

## Problems of National Opera Genre Formation in 1930's (On the Example of Tatar Musical Culture)

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**Abstract:** The study discusses the problems of opera genre formation in national republics of the Soviet Union in the 1930's. The issues discussed are the use of the first national opera folklore and its harmonization, peculiarities of orchestration, libretto issues and other problems. The activity of the Tatar opera studio of the Moscow State Conservatory is shown where composers, focused on creation of operatic repertoire were trained. Difficulties faced by young composers of Tatarstan during the development of a new genre of European culture are described. Many of the issues raised in the study reveal the ideological features of functioning of national cultures of the USSR in a totalitarian state.

**Key words:** National opera, 1930's, Tatar musical culture, Tatar composers, Tatar opera studio

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### INTRODUCTION

Formation of the new national schools of composition and at the same time, new genres a vital topic in musicology. Formation of national schools of composition were repeatedly examined by researchers from different positions. Recently, there were many theses that deal with professional musical culture of the former Soviet Republics: Turkmenistan (Abukova, 1994), Chuvashia (Danilova, 2003), Tajikistan (Kabilova, 2005) and Buryatia (Zhabayeva, 2006), Bashkiria (Nabiyeva, 2009), Tuva (Karelina, 2009). Many researches (theses and articles) devoted to the establishment and development of opera in the republics; Uzbekistan (Komakha, 1982) and Kazakhstan (Begembetova, 1995), Kyrgyzstan (Gorina, 2010), Bashkiria (Galina, 2008) Ossetia, Yakutia (Pavlova, 2012), Tajikistan (Mirzoyeva, 2013) and others. Various questions of operatic creativity and individual operas of national composers were the subject of numerous studies by Russian scientists and scholars of the former USSR. These researches are focused on the study of processes within the chosen national school, they raised questions such as “a manifestation of national specifics in the works”, “composer and folklore”, “oral and written professionalism”, “peculiarities of connection of the national modal organization with European tonal system” and others. Of particular note is the importance of Drozhzhina (2005) thesis in which the author explores the young national composer schools of the East in terms of their formation and development of European system of genres.

Questions of formation of professionalism of the Tatar composers of musical culture and the development

of new genres of European tradition are shown in monographs by Dulat-Aleev (1999) and Maklygina (2000).

The history of formation and development of the Tatar State Opera is described in researchers of Cantor (2007), Salitova (1994, 1997) and Isanbet (1995) and others. Review of National Opera in autonomous republics of the Volga and Ural regions is given in the book of Erre (1988). A detailed analysis of operatic researches of the 1930's by N. Zhiganov is presented in the thesis by Zaripov (2005), study by Iskhakova-Wamba.

Thus, we can say that the problems of opera genre formation in Tatarstan in 1930 in the general historical context were not yet the object of a special in-depth study. In this study, the researcher attempts to fill in some “white spots” in the history of Tatar musical culture.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Exploring the problem, the researcher relied on the researches of musicologists that examine the history of the Russian and Tatar music. However, first of all, the researcher turned to archival sources and publications of the magazine “Soviet Music” (all the issues for 1930's were viewed) which in those years was a public platform to discuss the most pressing issues of musical art. At the core of the study, an integrated approach that combines features of the historical, analytical and comparative-typological research methods.

### RESULTS

The dynamic development of the national musical culture in the 1920-1930's was a part of the cultural policy

of the Soviet Regime because the idea of multi-ethnicity and equality of all cultures was fundamental for its program. The strategy of forming a musical infrastructure, systematically implemented in the short term was built.

The formula already mentioned during X and XI Congress of the CPSU (b) as the main thesis of the party “socialist content, national form” was recognized as the basis for creating a model of multinational culture.

National cultural policy in the 1930's is having a more unified and totalitarian character, since the development of national cultures had a rigid framework. Declaring a national form that is relying on national traditions, mingled with accusations of nationalism. Government measures were aimed at the gradual internationalization of national cultures (especially in the 30s). Slogan of the multinational Soviet music as one of its key characteristics was directed (“worked”) for it (holding all sorts of decades and the “days” of the national republics in Moscow shows of popular talents, folk dance groups, all sorts of conferences, congresses of national cultures, exchange concerts, etc.). Active use of the practice of the participation of prominent Soviet musicians in the cultural development of the national republics was also the part of this process.

