

V. Benderov

**THE UNIQUENESS OF THE HEROIC CHARACTER OF RADAMES IN
“AIDA” BY G. VERDI AS THE CULMINATION OF THE EMBODIMENT OF THE
CONFLICT OF FEELINGS AND DUTY IN OPERA MUSIC.**

Radames is crowned by a series of images of opera characters, which are synthesized in a lyrical, heroic and dramatic spheres shaped, being unique in this regard, and culminating in the development of the world of opera. The inner conflict of duty and sense inherent to Radames, gives him a realistic reliability, creates his image complicated, multi-faceted, evolving. As a result, at aspiration of the composer to the creation musical drama, vocal of Radames is one of the most complicated in the world opera repertoire, have an impact on the further development of the opera performance.

Keywords: Verdi, “Aida”, Radames, heroic, conflict.

The purpose of this article is to show by analyzing the role of Radames in the opera “Aida” by Giuseppe Verdi the uniqueness of this heroic character, endowed with a conflict of sense and duty. At the same time we follow the plan of the integrated operatic role analysis, which we had generated and published in the article “The artistic image of an opera character as an object of composing interpretation” [1]. However, as the scope of this article does not allow revealing the image of the character in its entirety, we will focus only on the most significant of its features. Party of Radames is one of the most popular in the repertoire of the famous artists, tenors and one of the most difficult in the operatic repertoire.

However, it is unique also in its significance, embodying the heroic character, endowed, however, and an internal conflict.

As is known, the opera “Aida” was created by George Verdi in 1871, when in France to replace the Grand-opéra genre, lyrical opera came. However, this process was gradual, Grand-opéra did not immediately die, and lyric opera did not so suddenly appear. The creative work of G. Meyerbeer – a leading opera composer of 1830’s-60’s – is very significant in this regard. He was the first to catch the current trend of Grand-opéra crisis, also starting to create from 1840’s operas of the other genres. Especially indicative in this respect is the composer’s last opera (that was created gradually over the years from the 1830’s) – “The African” (1865), which combines the features of Grand-opéra and lyric opera. In the process of gradual change of the opera genre was also very actively involved the great Italian – Giuseppe Verdi. Without doubt, under the influence of Meyerbeer achievements, “The Sicilian Vespers” (1855) was created in the Grand-opéra genre. Later

Grand-opéra features are brightly shown in subsequent operas of the composer, especially in “Don Carlos” (1867). In “Aida” there is synthesized genre of Grand-opéra with lyrical-psychological opera, but if Meyerbeer’s “The African” is a Grand-opéra with the elements of lyric opera, then Verdi’s “Aida” – the lyrical-psychological opera with elements of Grand-opéra in which it is significantly felt the impact of its predecessor.

The musicological literature discloses the Radames character totally insufficiently and one-sided. For instance, M.S. Druskin in his textbook on the history of foreign music, while describing Radames, was strictly limited to the following phrases (in contrast to a more comprehensive analysis of Aida and Amneris characters): “Radames is portrayed in varied colors. Verdi highlights the two sides of his character: in his lyrical essence he is cognate to Aida, but as a warrior he has brave, heroic features. Therefore, his party found the melodies inherent to Aida, and along with them – march, fanfare intonation associated with culture parades, shouts of victory” [4, p. 342].

Purely descriptive analysis beyond the musical means of expression is an overview of the “Aida” in the textbook on musical literature by B.V. Levik [5]. The same lack is also inherent to the relevant sections of the “Aida” books of L.A. Solovtsova [6; 7], in which while consistent opera reviewing it was impossible to create a complete description of the individual character. It isn’t also characterized the images of the characters in the B.S. Yagolim’s article [12] published in the series “Opera libretto”.

There is a special edition on this topic – it's the textbook of the soloist of the National Opera of Ukraine A. Vostriakov “The image of the hero in the dramaturgy of opera performance: “Aida”, “Carmen”, “Lohengrin” [3]. A rather detailed descriptive overview of the party of Radames makes it possible to create a picture of his character, but the emphasis is more on the performing aspect, rather than on the analysis of the expressive means of musical language; insufficient attention is paid to the orchestral part.

However, none of the sources discloses the significance of the Radames image in the opera history and nor expresses the idea of its uniqueness as a culminating vertex of the development of the heroic characters images, endowed with the conflict of sense and duty, and got adequate vocal part incarnation.

