features instrumental pictures, interludes and intermissions, as well as with an expanded system of leitmotifs, which brings it closer to Wagnerian style of musical drama (during research it was possible to count more than 20 leitmotifs in the score).

References to French stylistic elements are no less tangible: from grand opera (four-act structure with extended arias, ensembles, choirs and ballet, as well as a love story framed by historical events) to lyrical opera (emphasising the social differences between the characters, an “exotic” plot and the realism of crowd scenes as in Bizet’s *Les pêcheurs de perles*, Delibes’ *Lakmé*, Massenet’s *Thaïs*). In terms of its plot and style, *Son of the Sun* most strongly resembles both Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* and Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette*: two irreconcilable camps to which the lovers belong, their selfless love and death, an emphasis on the lyrical component, and the soft, romantic melodiousness of the love scenes. Individual episodes, musical phrases and verbal clichés evoke in the listener’s memory other famous examples of Western European romantic opera: *Tristan und Isolde*, *Aida*, *Manon*, and *La bohème*.

Among the works of Russian composers, the predecessors of *Son of the Sun* include Alexander Dargomyzhsky’s *Rusalka* with its sharp drama, attention to everyday scenes and romance-like melody, as well as the romances of Pyotr Tchaikovsky (right down to the quasi-quotation: “*I opened the window*” — “*We will sail away with you*” from duet No. 15 of *Aurora and Lao-Sin*). The most immediate predecessor of *Son of the Sun* can be considered as *The Mandarin’s Son* by César Cui, the first work in Russian opera to feature a plot based in China. Compared to this work, however, Vasilenko went much further in his efforts to portray the world of the Celestial Empire.

From the first steps of work on the opera, it had become clear that the process would involve a certain amount of creative compromise. An analysis of surviving printed interviews and statements by the authors of the premiere performance shows that the intentions of the composer, librettist and director were quite different.

Vasilenko was primarily interested in the exotic atmosphere of the setting and the opportunity to work with Chinese national folklore. He specifically emphasised this in newspaper articles and interviews: “*Son of the Sun* was [...] the fruit of my long-term study of the music of the Far East. The songs of the peoples inhabiting China, Japan and India have long attracted my attention with their fresh and original construction of melody, as well as their unresolved structure of harmonisation.”<sup>21</sup> The composer emphasised: “The Chinese element has been written by me with more love and care than the European; it represents

<sup>21</sup> “*Sin Solntsa*” (k postanovke v GOTOB 2). Muzyka (iz besedy s S. N. Vasilenko) [*Son of the Sun* (for Production in GOTOB 2). Music (from a Conversation with S. N. Vasilenko)]. (1929). *Zhizn’ iskusstva* [*Life of Art*], (20), 13.

the brightest spot in the entire opera.”<sup>22</sup> The basis of the folk scenes, as he later recalled, were quotations from genuine folklore material that he had received from the famous traveller and geographer Pyotr Kozlov, as well as from Russian musicians.<sup>23</sup> The music of the crowd scenes in Chinatown, the Temple of the Sun, and the opium den (we may refer to this line of development as *ethnographic*) became one of the most artistically significant components of the score. As well as drawing on the traditions of Russian operatic exoticism (Glinka, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov), Vasilenko also seeks new and unusual harmonic and timbral solutions that touch upon the musical style of the artistic movements of the early 20th century — impressionism and modernism.

Among the striking examples is the orchestral *Procession to the Temple of the Sun* from Scene 2 of Act I. A series of colourfully developed and timbrally diverse themes and quotations organically intertwine European and Chinese musical and linguistic techniques. On the one hand, there is the “modern” ornamentation of the introduction, the “live” and quivering impressionistic texture and chains of harmonic parallelisms in the culminating section (*Example 1*<sup>24</sup>); on the other hand,

Example 1. Sergei Vasilenko. *Son of the Sun*.  
Act I, Scene 2. No. 11 *Procession to the Temple of the Sun*, Fragment 1

<sup>22</sup> Vasilenko, S. N. (1929). “Sin Solntsa” v GOTOBe II [*Son of the Sun* in GOTOB II]. *Novyj zritel’* [*New Viewer*], (20), 16.

<sup>23</sup> Vasilenko, S. N. (1954, December 28). Yarkie vpechatleniya. Zametki o kitajskoj muzyke [Vivid Impressions. Notes on Chinese Music]. *Sovetskaya kul’tura* [*Soviet Culture*], 3.

<sup>24</sup> From here on, musical examples are given from the publication: Vasilenko, S. (1930). *Son of the Sun*. Opera in 4 acts and 10 scenes. Libretto by M. Galperin, German translation by D. S. Usov. Arranged for singing and piano in 2 hands by the author. State Publishing House, Musical Sector.





Example 2. Sergei Vasilenko. *Son of the Sun*.  
Act I, Scene 2. No. 11 *Procession to the Temple  
of the Sun*, Fragment 2

who fell in love with each other”<sup>26</sup> — this is how he describes the main idea of what is happening in an interview (*Illustration 3*). Hence the librettist’s appeal to romantic and sometimes melodramatic clichés: “I wander alone in the power of tender thoughts, I wander alone in the ancient park” (No. 2 Romance of Edith Salier), “you and I will sail away to the blue silver lakes, we will dream together under the cover of bashful branches” (No. 15 Duet of Aurora and Lao-Sin), “I will drink all the sweetness of sorrow, I will know all the bitterness of dreams” (No. 20 Aurora’s Aria), etc.

Despite Vasilenko’s primary interest in the opportunity to work with Eastern musical material in the plot about the *Son of the Sun*, he responded willingly to the librettist’s aspirations in his music. The *lyrical layer* of the musical dramaturgy of the opera is written very convincingly, finding a vivid expression in the romantic vein.

there are pentatonic themes with Chinese-style decorations, harmonised with a clear understanding of the nature of this music (instead of European functional harmony, there are “empty” fifths and linear movement of voices) (*Example 2*).

Librettist Mikhail Galperin sought to advance the “lyrical expression of romanticism,”<sup>25</sup> emphasising that “...the struggle between two worlds — East and West — removes without a trace the phantom happiness of two people



Illustration 3. *Son of the Sun*. Scene from Act 2. Aurora — E. A. Stepanova; Lao-Xing — A. S. Pirogov. Photo from the cover of the weekly *Sovremennyi Teatr* [*Modern Theatre*], 1929. No. 22–23

<sup>25</sup> “Sin Solntsa” (k postanovke v GOTOB 2). Tekst (iz besedy s M. P. Gal’perinym) [*Son of the Sun* (for Production in GOTOB 2). Text (from a Conversation with M. P. Galperin)]. (1929). *Zhizn’ iskusstva* [*Life of Art*], (20), 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

In love duets and solos of the main characters, the supple romance melody frequently involves intervallic movements of sixths, sevenths and ninths. One of the most impressive scenes in the opera is the psychologically multi-layered deathbed monologue of Lao-Xing, which is saturated with mournful chromaticism (*Example 3*).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal solo. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (soprano) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The first system is marked 'Sostenuto.' and includes the lyrics 'про-щай, мо-я не- пом-ра-я мев- / Nicht lan- ge hat die Lie- be mich er-'. The second system continues the monologue with lyrics in Russian and German: '-то как сар- жа, как сар- жа... И как зес- / Meinhol-der Freund, mein Mor- gen- stern, du warst der'. The third system concludes with 'на пре-кра-сна... Се-го-дня ты жа- / det Le- bens... Ge- lieb- te, du er-'. Performance markings include 'Sostenuto.', 'dolce', and 'dim. assai'. The score is numbered '№ 37' and '105' at the top, and '1099' at the bottom.

