

Operas by Bedřich Smetana on the Ukrainian Stage

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The last decades of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century were the years of the Ukrainian theatre's active development. At that time, the theatres performed dramas with music; this type of "mixed" repertoire became a characteristic feature of theatre life. Alongside dramas based on subjects from Ukrainian village life, where the role of music gradually intensified, some opera performances were staged. In most cases, Ukrainian actors showed quite competent vocal skills and were able to perform drama as well as opera parts.

As indicated by the advertisement of the Lvov theatre company *Ruska besida*, directed at that time by the well-known Ukrainian producer and actor Mykola Sadovsky, the first performance of Bedřich Smetana's opera *Prodaná nevěsta* [The Bartered Bride] was given by a mixed music-and-drama theatre group at the beginning of the 20th century. The theatre poster advertised *The Bartered Bride* performance on March 29th, 1906, in connection with the appearance of A. Gaek, a tenor of the Lublin Opera. In the same year, 1906, M. Sadovsky organized the first permanent Ukrainian theatre. Its repertoire included dramas with music and opera productions. The most popular among them were *Halka* by S. Moniuszko and *The Bartered Bride*.¹

On February 5th, 1908, *The Bartered Bride* was performed under the conductor G. Jelinek in M. Sadovsky's production. He himself played Kecal's part. The reviewer of the newspaper *The Kiev Idea* [Kievskaya mysl], V. Chagovets, reviewed this performance as follows: "Certainly, except for madam Petliash, this new wonderful actress and singer, and Mr. Verhovinets, who has a rich voice – there are no other prominent 'opera' vocalists, but who will reproach Sadovsky for his voice, as he created an unforgettable Kecal."² According to the recollections of

¹ The theatre had its orchestra directed by Gustav Jelinek. Among actors constantly acting in opera repertoire were Oxana Petliash (1890–1971), who worked at M. Sadovsky's theatre from 1907–1913, then sang at the Odesa and Kiev opera stages. The future well-known Ukrainian singer Maria Litvinenko-Volgmut (1892–1966) worked at M. Sadovsky's theatre from 1914–1916. The leading tenor parts from 1909–1915 were performed by Semen Butovsky (1886–1967). He later became an opera producer and successfully worked at Odesa and Dnepropetrovsk opera theatres.

² *Kievskaya mysl*, October 20, 1908.

one contemporary, so-called “national operas” were systematically included in the theatre’s repertoire. They were carefully produced, and great attention was given to the actor’s expressiveness. Such performances enjoyed great popularity with the public.³ The repertoire of Sadovsky’s theatre included such operas as *Halka*, *Cavalleria rusticana* by P. Mascagni, *Janco* by W. Zeleniński as well as the most popular Ukrainian operas such as *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* by S. Gulak-Artemovskiy, *Natalka-Poltavka*, *Eneida* and *Chernomortsy* by M. Lysenko.

The history of Ukrainian opera theatre began in the 1920s. In Kharkiv, the State Ukrainian Opera Theatre opened in the 1925–1926 season. During the first season, the premiere of the opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* by R. Wagner was successfully given. In general, in the first ten years of the theatre’s existence, 67 premieres were staged. Among them were *Lohengrin*, *Les Huguenots*, *Turandot*, *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, *Prince Igor*, *Sadko*, *Boris Godunov*, and *Othello*. The following recently created 20th century operas were staged as *Madonna’s necklace* by Wolf-Ferrari and *Jonny spielt auf* by E. Krenk.