In the basis of Radames image is the pronounced conflict of sense and duty, and in this respect it has its many predecessors. The first conflict of sense and duty was clearly

embodied in the ancient Greek tragedy, and then classicist dramas of P. Corneille and J.B. Racine, who worked in the era of the first centuries of the existence of the Opera. *Dramma per musica* (as we know, the original name of the opera), focused on the Greek samples, could not, of course, pass a major subject embodiment of the conflict of sense and duty; moreover, it has become one of the main themes in the art of opera. It has emerged in one of the first significant operas – “The Coronation of Poppea” by Monteverdi K. (1642), where this problem is put very sharply (in Nero and Seneca dialogue about the priority of sense and duty, to some extent, and in the image of Otto). In the epoch of rapid development of the classicism the images of heroes, endowed with inner conflict of sense and duty received clearest embodiment of the means inherent in the era of their creation. This is primarily male figures, the performance of which composers, following the tradition, usually entrust to tenors: Reno in “Armida” by J.B. Lully and Gluck, Aeneas in many operas based on the story of Dido and the Trojan hero (perhaps, the most significant opera on the myth is H. Purcell’s), Hippolytus in “Hippolyte et Aricie” and Castor in the “Castor and Pollux” by J.F. Rameau, Agamemnon in “Iphigenia in Aulis” (this party is bass that is an exception) and Orestes in “Iphigenia in Tauris” by K.V. Gluck and many others. In the era of the formation and the intensive development of the Romantism the line of creating such images of opera characters continued and enriched with new incarnationeans. In the art of opera from the beginning of the XIX century there are such romantic images bright, endowed with an inner conflict of sense and debt, as Max (“Frayshyutts”

by C.M. Weber, 1821), Arnold (“William Tell” by G. Rossini, 1829), Pollio (“Norma” by V. Bellini, 1831), Raul, John, Vasco da Gama (“Les Huguenots”, 1836; “The Prophet”, 1849; “The African”, 1865 G. Meyerbeer’s). Tannhauser in the opera by R. Wagner, Andrew (“Oprichnik” by P.I. Tchaikovsky, 1874), Don José (“Carmen” by Bizet, 1875), Andrew (“Taras Bulba”, 1890 – the date of creation). In the work of Verdi is Ismael in “Nabucco” (1842), to a certain extent Ernani and Don Carlos in the operas with the same titles (1845 and 1867).

However, not all of the characters are heroic. First of all, we clarify the concept of “heroism”. As stated in the dictionary by D.N. Ushakov, heroism – “the ability to perform the feat”, and “character – exceptional for courage or for his valor man” [10, p. 554]. Other dictionaries define these concepts similarly. The dictionary on aesthetics states that “in the

heroic nature is overcome sharp, irreconcilable contradictions that often achieved at the cost of life. In the art heroic is disclosed through the statement of high aesthetic ideal primarily through the images of heroes, which is expressing him. In these images embody progressive trends of social development, vivid manifestation of courage, moral resistance, greatness of the human spirit” [11, c. 60]. We note also that the concept picture of the heroic was changed throughout the history: in different times and in different countries, the essence of this concept was interpreted differently. Therefore, the term “hero” is ambiguous. Is it should be considered as a hero the one who is able to accomplish the feat or only the one who accomplishes it already? Should a person be considered as a hero, whose feat does not bring, however, the actual results, aimed at the benefit of society or the other person? Is it possible, for example, to consider Prince Igor from the opera by Alexander Borodin, capable, doubtless, on the heroic act (judging by its musical characteristics in the Prologue), the hero which however ruined his squad and opened the way for the enemy to their native land, by his thoughtless, ill-advised campaign to Polovtsy (though in captivity, without any doubt, Igor behaves heroically – suffice to recall his answer to Konchak to the proposal for the granting of freedom)? In opera music the problem complicates the fact that the means of musical expression may characterize a particular character as a hero, but it does not appear as such, resulting in the further course of events, as in our example with Prince Igor. And can it be considered a heroic the act, which does not lead to positive results, although at the time it was committed, it seems those? As, for example, the performance of Don Carlos against the king in the final of the Third and Fourth Action of the eponymous opera by Verdi, which, in fact, not lead to anything?

Considering these factors, not all of these operatic characters are heroic.

Among them those appear, considering musical characteristics, Arnold, Pollio, Raul, Vasco da Gama, Hernani, and Zacharias in the “Nabucco” (1842), Arrigo from the “The Battle of Legnano” by Verdi (1849) and Manrico in the “Il Trovatore” (1853) – the last three characters have no inner conflict. But if it presents, nowhere is such a bright incarnation of the heroic traits neither in plot, nor in music like of Radames in “Aida”, so in this respect this image is the culminating in the world of opera music, what determines its exceptional importance. And then in the sequel such a heroic image, endowed with inner conflict, was not created. In Othello in the eponymous Verdi’s opera the internal conflict is not associated

with a sense of duty. The heroic characters in the musical dramas of Richard Wagner (Siegfried and Siegfried, Tristan – particularly lyrical character) and Calaf in the “Turandot” of Puccini are deprived of the internal conflict, while at Cavardossi in “Tosca” by the same author lyrical description of the image (also devoid of the internal conflict), judging by the music, prevails. In the operas of the Soviet period (including the Ukrainian operas) heroic images are embodied without internal conflict, or they do not receive adequate display. In some very significant operas of the twentieth century, as, for example, in the “Mathis der Maler” by P. Hindemith, the heroic principle in the characteristic of the protagonist of the opera, endowed with an internal conflict, does not get a bright incarnation in music.