Example 3. Sergei Vasilenko. *Son of the Sun*. Act 4, Scene 4.  
No. 37 Lao-Sin's dying monologue, Section 2

Director Titsian Sharashidze saw the task in his own way: “to make the performance politically consonant” and “reveal the social essence of the movement.”<sup>27</sup> The lyrical line developed in the libretto appears to him only as “a love episode between an American and a Chinese man”,<sup>28</sup> which “emphasises the tragedy of the oppressed masses of the people.”<sup>29</sup> Vasilenko noted that he and the librettist had to “make some alterations” so that “the opera would be significantly strengthened in an ideological sense.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, a *revolutionary ideological line* emerged in the dramaturgy.

<sup>27</sup> “Sin Solntsa” (k postanovke v GOTOB 2). Oformlenie (iz besedy s rezh. Sharashidze) [Son of the Sun (for Production in GOTOB 2). Design (from a Conversation with Director Sharashidze)]. (1929). *Zhizn' iskusstva* [Life of Art], (20), 13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Chto pishut kompozitory. Interv'yū s S. N. Vasilenko [What Composers Write. Interview with S. N. Vasilenko]. (1929). *Rabis*, (9), 6.

The scenes of the uprising became the culmination of *Son of the Sun*: the opera ends with Chorus No. 43 “Stand up against the enemy, people” with the words “the native land will throw off the yoke once and for all” and the final call “wake up, China!” However, the musical solution of the scene sounds rather dry and formal. Vasilenko once again happily quotes Chinese folklore, but there is no dramatic intensity or musical discoveries in the uprising scene. Moreover, taken apart from the text, the carefree patter of musical phrases could rather be perceived as a simple and cheerful song (*Example 4*):

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счастья дни. Сно- жом всту- же На вра- га  
Him-mal Klor Das Jun- ge Volk reißt zum Kampf,—

Дви-нем-ся мы мстите-ля-ми и полет-ся кровь. На-сра-нет день  
Rächt sich an den Fein-den und vergießt ihr schwarzes Blut! Es Kommt ein Tag

На про-сла-то- го вра-га. На-сра-нет день  
Un- - ser Land to- wird bef- reit. Es Kommt ein Tag  
*martellato*

*fff*

*Example 4.* Sergei Vasilenko. *Son of the Sun*. Act 4, Scene 2.  
No. 43 Choir “Stand up against the enemy, people”, fragment

In addition to the key layers of musical dramaturgy noted above, there is the other *world of the European Quarter*, proudly indulging itself in thoughts of racial and cultural superiority and immersed in a whirlpool of pleasures. However, judging by their statements in the press, none of the directors single out this layer as the main one or even mentioned it. Nevertheless, from the libretto and music it is clear that the “European” scenes occupy almost half of the opera (four scenes out of ten): they open and close it (Scene 1 of Act I and Scene 2 of Act IV), as well as forming the centre (Scenes 2 and 3 of Act III). Obviously, this layer of content was very important to the authors, although they were wary of formulating this idea verbally.

An analysis of the scenes in the European Quarter shows that in their solution the authors are at the forefront of musical and theatrical research of the 1920s, coming into contact with the newest phenomenon of Western European opera music of that time — “opera on contemporary topics” (*Zeitoper*).<sup>31</sup> The domestic audience was already familiar with one of the most famous works of this kind — *Jonny spielt auf* [Jonny Strikes Up] by Ernst Krenek. Shortly before the premiere of *Son of the Sun*, this opera was staged in Leningrad (1928), and then in Moscow (1929). Having noticed innovative features in *Son of the Sun*, the author of the weekly *Sovremenny Teatr* noted after the premiere: “by its nature, the opera can easily be considered topical.”<sup>32</sup> While the generic profile of *Son of the Sun* is certainly not reducible to *Zeitoper*, the scenes of the European quarter do indeed contain many of its characteristic features as discussed by Alexandra Monchick [16, pp. 214–215]:

- the contemporary nature of the events shown (the time of action is 1900, the year of the premiere is 1929);
- a socially significant plot, portraying social conflicts (the focus is on the uprising against European expansion in China);
- the involvement of the characters in everyday modern city life (in Scene 1 of Act I, “the company has gathered for a five o’clock drink,” the action of Scene 2 of Act III takes place in a billiard room, Scene 3 of the same act — in a dance hall, and Scene 2 of Act IV — in the lobby of Hamilton’s house);
- “a combination of modern high and lowbrow music” (the latter type is associated with the leitmotif of pleasures from Scene 1 of Act I, Edith Salier’s romance, Lieutenant Watter’s song, and the dances from Scene 3 of Act III);

<sup>31</sup> As well as Krenek’s *Jonny spielt auf* (1927), among the most famous examples of *Zeitoper* that appeared almost simultaneously with *Son of the Sun*, *Hin und zurück* (1927) and *Neues vom Tage* (1929) by Paul Hindemith, *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*) by Kurt Weill (1928), and *Maschinist Hopkins* by Max Brand (1929).

<sup>32</sup> Worker Correspondent Viktorov. (1929). *Chuvstvuetsya revolyucionnyj ehntuziazm* [One Can Feel the Revolutionary Enthusiasm]. *Sovremenny Teatr* [*Modern Theatre*], (26–27), 383.

- the use of film projections (although this is not reflected in the printed edition of the score, in the responses to the premiere we read: “just before the end... the action is transferred to the movie screen. Some grandiose clashes, explosions, war are shown there”<sup>33</sup>);
- the inclusion of jazz and dance numbers in the opera (the themes of the foxtrot, maxixe, and galop in Scene 1 of Act I and Scene 3 of Act III, Lieutenant Watter’s ragtime leitmotif; the choice of many of these dances is a clear anachronism in relation to 1900, but they were widely used in “topical operas”).

It is interesting that in the responses of contemporaries to the classic example of *Zeitoper* — Brand’s *Maschinist Hopkins* [17, p. 321] — and in the words of critics about *Son of the Sun*, despite all the intellectual and ideological dissimilarity of the attitudes of their authors, a surprising closeness is revealed: in both cases, pandering to the tastes of the contemporary public is noted.

### Conclusion

Thus, despite all the unevenness and diversity of the whole, Vasilenko’s *Son of the Sun* remains an interesting and innovative opera. However, the ideological bias of critical reviews, which were dictated by the events that affected Soviet-Chinese relations in 1929, played a fatal role in the fate of the opera. The behaviour of Vasilenko in the face criticism turned out to be completely different from that of Glière when he found himself in a similar situation: he did not want or did not dare to enter into polemics. Even without this, Vasilenko’s successful creative life was almost a miracle in those years due to his noble family roots. Always acutely aware of the danger, he considered it best not to enter into disputes, but, on the contrary, to demonstrate his readiness to serve the authorities on their terms. Soon Vasilenko won the competition to create the March of the Red Army and wrote the first ever Concerto for Balalaika and Orchestra, which immediately became famous. In terms of his interests in the musical East, the composer switched from the beginning of the 1930s to the more ideologically “safe” folklore of the Asian republics of the USSR.

As a result, *Son of the Sun* was firmly forgotten. Due to its religious and mystical basis, the Boxer Rebellion was dubbed reactionary by Soviet historiography; thus, there could be no talk of resuming the opera. Not only was it never performed again, but it has not yet been recorded in either audio or video format, placing a severe limit on researchers’ access to it.

Now, as the centenary of the premiere of *Son of the Sun* approaches, the presented study of the musical and literary text bolstered by reviews of contemporaries and surviving photographs of the production shows that

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<sup>33</sup> Vygotsky, N. (1929). “Sin Solntsa” (k postanovke v GOTOBe) [*Son of the Sun* (for Production at GOTOB)]. *Proletarskij muzykant* [*Proletarian Musician*], (4), 30.

this opera is not simply interesting as an example of “Russian musical China” but contains much that is valuable and artistically significant – and therefore deserves a better fate.

