

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY

MASTER'S FACULTY

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Doctoral program 'Music'

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Igor Stravinsky and the European Musical Theater between the Two World Wars

(Renard and Oedipus Rex)

A B S T R A C T

For obtaining the educational and scientific degree of 'Doctor'

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Sofia,

2020

The doctoral thesis was discussed and proposed for defense at a session of the Department of Music, NBU, held on 29.09.2020.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, two parts comprising 7 chapters altogether divided into relevant subchapters and a conclusion, to the total volume of 250 pages of which 240 pages of main text and 5 pages of appendices.

The cited literature includes 104 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, English and German languages, plus a sitography.

The defense of the dissertation will be held on:

The materials are available in the office of the Department of Music.

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The motivation behind choosing this particular topic is related to the practical activity of the author of the study, as well as her commitment to creating and participating in a performance of *The Soldier's Tale* of Igor Stravinsky. The connection established in the course of research was formed by the problems which arose in the process of realization of this performance and its transformation into a valuable experience helping to clarify through practice and collect evidence for the analyzes, interpretations and conclusions proposed in the dissertation.

The main purpose of the research was to try and find a unifying feature applicable to the various works of Igor Stravinsky's musical theater, outside the ballet genre, created in the period conditionally situated between the two world wars. An important point is the reverse process of offering practical and useful information based on the relation between the theoretical conclusions reached in the study and their application.

The specific problems tackled in the research ensued from the desire to shed light on a poorly studied field related to the analysis of the dramatic features of the two works central to the dissertation, namely, *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex*.

The object of the research and, respectively, of the analyzes carried out therein are the already mentioned works, *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex*, an important emphasis being laid on identifying the reasons for their creation, as well as recognizing their extreme divergence from the models existing in the European musical theater.

The main hypothesis on which the thesis has been based is formed on the assumption that there is a **common feature** characteristic not only of these two works but also inherent in the extremely uncommon and original musical-theatrical works of the Russian composer, outside the ballet genre, created in the period conditionally situated between the two world wars.

Method used: it is based on a detailed analysis of the sphere of European musical theater and, in particular, of the aesthetic reasons for the creation of these works, the focus being on the previous period and the period selected for research, as well as on identifying the changes caused by the revolt against the traditional and inherited models in the period of the so-called ‘**historical avant-garde**’.

The method of logical induction and comparison is applied to the main works analyzed in the study, namely *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex*. **The main argument is the structural changes which are found on a dramatic level and the tracing thereof when comparing the two main works.**

An important test for the validity of the obtained results is the application of the findings of the research to other musical and theatrical works outside the ballet genre from the selected period, such as *The Soldier’s Tale*, *Mavra* and *Perséphone*.

The materials studied in the course of research, on which the analyses were focused, whereupon the confirmation or rejection of the hypothesis were based, and to which the conclusions already reached in verifying their authenticity applies, are mainly works for musical theater outside the ballet genre of the Russian composer, Igor Stravinsky, created in the period conditionally situated between the First and Second World Wars.

The above presented objectives and problems determine the theoretical and empirical nature of the present dissertation. Its structure includes two parts with an introduction, an exposition divided in seven chapters, and a conclusion where the contributions are described, as well as appendices and a detailed list of cited literature.

It includes over 100 sources from Bulgarian and foreign authors, as well as musical scores and piano extracts with adaptations of the discussed works, which are used in this work. The total volume of the dissertation is 250 pages.

Due to the large volume of the research, this presentation can be only a brief look at it, including some moments and accents which will give a schematic idea of its character. It is mainly divided into two parts, however, proportionally, it follows a three-part internal-structural sequence with an introductory part addressing the main issue, actual analysis, and

subsequent application of the evidence, the intention being to verify it by testing the results achieved.

INTRODUCTION

Tradition is a generic concept. Not only is it passed from fathers to children, but it also goes through all stages of the life process: it is born, grows, reaches maturity, and dies out, only to be reborn.

From *Dialogues*, Igor Stravinsky

The logic of historical development makes us look for the roots of the processes that gave impetus to the art of the 20th century in the preceding 19th century. However, do turbulent events, wars, and the relatively short period between them suggest an art that could isolate itself, or even distance itself, from these phenomena?

The dynamics of the 20th century, reflected in new searches and aesthetic views, required radical changes. It can hardly be argued that each work had its own originality and was the result of new discoveries, but for most of them the fact is that they are difficult to fit into a given style. Following the same line of thought, the art of music made no exception. The hunger for renewal affected also the synthetic nature of the opera genre. It got more complicated not only due to the interaction between its own components, but also due to the influences from other genres.

It is no coincidence that during the 20s and 30s of the 20th century, a huge innovative role was played by works created not only within the opera genre, but in the musical theater in general.

The influence of the new theatrical searches in terms of conditionality, the ideas of B. Brecht, V. Meyerhold, G. Craig, A. Artaud, were at work in the increasingly closer interaction between the musical and dramatic theaters. The works of Igor Stravinsky, *Renard* (1916), and *Oedipus Rex*, created later (1926 - 1927), can be considered as a result of these processes.

Innovation in these works marks some trends that had a strong influence on the genre of opera and on the overall development of musical theater. Their concrete tracking and evaluation in the context of other significant events in Western European music art at that time is of particular importance as a starting point for a study the temporal frame of which

coincides with the period situated conditionally in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century. Such a study could neither focus mainly on historical or comprehensive theoretical analysis of these works neither would it be possible without touching on issues from these and also other areas, which necessitated its interdisciplinary character.

Only in this way would the topic be situated correctly in relation to the colorful palette of artistic trends and phenomena of the early 20th century. The origin and formulation of new and experimental author's ideas in the cited works can be considered as a starting position. It is necessary to emphasize, once again, that such tracing thereof is not entirely focused on the problems posed and treated in the researched specific works, but what is of particular interest is the projection of the new features embedded in them, as well as their impact on the development of the Western European musical theater. The merging of the creative achievements of composers, poets, directors and their uniting around the idea of creating "new" and different works, moving away from tradition, provokes the desire and leads the attention in this particular direction.

