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Opera as Reflected in Russian Academic Periodicals of the Last Five Years

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Abstract. The article gives an evaluation of the present-day condition of research works dedicated to opera in Russian academic periodicals and their correlation with publications in musicology in other countries. The material for analysis was provided by over 200 articles from 18 Russian journals, as well as a number of works written in English. As a result, it was possible to reveal several priority aspects of examination of opera. Conclusions are made about the expansion of the chronological and geographic frameworks in research works written in Russia, which corresponds to the world-wide tendency. At the same time, as analysis has shown, Russian musicologists, unlike those in other countries, pay much less attention to the Classical and Romantic heritage, considering it to having been sufficiently studied, and give their preferences to early and contemporary works. An important place in Russian scholarship about opera at the present time is taken up by source studies works receptivity and libretto studies — the areas closely connected with the needs for preparation of academically fitted editions and performances of opera works. Special attention is paid to articles in which opera becomes an object of theoretical analysis. Herein, Russian musicology keeps pace with that in other countries. All of these observations have made it possible to come to the conclusion that at the present time such directions in research of opera predominate which earlier for various reasons remained out of the scholars' eyesight. Russian scholarship about opera is undergoing a period of deconstruction of an entire set of cliché evaluations and filling up of blank spots, which creates the basis for new approaches to interpretation of the opera heritage and the topical processes of musical theater.

Keywords: opera, Russian musicology, academic musicological journals, the newest publications about opera, reception of opera works

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Музыкальный театр

Научная статья

Опера в зеркале российской научной периодики последних пяти лет

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Аннотация. В статье оценивается современное состояние исследований, посвящённых опере, в российской научной периодике и их соотношение с публикациями в зарубежном музыковедении. Материалом для анализа стали более 200 статей из 18 отечественных журналов, а также ряд англоязычных работ. В результате удалось выявить несколько приоритетных аспектов рассмотрения оперы. Сделаны выводы о расширении хронологических и географических рамок в отечественных исследованиях, что соответствует общемировой тенденции. Вместе с тем, как показал анализ, российские музыковеды, в отличие от зарубежных, значительно меньше внимания уделяют классико-романтическому наследию, считая его достаточно изученным, и отдают предпочтение старинным и новейшим сочинениям. Важное место в отечественной науке об опере в текущий момент занимают источниковедческие работы, рецептивистика и либреттология — области, тесно связанные с потребностями подготовки научно оснащённых изданий и исполнений оперных сочинений. Особое внимание уделено статьям, в которых опера становится объектом теоретического анализа. В этом российское музыковедение также идёт в ногу с зарубежным. Все эти наблюдения позволили прийти к выводу, что в настоящее время доминируют те направления в исследовании оперы, которые ранее по разным причинам находились вне поля зрения учёных. Российская наука об опере переживает период деконструкции целого ряда шаблонных оценок, заполнения белых пятен, что создаёт основу для новых подходов к интерпретации оперного наследия и актуального музыкально-театрального процесса.

Ключевые слова: опера, российское музыковедение, научные музыковедческие журналы, новейшие публикации об опере, рецепция оперных сочинений

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Introduction

“Despite the periodic funerals of the genre, it has not yet bitten the dust, but

continues to enjoy a long life and shows no signs of dying. This is an amazing characteristic feature of a lady named Opera — to complain constantly about her state of

health, and at the same time multiply the number of theatres, performances, singers, conductors, and directors.” These words addressed to the participants of the Fourth International Scholarly Conference *Opera in Musical Theatre: History and Modernity* (2019)¹ by Alexander Borukhovich Titel, chief director of the Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Music Theater accurately indicate the state of affairs not only in modern theatrical life, but also in Russian musicology. The number of articles, monographs, and dissertations devoted to various aspects of the study of opera has increased markedly in recent years. There is no need to use statistics to bolster the figures, since the number of musicological periodicals, art history publishing houses and dissertation councils has objectively multiplied many times since the 1990s, when there were only a few of them. However, for us it is not so much this growth that is of interest as the topics discussed in contemporary works devoted to opera. What exactly does a researcher find important today? In search of an answer to this question, we turn to Russian scholarly periodicals of the last five years. The material for the analysis comprises articles from 18 journals, mainly local university journals, as well as those published by research institutions and specialized publishers.