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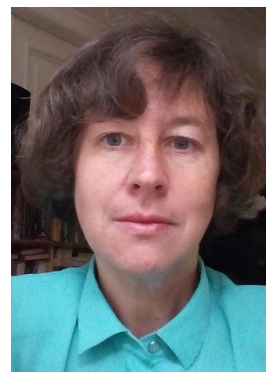
**Interpretive Restoration:  
Othmar Schoeck's *Das Schloß Dürande*  
in a New Edition**

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**Abstract.** The article highlights a high-profile project by the Bern Academy of Arts to bring back into musical life one of the key works in the history of 20th-century Swiss music – Othmar Schoeck's opera *Das Schloß Dürande* (1941). For many decades, despite its manifest musical merits, the performance of this composition seemed absolutely impossible due to the political overtones with which it is associated. Various “interpretive restoration” strategies were aimed at creating a new version of the opera. In the first place, the libretto, which was created by the Nazi writer Hermann Burte and based on the novella of the same name by the 19th-century German romantic author Joseph Eichendorff, underwent significant revision. The rather low literary level of the original libretto, which employed a large number of ideological clichés and slogans, required the replacement of more than half of the text, essentially involving its rewriting based on the appropriate verse texts written by Eichendorff.

Translated by Thomas A. Beavitt

The changes also affected the vocal part. In addition, a careful study of historical documents made it possible to clarify the circumstances of the opera's premiere, which took place in Nazi Berlin in 1943. After a mere four performances, the opera was removed at the request of the Third Reich ideologist, Hermann Göring. New biographical information has also more fully revealed the position of Schoeck, who was not a supporter of National Socialism. Considering that "being Swiss" meant adopting a scrupulous attitude of "neutrality", the composer collaborated with the Nazis for career reasons. The result of many years of work on the project was the performance of the updated opera *Daß Schloß Dürande* at the Meiningen Theatre in 2019. It didn't convince everyone. However, the determining factor in assessing the opera was not so much the quality of the music and libretto, but rather the problematic history of its creation and reception in an ideological context. Thus, even in its new "denazified" version, *Das Schloß Dürande* remains closely connected with the past.

**Keywords:** Othmar Schoeck, Joseph von Eichendorff, Switzerland, 20th century music, National Socialism, interpretive restoration, history of perception

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*Музыкальный театр:  
либреттистика, сценография и режиссура*

Научная статья

**«Интерпретирующая реставрация»:  
«Замок Дюранде» Отмара Шёка  
в новой редакции**

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**Аннотация.** В статье освещается резонансный проект Высшей школы искусств Берна, цель которого — вернуть в музыкальную жизнь одно из ключевых сочинений в истории швейцарской музыки XX века, оперу Отмара Шёка «Замок Дюранде» (1941). Исполнение сочинения на протяжении многих десятилетий представлялось абсолютно невозможным, несмотря на его очевидные музыкальные достоинства. Стратегии «интерпретирующей реставрации» были направлены на создание новой версии оперы. В первую очередь существенной переработке подверглось либретто, созданное нацистским писателем Германом Бурте на основе одноименной новеллы немецкого романтика XIX века Йозефа Эйхендорфа. Крайне низкий литературный уровень текста, обилие идеологических штампов и лозунгов потребовали замены большей половины либретто, которое, по сути, было сочинено заново и превращено в прозу с использованием подходящих стихотворных текстов Эйхендорфа. Изменения коснулись и вокальной партии. Кроме того, тщательное изучение исторических документов позволило прояснить обстоятельства премьеры оперы, состоявшейся в нацистском Берлине в 1943 году. После четырех спектаклей опера была снята по требованию идеолога Третьего рейха Г. Геринга. Новые биографические сведения более полно раскрыли и позицию Шёка,

который не был сторонником национал-социализма. Твердо убежденный в том, что «как швейцарец» он всегда «нейтрален», композитор сотрудничал с нацистами, руководствуясь карьерными соображениями. Результатом многолетней работы над проектом стало исполнение обновленной оперы «Замок Дюранде» в театре Майнингена в 2019 году. Оно убедило не всех. Определяющим в оценке оперы было не качество музыки и либретто, но проблематичная история создания и восприятия в идеологизированном контексте. И в новой, «денацифицированной» версии «Замок Дюранде» остался тесно связанным с прошлым.

**Ключевые слова:** Отмар Шёк, Йозеф фон Эйхендорф, Швейцария, музыка XX века, национал-социализм, интерпретирующая реставрация, история восприятия

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*Introduction*

The name of Othmar Schoeck (1886–1957), a Swiss composer of the first half of the 20th century, is relatively unknown (*Illustration 1*). Schoeck was certainly overshadowed by his famous compatriots Arthur Honegger and Frank Martin, who at different times left Switzerland to achieve international fame. However, around ten years ago, Schoeck’s work attracted the attention of the musical community. At the centre of a high-profile project by the Bern Academy of Arts is Schoeck’s forgotten opera *Das Schloß Dürande*, one of the key works in the history of 20th-century Swiss music — and, according to some critics, the composer’s masterpiece [1, p. 9]. For many decades, despite its obvious musical merits, the performance of this work seemed absolutely impossible due to the political overtones with which it continues to be associated. Thus, the opera has been stigmatised due to the circumstances of its commissioning and performance in Nazi Germany. In 2014, a research group was formed in Bern, which included representatives of various specialties — musicologists, writers, and performing musicians. Its remit was to develop strategies for so-called “interpretive restoration” to permit the composition to be brought back into musical life and included in the repertoire of opera houses. The restoration work, which took place over several years, was reported in detail in the press and thoroughly documented in scholarly reports.<sup>1</sup>

The Swiss project of “interpretive restoration” raises a whole slew of issues that go beyond the scope of Schoeck’s opera and are relevant for the entire musical and theatrical community. Paradoxically, it combines two almost opposite tendencies: on the one hand, the rehabilitation of repressed art; on the other, an attempt to reconsider the attitude towards art that tarnishes its reputation by serving ideology. It also raises the question of the artistic role played by the quality and content of the opera libretto, along with the possibility of completely replacing it while preserving the music. Finally, it also problematises the question of reception: can a work be “cleansed” of the history of its original creation and reception in an ideological context?



*Illustration 1.*  
Othmar Schoeck.  
Photographer Gotthard Schuch  
[2, p. 19]

<sup>1</sup> See more on the Bern Academy of Arts page dedicated to the project: „Das Schloss Dürande“ von Othmar Schoeck. (n.d.). *Institut Interpretation*. Hochschule der Künste Bern. Retrieved December 9, 2024, from <https://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/projekte/das-schloss-duerande-von-othmar-schoeck>

*Betrayal of Modernism and Ostensible Neutrality:  
The Premiere of Das Schloß Dürande in Berlin*

Schoeck's reputation in musicology as a fanatical anti-modernist has a sound basis.<sup>2</sup> The so-called "Helvetic stylistic lag" [4, p. 4] has been applied to characterise the special status of Swiss music, which for a long time remained an island of patriarchal tranquillity amid the turbulent current of new musical trends during the early twentieth century. The Romantic tradition was continued in Schoeck's work, in which the main place was occupied by music with words — opera and various chamber-vocal compositions. It was only in the early 1920s, having visited Paris, which was at that time engulfed in an anti-Romantic backlash, and after attending several festivals of contemporary music in Austria and Germany, that Schoeck became acquainted with the current state of his peers' oeuvres. Following this period, he enthusiastically listened to and studied the music of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Hindemith and Krenek.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of several months in 1923, he went from being an avowed tonal composer to immerse himself in atonality, perhaps not without being stung by Paul Bekker's ironic remark about the alleged backwardness of Swiss music: "Well, 50 years will pass and Switzerland will have its say" [3, p. 45]. However, Schoeck's "modern" works of the second half of the 1920s did not find popular or critical support, leading to his subsequent break with modernism. It seems that resentment towards his progressive contemporaries may have made the composer an easy prey for the Nazi ideologists. It was at this time due to just such a cultural backlash that new perspectives were opening up for Schoeck's music in Germany.