Especially fruitful was the jubilee 1936–1937 season. The new period of the theatre’s activity began after its successful performances in Moscow, in March 1936, in the Ukrainian Art Decade. Two Ukrainian operas *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* and *Natalka-Poltavka*, as well as *Snegurochka* by Rimsky-Korsakov were given in new extended musical and scenic performances by the conductor V. Iorish and director V. Manziy. The Party leaders and government officials visited these productions. The laudatory reviews appeared in the newspaper *Pravda*. The critic reviewer V. Gorodinsky wrote in *Pravda* on March 16, 1936 about *Natalka-Poltavka*: “It is necessary to love passionately, deeply understand and feel music and poetry of one’s own people to create such a wonderful music performance, full of quivering life, such as *Natalka-Poltavka*.”⁴

After these tours, Vladimir Dranishnikov (1893–1939), a well-known Russian opera conductor with wide work experience, was invited to head the theatre as the chief conductor and artistic director. He was given the task of carrying out a huge production of the new edition of heroic-patriotic opera *Taras Bulba* by M. Lysenko, which ended the jubilee season. At this significant festivity time *The Bartered Bride* was staged in Kiev as well.

³ I. O. Marianenko, *Stage, actors, roles* (Kyiv, 1964), 167.

⁴ The Kiev theatre was granted with the Lenin Award. By that time, the Moscow Arts Theatre director K. S. Stanislavsky, already canonized by the Soviet theatrical system, presented his portrait inscribed: “to the Actors of the Ukrainian Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre. I heartily welcome the beautiful theatre of the wonderful, sweet-smelling and melodious Ukraine. My sincere congratulations on a brilliant victory won during the Moscow tours in March 16, 1936. People’s Artist K. Stanislavsky, 1937, March 16.” Cf. M. Stefanovich, *USSR Kyiv Order of Lenin Shevchenko State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. Historic sketch* (Kiev, 1968), 138.

At once this event was given special ideological meaning. It was connected with the intensified party control over the theatres' activities and the repertoire's restriction to the operas, which, according to the ideological standards, met the classic requirements of realistic, understandable and democratic art based on national folklore. Alongside Russian opera classics and operas connected with the origin of other national opera schools, the opera by B. Smetana was included in the list of works of correct ideological orientation.

Exemplary principles of their interpretation were developed as well. Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre productions and performances by leading theatrical collectives of neighbouring countries became the model for imitation.

Before starting work on *The Bartered Bride* in August 1936, the group of Kievites, including director B. Manziy, conductor V. Iorish and the stage-designer A. Khvostov, left for Prague. They intended to see the opera performance by B. Smetana in Prague's National Theatre and become acquainted with Czech village ways of living, the history of national costumes, architecture and other ethnographic materials.⁵ During the trip to Czechoslovakia, the artist made sketches on location. Wide use of painting and authentic ethnographic details were characteristic of his staging style. Critics referred to the truthful, fresh and lifelike production design of *The Bartered Bride*.

The Bartered Bride premiere was held on January 9th, 1937. Professor Zdeněk Nejedlý, chairman of the Society of Cultural and Economic Ties with the USSR, and other Czech guests came to Kiev to visit this performance. The performance review by Zdeněk Nejedlý soon appeared on the pages of the Ukrainian magazine *Radianska musica* [Soviet music]. In particular, it mentioned: "orchestra, chorus, ballet, singers, the performance itself, production, decorative

⁵ Yorish Vladinir Yakovlevich (1899–1945). In 1917 he completed his studies at the Ekaterinoslav music school as a pianist, in 1924 music-college, composition and conducting class. In 1920 he began his conductor's work. Since 1934, up to the end of his life, he worked as a conductor and since 1943 as a chief conductor of the Ukrainian Opera and Ballet Theatre (Kiev). The artist orchestrated *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* and *Natalka-Poltavka*, adding some new scenes and numbers to both operas. He was author of opera and ballet works.

Manziy Vladimir Danilovich (1884–1954). In 1903 he completed a course at the Kiev music school and in the same year, performed on the opera stage, and worked in various Ukrainian and Russian theatrical troupes. He was a singer, conductor, choirmaster and producer. Since 1917, V. Manziy was the opera producer in Astrakhan, Penza and Orenburg. Returning to the Ukraine, the musician took an active part in the formation of national opera theatre. In 1925–1926, he was a producer in Kharkiv and Odesa. Since 1928 he worked at the Ukrainian Opera and Ballet Theatre in Kiev (1928–1934 as chief producer).