Does tradition have a continuation or shall it be understood only as a faded value, and how could the endless experiments be explained if tradition did not lie at their core and did not seek its new manifestations of life?

PART I.

Theoretical background and analysis of the prerequisites for the emergence of Igor Stravinsky's works for musical theater in the period between the two world wars

The first part has the function of an introduction into the problematics and focuses on the changes that occurred during the period under discussion or affected the field of musical theater, and comprises 36 pages including the following three chapters:

Chapter One: Presenting the situation relevant to the problematics studied. Description of the methodology used and setting the time framework. Analysis of the reasons which led to the changes that took place in the European musical theater.

Chapter Two: Transformations and rejection of the existing models affecting the spheres of music and theatre in the period between the two world wars

Chapter Three: Modernity and its influence on European musical theater

The first part of the dissertation is dedicated to an in-depth study of the reasons for the changes affecting the field of Western European musical theater. Their influence became a major factor for the very emergence of such diverse works as those of Igor Stravinsky.

Central issue here is the analysis of the development of some major trends that held sway over the European musical theater, such as:

- **The loss of unity;**
- **The pursuit of autonomy in art;**
- **The downfall of the humanistic ideal, and the resulting tendency to the epic.**

All these were studied in detail and presented in the first part with a view to the changes they effected, as well as their transformation into a factor for the generated radical reorganization in the field of European musical theater and art during the period.

Two of the above features will be spotlighted here due to the extremely important role they played:

- **The tendency towards epic:**

At the beginning of the 20th century, some changes took place that led to **an increased tendency towards epic** in the sphere of theater, which also affected musical theater. As early as the end of the 19th century, epic elements came to be included in the dramatic structure. Although they had been known in the opera genre long time before that, they had a completely different meaning.

The appearance of a narrative, the inclusion of a narrator (Narrator, Speaker, Reader, or the presence of the author himself), break a dramatizing effect, remove the tension, and disappear the illusion, as they interfere with the identification of the spectators. A number of other techniques have a similar role.

The tendency towards epic had begun to take a shape at the end of the previous period and had the cumulative effect of many changes. In short, the tendency was related to the fundamental changes that had occurred in the organization of life, caused by various factors, being generated, by processes based on the **downfall of the humanistic ideal in art**. The need to present a more comprehensive vision of the transformations was reflected, at the end of the previous period, in a fatigue from the existing models and a desire for change.

Those processes got visualized on a structural level, in the works for musical theater and, on the other hand, they affected the overall dramatic model. They required the use of other types of technical tools, as well as a new approach to communication with the audience. So, musical theater, like dramatic theatre, was strongly influenced by these changes and accepted them.

PART II.

Igor Stravinsky's works for musical theater in the period between the two world wars

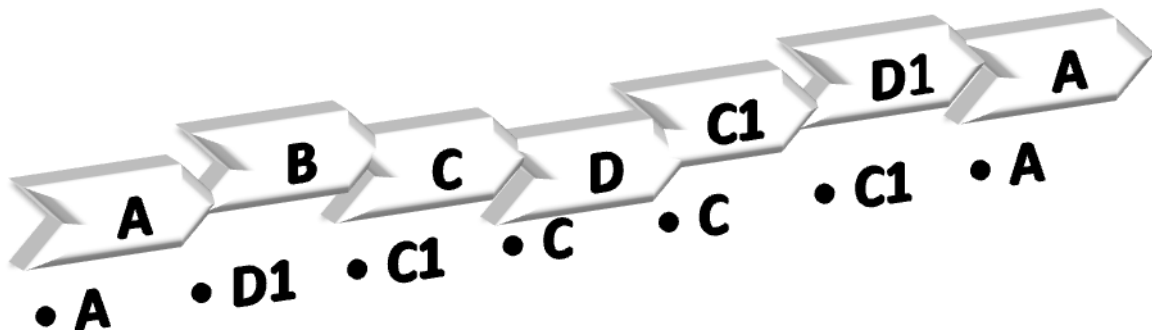
Chapter Four: Igor Stravinsky's *Renard* and the poetics of the montage as part of the experimental pursuits of the Russian avant-garde of the early 20th century. The epic principles applied in *Renard*

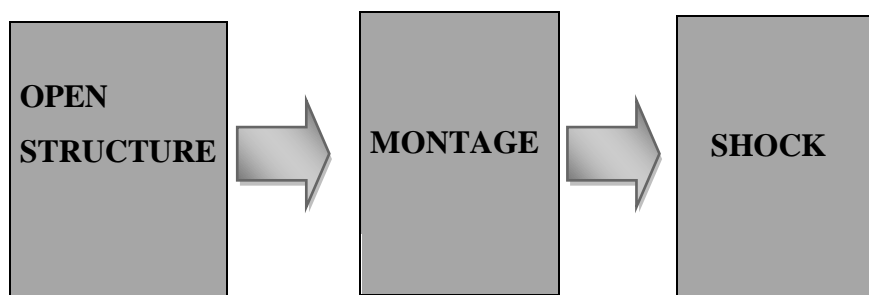
In the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century montage emerged as a phenomenon exceeding the application, attributed to it by the fledgling film art. In the later theoretical studies of S. Eisenstein *the idea of montage* would be affirmed and turned into a broad-spectrum principle.

The applicability of this principle was to spread and reveal itself not only in the field of art but in much more distant cultural spaces in order to illuminate them and as a form of support to the anti-synthesis trends. *The idea of montage like a main Avant-garde principle* will be also an important part of the *Theory of Avant-garde* written in the late years of 20th century by Peter Burger (1974).