"As a Swiss, I am neutral" — this phrase of Schoeck's became famous when in 1937, having received the German Erwin von Steinbach Prize, he was forced to answer to criticism in Switzerland (see [1, p. 8]). These words were intended to demonstrate his supposedly apolitical position. His avowed belief that Swiss citizenship represented a guarantee of neutrality, whether sincere or not, in any case provided him with an alibi. While he was not a National Socialist, he displayed loyalty towards them and sought to extract maximum benefit from his cooperation with them.<sup>4</sup> Like any composer, he wanted his art to have

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in his 1950 diary entry, Schoeck calls Stravinsky "the chief charlatan of modern music" and his work "vile sabotage" [3, p. 44].

<sup>3</sup> In 1923, Schoeck came to Paris at the invitation of Honegger, where he met the composers known as "Les Six" and attended the premiere of *Les Noces*; in August of the same year he participated in the chamber music festival of the *International Society for Contemporary Music* (ISCM) in Salzburg, where he met Alban Berg, Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Maurice Ravel, Alois Hába, Paul Hindemith and Ernst Krenek; in June 1924, he attended the festival of the All-German Music Union, where Three Fragments from Berg's opera *Wozzeck* were performed [3, pp. 44–45].

<sup>4</sup> As B. Felmlí notes, Schoeck was hardly an anti-Semite who welcomed the removal of Jewish musicians from their positions; rather, he hoped that "the place which had been so long unjustly denied him would now be freed for himself" [5, p. 132].

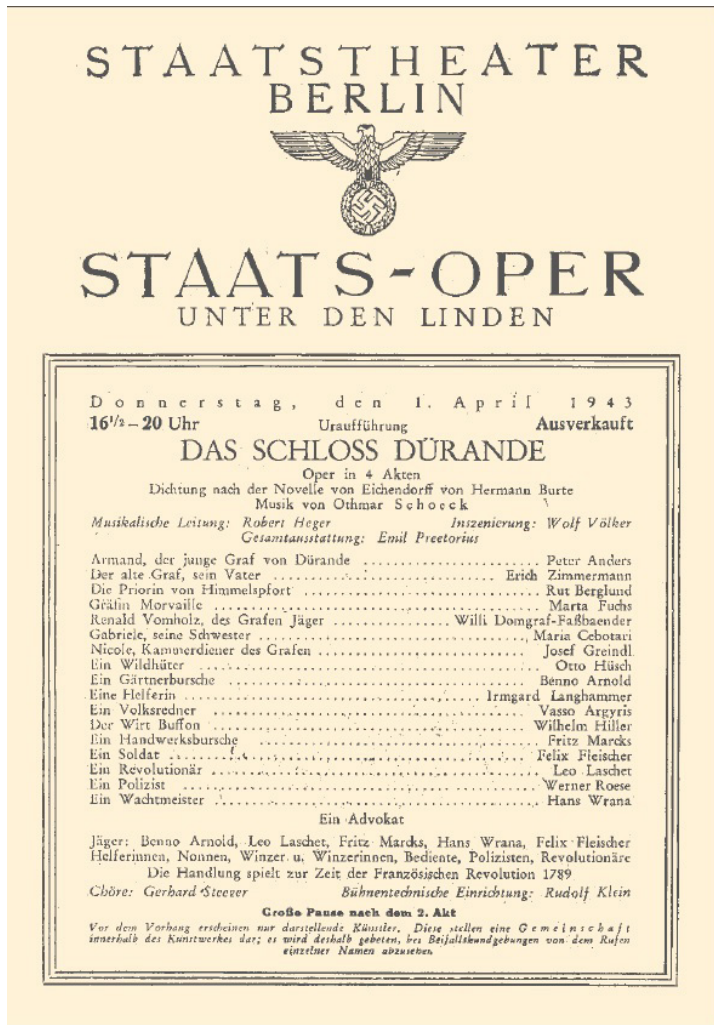


Illustration 2.

Poster of the premiere of the opera  
*Das Schloß Dürande* in Berlin  
on April 1, 1943 [2, Titelblatt]

a wider resonance and for his works to be performed under optimal conditions. To this end, he was ready to compromise even with his own conscience. Perhaps he also lacked the courage and determination to say “no” to those whom he respected and whose opinions he was accustomed to consider as determinative<sup>5</sup>. In any case, he probably had no idea that such actions could ruin his entire subsequent career.

This is exactly what happened with the opera *Das Schloß Dürande* when it was staged at the Berlin State Opera on April 1, 1943 (Illustration 2). The premiere turned into a tragic farce, since the Under den Linden theatre had just been rebuilt after the RAF raids in 1941. The explosion of the Dürande castle — which, according to the plot, concludes the opera — was shown “so convincingly that several minutes passed before the terrified audience realised that the explosion was not real” [7, p. 485]. The explosion became a prophecy of both the fate

of the theatre and that of the Third Reich itself. A few months later, the restored theatre was again bombed. Two years later, the Third Reich also fell, having already been predetermined following the conclusion of the Battle of Stalingrad.

The opera itself, which might have seemed to satisfy all the ideological criteria, also faced collapse. After four performances, *Das Schloß Dürande* was withdrawn at the request of Hermann Göring, who supervised the Prussian theatres. While Göring did not attend the premiere, he read the libretto.

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, two of Schoeck’s works can be interpreted as having a political subtext serving as a hidden criticism of Nazism: the *Cantata Op. 49*, composed in 1933, based on texts by Eichendorff (the words about the “new Pied Piper” can be understood as a hint at Hitler), while his satirical six-voice canon was also supposedly aimed at the Nazi leader, see [5, pp. 133–134].

In an angry telegram to Intendant General Heinz Tietjen (*Illustration 3*) Göring called the opera's libretto "sheer nonsense" (*aufgelegter Bockmist*) and demanded that appropriate measures be taken [8, pp. 9–10].

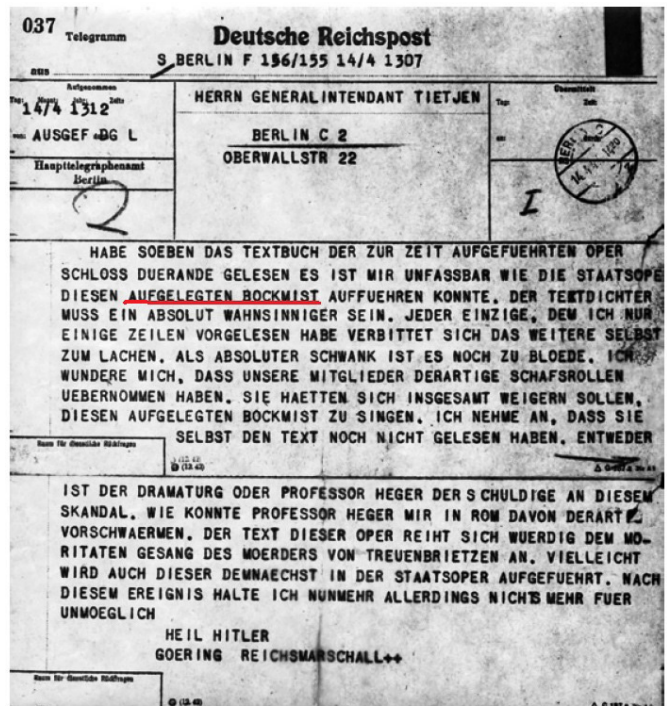
The opera also met with failure in Schoeck's native Zurich a year later. The performances were poorly attended, the absurd libretto having been openly ridiculed by the public, so further performances were cancelled. Schoeck could not be forgiven for having collaborated with the Nazis.