In total, around 200 articles were examined. Of course, it is impossible to recreate a truly holistic panorama of the latest opera research in Russia of this material. Often excluded from consideration

are informative monographs, dissertations and collections of materials presented at conferences. However, since the articles of all these journals are openly available on the Internet, it is these periodicals that bring new materials and ideas to the reader in the first place. Such published information is also timely. If we also take into account an assortment of pre- and post-publications of dissertations and monographs, then from the resulting collection an objective idea of the current state of opera studies can be obtained.

History and Geography

Evaluating the picture as a whole, several trends can be distinguished. While these trends correspond with the current scholarly agenda in world musicology, in some ways they have their own specific features. First of all, the chronological and geographical scope is expanding: the history of opera from its origins to the latest experiments, from European musical capitals to regional varieties in the Western and Eastern worlds. At the same time, the Classical-Romantic repertoire “between Mozart and Puccini,” which undoubtedly predominates in theatrical posters around the world, remains practically undiscussed in academic articles. With the exception of a few singular publications about Tchaikovsky’s *Queen of Spades* and Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* (both operas featuring mysterious plotlines and rich intertextual associations that do not cease to excite the imagination), most articles about such topics are devoted to discussing staged versions and directorial

¹ *Opera v muzykal'nom teatre: istoriya i sovremennost': materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, 11–15 noyabrya 2019 g.* [*Opera in Musical Theater: History and Present Time: Proceedings of the International Scholarly Conference, November 11–15, 2019*]. Ed. by I. Susidko. Moscow: Gnesin Russian Academy of Music, 2019. Vol. 1. P. 23.

innovations. The issues elaborated on in academic journals can thereby be seen to tend to sway towards the sphere of criticism. However, close contact with criticism also arises when in the genre of analytical studies new works are being discussed: stories about the plotlines and composition of opera fit well into the long-tested genre, originating in Russian criticism in the 19th century.² Within this genre, articles often draw attention to operas that are not known to the general public or musicians. In addition, the format “one article about one composition” corresponds closely with the content of journal publication. It is in relation to such works that the expression “introduced into academic use for the first time” is typically applied. While it may be stylistically flawed, it accurately and fully describes the tasks of real, serious criticism.

From the point of view of the novelty of ideas in Russian musicology, perhaps the most fortunate period in the history of opera, in relation to which the least of all this could be expected, is in the first steps of the genre. In the ideas of early 20th century opera there is an abundance of stereotypes formed in the 19th and the early 20th centuries: the romantic historicism of French *grand opéra* and the psychological realism of Russian classical operas were preserved for a long time on the wave of universal worship of Wagnerian musical drama. In this regard, the state of affairs in Russian musicology was similar to that found in other parts of the world.

Nevertheless, neither the historical distance nor the inaccessibility of handwritten

or old printed sources have formed an obstacle to the discoveries reflected in relevant articles. It turned out, for example, that the activities of the *Camerata de' Bardi* group, which stood at the origins of opera at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, were not quite as we used to imagine them. Although the Florentine gathering of enthusiasts disintegrated before the first opera compositions appeared, the new style of vocalisation was formed on the basis of hazy notions about early singing. While textbooks on music history have mentioned these facts to one degree or another, the main object that escaped attention was how exactly the process of such formation took place. Attention to this phenomenon was drawn to Mikhail Saponov in the preface to *Euridice* by Jacopo Peri, translated into Russian for the first time. [1] The political intrigues of the Florentine court and the complex relationships between the creators of the first operas based on the materials of researchers outside of Russia and the documents published by them, previously unknown to Russian readers, are examined in detail in the article by Alena Verin-Galitskaya. [2]

New emphases in the interpretation of the early history of opera also appear in musicology outside of Russia. In April 2019, an interdisciplinary conference titled *Florence Circa 1600: Patrician Families and the Financing of Culture* examined “the role of patrician families in the development of art and music.” [3, p. 445] Presenting many examples of “new archival documentation,” [Ibid., p. 446] the conference concluded with

² See, for example, articles by Vladimir Odoevsky on the operas of Mikhail Glinka (Odoevsky V. F. *Muzykal'no-literaturnoe nasledie* [Musical and Literary Heritage]. Moscow: Muzgiz, 1956, pp. 118–130, 147–148, 201–203, 205–212, 233–237), Vincenzo Bellini (Ibid., pp. 148–150), Carl Maria von Weber (Ibid., pp. 150–153) and other composers.

the premiere of “the recently discovered first rendition of the opera *Dafne*” by Ottavio Rinuccini. [Ibid., p. 445]³