Requirements for creators-authors were regulated by the orientation at democracy, clarity of language and means of expression and accessibility of their work to the masses. A genre that mostly met this orientation was a song, set at the head of a new artistic aesthetics. It affected development of other genres: symphonies, operas, cantatas and oratorios.

Of all the musical genres opera problem was especially controversial. The amplitude of attitude towards it spread from complete rejection of this form in the 20s to much attention to the genre in the 30s. It was in the 30 years when they saw personification of great power, majesty and effectiveness of the socialist system in it. Bolshoi Theatre became a major standard of great-power politics, acquiring a privileged status. Personal preferences of Stalin had a considerable role. They were aimed at Russian classical music of the nineteenth century. All this put opera in a prominent place among other genres of music which became the object of political and public interest.

They were actively searching for an appearance of “new”, “Soviet” opera. The discussion was raised both due to the form of opera itself (someone proposed to create mystery plays, mass actions, living newspapers”, musical-literary montages, etc.) and its content. Contemporary themes, themes of revolutionary struggle (the fight of the oppressed people, the era of revolutions the French Revolution, the 1905 Revolution and the

October Revolution in Russia, modern national liberation movements, the embodiment of heroism of labor) were prioritized. The idea of a Soviet people’s realistic musical drama, living, sounding paper era (Koval, 1939) was constantly introduced in the minds of the composers during the 30ies. It was also permitted to use stories of heroic epos, stories, fairy tales where a significant place was occupied by stories about the leaders of the liberation movements.

The reclamation of European music genres (opera, ballet) in the national republics became convincing proof of their cultural modernization. The fact of national opera existence becomes a “quality mark” of a new musical culture in this situation. The opening of national opera theatres on the pattern of European ones was perceived as “showcase”, demonstrating the advantages of the socialist system, its national policy. The main reference point for the composers was Russian classical opera which had reflected the national musical elements. New forms of culture were introduced rapidly, often without national identity and specific national traditions.

At the various meetings and conferences which were covered in the magazine “Soviet music issues of opera art was regularly raised, the problems of creating a national opera in the republics were discussed (For example, on March 22, 1936 in the Institute of Nationalities under the Council of Nationalities of Central Executive Committee of the USSR; Conference in 1936 in Tashkent where a lot of excitement caused discussion and analysis of the first Uzbek opera Farhad and Shirin by V. Uspenskiy; opera conference organized by the office of the musical institutions of All-Union Committee on the arts and the All-Russian Theatrical Society was held in Moscow in May 1939). All-Union conference on the development of Soviet opera which took place in December 1940 was a particular result of the previous decade. There was active work on the operatic genre (only in five Central Asian republics repertoire of opera houses consisted of 35 works, 27 composers worked on them), it was planned to organize a creative relationship of the center with the republics (conferences, meetings to share experience with the analysis of creative problems), lack of modern subjects was criticized. Among the pressing issues how to use folklore material, the principles of harmonization and orchestration of national operas (Anonymous, 1940).

Undoubtedly, the very first obstacle to the creation of national opera was the absence in the republics of “their” composers who could pick up new genre. People’s Commissars of Education (later the Office for the arts) found a way out. They asked composers from Moscow and Leningrad to write operas as well as create works together with national composers (“Shahsenem” R. Glier

(1927, Azerbaijan), "The Rise of Vose" Samvel Balasanyan (1939, Tajikistan), "Toktogul" A. Vepruk (1940, Kyrgyzstan), "Tahir and Zuhra" A. Lenskoy (1945, Tajikistan); Uzbek opera "Gulsara" (1939) and "Layla and Majnun" (1940) and R. Glier T. Sadykova, "Buran" (1939) and S. Vasilenko, M. Ashrafi; Kyrgyz first opera "Aichurek" (1939), A. Maldybaev, V. Vlasov and V. Fere. During the war, the first Turkmen opera appeared, written in collaboration with A. Kuliev and B. Shehterom ("Yusup and Akhmet", 1942) and Yu. Meytus ("Abadan", 1943)).