This generally accepted position will be the starting point that will serve as a basis to attempt an analysis of the structure of Igor Stravinsky's work – *Renard*

Figure1. Model of Avant-garde art work – Renard





Chapter Five: Evolution and realization of the epic form in the opera-oratorio
Oedipus Rex

Completed in May 1927, the opera-oratorio debuted as a concert at the *Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt* in Paris and, on 23 February 1928, was staged in Vienna. This work of the Russian composer comprises two acts. The libretto was written by Jean Cocteau on the basis of Sophocles' tragedy, and then translated from French into Latin by Jean Daniélou. The libretto allocates three scenes per act which, in a highly concentrated and concise way, follow Sophocles' tragedy. The boundaries of these scenes are determined by the interruptions of the Narrator (Speaker) aiming to summarise their content into spoken language. In this way the text is retained and made accessible without disturbing the deep codification of the Latin language, which is the main bearer of the text in the reworked, translated version of the tragedy.

The work is remarkable precisely because of the fact that a dramatic act has been substantiated through the libretto which, in turn, is fragmented by the comments of the Narrator and their ironic overtones. These comments appear to deliver the opinion of a contemporary to the work. According to the wishes of the composer, codification of the text in Latin ensures the emotional element which Stravinsky prefers to be seemingly *petrified* and communicated predominantly through musical forms; this leads to a certain immobility on the

stage, as prescribed by the author's remarks, and brings the work much closer to specimens of the oratorio genre. In terms of structure, act one and two of the opera-oratorio contain three scenes each, demarcated by the appearance of the Narrator.

The artistic device of 'static' was a requirement of the composer for staging of the opera-oratorio and reverts the work to its antique roots of myth and epos. The interweaving of narrative elements into the dramatic fabric of Sophocles tragedy modifies its nature and deforms its emotional impact and expression, introducing a distance from its content.

This is achieved by the introduction of the Narrator's figure, the visibility of which for the audience, as opposed to *Renard*, marks not only the emergence of epic features but also a certain gradation with regards to their implementation. An approach inherent to epic expression, which Stravinsky often utilizes, is the direct address of the Narrator to the audience:

Spectators, you are about to hear a Latin version of King Oedipus (Stravinsky, 1971:7).

This approach aims to actively involve the spectator in the action and at the same time highlights its theatrical nature. Evidently, in *Oedipus Rex*, Stravinsky applies specific methods designated to implement a new theatrical concept in the field of musical theatre. This concept runs contrary to the principles of *Aristotle's Theatre* (Brecht, 1985:173). The composer, however, implements this concept precisely through its most vivid form – the tragedy. This is not an arbitrary pursuit of 'novelty', nor is it the result solely of rebellion against romantic heritage and traditions, but is rather a sign of aspirations arising from very different artistic views which the composer strives to bring to fruition.

On the other hand, by eliminating the text's potential to express its contents in an understandable form, the composer accentuates the external, the method and manner of processing in the course of the phonetic perception, which creates auditory images without affecting the text's meaning. Similar is the role of typical Russian folk songs – 'shifting of accent', of which Stravinsky himself writes in *Dialogues* but which he uses in some of his much earlier works. Probably the product of very specific aspirations, these ideas are over imposed following the writing of *Recollections of my childhood* (three songs based on Russian folk texts, written around 1906).

In the opera-oratorio, the composer uses the Latin text quite freely and places phonetic requirements to the articulation of the vocal motif. Even more distinctive is the use of affected exclamations and sigh-like descending passages, for example in *Invidia*, highlighting the auditory perception of language.

With *Oedipus Rex* Stravinsky rejects the principles of musical drama. He reverts to the fragmented purely musical structure and expression, intrinsic to the opera form. At the same time, he combines the opera architecture with that of the oratorio in a mixed, hybrid genre which manifests features typical of both forms. For examples, the features of the oratorio can be identified both in the active role of the choir, which is connected, to a certain extent, with the action [but is, conversely, at certain moments, completely detached], and with the presence of the figure of the Narrator which can be attributed to the significantly modified but functionally close role of the Evangelist or the Historicus in oratorio works.

The aesthetic presence of the composer, contrary to French classical rules requiring absence of the author, transform him into a *musical narrator*, according to Dahlhaus. This presence can be discerned in Stravinsky's¹ treatment of the clarinet's trill in Oedipus' monologue – *Lux facta est*.

In his *Oedipus Rex* Stravinsky recreates various musical models from the past, interconnected into a hybrid presence characterized by features inherent to both the opera and oratorio of the 17th – 18th century, and to some of Verdi's works, but with a modified attitude towards tradition:

When the epic theatre's methods begin to penetrate the opera the first result is a radical separation of the elements (Brecht, 1985: 65- 66).

Creating a distance from what is presented provokes a certain attitude and reaction in the spectator which prevents the direct effect and allusions on the audience and counters the spectators' emotional attachment and empathy through the so-called '*alienation effect*'².

The formulation of this principle is evident even in the works of Viktor Shklovsky [with which Brecht is also believed to have been familiar] and is described in the emerging

¹ As noted in Chapter Five of this study, the composer defines it as a '*manner*' or '*mandatory stylistic element*' (Stravinskiy, I. Kraft, 1967: 294).

² *Verfremdung* or *alienation effect* comprises, according to the definition of P. Pavis: *an approach involving distancing from the presented reality and exhibiting this reality through a new angle which reveals its hidden or overly familiar aspect* (Pavis, 2002: 104).

attack on perceptions or *technical attack*³. In this way the stereotype is disrupted and, simultaneously, impact on the spectator is intensified.

It must be noted that the *alienation effect* is manifested not only with regards to the spectator but also to the representation itself, forcing the actors to abandon ‘empathy’ or excessive emotion by concentrating their performance on the game element and on ‘exposing’ the respective character, from which, at a given moment, they may even detach themselves and on which they may express an opinion:

The actors themselves did not immerse themselves in the character but rather maintained a certain distance and even encouraged a critical attitude (Brecht, 1985: 183).

It must be noted that Brecht requires that this position be even more obvious in musical theatre shows and to be of particular importance for the singers.

The establishment of the new principles of theatrical conditionality open up unfamiliar routes to the development of musical theatre by giving a new meaning to all conservative positions and rejecting traditional rules and norms.

An excellent example in this direction is precisely Stravinsky’s opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex*.