One Russian musicologist managed to make a discovery in the area of competence of primarily Western European researchers. In a study of the first Venetian opera buffa, *Bertoldo, Bertoldino e Cacasenno*, the former determination of its authorship was questioned. While the libretto by Carlo Goldoni was earlier thought to have been written by Vincenzo Ciampi, a careful study of the only surviving manuscript score (Biblioteca Estense, Modena) based on an analysis of handwriting and marks in the manuscript showed that it was nothing more than an example of pastiche music collated from the works of different composers and productions. [4]

Analysis of the latest opera experiments, which often requires musicologists to boldly go where none have gone before, also appears problematic. A discussion of aesthetics in conjunction with compositional techniques — or, more precisely, aesthetics generated from compositional innovations — is presented the works of Svetlana V. Lavrova, in particular, her articles on the Kafkaesque theme in modern musical theatre. The focus of the researcher is the operas *At the Gates of the Law* [*La porta della legge*] by Salvatore Sciarrino, *To... [K...]* by Philippe Manoury and *Transformation* [*La Métamorphose*] by Michaël Lévinas [5]. The operatic plot based on the life events of Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa and his musical manifestation in Scarrino’s opera *My Traitorous Eyes* [*Luci mie traditrici*] became the subject of

her analytical article written several years after the Moscow performance of that work (2012). [6]

“In Search of the Genre” discusses one of the acute problems of the modern opera house, to which musicologists and theatre practitioners immediately responded both in Russia and in other countries. The main thesis that unites a number of articles is the departure from the traditional “opera,” the search for examples of non-standard fusion, the deconstruction of the opera narrative, [7; 8] and the new relationship between the arts. A typical example is the opera *Doctor Atomic* by John Adams, examined in articles by Ryan Ebright [9] and Alexandra Shornikova. [10] The primary focus is on the composer’s work with the category “space–time” through “the use of a spatialized electroacoustic sound design.” [9, p. 85] In the second type of nonlinearity as a mode of plot deployment, the collage principle of composition construction, as well as the use of sound design technology that expands the sound space, — both of these are evaluated as signs of performativity. [10]

The search for new genre inclinations on the example of one specific composition — Artem Ananyev’s mono-opera *Squaring the Circle*, in which a gradual genre and spatial–scenic transformation is carried out, became the topic of an article by young Novosibirsk-based musicologist Taisia Belyaeva. [11] The systematisation of compositional solutions in this genre, which occupies one of the leading places in Russian operatic theatre of recent decades, is given in a work by Galina Zadneprovskaya. [12] A general

³ According to the author of the review, “The new libretto (discovered by Francesca Fantappiè) consists of 212 verses with the addition of original compositions by the patrician Jacopo Corsi and Jacopo Peri.” [3, p. 446]

view of the problem of opera synthesis in the 21st century is presented in an article by Alexandra Krylova. [13] We may particularly highlight publications devoted to the use of digital technologies in modern musical theatre and the genre of digital opera. [14; 15; 16]

The close attention to the “extreme points” of opera history in modern Russian musicology can be apparently explained by the almost complete lack of opportunities to study these stages in full measure during the Soviet period, when access to early manuscripts and the most recent musical scores was extremely difficult. The picture in musicology outside of Russia is different. There is no gap “from Mozart to Puccini” present here: not only do articles appear regularly, but also major monographs devoted to the key figures of Classical and Romantic musical theatre — Gluck, [17; 18] Mozart, [19; 20] Rossini, [21; 22; 23] Verdi, [24; 25; 26] Wagner, [27; 28] as well as the composers of the “second rank.” [29; 30] Russian musicology today stands at the beginning of a period of new understanding of the classical opera repertoire.

If we raise the question of geographical “coordinates,” then the overall consequences of the processes of globalisation are still being perceived in Russia. No matter how much the supporters of national and regional identity complain about it, this process also demonstrates a fair share of positive aspects, at least, in musicology. With the generally increasing transparency of the borders around the world, the exchange of ideas becomes freer, creating new opportunities to study musical, audio and video sources. For this reason, articles published in Russian periodicals about Russian and Western European operas from different time periods are based on similar levels of scholarly resources.