In the Tatar musical culture, the first experiments in the genre of national opera were created by a group of researchers S. Gabyashi, G. Almuhametov and V. Vinogradov. These were operas "Saniya" (1925) and "Eshche" ("Workman", 1930) using the Tatar and Bashkir intonation material. Despite the significance of the first operas for Tatar culture that demonstrated possibility to connect national melos and even national musical traditions with the experience of European opera, they were not free from a number of significant shortcomings in terms of implementation of the operatic form. But, nevertheless, they had great resonance in the country, support in the press (Zaripov, 2005).

Production of the first operas marked another problem which was urgent in other republics the absence of national musical staff on a large in particular for the opening of opera houses. New musical and educational structures at the Moscow State Conservatory National Opera Studios and offices (Bashkir, Tatar, Uzbek, Kazakh and Turkmen branch of the studio) were created for their training in the 1930's (Salikhova, 2009).

Tatar opera studio functioned from 1934-1938 and was aimed at training the performers (vocalists) for opera and composers to create its repertoire. Accordingly in the studio vocal, composing and literary sectors were organized. Composers were focused on creation of stage genres, specifically operas and writers were focused on preparation of opera librettos. The studio taught the first Tatar composer, Dzh. Fayzi, S. Saydashev, M. Muzafarov, F. Yarullin, Z. Habibullin, M. Latypov and L. Hamidi. Zhiganova (2011), who studied at that time at theoretical composing faculty of the Moscow Conservatory, actively cooperated with opera studio.

Despite the fact that the singers in the studio were working on productions of classical Russian and Foreign operas (in Russian and Tatar languages), national repertoire had priority. Therefore, initially it was planned to include in the repertoire also early Tatar operas "Sanya" and "Eshche" (on condition that they will be re-worked) but soon they were rejected because of insufficient clear national orientation.

Composers mastered such special subjects as composition, instrumentation, harmony, polyphony,

analysis of musical forms, piano, music history, music literature and a number of general subjects. Apart from training they worked hard over the operatic compositions. For example, Muzafarov worked on opera "Lachynnar" ("Falcons") and "Galiyabanu" M. Latypov on opera "Zulhidzha" and Safa", Z. Habibullin over "Yugalgan Shatlyk" ("Lost joy"). As a result, only Zhiganova (2011) finished his opera. It was opera "Kachkyn" ("The Fugitive") to a libretto by A. Fayzi which premiered June 17, 1939 and that opened the Tatar State Opera House. During the period of study in Moscow F. Yarullin began his research on ballet "Shurale" which was completed on his arrival to Kazan and in 1941, he began the process of its production.

An important function was assigned to the literary sector of the studio. Poet Jalil became the head of it. The objective of the sector was to create original opera librettos, translations of classic operas into Tatar and texts of vocal works. This basic requirement of the original opera libretto was its "ideological consistency" that paralyzed the creative freedom of writers and numerous inspections hindered their work. Often libretto was refused as it was thought to be "an ideological marriage".

Problems of opera genre concerned not only "socialist content". No less important was the problem of "national forms" that included: the use of folklore and creation of original music, related to folk music; organic composition of modus and intonation features of national melody with European tonal system; orchestration with national features. In addition, opera had to comprise all the developed forms of opera arias, ensembles and choral scenes, dancing and instrumental events, recitatives.

Independence was welcomed in the use of folk music by a composer, the ability to keep the individuality of the author and national specificity of music. Often, however, first samples of capital and national composers lacked independency, they actively quoted folk material. Such a "narrow-ethnographic" method faced condemnation, it was labeled primitive as operas left impression of "catalog of tunes". Such comments are found in the various reviews of opera in journal "Soviet Music" (for the 1930's).

In this regard, teacher and curator of the composer group of Tatar Opera Studio G. Litinsky oriented his disciples in search of their original decisions, the logical means selection, selection of folk songs conditioned by compositional and artistic feasibility. His student Zhiganov (2011) in his opera "Kachkyn" rarely resorts to citations using them according to the stage situation (Tatar lyrical urban songs tunes "Hamdia" and "Shakir soldier" in the characterization of women in Acts I and II of opera, choral dialogue melody of boys and girls from

Act II sounds in the spirit of the modern game song. Details of Tatar folklore genres are written by Khurmatullina and Salpykova (2014).