Chapter Six: Igor Stravinsky and the European musical theater between the two world wars. Specifics of the manifestation of the epic type of theater in the works of the Russian composer

The main prerogative of this chapter is to identify a certain *trait* applicable to the extremely diverse, in terms of structure, works of Stravinsky falling beyond opera genre, i.e., within the so-called heterogeneous genre contours. In essence this would mean to derive their special and particular features.

Reflected in various findings and aesthetic conceptions, the dynamics of the early 20th century strives to find radical changes at all art levels. In that sense, the hunger for innovation has strongly influenced the synthetic nature of the opera genre. Some of the newly produced artworks go beyond the limits of the genre, entering the sphere of musical theatre. In one of

³ The term is used and defined by Brecht (Brecht, 1985: 54).

his meanings of antithesis and a term opposed to “opera”, he manages to unite a huge works of art. So, it is reasonable to ask: to what extent would this attitude spread and where we can disclose common characteristics in Stravinsky’s works for musical theatre between the Two World Wars?

I.

Unification of the stage works of Igor Stravinsky which do not expressly fall within the opera or ballet genre is in the direction of the *mixed*⁴ type, as referred to by M. Druskin, namely works which are defined by the general term for musical theatre. These are often viewed in a similar aspect in other Russian sources and publications as well. Of course, their indeterminate nature creates prerequisites for increased attention to the issues they introduce, but not without attention to the leanings in some of them, which place the works of Stravinsky mostly in the *context of Russian theatrical culture*⁵ - an aspiration which rather cursorily mentions of the possible existence of *some common aesthetic prerequisites*⁶ - Thus, it is the origin of the composer that is highlighted, with which naturally, we have to agree, precisely because of the specific nuances of Russian musical scene traditions.

In one of the versions of the article *Stylization and play* by V. Dyomling⁷, this author also reflects on the stage works of Stravinsky in a manner similar to that of M. Druskin, against the background of vanguard Russian influences, the *World of Art* circle, the ideas of A. Benue and S. Dyagilev and the Russian directors such as Meyerhold, Tairov, Mardzhanov and Evreinov, in an attempt to qualify and represent them as a sign for *renunciation of the musical theatre of illusion*⁸.

What is interesting is that Dyomlin, as opposed to Druskin, includes all musical scene works of the composer under this definition, while at the same time differentiating them into several types, unified, for example, under the title “ritual/ rite”⁹, where he includes *The Rite of*

⁴ Druskin, 1979:80

⁵ Druskin, 1987:21

⁶ Druskin, 1987:24

⁷ Dömling, Wolfgang. *Stilisierung und Spiel, Maske und Kothurn*, Hamburg, 1983, Heft 1

⁸ Dömlin, Wolfgang, *Stilisierung und Spiel, Maske und Kothurn*, Hamburg, 1983, Heft 1, S:152

⁹ Ibid.

Spring, Oedipus Rex, The Wedding and Perséphone. The author does not determine the emergence of another “continuity” influencing the level of “formation of the forms of expression”, with the exception of the one emerging, in his opinion, in the - *first acts of The Nightingale and The Firebird*¹⁰. An important feature, according to Dömling, is not so much the relative differentiation of periods in the works of the composer, noting that such periods do indeed *provide some clarity*¹¹, as the presence of an unfailingly inherent distinguishing feature of his works, which he defines as a *conflict with the norms, resulting in changes*¹².

We must approach the term of “musical theatre” somewhat cautiously with view of the fact that the term serves to introduce numerous heterogeneous and even conflicting meanings, which make it too imprecise to be defining. Most often the ballet, the opera, the musical and many different works of a wider scope, tend to gravitate towards the term of “musical theatre”. In this way we can outline the obvious difficulty to define a specific feature to which the stage works of Stravinsky could be referred, which, even if placed, in their larger part, under the token of “anti” – reaction against the opera genre, will always retain a vague superimposition on generalization.

In his treatise on the Russian composer, M. Druskin- pronouncedly opposes the possible connection between the theatrical concepts of Stravinsky and B. Brecht – *the very formulation of this issue is illusory*¹³ writes Druskin, and also: *the fundamental differences in the ideological aspirations of Stravinsky and Brecht are undisputed*¹⁴. It does strike one, however, that the Russian researcher admit some use of Brecht’s terminology to certain issues arising from Stravinsky’s stage works. Naturally, will be incorrect to disagree with M. Druskin that in terms of aesthetics and dramaturgy there are significant differences between the two authors.

On the other hand, by overcoming the above concept difficulties, K. Dahlhaus considers¹⁵ - the musical stage works of Stravinsky in the light of a much *wider*¹⁶

¹⁰ Dömling, 1983:140

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid .

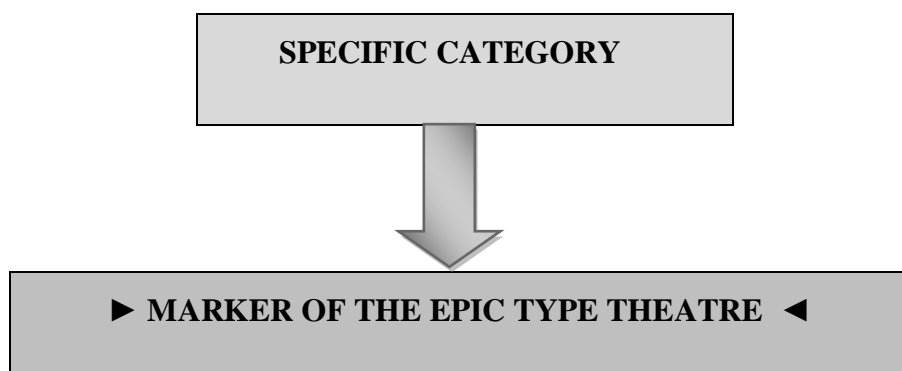
¹³ Druskin, 1979:72

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Dahlhaus, Carl. Igor Strawinskijs episches Theater, Beiträge zur Musik- wissenschaft, Berlin (West), 1981, Heft 3, S: 163-186.