However, there is yet another side to this process. In Russian-speaking musicology, as well as in that outside of Russia, attention is increasingly focused on the diverse intersections of national traditions in the past and present of musical theatre: Austria and Russia in the creative fate of Vicente Martin y Soler, [31] France and Greece as the origins of Georges Aperghis’ national identity and as the basis of a new syncretism of word, sound and gesture in his theatrical quest, [32] Italian opera in Germany and Denmark, [33; 34] a Kazakh fairy tale “voiced” using the latest compositional techniques sonorous effects in the opera *Er-Tostik* (2019) by Alexander Manotskov, [35] Chinese motifs in Western European and Russian librettos, [36; 37; 38] national and European in Vietnamese opera [39] and, finally, a Chinese musician’s view of the traditions of classical Italian *bel canto*. [40]

The Primary Source, Interpretation, Reception

Associated with the second half of the 20th and continuing into the 21st century, world source studies are experiencing a period of rapid development, including that in the field of opera studies. Here the main impulse was the publication of new works by composers who paid significant tribute to the musical theatre. These established a new scholarly format, including information about the history of the creation of works based on a comparison of preserved early versions of scores, librettos, textual comments, etc. Only in the publishing house Bärenreiter, for example, new editions of operas have been published or are being prepared for publication by Mozart, Handel, Gluck, Monteverdi, Cavalli, Martin, Janacek, Rossini, Saint-Saens, Schubert, Rameau, the series “Masterpieces of Italian

Opera,” “L’Opéra français,” “OPERA — Spektrum des europäischen Musiktheaters” (“Eigentext und Fremdtext,” “Transfer und Transformation,” “Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation,” “Sprechen und Singen”).⁴

In Russia the need for new format publications is felt very acutely. Work is already underway on the collected works of Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Shostakovich, and Rachmaninov. However, opera masterpieces by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glinka, as well as those composed by Verstovsky, Serov, Cui, Rubinstein, and Prokofiev have unfortunately been put on the back burner. In any case, source studies have remained relevant and can only be expected to increase in the near future.

The need to revise established stereotypes is perceived even when the situation seems to be more or less fortuitous. The fact that Mussorgsky repeatedly revised his *Boris Godunov* has long been well known, but few people could have imagined that there would be eight authorial versions alone. These

were discovered, prepared for publication and accompanied by a voluminous scholarly commentary in a two-volume edition of the opera’s piano-vocal score by Nadezhda Teterina and Evgeny Levashev.⁵ “There are numerous discoveries, which can be divided into two groups: the discovery of new materials and the improvement of approaches to publishing Mussorgsky’s legacy,” Nadezhda Teterina wrote in her answers to questions posed from the journal *Music Academy* [*Muzykal'naya akademiya*]. “Source discoveries are pouring out like a cornucopia, notwithstanding Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky seemingly being the two most studied figures in the history of Russian music from the point of view of source studies and textual studies.” [41, p. 144] It is clear that the new edition and the first experience of staging the authorial version of the opera with the previously unreleased painting *Forest Clearing under Sokolniki on the Dnieper* and with the omission of the scene *Tavern on the*

⁴ *Masterpieces of Italian Opera, L’Opéra français, OPERA – Spektrum des europäischen Musiktheaters (Eigentext und Fremdtext, Transfer und Transformation, Aufführungspraxis und Interpretation, Sprechen und Singen* [Musical and Textual Parody, Transfer and Transformation, Performance Practice and Interpretation, Speaking and Singing]). For more information, see the publisher’s website:

URL: <https://www.baerenreiter.com/programm/gesamt-und-werkausgaben/masterpieces-of-italian-opera/>;

URL: <https://www.baerenreiter.com/programm/oper/> (accessed: 15.09.2023).

⁵ Levashev E. M., Teterina N. I. K publikatsii klavira opery “Boris Godunov” M. P. Musorgskogo v avtorskikh versiyakh 1868–1874 godov [To the Publication of the Piano-Vocal Score of the Opera *Boris Godunov* by Modest Mussorgsky in the Authorial Versions of 1868–1874]. *M. P. Musorgskii. Polnoe akademicheskoe sobranie sochinenii. T. 1, ch. 1: Boris Godunov: Avtorskie versii 1868–1874 godov. Klavir* [Modest Mussorgsky. Complete Academic Compilation of Works. Vol. 1, Part 1: Boris Godunov. The Authorial Versions of 1868–1874. Piano-Vocal Score]. Moscow: State Institute for Art Studies, 2020, pp. VII–LVIII; Teterina N. I., Levashev E. M. Nauchnye i tekstologicheskie kommentarii k publikatsii klavira opery “Boris Godunov” M. P. Musorgskogo v avtorskikh versiyakh 1868–1874 godov [Scholarly and Textual Comments on the Publication of the Piano-Vocal Score of the Opera *Boris Godunov* by Modest Mussorgsky in the Authorial Versions of 1868–1874]. *M. P. Musorgskii. Polnoe akademicheskoe sobranie sochinenii. T. 2, ch. 2: Boris Godunov: Avtorskie versii 1868–1874 godov. Klavir* [Modest Mussorgsky. Complete Academic Compilation of Works. Vol. 2, Part 2: Boris Godunov. Authorial versions 1868–1874. Piano-Vocal Score]. Moscow: State Institute for Art Studies, 2020, pp. 871–995.