In the same way Radames combines three different areas: the heroic, lyric (love for Aida) and dramatic (the conflict of sense and duty). This combination, as we have shown, is inherent to very few operatic characters. The closest both in history and in nature Radames precursors are Pollio of the “Norms” by V. Bellini and Vasco da Gama from “African” by J. Meyerbeer (incidentally, this opera is the direct predecessor of “Aida”, undoubtedly influenced its creation). However, Pollio is not shown as the commander, whose military honor and valor plays at least some certain role; he is obsessed with a passion for Adalgisa, and the internal conflict, to some extent inherent to him, lies in the love-lyrical plane. However, the inherent thematism (marching melodies with dotted rhythms, energetic upward jumps, although he sings about love) describes Pollio as a courageous, fearless man, eager to sacrifice himself for the salvation of his beloved, and capable of a heroic act that he performs at the end of the opera, redeeming his guilt in front of Norm.

Vasco da Gama in the first act of the opera is shown as a brave explorer, fearless hero, courageously convicting the Inquisition, though knowing all the terrible consequences of his act. Later, however, the lyric feature prevails in the image of Vasco and his inner conflict lies in the plane of love; however, a significant role in his final decision to connect with Ines is the opportunity to sail to Europe and to publicize his geographical discovery of what he was so passionately dreaming. But in the music of the last actions of heroic sphere in the depiction of the image of Vasco remains in the background; of course, plays a role, and the movement of the opera genre from Grand opéra to lyrical.

Considering the above circumstances, we can safely say that Radames is, without a doubt, a heroic person. But Verdi shows its characters as real people, endowed with advantages and disadvantages, as it happens in real life. How profoundly true commented G. Tarotstsi, Verdi “realizes that his heroes have to take a human form, no longer needed the giants, burned with hatred or love, fury or passion, does not need hypertrophied figures who do not know a limit in the manifestation of good and evil (as it is usually in the opera seria, classicist and many romantic dramas – V.B.), but the men and women are needed, to which are peculiar the simple human feelings, complex and subtle emotions, doubt, hesitation (what is peculiar to the realistic direction, to which the composer moves throughout his creative path V.B.)” [9, p. 222]. And Radames – the

heroic character of the new type and in this is also lies Verdi’s innovation, creating his characters with quite realistic features, despite their exclusivity, which is characteristic of Romanticism.

At the beginning of the opera Radames is shown as a man who dreams of military glory, able to perform the feat and really committing it – he wins a victory over the enemies of his state. Another thing is that as this war is fair; I think both Egypt and Ethiopia are equally guilty of feuds between them. And Verdi greatly showed in his opera the hostility of war to man – a war in fact is only needed to the ruling classes. Singing the prowess and the power of an ancient Egyptian state, Verdi shows at the same time its hostility to man, and the composer’s sympathies are clearly on the side of the defeated, in what convinces us the theme “But we believe in your true judgment”, broking into song by Amonasro and taken up by all the prisoners together with Aida with expressive melodies and expressive harmonies [2, p. 147 - 149]. Radames sincerely considers himself a patriot of his homeland, a defender of the fatherland from invading Ethiopians, without thinking that the reason for their invasion, about what is singing Aida in her monologue in the First act, is the aspiration of her father to release his daughter from captivity.

Immediately at the beginning of the opera composer creates a portrait of Radames in two-aspect view – pronounced in music heroic features are combined with deep lyrical feeling of love to the heroine of the opera. In the output Romance Radames “Celeste Aida” (“Sweet Aida”), which is the exposure of the image of the character, this synthesis is presented in the strongest degree. Already in the opening recitative “Oh, if I was elected and

my prophetic dream came true” [2, p. 10] both sides of the young man presented very convincingly. The feature of the introductory recitative – its unusual high tessitura, which presents a considerable difficulty for the beginning of the party, when the singer is not enough descanted (but this is not considered by the composer). The heroic aspect of the image in the Recitative is stressed by fanfare replicas of trumpets and trombones. But as soon as Radames mind turns to his beloved, soft sounding strings come to replace the brass. In all cases, the orchestra vastly deepens the response of the image produced by vocal.

Radames believes that only for the sake of the liberation of Aida he wants to lead the Egyptians to fight, but the musical characteristic throughout the first action is evidenced by purely ambitious of its intent – to acquire military glory.

