

THEATRICAL ARTS
ТЕАТР ӨНЕРІ
ТЕАТРАЛЬНОЕ ИСКУССТВО

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**THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF
OPERA PRODUCTIONS**

Annotation

Today, opera and theatrical work are rapidly developing. However, few studies recognize the need for a systematic analysis of opera production as an intermediary between opera and public. This article provides an overview of the existing literature on this subject in order to familiarize with the methods used in the analysis of opera productions.

Keywords: *opera, opera production, opera performances, analysis, methodology.*

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**ОПЕРАЛЫҚ ҚОЙЫЛЫМДАРДЫ ТАЛДАУДЫҢ
ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ НЕГІЗДЕРІ**

Аннотация

Бүгінгі күні опера және театр ісі қарқынды түрде дамып келеді. Дегенмен, бірқатар зерттеулер опера мен көпшілік қоғам арасындағы опера қойылымдарына жүйелі талдау жасаудың қажеттілігін мойындап отыр. Сондықтан осы мақалада опера қойылымын талдау кезінде қолданылатын әдістермен танысу үшін осы мәселе бойынша әдебиеттерге шолу жасалынады.

Түйін сөздер: *опера өнері, опера қойылымы, опера спектаклі, талдау, әдіснама.*

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**ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ АНАЛИЗА
ОПЕРНЫХ ПОСТАНОВОК**

Аннотация

На сегодняшний день оперно-театральное дело развивается самым активным образом. Тем не менее, не многие исследования признают необходимость систематического анализа оперной постановки как посредника между оперой и публикой.

Поэтому в настоящей статье дается обзор существующей литературы по этому вопросу с целью ознакомления с методами, используемыми при анализе оперных постановок.

Ключевые слова: оперное искусство, оперная постановка, оперный спектакль, анализ, методология.

The opera of the end of the 20th - the beginning of the 21st centuries was greatly developed. It continues the traditions of musical theater established in various opera cultures such as Italian, French, German, Russian, and others. The characteristic feature of such opera is the reflection of modern trends in the musical language, theatrical direction, and the synthesis of expressive means of all types of arts. In modern opera production, the director often plays a major role, in contrast to the previous primacy of the composer and conductor in the opera of the 18th -19th centuries because now, opera production is the most important factor that characterizes opera. It uncovers the author's conception through the visualization of music in space and action [1, p. 84].

New productions of the classical opera repertoire are of great importance for the development of opera. These include "Eugene Onegin" by P. Tchaikovsky (Bolshoi Theater, 2006, director D. Chernyakov), "Boris Godunov" by M. Mussorgsky (Mariinsky Theater, 2012, director G. Vic.), "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by B. Britten (Bolshoi Theater, 2012, director C. Alden), "Tannhäuser" by R. Wagner (Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theater, 2014, director T. Kulyabin), "William Tell" by J. Rossini (Covent Garden, 2015, director D. Michelleto) and others. The novelty of these productions is related to their attempts to reflect topical ideas and aesthetic demands. However, these productions could be overwhelmed with outrageous and vulgar methods of incarnation, which often cause scandal and outrage not only among opera professionals but among listeners as well [2]. Nevertheless, D. Chernyakov, a recognized opera director, explains such interpretations of classical works as a way to attract more viewers and ensure sold-out as well as high box office [3, p. 239-240].

There are many researchers who devote their studies to opera (e.g. L. Kirillina, M. Sabinina, L. Kovnatskaya, G. Ordzhonikidze, M. Mughinstein and others). Thus, a huge layer of musicological literature is devoted to the analysis of specific operas, their compositional and dramatic features [4, 5, 6]. A separate area of study concerns the operatic works and the national style of the composers, as well as performing art of the singers [7, 8, 9]. It is notable that the questions devoted to the stage incarnation of the opera are contained in the works of opera directors themselves - B. Pokrovsky, K. Stanislavsky, V. Meyerhold, L. Rotbaum, V. Felzenshteyn, E. Akulova, G. Ansimov, and others. Nevertheless, although opera production and performance determine the musical life of the opera theater,

they have received some scholarly attention recently. Previous historical works usually contain some descriptive information about various opera productions and performances, but there is no systematic analysis.

In comparison with the traditional study of the opera, there are significantly fewer works on production and staging. They occasionally come up in critical articles and reviews devoted to specific performances in the periodicals such as “Academy of Music”, “Musical Life”, as well as on “Operanews” website. However, in theoretical works, the study of performances is deepened; the problems of the typology of direction [10], the classification of performances [11], the analysis of the stage text in the opera [1] are put forward. Such works give an idea of the methodological basis for the analysis of opera productions. Therefore, the present paper reviews these works to identify the methodologies designed to study opera productions and outlines their major approaches.

The role of a theater and performers

From the production point of view, those artistic patterns that allow realizing the aesthetic purposes of opera as a genre should be included in the theatre repertoire wherein psychological and sociocultural needs of opera lovers are also should be taken into consideration [12, p. 72]. Thus, the promotion of certain opera masterpieces serves to achieve a high rating of theaters and stable incomes. In this case, production as a collective artistic result demonstrates the success of the creative activity of the opera theater as a whole as well as expresses its artistic interests [13, p. 488].