Khvostenko-Khvostov Alexander Veniaminovich (1895–1968), theatrical painter and graphic artist. In Kharkiv he decorated *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* by G. Rossini, *Rusalka* by A. Dargomyzhsky, *Die Walküre* by R. Wagner (1929), *Pikova Dama* (The Queen of Spades) at the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre (1927).

design – everything is perfect.”⁶ Nejedlý emphasized that on the Kiev stage was presented real Smetana, young and vigorous. The opera’s national character was well experienced and reflected by the performers. The most popular Ukrainian bass, Ivan Patorzhynsky, was at the centre of attention.⁷ As the critics wrote, in Kecal’s part he created a bright character of the naive-artful village matchmaker.

Mařenka’s part was played by Zoya Haidai⁸ – possessor of a flexible voice, vivid facial expression and accomplished diction. The female characters of the Ukrainian operas *Natalka-Poltavka* and *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* brought her popularity. Critics put special emphasis on the musician’s gentle and natural stage behaviour. At the same time, except in comedy and lyric-comic parts, she sang Elsa (*Lohengrin*) and Desdemona (*Otello*). In Moscow, in 1933, Z. Haidai became the First-Prize Winner of the All-Union Musicians -Performers’ Competition in Moscow.

Kievites’ tours in Leningrad, May 18 June 29, 1937 wrote a vivid page on the performance’s further future. In total, during these long tours, 46 performances were given. Alongside the *The Bartered Bride*, the Ukrainian operas *Taras Bulba*, *Natalka -Poltavka* and *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* were performed, as well as a new Soviet opera *Tibiy Don* by I. Dzerzhynsky. After Stalin’s admiring comment, this production was widely promoted by all theatres. In January 1936, Stalin severely criticized the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensky district* by D. Shostakovich, as formalistic and antinational and compared to it the opera by I. Dzerzhynsky, a performance of much poorer quality.

The Popular Leningrad reviewer A. Gozenpud wrote in the Moscow magazine *Theatre* a detailed review about the *The Bartered Bride* Kiev performance. The critic underlined the musicality and the stage design, the opera’s closeness to the atmosphere, air and character of the Ukrainian repertoire. At the same time he made some critical remarks about the production which, as he said, lacked inventive scenic form, original innovation and glamour: “Giving due to Manziy’s culture and feeling of style, at the same time we cannot blame him for the excessive timidity and fear of experiment.”⁹ This remark testifies to the start of the staging style “academisation” in all Soviet theatres connected with criticism,

⁶ *Radianska musica*, no. 1 (1937): 37.

⁷ Ivan Patorzhynsky (1896–1960) graduated from the Conservatoire in Ekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk). He began his scenic career in Kharkiv, from 1935 to 1952 leading soloist of Kiev Opera Theatre. A performer of leading bass parts in Ukrainian operas. During the Ukrainian Art Decade in March, 1936, the singer’s meeting with Stalin took place. Stalin presented him with his portrait inscribed “from Stalin to comrade Patorzhynsky”. Later the actor was given the People’s Artist title.

⁸ Zoya Haidai (1902–1965), graduate of Lysenko Kyiv Music-Drama Institute, performed in the Kharkiv opera, from 1934 on Kiev’s theatre stage.

⁹ *Theatre*, no. 7 (1937): 9.

removal from posts, repressions and the physical destruction of representatives of the 20th year of Soviet avant-garde theatre.

Another Leningrad journalist, S. Ginsburg¹⁰, positively judged the Kiev performance as a whole, and its demonstrative tendencies. He compared Kievites' work and *The Bartered Bride* production at the Leningrad Maly Opera Theatre, held some days after the Kiev performance. Though, as he said, the Ukrainian guests' spectacle could seem a little sentimental, its optimistic operatic mood and internal simplicity were successfully expressed. However, in his opinion, the orchestra conceded more precise and subtle playing than the Maly Theatre orchestra. On the pages of the newspaper *Leningradskaya Pravda* S. Rozenfeld especially emphasised that the Kiev performance kept to the style and spirit of the Prague opera production.