Lithuanian Border,⁶ where Teterina and Levashev acted as scholarly consultants, has brought new accents to the semantic interpretation of *Boris Godunov*.

The same trajectory — a study of the primary source, giving rise to a new understanding — is outlined in the article by Maria Skuratovskaya on the second edition of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Maid of Pskov* (1876–1877). [42] The composer was working on this version at the very same time as when Mussorgsky was creating *Boris Godunov*, and the composers are known to have been in close contact with each other. It is possible that the scene with the Fool Nikola Salos in the second edition of *The Maid of Pskov*, which was subsequently not included in the third edition of the opera, appeared precisely under the influence of *Boris Godunov*.⁷ Since the second version of *The Maid of Pskov* has not yet been published, a textual study of all handwritten materials can become the basis for the publication of this version of the score, which will allow a more complete and objective assessment of the process of Rimsky-Korsakov's formation as an opera composer. The need to re-evaluate the place of the opera *Pan Voevoda* in his legacy is demonstrated in the detailed analysis of autographs and documents related to the history of its creation carried out in the article by Zivar Guseinova. [43]

A study not of only handwritten materials, but also of old printed editions of scores and

librettos, can lead to a rethinking and new significant conclusions. Recently, many libraries have generously and often freely shared previously inaccessible sources of this kind, significantly expanding the capabilities of researchers from different countries. Tatiana Smirnova's article on the publication of scores and librettos of *Armide* by Jean-Baptiste Lully in France at the end of the 17th to the beginning of the 18th century is of interest not only because it brings us closer to the material evidence of theatrical life of a distant era and specific performances, but also due to the opportunity to clarify, for example, how the term “libretto” was understood at that time, how the publishing business was organised, who had the printing privileges, etc. [44] There are also completely unique cases when handwritten notes on the margins of an old print edition left by one of the spectators of a particular opera production⁸ allow us to judge the quality of this performance, representing factual evidence of its critical review. [45]

A special aspect of textual research is presented in the article by Natalya Degtyareva, which analyses the composer's remarks in opera scores as an expression of his directorial intentions. [46] While such remarks have a different function, they are in any case closely related to the musical solution. Although the material of the article is drawn from Austro-German operas of the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries,

⁶ For example, the Krasnodar Musical Theater, where in 2022 the musical and the stage version of the opera, comprising eight scenes, was performed. [Ibid., p. 142]

⁷ See: Skuratovskaya M. V. “Pskovityanka” N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova i “Boris Godunov” M. P. Musorgskogo: dialogi i peresecheniya [*The Maid of Pskov* by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and *Boris Godunov* by Modest Mussorgsky: Dialogues and Intersections]. *Opera v muzykal'nom teatre...* [*Opera in Musical Theater...*]. Vol. 2, pp. 313–321.

⁸ Here, we are talking about the libretto of Antonio Cesti's *L'Argia*, which was staged at the Teatro S. Luca in Venice in 1659.

there is no doubt that this approach can be extended to a wider range of works. In any case, it seems to be extremely important in the preparation of a performance, since serving as a guideline for the director and performers.