The harmonization, arrangements of folk songs and operas issues were very sharp and were discussed on the pages of magazine "Soviet Music".

Two ways of harmonization were identified. The first a gentle, conservative" when the melody in the true form was accompanied by a very correct, clear, simple harmonic background without any digressions from the intonation revolutions of folk song (E. Brusilovsky "Kyz Zhibek", V. Vlasov and V. Fere "Altyn Kiz"). Often, these were typical of many peoples quarto-fifths harmonies, imitations of sounds of folk instruments. Reviewers of operas considered the decision of harmonization to be rather shallow.

Another way a "Europeanized harmony" that foresaw going beyond traditional methods of harmonization without losing the overall national features (freer harmonic development with modulation deviations, with the trend of development of melodic material). There were particular difficulties here. Most composers ignored the specifics of the national music, its modus and harmonic features. Breakthroughs of harmonies of Puccini and Verdi that contradicted modus features and internal logic of melodic development of Uzbek national themes were found in the harmonization of R. Gliere. In opera "Altyn Kiz" V. Vlasov and V. Fere noted a discrepancy in the style of Rachmaninov harmonization in the introduction to Act I and in the style of Rimsky-Korsakov III act to Kyrgyz melodies. Objections were made due to "spaghetti patina" in opera "Ker-oglu" by U. Hajibekov, etc. These critical remarks include reviews of these works in magazine "Soviet Music".

Some national operas of metropolitan composers, created with a significant European (Russian) accent did not satisfy republican authorities. So, initially ordered to B. Asafiev opera "The golden-haired" to a libretto by M. Jalil was criticized in 1939 as a "quasi-national" work and rejected by Tatar opera house, despite the acute shortage of national repertoire (Opera "Altynchach" was created by N. Zhiganov in 1940).

In the first Tatar opera "Kachkyn" the composer is characterized by the careful approach to folk songs harmonization often these meager diaphonies and chords (sometimes on tempered tonic organ bass), melodies overlapping, accompanying it with quinto octave passages that recreate traditions of folk performing art (story and Game Kiramata of Act I, Tale Kiramata of 1 act). However, researcher Zaripov (2005) notes the method of intonation expansion of pentatonic system which is largely connected to harmonic means. Often colorful

harmonization of pentatonic gamut contributes to a particular expression and intonation freshness of sound (such as the use of second lower chord).

Opera orchestration played an important role in the creation of "national form". Often the authors introduced some folk instruments in the classical symphonic orchestra (tar, kamancha, yasty-Ballaman, tambourine in "Ker-oglu" choir in "Altyn Kiz"). In the opera "Kachkyn" for example, the hero Kiramat in 1 act plays kurai with orchestra. Another way imitation of the tone and style of playing folk instruments in the orchestration ("Aichurek" A. Maldybaev, V. Vlasova and V. Fere sound of trump "Vose Uprising" by S. Balasanyan national rhythms and meters, ostinato rhythm by percussion instruments or stringed low instruments, etc.).

In the 1930's, the problem of symphonic development of material, through-composed dramatic development, the use of various forms of opera (especially vocal ensembles, recitatives) and means of musical expression (advanced harmonic language, polyphonic receptions) in most cases remained prohibited. In particular, these remarks about the opera by M. Muzafarov "Galiyabanu" and operas "Karahmet" and "Safa" by Dzh. Fayzi expressed Chairman of the Union of Composers of Tatarstan Zhiganova (2011) at a conference in 1940. In opera "Kachkyn" N. Zhiganov managed to replace the number principle of performance structure with through-composed development, unity of musical and dramatic development which was achieved with the help of keynotes, orchestral episodes-ligaments and choral scenes embodying the development of action (Zaripov, 2005).