Thus the composer paid a high reputational price for the opportunity to see his work performed in Berlin. With the disappearance of his opera into critical and popular oblivion, his career was ruined, having severe effects on his health. The premiere had become a shameful stain on the composer's biography. Although of course Schoeck bears the responsibility for making the decision, others shared this burden.

For example, the Vienna Universal Edition, headed by Alfred Schlee, argued in favour of a Berlin premiere since believing that the artistic level here would be higher than anywhere else. "Berlin has the advantage of being able to provide an absolutely first-class performance, for which no artistic or technical resources will be spared" [9, p. 57], wrote Schlee on May 14, 1940. At the same time, he opined that a premiere on a small stage would be more useful for promoting the opera.

The famous Swiss patron of the arts Werner Reinhart (1884–1951) also had a huge influence on Schoeck (*Illustration 4*). An amateur clarinetist and the owner of a large fortune (his ancestors had been engaged in trade with India), he was a major influence in the development path of 20th century art. It was thanks to Reinhart that Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* saw the light of day; his other protégés included Hindemith, Honegger, Webern, Krenek, and Pfitzner. For over thirty years, he financed musical life in Winterthur, Switzerland, his partnership with the conductor Hermann Scherchen making it one of the preeminent centres of modern music.<sup>6</sup> Reinhart also insisted that the premiere of *Das Schloß Dürande*

<sup>6</sup> For more details on Reinhart's patronage [10].



*Illustration 3.* Telegram from H. Goering to H. Tietjen with a negative assessment of the libretto [2, p. 10]





Illustration 4.  
[Werner Reinhart](#) (1945).  
(accessed 12.11.2024)

the fate of real people” [4, p. 260], believes musicologist Chris Walton. With the rise of the Nazis to power, Burte was elected to the newly formed Prussian Academy of Arts; in 1936, he became a member of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. The awarding of the Hebel Prize (*Johann Peter Hebel-Preis*) to him cemented his fame and confirmed his title as “the first and best National Socialist poet” [12, p. 149]. A staged photograph (*Illustration 5*) shows Burte reading Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. An ornament of the swastika, revered by him since his youth<sup>9</sup>, covers the specially made table

should take place “in a first-class German theatre” [7, p. 485]. It was largely on the basis of the philanthropist’s support of Schoeck for many years, that the latter followed his advice and gave the opera to Berlin. It was also Reinhart who introduced Schoeck to the German writer Hermann Burte, the future librettist of the opera.

#### *Libretto and Original Source*

Hermann Burte (1879–1960) became one of the lucky writers who were sanctioned to practice this craft in Germany during the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> His journey, which started from simple poetry in the folk spirit (*im Volkston*)<sup>8</sup> would lead him to become a leading propagandist of National Socialist ideas. “His writings and correspondence clearly reveal a man whose opinion of himself is far higher than his abilities warrant, who is shameless in his pursuit of fame and money, and who does not seem to care one iota about



Illustration 5.  
Hermann Burte reading  
*Mein Kampf* (1941) [1, S. 124]

<sup>7</sup> For information on how literary life was regulated in Nazi Germany [11, pp. 116–118].

<sup>8</sup> Even such an august figure as Rainer Maria Rilke succumbed to the charm of Burte's Alemannic lyric poetry, calling one of his poems “a universal German treasure.” [12, p. 148].

<sup>9</sup> Even before the swastika became a symbol of the Nazi movement, it was understood as a sign of Antisemitism [12, p. 145].

at which the poet sits [13, p. 124]. It was to Burte, then, that Schoeck came with a proposal to work together: “Why don’t we write an opera together?!” And I have a plot: *Das Schloß Dürande* by von Eichendorff! [14, p. 93].

From his youth, Schoeck knew and loved the poetry of Joseph von Eichendorff (1788–1857) (*Illustration 6*), one of the most famous German Romantics<sup>10</sup>; he created numerous songs based on the poet’s texts, which became a continuation of the tradition of Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Wolf. However, in the fervent 1930s, the appeal to Eichendorff, “the most German of all German poets” [16, p. 221], whose work became a cult object in Nazi Germany, could



*Illustration 6.* Monument to Joseph von Eichendorff. Wangen [2, p. 41]

not help but be interpreted ideologically. “Eichendorff’s faith in future generations and their honest struggle was not disgraced. “On the contrary, it actually found its confirmation through us, the National Socialists” [4, p. 115], wrote Rainer Schlösser, president of the Eichendorff Foundation, in 1935.

The original source for Burte’s opera libretto was Eichendorff’s 1836 novella *Das Schloß Dürande* [*The Durande Castle*]. It is dedicated to the events of the great French Revolution, against the backdrop of which a tragic love drama unfolds. Young Gabrielle, the sister of the gardener at the Durande castle, falls in love with the count’s son Armand. Her brother Renald is sure that this love will destroy Gabrielle. In the process of trying to save his sister, Renald goes mad, killing his lovers one by one, then setting fire to the castle and dying in the fire himself.

The tragedy of heroes as *pars pro toto* represents the tragedy of a destroyed world. Eichendorff, who was born a year before the revolution, reflected his attitude towards it here: he perceives the historical turning point as a catastrophe, violence, the death of the harmonious world of the past, which is plunging into chaos and oblivion.

Burte changes a lot in Eichendorff’s text, updating it in accordance with the demands of Nazi propaganda: “Hitler’s personal cult [...] seems to have become second nature to him” [4, p. 259]. The French Revolution is associated with the Bolsheviks; the main character Renald is now a Communist rebel, while

<sup>10</sup> Nowadays it is customary to interpret it within the framework of Biedermeier [15, pp. 499–501].

Countess Murvay (a character introduced by Burte) represents the aristocracy, which is waiting for a new hero capable of awakening the nation – her words are reminiscent of Nazi slogans “*Deutschland erwache!*” (“Germany, awaken!”) [4, p. 257]. However, the libretto is so obviously mediocre that it even angered Göring himself. Eichendorff’s prose gives way to primitive, pompous and ponderous poetry, saturated with Nazi clichés and slogans: in Burte’s libretto, the “purity of blood” is repeatedly emphasised, which can be understood as a hint at Aryan origins, while the unsavoury character Renald, who joined the revolutionaries and “broke all ties of blood,” is reinterpreted by Burte as a “Jewish Bolshevik” [4, p. 258].

The fall of the Third Reich put an end to the history of the opera: the odious libretto carried Schoeck’s music away into oblivion. The author of a monograph on the composer, Chris Walton, considered only a concert performance of the work to be possible in the future, but not a stage performance: “If we never see this opera on the stage, the world will be a little better” [4, p. 261].

*Strategies of “Interpretive Restoration”: “Back to Eichendorff”*

It was clear that “disinfection” or denazification of the text was the main prior condition for any revival of the opera.<sup>11</sup> Since more than half (60%) of the libretto had to be replaced, it was essentially written anew. The Bernese poet Francesco Micieli was invited to work on the text.<sup>12</sup> With the slogan “Back to Eichendorff” [8, p. 34] he carried out a “reverse transfer” of the poet’s poetic and prose texts into the libretto, which made it possible to tell the story anew, recreating its original atmosphere. The vocabulary was significantly revised, including exclusion of the words “blood,” “people,” “honour,” “eternity”; moreover, certain key words from the original were added, such as “silence.” Below is a small example of the reworking of the text.<sup>13</sup>

The change in the libretto necessitated adjustments to the vocal part. This task was carried out by the Swiss conductor Mario Venzago).<sup>14</sup> When working on an opera, Schoeck often composed the music prior

<sup>11</sup> There are other examples of opera re-texting in the history of music, one of the most famous being *A Life for the Tsar / Ivan Susanin* by Mikhail Glinka, about which M. G. Raku writes in detail in his monograph *Musical Classics in the Myth-Making of the Soviet Era* [17, pp. 470–485]. In the numerous revisions of the libretto in the 1920s, as the author convincingly proves, it was not about “the return of a classical masterpiece to the stage, but about the urgent need for Soviet opera to come to it” [17, p. 476]. Despite the differences in context, the respective initiators of the re-texting both of Glinka’s opera and Schoeck’s had to solve a similar problem of replacing the libretto text while preserving the music.