Pointing out the spectacle's optimistic atmosphere, he saw a likeness between the performance and Ukrainian operas penetrated with "the spirit of vivacity and cheerfulness peculiar to the Ukrainian people."¹¹ During the difficult years of repressions, the strengthening of the totalitarian regime and the leader's dictatorship, in the Soviet art creation of optimistically oriented productions was in every possible way stimulated. In idyllic tones, screened films glorified happy life and the human prosperity of the Soviet people. The opera by B. Smetana was regarded as a model of positive enthusiastic art.

The Kiev theatre turned to the opera by B. Smetana once more in the first post-war years, when similar optimism and belief in its power were really necessary to the ruined, war wounded, and healing its injuries, country. During the 1949–1950 season, the first performances of *Halka* were held: first, *Halka* was staged, and, on April 11, 1950 *The Bartered Bride* production took place. This was a renewal of the performance held in 1937. According to the words of the Ukrainian singer, opera producer and author of the monograph on the Kiev Opera Theatre history, M. Stefanovych, with the help of *Halka* and *The Bartered Bride* performances, the most popular and favourite operas of the Polish and Czech people – "the theatre wanted to acquaint a new generation of Ukrainian students with perfect samples of art of the brotherly people and pay a tribute to their national genius."

Soon after the Kiev post-war appearance of *The Bartered Bride*, this opera was included in the Lvov Opera and Ballet Theatre repertoire as well. The talented conductor Yaroslav Voschak started working on the new interpretation of the opera.¹² In the Lvov production, reviewers mentioned the precise playing,

¹⁰ *Krasnaya gaseta*, May 27, 1937.

¹¹ *Radianska musica*, nos. 6–7 (1937): 12.

¹² Yaroslav Voschak (1921–1989) studied in Lvov. From 1944 to 1963 he was the conductor, and from 1953 the chief conductor at the Lvov Opera and Ballet Theatre. The artist worked in Odessa,

rhythmical and melodious orchestral sound. The work by V. Kharchenko caused greater claims.¹³ The producer divided the stage by a double curtain, to perform some episodes as an interlude in front of the curtain. But, in the critics' opinion, such interludes became a kind of inserted number of operatic character. The performance obviously did not follow the established canons of a mass show. The producer's aspiration to arrive at more clear-cut decisions and to individualise the mass scenes participants, failed. His attempts to enrich action with authentic genre scenes were unsuccessful as well. He divided the first chorus into small, individual groups and introduced a fight scene with two peasants. Dumb characters around Vašek also were to emphasize features of his image, and the attitude of other people to this unlucky character.

Most illustrative of the Stalinist ideological directions was a critical review of the stage designs created by the painter O. Salman. All classic opera productions included in the Soviet opera repertoire, were inspected for ideological purity, reconsidered and rectified. If the scenes' contents caused suspicion, their text was re-written, the libretto events and circumstances were replaced by others. Everything connected with religious rites and peoples' feelings was corrected without fail. The libretto of *The Bartered Bride* was re-written in this way. The church feast in the original text was replaced by a festive gathering of people in the performance. For this reason, the reviewers thought that such scenery detail as a cathedral placed in the foreground by the painter were inappropriate.

The producer tried to give life to the opera characters and made inventive "mise en scenes". But his attempts were not well received. Among all the opera characters, the singer V. Gerasimenko deserves high praise.¹⁴ She accentuated lyrical features of the image of Mařenka and the girl's active struggle for her own happiness.