¹⁶ Ibid

rationalization of the term “epic theatre”, alluding to the aptness of the *historiographic*¹⁷ use of the term, while at the same time noting the loss of strict determination in the term drawn by Brecht. Dahlhaus applies the term not as *radical division*¹⁸ of synthesis components but rather as their *distancing*¹⁹, emphasizing the context of the proximity of Stravinsky to the theory and practice of Russian constructivism. At the same time he situates the shaping of an “epic” type of theatricality, noting that it affects to a large extent both the dramatic and the musical theatre in the beginning of XX century. The musicologist also links this phenomenon to the process of “disintegration” of the traditional *Aristotle's dramaturgy*²⁰ or to the *technical attack*, as defined by Brecht. It is on this foundation that this specific direction towards a uniform position affecting dramaturgy will be placed and applied to the musical stage works of Stravinsky as a *specific category*, defined by a *marker of the epic type theatre*. Its most significant components are outlined below as a comparison to the theoretical principles of dramaturgical composition, drawn by B. Brecht, but precisely by emphasizing the specifics of Stravinsky against the concepts valid for Brecht:



¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Brecht, B. Reflections on the Theatre and Literature, volume 4, S.,1985. (Brecht, 1985: 173).

B. Brecht	I. Stravinsky
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • epic structure 	fragmented artistic structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • degree of distance 	the topic is exhibited as a past moment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alienation 	absence of the accent on social and critical features of engagement, typical for Brecht

II.

Seeking an escape from a, traditional *Aristotle's dramaturgy* as defined by Brecht, the theatre stage gradually turns its back on the concept of *human emotions*²¹. Stravinsky writes of *Oedipus Rex* that it was not the *human aspect* that intrigued him, otherwise, as he notes himself: *I would have built the drama in a different way, for example by adding scenes from the King's childhood*²².

In the *Opera-oratorio*, the composer uses the “number” structure. In this manner he challenges the tragedy as a concept dedicated to continuity in the development of the act. The emergence of an epic structure is rationalized rather as a return to the roots of myth, because the tragic character does not bear the consequences of his action, and of his sufferings and those of Jocasta, we learn from the action itself, presented through the artistic form of narration by means of the figure of the Narrator. This structure is further emphasized by the realistic expression of the Narrator, breaking down musical conventionality, and the vocal expressiveness of characters.

²¹ Brecht, 1985: 48

²² Stravinsky, Craft, 1967: 293

In *Oedipus Rex* Stravinsky “recreates”²³ the musical - archaic features peculiar to the opera and oratorio. The composer combines the use of choirs, typical of those times, arias that are archaic in appearance, several techniques of the polyphonic style, thus restricting, however, the effect of classical functional links and natural moods. The separate episodes represent relatively independent and closed fragments, which strongly differentiates them for the structure of the musical drama and its aspirations towards continuous development of the act. Another specific feature should be noted here, which is typical of this work: as a counterbalance to the theatre in thrall of “empathy”, where the action strives to imitate reality in that it should not be interrupted, the new *epic form* acknowledges its separation and fragmentation into separate episodes.

The antirealist aspirations are emphasized by plot lines dominated by the fairy-tale, the myth or the rite. The aesthetics of the “miracle” and not of the *actual conflict* are a leading element in the fairy tales used by Stravinsky. The fable about animals (in *Renard*) or the “undramatized” most striking model of tragedy (*Oedipus Rex*) retain in their basis the *epic structure* of the original, according to the musicologist K. Dahlhaus. In *Oedipus Rex* the quest is not in the direction of Sophocles’ tragedy but in the direction of the deeper roots of the myth while *Bayka* has a fable at its centre.

The aesthetic presence of the composer, contrary to the requirements of the absence of the author, transform him into a “musical narrator”, according to Dahlhaus, the manifestation of which can be noted in the attitude expressed by Stravinsky [in the clarinet trill] in Oedipus’ monologue – “*Lux facta est*”.

In *The Soldier's Tale* also the facts and events are not further introduced but are rather distanced by the Narrator, which is a major deviation from the role of the Narrator (*Le Speaker*) in *Oedipus Rex*. Despite this, in both cases they undoubtedly bring the *colour of the past*, albeit of an *indefinite, abstract past*, according to the definition of Dahlhaus²⁴.

The sense of place and time has to a large extent been erased, which is a specific feature that is not eliminated even by the interwoven “contemporary” dance such as the tango

²³ Boris Asafiev (A Book on Stravinsky. L., 1977).

²⁴ Dahlhaus, 1981:172

into the musical texture or the implications in the costume of the soldier – an illusion the uniforms of the First World War.

Similarly to other works of Stravinsky's for the musical theatre, the action unfolds in a *distance*, which neither imposes *timeless states*²⁵, nor is precisely fixed, the way this is sought for in Brecht with an emphasis on the *documentary nature of this image*²⁶. It is precisely for this reason, however, that it impresses with its folklore, fairytale foundations, borrowed from the musical models which Stravinsky resurrects. This method correlates to the plot as well, in order to accentuate mainly on *revealing artistic means and is nothing more than a substrate of reshaping of the aesthetic meaning which comprises distancing from the plot and not its "modernization"*²⁷.

The following technique is taking shape: in the effect of statics, in the author's recommendations for the use of masks, in the retorts directly addressing the audience, in the scene, lacking depth and profile, which, along with lighting direction²⁸ is required by Stravinsky, and in the *reference* of the text according to Brecht²⁹ in Latin, transforming the contents into an *independent component*³⁰. Its phonetic manipulation allows the text to be treated by the author in accordance with the specifics of musical expressiveness and we will probably find here some influence from several of the vanguard theoretic principles valid for the origination of *zaum*.

There are several occasions in *Oedipus Rex* where puns are used – words are transposed or repeated, for example: "*Ego exul exsulto*", which also serves to emphasize a specific approach and highlights the aesthetic separation albeit without linking it to a social and critical charge as in Brecht. These saturate the expression with a tangible associativity beyond the boundaries of traditional semantics.