Musical source studies presented in articles often have a close relationship with the general scholarly direction that has become widespread in Russian musicology in recent years. Here, we are talking about receptivity studies. Not only does the reconstruction of the history of the opera on the basis of documentary sources and the comparison of the authorial, publishing and staged versions allow us to judge the idea and its implementation, but the analysis of responses in the professional environment and mass print media also makes it possible to reconstruct what Svetlana Petukhova calls a “biography,” putting this definition in the title of her article on Prokofiev’s *War and Peace*. [47] How difficult the history of this opera was can be judged from the very beginning of the article: “The theatrical epic *War and Peace* is the only opera work by Prokofiev that does not have a canonical edition.” [Ibid., p. 145] The fate of Mozart’s unfinished opera *Zaide*, documented in detail by Karina Zybyna, belongs to the same type of work *Zaide* in a variety of its versions — both “lifetime” and “posthumous,” [48] as well as a voluminous essay by Svetlana Lashchenko, in which the reconstruction of the relationship between Mikhail Glinka and Karl Georg Wilhelm Rosen was undertaken in the process of working on *A Life for the Tsar*. [49]

Judging by the articles, while the study of the reception of an opera composition and archival studies usually pursue different goals, as a rule, they lead to similar results — the acquisition of new knowledge, which often accompanies a rethinking of existing

ideas, along with a resultant destruction of accepted wisdom. In one case, based on a meticulous analysis of responses in the French press, it may be time to bid farewell to the myth of the failure of the premiere of Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*, [50] to clarify the nature of the comedy-ballet genre in the 17th and 18th centuries; [51] in another, to outline the attitude to the Italian opera in the Soviet Union during the time of Stalin, [52] to reconstruct on the basis of archival documents the history of attempts to create a Soviet “song opera,” which did not lead to noticeable results, [53] to identify signs of the “classical” Soviet opera of Stalin’s time; [54] in a third, to consider the features of the ambiguous perception of the personality and music of Richard Strauss by Alban Berg; [55] finally, to clarify the history of the creation of Alexander Borodin’s operetta *The Heroic Warriors* with the help of previously unknown letters from librettist Victor Krylov to theatre director Nikolai Savitsky discovered in the archives of the State Historical Museum. [56] One of the most noticeable features of the Russian musicological periodicals of the last five years is the increased attention paid to the document as the bearer of primary historical information.

A special part of the interpretation of an opera work has always been the analysis of the relationship between music and libretto, as well as the semantic, dramatic and compositional features of a poetic or prose text in an opera, taken separately as a fact of literature, but considered in the context of musical and theatrical poetics. Here, we have in mind the approach adopted in librettology, which still retains the status of an interdisciplinary field in which neither the musicologist, nor the literary critic, nor the philologist feel fully “self-sufficient.” The need for coordinated and collaborative

research in this area is still felt very acutely. Nevertheless, there do exist musicological works of this kind which attract attention by the fact that the analysis of the libretto by a musician, no matter how literarily oriented he or she may be, is inseparable from his auditory musical sensations.

Let us cite a few examples. Nelya V. Nasibulina in an article devoted to Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, writes about the action of two systems of leitmotifs in it — the musical and literary. [57, p. 207] The words “laughter” (and the same root) and “three oranges” were turned into literary leitmotifs by the composer himself, who acted as the librettist of his opera. [Ibid., p. 209–210] The history of work on the text of the libretto of *Kashchey the Immortal* is reconstructed by Zivar Guseinova based on Rimsky-Korsakov's letters and the autograph vocal score. [58] Having completed two thirds of the opera, the composer refused the text offered to him by the writer and journalist Evgeny Petrovsky, and wrote his own version. Although, according to the author of the article, this variant was artistically inferior to the works of contemporary writers, it perfectly corresponded with the new musical and stylistic techniques relevant to the composer at that time. [Ibid., p. 608] For Inna Naroditskaya, a comparison of Pushkin's “The Tale of the Golden Cockerel” with its source — Washington Irving's story about the Arab astrologer, (1832) which is interesting in its own right — became an impulse to analyse how Pushkin's fairy tale was adapted into the opera and how it

correlates with the depiction of the Russian and oriental images in Rimsky-Korsakov's work. [59] Nina Pilipenko's article illuminates the sources that could serve as the basis for the plot of Schubert's *Alfonso and Estrella*. [60] Not the libretto as such, but the ways of working with it by the composer, which actually reject the idea of the text of the opera as a narrative, became the subject of examination in Elena Kiseyeva's article on Tan Dun's *Marco Polo*. [61]

These examples do not exhaust the entire range of librettological research carried out by musicologists. Nevertheless, it is musicological works that apparently delineate the most realistic prospects for the development of this scholarly field.