If the Lvov performance failed to have such resonance as the Kiev performance in 1937, the staging of the opera *Dalibor* by B. Smetana in the Lvov theatre was a great event (1950). It was *Dalibor's* first performance on the Soviet opera stage. One of the leading opera conductors, Isidor Zak, interpreted anew. He was graduate of Odesa and Leningrad Conservatoires. Before his arrival at Lvov in 1949, he had wide work experience at Leningrad, Khabarovsk, Kuibishev,

Minsk and Russian theatres.

¹³ V. I. Kharchenko (1910–1971) graduated from the Kiev Lysenko Music-Drama Institute, working in theatres in Zaporizhia, Lvov and Kiev, and produced drama performances.

¹⁴ Gerasimenko Valentina Lavrentievna (b. 1927). Kiev Conservatoire graduate (1949). From 1949 to 1980 the artist performed on the Lvov opera stage. Her repertoire included the parts of Tatiana in *Eugeniy Onegin*, Liza in *Pikova dama*, Halka in *Halka* by S. Moniuszco, Nedda in *Pagliacci* and Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, Elizaveta in *Don Carlos*.

Dnepropetrovsk, Gorky and Novosibirsk opera theatres.¹⁵ The conductor's hard work with soloists, orchestra and chorus produced positive results. Reviewers mentioned the precise, harmonious and compact orchestral sound; they pointed out however, the fact that the harp, originally indicated in the score by the composer, was missing.

The opera libretto was subjected to even more radical changes than *The Bartered Bride*. Quoting the words of the music critic and party ideologists of those years, V. Kukharsky, "helped by the poet S. Masliak, the theatre freed the libretto of romantic conventions, aspiring to emphasize the national-patriotic spirit of this outstanding production."¹⁶

Such changes were believed to follow the composer's plan, strongly deformed during the creation of the libretto. However, the corrections carried out by the producers and the text's editor seemed insufficient to the critic. He felt that the text of King Vladislav's aria should be newly studied. One of the theatre's leading soloists, P. Karmaliuk, played Vladislav's part¹⁷ and, in the producers' interpretation, at the beginning of the opera acted as a despot, and severe oppressor of the people, and, at the end of the performance, turned into a despicable coward. According to V. Kukharsky, the speech of such character is characterized by "false sounding of noble motives". The producers achieved the same social acumen and strengthening of negative features in the jailer Beneš, which Ukrainian bass M. Torchinsky¹⁸ showed as a typical Tsar servant.

In the performance, the romantic atmosphere dominated, without excessive pomposity and unnecessary exaggeration. Choral scenes were skilfully prepared by the talented director Vladimir Skliarenko¹⁹. The stage design, by one of the best Ukrainian theatre painters, Fedir Nirod, combined Gothic architecture,

¹⁵ As one of the organizers of Novosibirsk and Cheliabinsk's Opera Theatres, I. Zak produced *Brani-boři v Čechách* in Chelyabinsk in 1963, thus continuing work on operas by B. Smetana.

¹⁶ V. Kukharsky, *About Music and Musicians of our days. Articles. Performances* (Moscow, 1979), 296. The review on Lvov's *Dalibor* was printed in the newspaper *Izvestia*, May 21, 1950 and titled "The Heroic Opera".

¹⁷ Karmaliuk Pavel Petrovich (1907–1986), baritone, Kiev Conservatoire graduate (1941). The Lvov Opera Theatre soloist (1940–1970). The artist had a powerful wide-ranging voice of unique beauty and remarkable artistic abilities.

¹⁸ Torchinsky Mikhail Isakovich (1899–1986), bass, Kharkov Music-Drama Institute graduate. He gave his debut, and worked, at the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre until 1930. Later he was soloist of the Kuibishev Opera and Kiev Philharmonic, and also the Lvov Opera and Ballet Theatre (1945–1959). He possessed a powerful voice of wide range and had an innate talent for acting. He had a good vocal school training.