The specific attitude of Stravinsky towards the text is very evident in his efforts on other works, such as *The Wedding*, in which researcher such as Druskin identify a specific

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Brecht, 1985:55

²⁷ Dahlhaus, 1981: 172

²⁸ According to the very precise author's remarks.

²⁹ Brecht, 1985:69

³⁰ Ibid.

manner of development and attitude towards the phonetic aspect of Russian speech. The latter is once again subjected to a peculiar type of game in which Stravinsky incorrectly uses or changes the normal stress in words, where, however, Druskin discover dependence between *the stableness of rhythmic formulas and the phonetics of speech*³¹. At the same time, the intensity of the dramatic effect increases, but not through a presentation of emotions, expressed by the author, but through representation of the situation itself. The figurative sphere is also affected and its concreteness diminishes.

In conclusion, I will highlight the following significant element which will also serve as a final accent: what has been deduced with regards to the opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* applies, naturally, with certain variability, to all other un reviewed works of Stravinsky for the musical theatre from the defined period, satisfying the parameters set out in the beginning of this expose. Despite the rather perfunctory review of the few, but quite significant sources, and the insufficient and extremely schematic analytical review of the selected example, we can characterize them as completely valid as to the tasks set out.

Basically, this chapter was aimed to define a certain criterion or characteristic feature applicable to the extremely multifaceted outlines of Stravinsky's works for the musical theatre. This was achieved by introducing a common *specific category* which have been outlined with the *marker for an epic type theatre*. We have justified the possibility for unifying both the distinctive and the unique features in these works. Thus this marker brings the musical stage works of the Russian composer from their vague definiteness, attempting to make them more recognizable, looking across not only the specific work reviewed but also across those of the composer's works which remain outside the scope of the present expose.

Chapter Seven: The epic nature of the hybrid musical-theatrical works of Igor Stravinsky *The Soldier's Tale, Mavra, Perséphone*

Deducing a uniform feature applicable to the musical theatre works of the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky beyond the ballet genre, given their placement within the equivocal

³¹ Druskin,1979: 70

boundaries of terminology which refers them to the musical theatre zone without further explanation, is a path that needs to be selected, followed and defended in practice. Following analysis of the results for the main works examined in this study – *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex*, it was noted that these works of the Russian composer not only belong to the *epic type of theatre* but that there is an ascending trend for reinforcement of the characteristic of this type of theatre, of the *epic form and expression*.

The epic structure of *The Soldier's Tale* requires, similarly to *Bayka*, that all scenes are situated in the past. These are fitted in the *Tale* in the form of a *narration*, where the dialogue structures provide shape to selected dramatized moments. In its entirety, the *Tale* is driven by the Narrator and thus, from its very beginning, it emerges as a past moment which, however, is not pinpointed in time and its flow is interrupted by events which render it unrealistic and fairytale-like.

The identification of a different approach towards the examined works and placing them, in accordance with their dramaturgical essence, within the dimensions of the *epic type of theatricality*, means that such an approach should be applicable to other, unexamined works, even those outside the reviewed period. This path will allow us to reach their expressive depth without overlooking their main dramaturgical specifics. And, by applying the *marker for epic type of theatricality* these works will be lifted from their undetermined state.

I. The creation of *The Soldier's Tale* (1917 – 1918) marks the emergence of a certain character, whose exceptional role – in *Bayka* – is only a projection, against which the action unfolds, or, rather, *is told*. As opposed to the experimental approach in *Bayka*, the *trend towards the epic* in *The Soldier's Tale* evolves towards Stravinsky's subsequent works through the manifestation of the central figure of the Narrator. In *The Soldier's Tale* this figure emerges from the shadow of anonymity and tangibly draws the attention, with its presence unfolding directly before the eyes of the audience. The conscious transformation of the Narrator into a visible presence and part of the stage presentation, or, more specifically, its placement on an equal footing with the other protagonists, is prescribed by the epic structure itself. Even in *Renard* the invisible presence of the Narrator as a bearer of the epic is alluded to through the overall imagery and depersonification of the roles which often intermingle in a

similar manner to the manifestation of the skomorokh-story teller or the leading figure in street theatre shows – the blagan *ded* (grandfather).

A more detailed analysis of *The Tale* will reveal that the separate components, such as pantomime, speech, dance and music, demonstrated greater independence and equality. In this case the main driving element of the action and manifestation of each separate component is precisely the intervention of the Narrator, whose role in delivering the story is not only substantiated by the stage processes but who plays as central and significant a role as dialogue scenes and episodes. In this way the narration acquires weight, such as that of the dialogue in *Aristotle's Theatre*.

Thus, in the work of the Russian composer, the *epic structure*, instead of hiding, merging and intertwining as in many opera examples, is highlighted and brought to forefront and it is precisely this constructive peculiarity that becomes an important focus of attention.

The most central aspect in *The Soldier's Tale* is once again the approach and its visible manifestation.

At the same time, if the work is examined in detail, a study of its components – speech, music and dance – will reveal the demonstrative manner of their presentation. Before the very eyes of the audience, the process of story-telling is transformed into a tangible focusing of spectators' attention towards the reading of the story from a book, while distillation of the sound matter occurs by highlighting the entire process of music-making. In this way, the violin loses its invisibility and becomes, along with the others, a proper participant involved in the stage action. The plot of *The Soldier's Tale* is shaped in the same way – to prevent identification with the stage and to keep the audience at a distance.

The comments of the Narrator also help to increase this distance, as well as the conspicuous, highlighted technical aspects in the staging of the work. This is achieved by alternating dialogue scenes and verses from Ramuz with the prosaic comments of the Narrator. Such alternation between dialogue and prosaic episodes with music and dance shapes a constructive peculiarity in which the separate components are manifested with their intrinsic expression and are also juxtaposed through montage, each retaining its autonomous validity. Thus, montage serves as the mysterious link which brings together the separate fragments of the work.