Opera and Music Theory

Another noticeable trend with the “mass” coverage of publications in periodicals is the appearance of articles in which opera becomes the material and subject of theoretical understanding. This fact seems significant, since for a long time — at least, up until the end of the 20th century — opera research almost invariably remained within the purview of music history. The reason for this is easily explained. The synthetic nature of the genre and the interaction of different arts in it do not allow us to examine the musical and linguistic resources on which opera composition draws to be fully independent, which takes it beyond the framework of music theory in the strict sense of the word. While opera could be considered as a field for the formation of instrumental thematicism,⁹ the idea of

⁹ Let us cite as an example the monograph by Valentina Konen, who played a significant role in the development of Russian musicology: Konen V. Dzh. *Teatr i simfoniya (rol' opery v stanovlenii klassicheskoi simfonii)* [*Theater and Symphony (the Role of Opera in the Formation of the Classical Symphony)*]. Moscow: Muzyka, 1968. 352 p.; 2nd ed. 1975. 376 p.

form-generation, harmony, texture, and orchestration as objects of theoretical study and analysis was formed on the basis of the study of instrumental or “absolute” music.

A significant breach was made with the innovations of the modernist and the avant-garde artists in the 20th century, who turned to musical and theatrical genres. It became impossible to comprehend the operas of Albang Berg, Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti, Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio, Edison Denisov, not to mention the authors of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, without examining the free orientation in their compositional technique. It is significant that most of the works on the topical operatic compositions mentioned by us, as well as a number of other publications, necessarily involve theoretical aspects of the analysis of texture, form-generation, sound and timbre solutions, etc. Recently, this trend has begun to manifest itself in relation to opera works of other centuries, from early opera to the classics of the 20th century. The examined publications of the last half a decade represent a fairly wide range of such excursions into the sphere of musical theory based on the material of opera compositions.

Here, musical tempo and metro-rhythmic issues are equally relevant for music theory and performance. One of the most controversial topics is the interpretation of the musical texts of early music, including opera scores. The *danse chantée* (dance with singing) genre became widespread in the French musical and theatrical practice

of the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries. Larisa Pylaeva, who devoted a number of research works to stage dancing in early opera, explores the influence of the so-called “passionate” rhythms of French poetry on the formation of musical rhythm on the example of *danse chantée*. [62] The problem posed, as it seems to us, is also important for the analysis of musical forms in early French opera, and even for understanding the specific features of the instrumental thinking of the French composers of that time.

Alexei Panov’s and Ivan Rozanoff’s article [63] seems to be of particular importance in terms of clarifying the status of opera as a theoretical and analytical object. In search of an answer to the question of the correctness of the choice of one or another tempo in the performance of music by Jean-Baptiste Lully, the researchers analysed a number of treatises of the late 17th and 18th centuries, noting that the French authors in their source texts devoted to instrumental music rely on examples from operas. A reference to the duet of Epaphus and Libya from Act 5 of Lully’s *Phaëton* was found in the treatises *Les principes du clavecin* [*The Basics of the Harpsichord*] (1702) by de Saint Lambert’s and *L’Art de Preluder sur la Flûte Traversiere* [*The Art of Preluding on a Traverse Flute*] by Jacques Hotteterre’s (1719).¹⁰ This duet, which apparently enjoyed popularity after Lully’s death, still impresses the listener today with its combination of simplicity and refinement of the melodic weaving of two voices (Example No. 1).

¹⁰ Saint Lambert de. *Les Principes Du Clavecin Contenant une Explication exacte de tout ce qui concerne la Tablature & le Clavier*. Paris: Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1702; Hotteterre J. M. *L’Art de Preluder sur la Flûte Traversiere. Sur la Flûte a bec, Sur le Haubois, et autres Instrumens de Defbus*. <...> Paris: l’Auteur, Foucalt, 1719. The links and descriptions of sources, see: [63].

Example No. 1 Jean-Baptiste Lully. *Phaëton*. Fifth Act.
The Duet of Epaphus and Libye

Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours. Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours. Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours. Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours.

BASSE-CONTINUE.

nelle. Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours. Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours. Hélas! une chaise si belle Devoit estre eternelle. Hélas! de si tendres Amours Devoit durer toujours.

BASSE-CONTINUE.

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the popularity of this duet can in itself justify its appearance in manuals on the art of playing instruments. The authors of the article note: “It is curious that in the treatise on learning to play the harpsichord, the author refers

the reader to vocal genres. This does not quite correspond to today’s understanding of the principles of historically informed performance of early music.” [Ibid., p. 75] Apparently, the time has come to extend the thesis of the close relationship between the “instrumental” and “vocal” in the 17th and 18th centuries to a wider range of theoretical issues than was previously accepted.