<sup>12</sup> Misieli outlined his principles for working on a libretto [18, pp. 207–210].

<sup>13</sup> For the full old and new text of the opera [19, pp. 211–330].

<sup>14</sup> Venzago’s work on adapting the vocal part to the new text is described in [8, pp. 42–78].

to the completed libretto, only adding the words to the written music subsequently. Venzago did essentially the same thing. They both inserted or deleted syllables, changed stresses, and adjusted the melodic line and rhythm. The example below [20, p. 189] (*Illustration 7*) allows us to understand how the vocal part was created anew based on the existing outline. Unlike the vocal part, the orchestral part did not change. Many small redactions were carried out to give the action greater compactness and purposefulness.

Old text	New text
Renald Verfluchter Glaube An Ehre und Wort, Sperber und Taube, Beide sind fort!	Renald Leises Schauern In dunklen Bäumen*. Sperber und Taube, Beide sind fort!
Gabriele Ich bin dein, mit Leib und Seele, Lebend, sterbend, Gabriele!	Gabriele Mir flimmert's so schön vor Augen wie dazumal, als du zu mir kamst!

\* quote from the poem by J. Eichendorff  
*At Night (Nachts)*.

The image displays two musical score excerpts side-by-side, illustrating the reworking of a vocal part. Both excerpts feature a vocal line (marked 'R.' for Recitative) and a piano accompaniment. The top excerpt shows the original text: "und setzt dein Haus in Brand!". The bottom excerpt shows the new text: "Es ist so still, dass mir graut in der Einsamkeit.". The piano accompaniment is identical in both, with markings such as "molto espr.", "p", and "pp". The vocal line in the bottom excerpt is significantly reworked, including a triplet of notes and a change in the melodic contour. A box labeled "64" is present in both excerpts, indicating a specific measure or section.

*Illustration 7.* An example of the reworking of a vocal part in a new edition [1, 189]

The revised libretto made it possible to rediscover the opera's music, which can now be perceived as embodying of the spirit of Eichendorff's poetry. Behind it stands the deserved fame of a vocal composer, the author of songs based on Eichendorff's lyrical work, who absorbed the tradition of the refined manner of poetry into the music.<sup>15</sup> As already noted, although the opera is not one of Schoeck's more radical works, the experience of contact with contemporaneous artistic trends left its mark on it: the styles of Late Romanticism and Modernism are refracted through the prism of the new, post-war era, creating a productive synthesis. This is noticeable not only in the harmonic language, where tonal sensations are sometimes blurred, but also in the instrumentation: the luxuriance of the late Romantic orchestra coexists with asceticism and intimacy. Accompanied by vocal voices, the linearity inherent in neoclassicism emerges from the solo instruments; new timbres appear in the orchestra, the most noticeable being the piano; intonations of new corporeality are also discernible, for example, in the foxtrot march depicting the Jacobins.

One of the opera's most vivid scenes features Armand's hunting song with the chorus at the end of the first act (*Example 1*). Weber's forest romance appears here in a late-romantic garb, in which allusions to Richard Strauss and Erich Wolfgang Korngold can be discerned. "At times it seems as if Schoeck had put all the subtlety of his craft into the one area over which he had sole control, namely, orchestration" [4, p. 255], writes Walton.

The other side of the Romantic tradition is revealed in the appearance of the main character Gabrielle, who falls in love with Armand. The skilfully harmonised stylisation of the folk song with which she first appears on stage emphasises the girl's innocence and sincerity (*Example 2*). The simple diatonic melody, representing an embodiment of the "German soul" [4, p. 117], sounds against the background of an impressionistic orchestral accompaniment.

The graceful aria of the Count, Seigneur of the Durande Castle, refers back to a pre-Romantic era stylised as French music of the 18th century typically accompanied by a tambourine, which is skilfully imitated by grace notes of strings and brass (*Example 3*). In Schoeck, Lully's lifeless era appears as a ghost of a sad and obsolete past.

The luxurious love duet of Gabriele and Armand, which is permeated with overtones of Tristan's *Liebestod*, is heard twice in the opera — in the first act and in the finale, where it is periodically interrupted by the music of the French Revolution (*Example 4*). Schoeck also quotes its main symbol, the Marseillaise. Evil — in the traditions of the 20th century — is caricatured by a toy-like mechanistic nature.

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<sup>15</sup> Schoeck's music referred to Eichendorff's poems throughout his entire creative career. He created choral works, orchestral and ensemble songs, as well as solo songs for voice and piano [20].

The image shows a page of a musical score for an opera. It is divided into two systems of staves. The first system includes vocal parts for Tenor (I, II), Bass (I, II), and Chorus (Tenor, Bass), along with piano accompaniment for Flute I, Flute II, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The second system continues the vocal and piano parts. The score includes lyrics in German and dynamic markings such as 'Bewegter', 'pp', 'mf', 'ff', 'cresc.', and 'decresc.'.

Example 1. Armand's Hunting song with chorus. 1 act, m. 3 after fig. 57<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Schoeck, O. (2018) *Das Schloss Dürande*. Oper in vier Akten nach einer Novelle von Joseph von Eichendorff. Neufassung des originalen Librettos von Hermann Burte (1943) durch Francesco Micieli unter freier Verwendung von Texten Joseph Eichendorffs. Musikalische Adaption: Mario Venzago. In *Zusammenarbeit mit einem Forschungsprojekt der Hochschule der Künste Bern*, Leitung: Thomas Gartmann. Partitur UE 37 391. (pp. 112–113).

rit. ----- Tempo I

Fl. I. II.

Bass-Klar. (B)

I. II. 3 Hr. (F) III.

Harfe

Gabriele.

Kennst du schwei-ge, blüt-be still!

für Spung: Da span-gen vom Kle die Quel-len, da Und a-bends die Wöl-der rau-schen, von

rit. ----- Tempo I

Fl. I. II.

Viola

Violin I.

Violin II.

Basso.

Gabriele.

Fliegen die Vög-lein ins Tal Und Fern' nur fällt kein Schuss, da

5

I. II.

Bass-Klar. (B)

I. II. III.

Harfe

Gabriele.

Fliegen die Vög-lein ins Tal Und Fern' nur fällt kein Schuss, da

Viola

Violin I.

Violin II.

Basso.

Example 2. Gabriele's Song. 1 act, fig. 2<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 7–8.

*Bewegt (♩ = 1)*

1. Fl.  
2.  
1. Hob.  
Engl. Hrn.  
1. Clar. B.  
2.  
Bassclar. B.  
1. 2.  
Horn F  
3. 4.  
1. 2.  
Tramp. C.  
2. 3.  
1. 2.  
Pos.  
3.  
Tuba  
Pt.  
Graf

*Bewegt (♩ = 1)*

I. Vl.  
II. Vl.  
Br.  
Vcl.  
Cb.

Da draus - sen stellt die ver-rück-te Zeit, der Sturm wühlt die...