The unity of montage links transforms the various components into a powerful antipode to the opera concept and, despite the fact that not a single word is sung, there is a strong impression for immersive musical theatre imagery. It is precisely the distance from the separate components that ‘saves’ them from their hierarchic relations and requires a different montage relation without reducing them to a background to the dramaturgical material.

The epic form ensures a contrasting juxtaposition between the individual scenes, which are more or less broken down by the comments of the Narrator, the musical numbers and dances.

The disconnectedly represented action ‘vacillates’ and repeats certain episodes which are not logically plotted along a single line nor presented synchronously in accordance with the action and its uniform development. Detachment from action on the stage is achieved by highlighting the technical structure of the work and through removing the *stamp of the familiar*, turning it into something alien.

The montage principle is employed at all levels. An interesting effect is achieved by the tonal juxtaposition of sonorities in the chamber orchestra.

According to A. Bukureshtliev, *The Soldier’s Tale* is one of Stravinsky’s *most mysterious masterpieces*. Its exceptionally simple and somewhat minimized presentation is finely brought to the foreground:

The Soldier’s Tale is pure music, a treatise on interactions, proportions and their variations which despises all affect and intentional gesture (Bukureshtliev, 2014:135).

In a similar manner, the present chapter outlines the epic features in *Mavra* and *Perséphone*.

II. Mavra

The return to the stylistics of the opera-buffa is, to a large extent, subjected to the rather ironic vision of the composer. He appears to be satirizing the entire genre although, at a first glance, he is bringing it back to life without, however, directly visualizing and lifting it from its own time. The parody appears to be a return to the dramatic and comic form, but in *Mavra* this form appears changed, i.e., another form is actually in place. The style of the work seems to be exactly reproduced, but is, in fact, not a true reproduction but instead becomes a

commentary which rejects the original. It can thus be summarised that this duality of ostensibly reviving a certain genre and echoing its external features does not mean that the genre is, in fact, being reconstructed. On the contrary, in this case exactly the opposite is true. Neither the form, nor the style of the opera-buffa are presented in their true manifestation and whole exercise becomes a denial of tradition through parody of its specific features instead of direct revival.

Montage is at the basis of the compositional writing of Stravinsky and is manifested, as already noted, at all levels. The contrast between the separate elements is at the basis of their aspiration towards autonomy and anti-synthesis. This is what makes the greatest impression. The various components of the work are detached while the hierarchic relations between them are subject to an increasing smaller opportunity for manifestation within the scope of their interaction. Thus, the Russian composer achieves a form which, in a dramaturgical plan, is far removed from the opera-buffa.

This is why, through the relatively self-contained, closed numbers, the absence of actual conflict and the fragmented action, an epic structure is deliberately constructed, which is evident in *Mavra*.

III. *Perséphone*

The pantomimic action, similar to that in *Bayka*, contains a certain separation of gesticulation and movement, from the very moment of pronunciation of the words, which, logically, presupposes the emergence of music as an independent, emancipated and self-contained reality.

The highlighting and ostentatiousness of the different components of the work is a favourite method used by the composer, as was noted in the examination of his previous works. Drawing focus on the artistic means, the specific approach and structure as well as the visibility of montage between the different arts aims to exert a direct impact on the audience's consciousness.

The figure of the Narrator is once again present, similarly to that of the Speaker in *Oedipus Rex*. In *Perséphone* however, this figure has a vocal expression and is entrusted to Eumolpus while Perséphone herself has an unexpectedly conversational role.

CONCLUSION

*La musica è un silenzio interrotto. Ogni nota, quando emerge e poi morire,
rimane in dialogo con il silenzio*³²

The works for musical theater of the Russian composer, Igor Stravinsky, can be considered as part of the **epic type of theatricality** and are indicative of a change in the author's thinking, being at the same time like a litmus test for the many changes that had occurred as a result of a comprehensive action on the part of the artists in their struggle for renewal since the beginning of the 20th century. The conclusions reached in the course of research on the topic of the dissertation proved the initial hypothesis about the existence of a deep rift with tradition manifested in a total attack on the established models and search for innovative approaches and implementation thereof. In addition, justified can be the fulfillment of the initially set goals and tasks, in the course of whose pursuit important theses related to the *epic specificity* of the works for musical theater created by an author like Igor Stravinsky were proved for the period set conditionally between the two world wars. At the same time, specific interrelations were substantiated as a result of the research carried out in the course of the study, which progressed in an in-depth analysis of the evidence obtained from the works principally examined, namely, *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex*. These conclusions were reached, which were confirmed not only in the cited works, but also in other musical and theatrical works created by the Russian author in the period between the two world wars, namely, *The Soldier's Tale*, *Mavra* and *Persephone*.

In the course of research a unifying **marker** was established which is applicable to all works and thus accounts for their similarity by uniting them despite their extremely diverse features, this making it possible to classify them in a *specific category* setting them apart from all the rest. The suggestion for so classifying them on the basis of the identified **marker for epic type of theater** and its distinguishing from the concept made use of in Brecht's theory was a foundation laid on the basis of the facts collected and conclusions drawn from the

³² Steiner, 2003: 124

analysis of the two works examined in the dissertation, namely, *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex*. The assumption made for the entry of these works in a single sequence as a result of the various aesthetic principles that the Russian composer chose to follow – the spread and manifestation of which in other areas was of leading importance – was proved by comparing their structural features. In this way, it was possible to deduce their dependence, as well as the gradation in the demonstration of technique and the features of the *epic type of theater* as part of the process of establishing and aesthetic embodiment of Stravinsky's principles in his musical and stage works outside the ballet genre. It was established that they developed in the form of an experimental work presented in the *Renard*, with a subsequent complication of the epic structural features in the direction of *Oedipus Rex*.