Opera also becomes a field for studying the problems of orchestral writing, [64] tonal patterns and their role in operatic drama, [65] consideration of the spatial and temporal coordinates of musical composition and drama. [9; 10; 66]

Another theoretical problem, to which attention has recently increased, is that of the musical formation of opera. Judging by the scholarly periodicals, two different approaches seem to be relevant today. On the one hand, the compositional processes occurring within the opera attract attention by themselves. This kind of research has its own tradition in Russian musicology, they are reflected even in textbooks and tutorial manuals, whereas in past decades the material consisted primarily in the national opera of the 19th century.¹¹ However, researchers have recently been increasing their focus on works by musicologists outside of Russia.¹²

¹¹ Skrebkov S. S. *Analiz muzykal'nykh proizvedenii: uchebnik dlya srednego professional'nogo obrazovaniya* [Analysis of Musical Works: a Textbook for Secondary Vocational Education]. 2nd ed., rev. and add. Moscow: Yurait, 2019. 302 p.; Kholopova V. N. *Formy muzykal'nykh proizvedenii: uchebnoe posobie* [Forms of Musical Works: a Textbook]. 2nd ed., rev. St. Petersburg: Lan', 2001. 496 p.

¹² *Formy vokal'noi muzyki: uchebnik po analizu. Dlya vysshikh i srednikh muzykal'nykh uchebnykh zavedenii* [Forms of Vocal Music: A Textbook of Analysis. For higher and secondary musical educational institutions]. E. Ruchyevskaya, V. Shirokova, L. Ivanova [et al.]. N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory. St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2022. 608 p.; Logunova A. A. *Stroenie stseny v ital'yanskoi opere XIX veka: la solita forma na primere finalov oper Verdi “Nabukko”, “Makbet”, “Traviata”, “Don Karlos”, “Otello”: uchebnoe posobie* [Structure of the Stage in the Italian Opera of the 19th Century: la solita forma on the Example of the Finals of Verdi’s Operas “Nabucco”, “Macbeth”, “La Traviata”, “Don Carlos”, “Othello”: Textbook]. St. Petersburg; Saratov: N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory, 2023. 92 p.

In this connection, it is worth noting an article by a young musician who turned to the study of the opera finale as a composite “unit” in the Singspiels by Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf as compared to the finales of Mozart’s buffa opera, [67] by which means the typical features in the poetics of the composition of the comic opera of the second half of the 18th century can be more clearly represented. The attention of another researcher was attracted by the quartet canon from Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and the form of the opera canon itself, which was popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. [68]

The second approach allows us to look at the problem from a different perspective; in this case, the emphasis is on the role of opera in the general process of developing the logic of musical formation. However, such a formulation of the question for Russian musicology has not yet become habitual. Attention to this problem was drawn by one of the authors of our article in a report at the First Congress of the Russian Society for Music Theory in 2013, and again a year later at the international conference (Musicians and Musicologists as Teachers: How to Construct Musical

Comprehension for Students, Bologna, 2014).¹³ Its development can be traced in several publications of recent years, in which the Italian aria is examined as an important “springboard” in the formation of a number of key categories and principles of musical composition of the time period from the 17th to the 19th centuries. [69; 70; 71]

Conclusion

An analysis of contemporary academic periodicals forms a basis for judgements concerning research priority areas in the study of opera. The main trend can be considered in terms of a clarification of a number of positions that had previously remained obscure in Russian musicology for various reasons. Specific areas attracting the research attention in studies of early and modern opera include the use of documentary archival sources as the basis for historical reconstructions, as well as opera works considered as material for theoretical understanding. It is important that opera issues continue to be presented on the pages of Russian journals since indicating the dynamic development of both the opera itself and the scholarly field of research that accompanies it.

¹³ Susidko I. P. *Starinnaya opera kak analiticheskii ob"ekt* [Early Opera as an Analytical Object]. Journal of Russian Society for Theory of Music. 2013. Issue 2.

URL: <https://journal-otmroo.ru/sites/journal-otmroo.ru/files/Susidko%20I.P..pdf> (accessed: 15.09.2023); Susidko I. P. Musiktheoretische Studie der Arienform in italienischer Opern des 18. Jahrhunderts und die Umgestaltung des Formenlehrekursus. *Iskusstvo muzyki: teoriya i istoriya* [Art of Music: Theory and History]. 2014. No. 10–11, pp. 120–125.

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