This he sings in the Third Action – “To forget the land where the glory for the first time flashed to me” [2, p. 236]. For Radames desire for military valor is not less important than the feeling to Aida, otherwise he would without any hesitation decided to escape from the country together with Aida. It is in this duet with Aida at Radames reveals the inner conflict of love and duty, which had not previously manifested itself as he hoped for a favorable for him outcome of events – as a result of the next victory, he will achieve Pharaoh permission to marry Aida, as he hopes in his arioso “In a fit of revenge” of the same scene duet [2, p. 231].

We emphasize that Radames gave military secret quite unconsciously – he answers Aida to her question asked casually, about the path of the Egyptian army troops, intoning at the same height in a low tessitura (the sound of b by the words “In the gorges of Napata” [2, pp. 246]). Recitativation indicates that Radames did not attach special significance to his answer. The composer emphasizes the fact by musical means of expression. The string section of the orchestra in a low tessitura on pianissimo chord sequence is carried out cautiously in multibemole (tragic!) b-moll'e, attracting attention with its gloomy sound; the fateful name of the gorge stands by enharmonic modulation, stressing the crucial moment in the development of action (interrupted circulation with permission by-D7 in the VI stage of the minor, which is later realized to stage III E-dur'a; as a result is a shift in the tonality of tritone ratio).

And just when he heard the replica of the overhearing Amonasro (completion of enharmonic modulation) Radames realized his involuntary betrayal and came from it in

horror. The triumph of Amonasro and the despair of Radames are emphasized by the achievement of a new tonic on tutti sound of orchestra already on the fortissimo. However it does not come to Radames mind the thought to correct the existing situation by an attempt of murdering of Amonasro – because he is the father of his beloved (unlike Amonasro itself, throwing himself with a dagger to Amneris as she appeared). Radames, do not hesitate to make his choice, acting as a hero-patriot, supremely noble, rejecting the idea of the escape with Aida and her father, preventing the murder of Amneris and voluntarily giving up to the priest, knowing that goes to death.

Thus, a sense of duty wins in its internal conflict. The subsequent behavior of Radames is quite consistently: it behaves truly heroically, rejecting Amneris assistance and without humiliating himself by excuses to priests, worthy going to death. He does not consider himself is a traitor – “I was not a traitor”, – he sings in a duet with Amneris [2, p. 259 - 260]. Nevertheless Radames admits his guilt: “My mouth is guilty – a great sin, I know, but I’m not sinful by deed and my honor is with me” [2, p. 260], and is ready to be punished.

In the last stage duet with Aida Radames primarily thinking of her, of his powerlessness to save her, about her imminent death, while she is, in his opinion, is not guilty in anything. And this reveals all the power of Radames’s true love; his heroic nature is truly revealed in its entirety not in the first two acts, where he shows a willingness to lead the army and defeat the enemies of the state, but since the final of the Third act. Embodying on the scene the brightest heroic image of Radames, endowed at the same time with the purely human qualities, the composer creates his vocal part as one of the most difficult for the fulfillment in the world opera repertoire, due to the complexity and versatility of both the nature of the character, and the wider objective of creating a genuine musical drama, the creation of which Verdi sought throughout his career. Emphasizing Verdi’s innovation, L.K. Yaroslavtseva notes that he had “Opera which is not conceivable without contradiction, without sharp pointy antitheses, tension of passions, which would generate a dynamic musical action” [13, p. 43]. This causes and the nature of the vocals by G.Verdi: “In the works of Verdi and difficult coloratura passages are practically absent, the vocal parties require more complex sound, good sound send. Significantly expanded the range of the upper portion of the male voice, the culmination is transferred upward, and opera dramaturgy

completely eliminates the light falsetto sound, replaced by a so-called “disguised sound” [13, p. 44]. Speaking specifically about the party Radames, A.G. Stakhevich notes that her vocal intonation “is characterized by simplicity and clarity of melodic pattern. There is the most used open-sounding voice section in the singing. High, covered nature sounds of the voice add shine and heroic traits, crowning the image of Radames” [8, p. 175].

Thus, the value of the Radames image and his vocal part in the history of opera is immense. Radames is crowned by a series of images of opera characters, which are synthesized in a lyrical, heroic and dramatic spheres shaped, being unique in this regard, and culminating in the development of the world of opera. The inner conflict of duty and sense inherent to Radames, gives him a realistic reliability, although the exclusivity of his character creates his image as a bright romantic, making it complicated, multi-faceted, evolving. In this regard, the statement of A.G. Stakhevich on the impact of the image with its inherent vocal part on the course of development of the opera art in future: “In “Aida” the fusion of brightly pronounced lyrical sphere of the artwork with the dramatic singing of male voices establishes as the leading European opera direction performance, has an impact on future generations of singers. A natural result of his development was performing art of Fr. Taman and E. Caruso, M. Battistini and T. Ruffo, Chaliapin, performing in the Verdi repertoire” [8, p. 175].

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