¹⁹ V. M. Skliarenko (1907–1984) worked as the chief director at the Kharkov and Lvov Young Spectators' Theatres. In 1947–1952 he was the chief director of the Lvov Opera and Ballet Theatre. In Kharkov, where he worked from 1953–1955, he produced *Rusalka* by A. Dvořák (1954). In the autumn of 1924, he became the leading opera producer of the Kiev Opera Theatre.

heraldic banners and landscapes. From the point of history, the well researched curtain looked as if made of banners hanging down above the stage. At once, the public realized the time of the action. The massive architectural structures, arches' lancet forms, niches and gates were strongly emphasized. The architecture was especially gloomy and pessimistic in the scenes of the king's trial and in the dungeon where Dalibor was incarcerated. In a number of episodes the artist successfully used landscape elements. Thus, when Dalibor was sentenced, the tree branch with autumn crimson leaves, was hanging above the stage. It was perceived as an "ominous blood symbol"²⁰.

This vivid, inventive design was, however, criticized in the previously mentioned review by V. Kukharsky, who felt that the relationship of medieval banners to coats of arms, used a lot by the stage designer for the national-democratic idea of the production, was rather small.

The critic named the opera by Smetana "the national music tragedy", taking into account the similar genre definition of operas by M. Mussorgsky.

The young actor K. Malashenko acted as Dalibor in the Lvov performance²¹. For the first time he was entrusted with such a responsible operatic part. In relation to the director's interpretation of the work, he created a vivid image of a fighter for national happiness. Concerning the vocal aspect of his interpretation, the critics pointed out his intensification of sound and technical defects. They also mentioned the sketchy character given to Dalibor by the singer, while acting.

M. Telegina, who performed Milada's part, possessed a high-power dramatic soprano, and created a more integral character²². She managed to show evolution of the character's feelings. The critics also emphasised Jitka, performed by the talented and very musical singer G. Yurovskaya²³. She had an attractive appearance and a strong voice equal in all registers. *The Dalibor* performance left a distinguished mark in Lvov opera history and, for several seasons, was an ornament of the repertoire.

In 1966, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the first Prague performance of *The Bartered Bride*, this opera was staged by the Kharkov Conservatoire opera studio. This youth opera collective began its activity in 1939 as an independent school theatre. Later it became one of the Conservatoire's departments,

²⁰ M. Panfilova, *Fedir Nirod* (Kiev, 1969), 20.

²¹ Malashenko Konstantin Sergeevich (1909–1974), dramatic tenor, soloist of the Lvov Opera Theatre (1947–1951). He had a wide range, strong operatic voice, and performed parts of lyrical and dramatic repertoire.

²² Telegina Maria Vasilievna (1914–1996), lyric drama soprano, in 1941 graduated from the Kiev Conservatoire. Soloist of the Lvov opera (1944–1953).

²³ Yurovskaya Galina Iosifovna (1914–1983), soprano, in 1946 graduated from the Lvov Conservatoire, since 1944 to 1959 Lvov Opera soloist.

where the vocal faculty students had their practice. The studio had its orchestra, chorus and invited soloists. The Conservatoire's special opera faculty opened in 1958, and the opera studio was included in its structure. In 1960, in the Kharkov Conservatoire opera studio, vocal faculty graduate Vladimir Lukashov started working here as the assistant stage director. He mastered the director's profession and after graduation he became the leading stage director of the studio, on the stage of which he produced a number of brilliant performances of classical and modern repertoire. Vladimir Lukashov initiated the staging of B. Smetana's opera. Seriously preparing to implement his idea, he asked the Prague Smetana Museum for advisory help. He was interested in the Czech traditions of performing the opera, and the ethnographic materials, relating to Czech life, costumes and national customs of the time of the opera's action. Very soon, he received a detailed answer. The Museum sent him photos of *The Bartered Bride* performances from different years, the opera libretto in the Czech language, and a two-volume history of Czech costume and life.