24

1. Hob.  
Engl. Hrn.  
1.  
Fag.  
2.  
Graf

Ze - ten sich bau-men. Da fast der Sturm die Wel - len durch - wühlt die Einsam-keit. - wacht auf, ihr Traum-ge-set-ten!

I. Vl.  
II. Vl.  
Br.  
Vcl.  
Cb.

24

Example 3. The Count's Arioso. 4 act, mm. 237-242<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51.



*molto rall. - - - - - Breit*

1. 2. Fl.  
1. 2. Hob.  
1. 2. Clar. B  
Bssclar. B  
1. 2. Fag.  
1. 2. Horn F  
3. 4.  
1. 2. Tromp. C  
3.  
1. 2. Pos.  
3.  
Klav.  
Hrf.  
Pk.  
Hinter der Scene  
1. 2. Picc.  
1. 2. Tromp.  
Tr.  
Gabriella  
Armand  
*(immer leiser)* *pp* Al - les ru - hig, du kannst - gehn, und kein Au - ge wird dich sehn. *molto assr*  
u Jan - send

*molto rall. - - - - - Breit*

Bva  
I.  
Vi.  
II.  
Br.  
Vcl.  
Cb.  
*pp dolce*

The image displays a page from a musical score, numbered 92 at the top left. The score is written in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. It begins with the tempo marking *molto rit.* and *Tempo I.* The score includes parts for various instruments and voices:

- 1. 2. Fl.** (Flutes)
- 2. Hob.** (Horn)
- 2. Clar. B** (Clarinets in B-flat)
- 3. Clar. B** (Clarinets in B-flat)
- 2. Fag. Fag.** (Bassoons)
- 2. Horn F** (Horns in F)
- 1. 4.** (Horns in F)
- 1. 2. Tromp. C** (Trumpets in C)
- 3.** (Trumpets in C)
- 1. 2. Pos.** (Positively)
- 3.** (Positively)
- PK. Tamtam** (Tamtam)
- Harfe** (Harp)
- 4. 2. Picc** (Piccolo)
- 1. 2. Tramp.** (Trumpets)
- Tr.** (Trumpets)
- Sopr. Alt.** (Soprano Alto)
- Chor** (Chorus)
- Ten. Bas.** (Tenor Bass)
- Gabriele** (Gabriele)
- Armand** (Armand)
- I.** (Violin I)
- II.** (Violin II)
- Br.** (Brass)
- Vel.** (Viola)
- Cb.** (Cello)

The score features numerous dynamic markings such as *pp*, *ppp*, *ppp morendo*, *ppp con strisficcit*, and *ppp con strifficrit*. There are also performance instructions like *morendo*, *marcato*, *rit.*, and *T. più.* The vocal parts include lyrics in Italian, such as "An - - gen hat die Nacht." and "sie stirbt". The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 92. The tempo marking *molto rit.* is followed by *Tempo I.* in the second system.

Example 4. Reminiscence of the duet of Armand and Gabriele. 4 act. Final, mm. 918–922<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 184–185.

The opera's finale is reminiscent of the ending of Wagner's tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*: all the heroes die and the Dürande castle is engulfed in flames. However, the end of the old world lacks the grandeur of Wagnerian eschatology, instead being reminiscent of the fatal denouement of a verismo opera. Its outcome is unclear, the last words of the opera are poetic lines from Eichendorff, put into the mouth of the castle servant: "All my life I have been trying to grasp deceptive visions. Who is the hunter here and who is the game?"

### Conclusion

The new version of the opera, which was premiered in 2019 at the Meiningen Opera House, met with varied, sometimes contradictory, responses. The titles of the reviews are eloquent: "Opera Renovation," "Second-Hand Political Biedermeier," "White Jacket on a Brown Opera."<sup>20</sup> They testify to the conclusion that even today, *Das Schloß Dürande* cannot be extracted from the context of its time, despite the rewritten and "cleaned" libretto – this, apparently, is the essential difference between the updated opera by Schoeck and other, more successful examples of such alterations. The perception of the work is determined not by the music, not by the libretto, and not even by the direction, but by its dark and problematic history. Anti-German sentiment was widespread in Swiss society both during and after World War II: "surrounded by the Axis powers,<sup>21</sup> Switzerland had long feared, not without reason, a full-scale German invasion; thus, Schoeck's decision to allow the premiere of his opera in Nazi Germany was met with a mixture of incomprehension and anger" [7, p. 485].

However, the historical past, as well as the actual present, differs from the chessboard on which white and black pieces play. On the contrary, it is rich in shades and halftones. In the same way, a living work of art cannot be reduced to its history; it is immeasurably broader than the context of its origin. Beat Felmlí notes: "We need to distinguish between two fundamental aspects. First of all, this is the man and the artist Schoeck. Like everyone else, he lived in a certain era, which forced him to act based on various considerations, such as ethics and egoism, altruism and opportunism. [...] Secondly, there is a piece of music created by the composer Schoeck in this special historical context. This should be analysed and evaluated in accordance with aesthetic, compositional-technical and historical criteria, but not in accordance with the convictions and moods of the author" [5, pp. 131–132]. In the case of *Das Schloß Dürande*, these twin aspects are brought as close as possible to – and even identified with – each other. As long as this remains the case, such interpretive restoration of "ideologically contaminated" musical works seems doomed to failure.

<sup>20</sup> Reviews of the premiere are available on the project website, see <https://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/projekte/das-schloss-duerande-von-othmar-schoeck>

<sup>21</sup> This is understood to refer to the countries of the Nazi bloc, primarily Germany and Italy.

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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,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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*).<sup>3</sup> The most important pages of the history of this cycle will be illuminated in the present work.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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].

<sup>3</sup> 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].<sup>4</sup> Among the new forms of its existence, Yusefovich mentions

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> 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>.

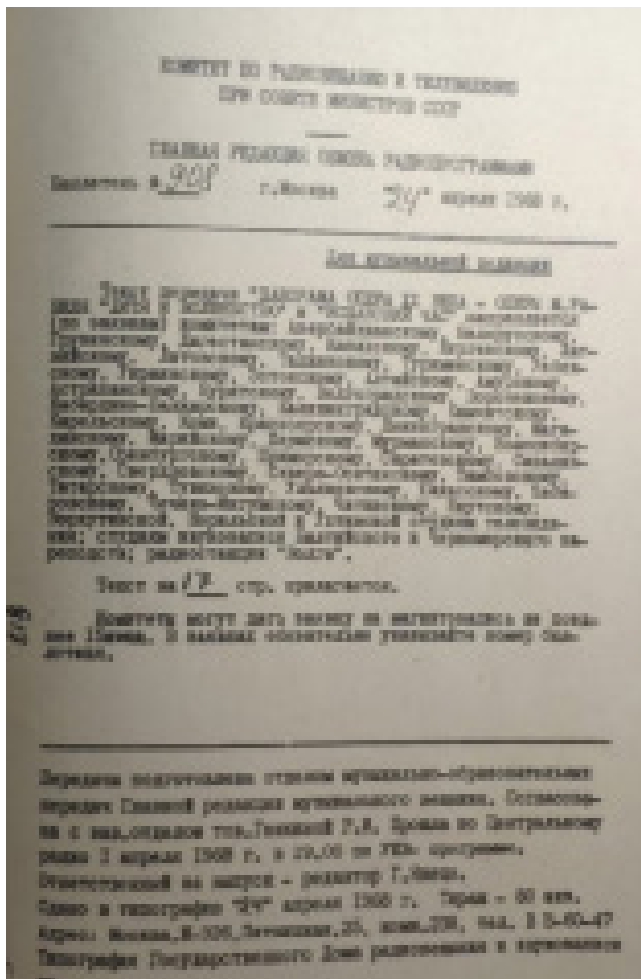


Illustration 3. The page preceding the text of the radio program.