In the opera production process, performers receive particular attention. Those singers who are endowed with high professional skills (singing, acting) are usually attracted as their presence on the stage could contribute to the formation of mass interest in opera. Therefore, opera performances often count on at least one creative figure and more often on several performers that have a brilliant reputation and are familiar to the public.

The role of a director

A stage reading of the opera is a complex process. Directors attach importance to the analysis of the score. In order to create a credible performance, they work on musical text together with the conductor and artists [14, p. 146] because one of the important parameters of production is the ratio between the stage interpretation and the musical drama created by the composer. The principle of correspondence between the music of the opera and its theatrical embodiment is considered to be the main one in opera direction. According to B. Pokrovsky, musical dramaturgy is the grain of the performance which addresses an emotional generalization to a specific character, his life logic, a certain plot, and reveals the essence of a specific event and act [15, p. 26].

Other directors (E. Akulov, N. Ansimov) also emphasize the need for

attention to the musical techniques that build opera drama and determine the vocal and stage interpretation of the play [16, p.10]. The stage reading of the opera is largely determined by an analysis of the literary basis (the libretto, the literary origins of the libretto, the poetics of the text, etc.). Its interpretation underlies the director's decision which can deviate from the composer's dramatic plan such as in the production of P. Tchaikovsky's "The Queen of Spades" in Maly Leningrad Opera Theater, staged by V. Meyerhold in 1935 [17, p. 18]. The detailed analysis of the production process of this performance is described in the book "V.E. Meyerhold. "Queen of Spades". The idea. Embodiment. Fate". It suggests that the concept of the director was focused on the restoration of the original drama of "The Queen of Spades" as presented by A.S. Pushkin. In other words, V. Meyerhold tried to step aside from opera librettist M. Tchaikovsky's interpretation. Thus, this approach led to significant changes in the score of the opera, its scenes, the interpretation of the images of the main characters and other components of the performance. The main purpose of addressing the text during the opera production, according to E. Akulov, is the need to rethink the plot and rearrange the dramaturgical accents in the script of the work [16, p. 421].

It is notable that in connection with the increased role of directorial activities in the production of the play, different scholars outline types of opera direction. They identify three main types that may be different in name, but the same in meaning. The first type of opera direction is termed as traditional (M. Muginshtein), the theater of historical authenticity (M. Bialik), naturalism or total autism (E. Tsodokov). It strictly follows the author's intent as well as the laws of opera genre. Its feature is the scenery and costumes used in the performance, consonant with the era illustrated in the opera [10, p. 55]. The second type represents actualized (M. Muginshtein), modernized (M. Bialik) direction, or historical realism (E. Tsodokov). Its essence is concentrated in the "careful preservation of the traditions of the past, but taking into account the changed modern historical, vital and artistic realities" [18]. The third type is metaphysical (M. Muginstein), postmodernist (M. Bialik, E. Tsodokov). It represents the director's self-expression of a stage performance. This approach often results in "a complete break with the author's intent and classical production traditions" [ibid.]. The production of the play in this vein is filled with metaphors, often brought to some point of absurdity. Thus, these examples illustrate the importance of the opera direction in the production process. M. Muginshtein, a Russian musicologist and critic, explains this fact as follows:

The type of theater itself cannot ensure success or failure but can reveal different possibilities depending on the individuality of the director, the leading trends of the time, the mentality of the country or different

layers of the public [19, p. 608].

Parameters for opera performances analysis

Scientific works on opera tried to classify the types of opera performances. Thus, they identified the main parameters for their analysis. They consist of three groups divided by the presence, nature and degree of changes in the score and the libretto (edition); by the type of theater / director's language; and by chronotope [11, p. 83].

The first group consists of two parameters. The first parameter is editions of the musical text. Here researchers should analyze the original editions (author's or traditionally non-author), new editions as well as conductor editions (independent from the director's version). The second parameter is the libretto. Its editions should be analyzed edition to the following categories: the original text of the libretto, the translation and the modified text. A. Makarova advocates this approach and suggests that the editorial choice should be the first item of the analysis of the performance since it "determines the transformation of the score into a performance" [11, p. 85].

The second group includes the type of theater and director's language. When considering this type, researchers should refer to the typology of opera direction by various authors described above.

The last group is the chronotope. It includes such parameters as time and its signs (that is relations between 'now' of the opera and 'now' of its performance; actualization, approximation/distance, modernity/non-maturity). Another parameter to look at is the use of aesthetic patterns or tools which can be moved across historical or cultural epochs [11, p. 94].

Nevertheless, despite these attempts to delineate parameters for the analysis, A. Makarova suggests that some groups of this classification may not be applicable to all opera productions. Therefore, the most significant parameters are those that would allow the most effective analysis of opera performances. Nevertheless, there are not alternative methodologies that would ensure a comprehensive analysis of opera productions. However, in the rapidly developing opera and theatrical work, the production of opera as an intermediary between the opera and public deserves in-depth scholarly inquiry as it would help to solve the topical issues of contemporary musical and theatrical art.

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