According to the producer's plan, the performance had to put together authentic details of place and time of action, as well as the poetic reconstruction of the national environment. The lacy pagodas combined with garlands of colourful ribbons were used as a thoroughly poetic image to frame the stage. The festive atmosphere marked the image of the house (painter L. Bratchenko). According to one of the reviewers, the stage design was exquisitely tasteful and skillful, but, at the same time, sober and unpretentious.²⁴ The performance began with the whirlwind of a sprightly dance as the curtain parted. At the square by the pub, peasants were gathering to celebrate the beer feast and hop harvest. The producers treated the opera as a patriotic comedy and found similar features in the opera by B. Smetana, and the classical opera of the Ukrainian repertoire *Zaporozhets za Dunayem* by S. Gulack-Artemovsky. Its premiere was held in St. Petersburg three years prior to Prague's premiere of *The Bartered Bride*. The whole performance atmosphere and general air were to emphasize that the Czech composer, like his Ukrainian contemporary, wrote a work showing the unfading force of people's spirit, human optimism and man's ability to rejoice despite captivity and a difficult life.

Great attention was paid to working with young performers, the Conservatoire students. Gizela Tsipola was chosen for the part of Mařenka, the Conservatoire sophomore, who later became a well known Ukrainian singer and leading soloist of the Kiev Opera and Ballet Theatre. She had a wide ranging voice with rich timbre and organic combination of light lyric dramatic shades. By that time the unique qualities of this voice had attracted everybody's attention. It is worth mentioning

²⁴ M. Golovashenko, "Dykhanie molodosti", *Kulture I zhyttia*, September 29, 1966.

her musicality, acting and vivid appearance as well. The singer had a gentle motion, danced and created the lively truthful image of a girl who was gentle, faithful and at the same time resolute and capable of defending her happiness. The producer, Alexander Skripnichenko, wrote the performance's review and mentioned that the young artist was not so successful in the dramatic episodes where Mařenka learns about Jenik's shameful unfaithfulness.²⁵ Jenik's part, performed by V. Semashko, a Conservatoire graduate, deserved praise, though with some reservations: "He has a pleasant voice and sings intelligently. It would be good to see him more active and with youthful ardor." Working with the student Henadiy Podleschuk on Vašek's part, the producer accentuated the image's comic features, but, on the other hand, avoided excessive comic elements. He hoped the audience would feel sympathy for this unlucky character. The soft comedy tones prevailed here, not the sharp shades as in the Lvov opera performance. Vašek's first appearance was highly original. Under his arm he had the festive goose and in the other hand carried a heart-shaped gingerbread, which he immediately began to eat.

Kecal's scenic portrait was based on abundant expressive scenic drawing, without exaggerating the image's negative side. The talented singer and actor A. Kovtun, later a leading soloist of the Kharkov Opera and Ballet Theatre, played this part. The thoughtful and laborious work with the orchestra and young soloists was carried out by the opera conductor-director Anatoly Kalabukhin, who later was to run the Kharkov studio.

The authoritative commission, which reviewed and judged the results of the work of Soviet Conservatoires opera studios, considered the Kharkov production the best. In Kiev, in the autumn of 1966, the performance was successfully given with the symphonic orchestra of the Kiev opera studio. As the reviewer mentioned, the orchestra, under Anatoly Kalabukhin, played with feeling and measure, and a balanced arrangement of orchestral groups, chorus and soloists. *The Bartered Bride* was not in the Kiev Conservatoire studio repertoire and this is why Kiev musicians managed to study the score in a short time. As the quoted reviewer concluded, the producer Volodymyr Lukashov "had shown a real knowledge of the material, deeply felt and much 'perceived' in the music by B. Smetana, action, images and pictures. [...] It is necessary to bring up future singers-actors on works marked with a patriotic-national character and high artistic quality."²⁶

On April 25, 1994, the opera studio of the Kotliarevsky Kharkiv Institute of Arts (the former Kharkiv Conservatoire, today the Kharkiv State University of Arts) presented a new production of *The Bartered Bride*, initiated in 1966 by the conductor and director of the performance, Anatoly Kalabukhin. According to

²⁵ Alexander Skripnichenko, "Eloquent answer", *Molod Ukrainy*, October 2, 1966.