They saw one of the ways to the National Opera through musical and dramatic plays a self-sufficient and popular musical stage form in national republics in 1920-1930's (note the popularity of the researches by S. Saydasheva in Tatarstan). However for those who carried out the "opera politics", they were considered a transitional stage from simpler to complex forms. Thus, the composers worked on the processing of musical and dramatic performances to operas with full fixing of musical text and its harmonization and orchestration for symphony orchestra. As the proportion of original music grew, European opera forms were introduced, choral and dance scenes deployed, musical and dramatic performance was approaching the genre of opera.

The question of development of genre "musical drama" or play for drama theater with evolved musical accompaniment was raised repeatedly in Tatarstan in 1930's. This area was more natural for composers, so they offered not to abandon the setting of such works in the new theater. At the initial stage of theater work, the pieces of music were seen as a necessary measure in the absence

of a large opera repertoire and as a transitional stage to opera. Under the new conditions they did not see an independent artistic value in them, they considered the genre “immature”, “undeveloped” to the required standard (grand opera). In addition, melodramatic, lyrical plots of “musical dramas” were very far from the necessary Soviet themes. Attempts to introduce urgent issues in the 1930's did not bring good results and in an atmosphere of public attention to opera the issue of development of “musical drama” as an independent genre ceased to be relevant.

**Summary:** Thus, the work of Tatar composers of opera genre in the 1930's faced a lot of difficulties. A number of reasons caused the fact that in most cases it was finished.

In many ways, opera libretto was a big problem. It was altered endlessly because of claims of the reviewers, the editorial committee, the arts council of the Tatar Opera Studio. In most cases, the reason for that was the inadequacy of Soviet content presentation. Often the composer was forced to take over a new work as a libretto was eventually refused.

The level of training of composers which for so intense start required a more thorough theoretical and practical training was not considered at all. Most composers received secondary education as instrumentalists before the studio. Given this fact, young authors were focused by the studio leadership on creation of opera fragments (some scenes, acts, situations). These training operations in the event of success were planned to be brought to the full result (“grand opera”). However, the authorities of the republic called this tactic “flawed”. Second Secretary of Tatobkom G. Muhametzyanov at a meeting held April 18, 1937 in Kazan with the regional committee of the CPSU (b), stressed the need for big composers to focus on big, complete works.

Problems of artistic creativity worried the authorities a little bit. Despite the fact that many of the republics only proceeded to the development of professionalism of European type, the task of creating the opera was put in the 30s in an imperative way to all national cultures of the peoples of the USSR. This process, difficult and painful was implanted in many republics. The gradual “inclusion” into the national culture of new types of work, based on the written principles in creation of music was a sign of formation of professionalism, especially for the Turkic republics. However, musical thinking of first Tatar composers who studied in the studio S. Saydashev, M. Muzafarov, Dzh. Fayzi, Z. Habibullin who were called by musicologist A.L. Maklygin “melodist composers, improvisers” balanced on the brink of written and oral

professionalism. This can be explained by the fact that their formation happened in a special cultural space in terms of oral professional stage music-making (Maklygin, 2000). Therefore, procedural and dynamic principles of development, characteristic of the “major” genres (sonata, symphony, opera), caused them great difficulties and their work could not bring great results. Despite the fact that this form of thinking of the first “song composers” had “its self-sufficiency and certain completeness of artistic self-expression”, composers were sharply criticized. Their failures were explained by professional incompetence and their work received such unflattering epithets as “primitive”, “immature form” of national professional music.

The requirement for the creation of operas by composers of the studio in a short time was absurd. The young composers were just beginning their career, moving by “trial and error”. A longer time process was needed for in-depth comprehension of European experience (styles, shapes, language means) and gaining of artistic independence. This process allows to initiate creative listening, develop intelligence, liberate composer initiative. Only then individual aspirations of composers and their feasibility can come to the fore.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Researcher would like to note that despite the speeding up of the described events, national musical cultures in the 1930's, received a powerful impetus for their development and decent artistic results were not long in coming. In many ways, the emergence of new genres in the union and autonomous republics of the Soviet Union took place in a revolutionary way that was conditioned by “the destruction of the ideological element of the traditional canon and political situation conducive to forced creation of the necessary socio-cultural conditions infrastructure with its staff” (Drozhzhina, 2005).

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