*Panorama of 20th Century Opera:*  
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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.<sup>6</sup>

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,<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, not all the texts are provided with detailed information.

<sup>7</sup> 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,<sup>8</sup> 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, conductor<sup>9</sup>.

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-Diskau 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

<sup>8</sup> The precise name of the theater is not indicated.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

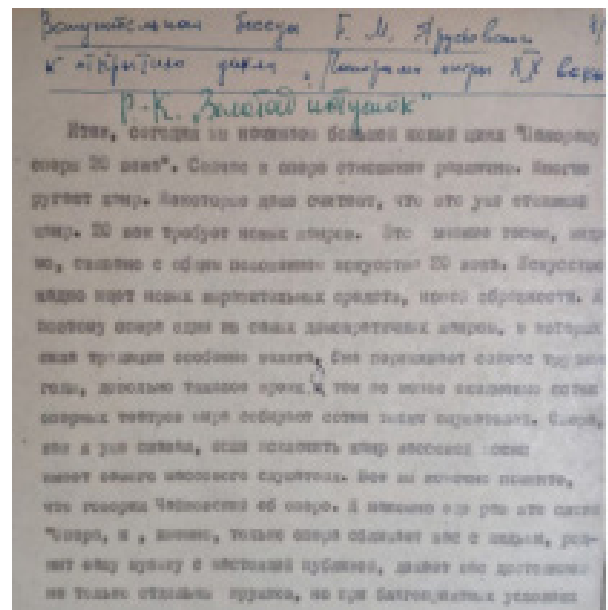
No less remarkable is the amount of time that was allotted for the programs — up to four hours of air time, which seems unthinkable in present-day radio. The operas were transmitted in entirety, with detailed presentments of the synopsis before each act. But the most important element was in the introductory 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."<sup>10</sup> 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.

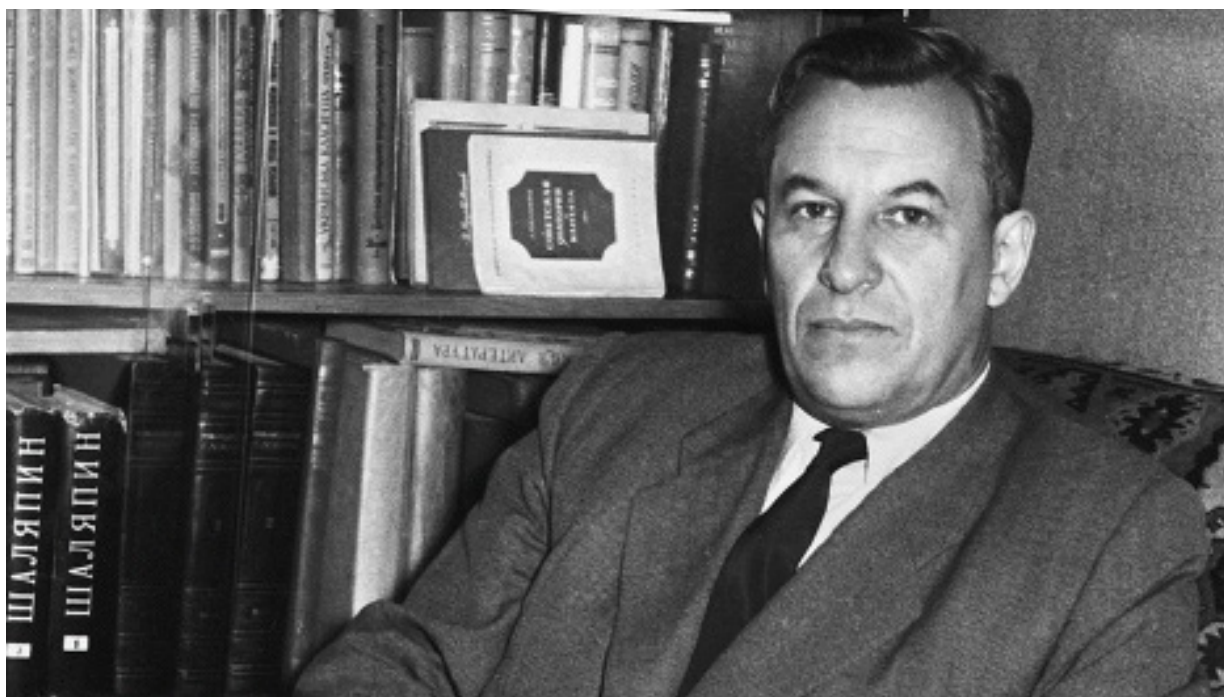
*Photo from the author's personal archive*

<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup>

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.”<sup>12</sup> 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.”<sup>13</sup>

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.”<sup>14</sup> In connection with the operas of Janáček,



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

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> 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...”<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Sergei Diaghilev’s ability, opera “became flooded with the choreographic element [...] Choreography assumed equal rights with the vocal sphere...”<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

### *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.”<sup>18</sup> This was followed by:

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 14–15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

Giacomo Puccini *Madama Butterfly* January 15\22, 1968.<sup>19</sup>

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,<sup>20</sup> 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,"<sup>21</sup> "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

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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.”<sup>22</sup> Another comment is noteworthy: “The composer’s active intrusion into the sphere of the libretto must be hailed.”<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup>

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*,<sup>25</sup> 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).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>25</sup> 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,

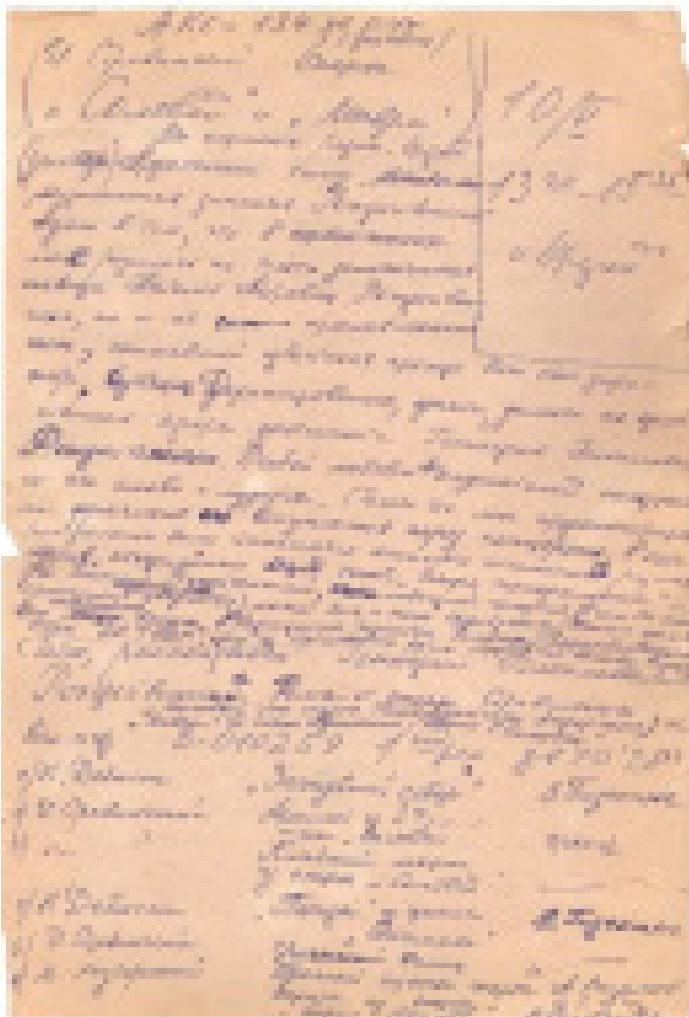


Illustration 6. Manuscript page inserted into one of the volumes of *Panorama of 20th Century Opera*.

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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