The first part of the dissertation has been set apart as an in-depth analysis of the conditions under which such diverse works as those of Stravinsky appeared during the indicated period. This was motivated only by the desire to examine of the general rift with the traditional models, as well as the changes affecting the very essence of Igor Stravinsky's works. These proved to be determined and driven by their aesthetic roots and have been identified as a specific mark of the musical and stage works of the Russian composer outside the ballet genre. At the same time, they refer not only to the specific structural level, but also turned out to be a basic prerequisite for the very creation of the works. A clear example is their hybrid genre nature. This is the reasoning underlying the whole first part. The second part traces the evidence of the identified general dependence on the manifested aesthetic views, which are leading for the Russian composer and whose presence and study is absolutely necessary for understanding the change affecting all levels and the very essence of these so unique musical and theatrical works.

CONCLUSIONS

- It has been proved that the works for musical theater of the Russian composer, Igor Stravinsky, can be considered as part of the epic type of theatricality and are indicative of a change in the author's thinking, being also like a litmus test for the many changes that occurred as a result of a wide-ranging action of the artists from the beginning of the 20th century in their struggle for renewal.
- In the course of research, a specific feature was identified accounting for *their similarity and their belonging to the epic type of theater*.
- The researched Stravinsky's musical-theatrical works were classified into *a specific category, distinguishing them from the similar ones*. They were set apart on the basis of a *unifying feature*, it being distinguished and defined as *different from the terminology used in the theory of Brecht's epic theater*.
- It was established that the creation of these musical and theatrical works outside the ballet genre were the result of aesthetic principles inherent in the historical avant-garde, which the Russian composer chooses to follow and whose spread and manifestation is well-known in the field of European musical theater.
- Identified was dependence on the epic type of theatricality, as well as a **gradation** in the degree of manifestation of its features, as part of the process of establishing and aesthetic embodiment of Stravinsky's principles. They initially appeared as an experimental work presented in *Renard* and subsequently got established and stabilized in the epic structural features of *Oedipus Rex*.
- The dependences identified with respect to *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex* were also validated with respect to other musical-theatrical works outside the ballet genre belonging to the given period. Established was affiliation to the epic type of theater also for the works *The Soldier's Tale*, *Mavra* and *Perséphone*.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Given the numerous researches on the works of the Russian composer, Igor Stravinsky, a very limited number of these refer to the issues considered and analyzed in the present dissertation. The specifics and dramatic characteristics of the works examined in this study, it fits into an extremely dimly lit field not only of Bulgarian musicology, but also in general in the field of musical theater and in works dedicated to this particular time period.
2. The epic structure and the *marker* identified in the researched works of Igor Stravinsky from the period between the two world wars, is suggested for the first time in comparison with the concepts introduced by B. Brecht. They are distinguished from the existing definitions by classifying them into a unified *specific category*, indicated by marker, thus establishing a common denominator for analysis of their diverse characters from the perspective of their dramaturgical features.
3. To the Bulgarian musicology presented has been an outline of the change caused by the introduction of the specifics of the epic form, and its subsequent *evolutionary gradation*, in the creation of the dramaturgy of the works under consideration, together with a detailed analysis concerning the clarification of their common constructive features.
4. For the first time in the field of musicology and research of the musical-theatrical works, and in particular in the case of *Renard* and *Oedipus Rex* are set as main objects for study in this dissertations, introduced has been an identification marker called *marker for epic type of theater*, recognized as different, in terms of terminology, from the concepts introduced in the epic theater clarified in the theoretical works of B. Brecht.
5. In order to corroborate and expand the scope of the derived principles, substantiated has been the application of the results obtained in the course of the analysis to other works of the Russian composer from the chosen period.

6. What is more, the analytical achievements and contributions obtained in the course of the study offer a basis for identification and application to other musical and theatrical works of the Russian composer, even outside the given period.
7. There doesn't exist, in the field of the Bulgarian music theory, research specifically dedicated to this particular object and problematics.
8. The immediate practical applicability of the dissertation is important, in the field of musical theater, for both directors, in terms of the tools used in such works, and for actors - in their specific interpretation, consistent with the requirements of the works. On the other hand, the research can get basic use and subsequent development in new scientific and theoretical studies.
9. The dissertation offers an opportunity for application in the field of pedagogical programs for training of future professionals and performers engaged in the field of musical theater.
10. The research on the discussed issues provides a basis for future theoretical discoveries in the field of the works of the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, being also a step towards a wider field for testing the derived principles in the works other like-minded authors tending towards developing the epic type of theater.

PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS RELEVANT TO THE DISSERTATION

Results connected with the dissertation were announced at the following scholarly forums:

- Fourth doctoral conference of NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY,
Held from June 14th to June 16th, 2019.
Paper on the topic: **Renard by Igor Stravinsky and the poetics of montage.**
- Sixth doctoral and post-doctoral scientific conference (with international participation)
– *Young Scientific Music and Dance Forum*, NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY,
Department of MUSIC, 2012.
Paper on the topic: **Igor Stravinsky and the European musical theater between the two world wars.**
Abstract of the paper was published in the issue of NBU, Department of *Music-Young Scientific Music and Dance Forum*, (2012) Editor Prof. Yavor Konov, Ph.D., issue 6, p. 43, ISSN: 1313-342X C: NBU Publishing House.

2. Publications directly dealing with the issues discussed in the dissertation are as follows:

- **Potchekanska, Tsvetanka.** *Igor Stravinsky and the European musical theater between the two world wars.* (2012) *Young science of arts*, Vol. II. p. 155, ISSN:1314-6777, S: M-8-M/ ACCA-M.
- **Potchekanska, Tsvetanka.** *Renard by Igor Stravinsky and the poetics of montage as part of the experimental search for the Russian avant-garde* (2020), in the magazine *Musical Horizons*. Edition of SBMTD, issue 4, p.14-20, part I, ISSN: 1310-0076, S: *Vezni*.
- **Potchekanska, Tsvetanka.** *Renard by Igor Stravinsky and the poetics of montage as part of the experimental search for the Russian avant-garde* (2020), in the magazine *Musical Horizons*. Edition of SBMTD, issue 4, p.10-16, part II, ISSN: 1310-0076, S: *Vezni*.