²⁶ *Molod Ukrainy*, October, 2, 1966.

his words, “*The Bartered Bride* is perfect material for training young vocalists.” Besides, the large number of characters makes it possible to engage many students in the work, which is very important for a school theatre.”²⁷ The premiere was dedicated to the 40th anniversary of Anatoly Kalabukhin’s creative activity. At the same time this performance was the debut of the young producer B. Romanchuk, who did not complete the preparation of this specific musical performance. The opera studio was experiencing difficulties at that time. According to the reviewer’s words, “the performance” was “hardly dressed”, we can paraphrase “every little makes a mickle”. It was necessary to pay a considerable sum of money to the Builders’ Culture Palace, where the premiere was held.²⁸ For this reason, the performance was not kept in the studio repertoire and did not repeat the success of the previous staging. However, it opened the way for talented youth. Especially convincing was the charming agile Mařenka, performed by N. Drozhzhina. As in the production of 1966, the experienced opera singer A. Kovtun, no longer a young performer, created Kecal’s expressive and unforgettable image.

Thus, almost for one century, the Ukrainian theatre gained valuable experience of producing one of the best operas of the Slavic opera repertoire, *The Bartered Bride*. Ukrainian producers and performers noticed that this work had the same spirit as the popular Ukrainian operas by S. Gulak-Artemovsky and M. Lysenko. It is extremely significant that the most gifted performers of the main characters in the different productions of *The Bartered Bride* became as famous as the outstanding interpreters of the scenic images in widely known Ukrainian operas. In the whole Soviet opera theatre history it is possible to name the Lvov *Dalibor* performance as a unique phenomenon.

English translation revised by Michaela and David Freeman

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Abstract

The last decades of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century saw an intensive development of theatre life in Ukraine. The core repertory consisted of plays with a high proportion of incidental music. Motifs from rural life were particularly popular. The plot of Smetana’s *Prodaná nevěsta* [*The Bartered Bride*] matched the traditional repertory well. What is more, it was

²⁷ T. Dribinskaya, “Students sing Smetana”, *Vremia*, May 7, 1994.

²⁸ Ibid.

possible for the local theatre companies to perform Smetana's score at an appropriate level. Smetana became one of the most frequently performed opera composers thanks to his second opera and was regularly included in the programme of Ukrainian theatres before the First World War, along with S. Moniuszko, P. Mascagni, W. Zeleński, S. Gulak-Artemovsky or M. Lysenko. At the time of the establishment of Ukrainian opera stages after the World Wars, Smetana was still a popular author, as documented in detail by the study. Apart from *Prodaná nevěsta*, his *Dalibor* also began to be performed.

Opery Bedřicha Smetany na ukrajinské scéně

Abstrakt

V posledních dekádách 19. století a začátkem 20. století, kdy docházelo k intenzivnímu rozvoji divadelního života na Ukrajině, tvořily jádro repertoáru hry s vysokým podílem scénické hudby. Oblibu si získaly náměty z venkovského života. Smetanova *Prodaná nevěsta* nejenže svým sujetem dobře zapadla do tradičního repertoáru, zejména však bylo v silách divadelních společností provést Smetanovu partituru na odpovídající úrovni. Smetana se díky své druhé opeře zařadil mezi nejhranější operní skladatele, kteří byli pravidelně zařazováni na program ukrajinských divadel před 1. světovou válkou, a to vedle S. Moniuszki, P. Mascagniho, W. Zeleňského, S. Gulaka Artemovského či M. Lysenka. S budováním ukrajinských operních scén po 1. světové válce a opět po 2. světové válce byl Smetana stále žádaným autorem, jak je ve studii zevrubně dokumentováno. Vedle *Prodané nevěsty* začal být prováděn i *Dalibor*.

Keywords

Bedřich Smetana; opera; Ukraine; reception

Klíčová slova

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