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## ELEMENTS OF GROTESQUE IN THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE OF THE MUSICAL “ONCE IN ODESSA... OR SONYA – GOLDEN HAND”

BY SIYANA LOSINSKAYA

**Article purpose** – to reveal manifestations of grotesque in musical language of the musical "In Odessa once ... Or Sonka – the Gold Handle" of Siyana Losinskaya. **The methodology of a research** is guided by the theory of grotesque created by M.M. Bakhtin within literary criticism stated in work "Francois Rabelais's creativity and the national culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance". **Scientific novelty of a research.** This research opens the direction of determination of specifics of the embodiment of the grotesque figurative sphere in a genre of the musical for which the grotesque as artistic touch is immanently peculiar. An attempt of a research of specifics of musical grotesque on material of music of the modern Odessa composer S. Losinskaya is for the first time made. **Conclusions.** For the embodiment of the grotesque figurative sphere, in the musical such musical and stylistic receptions as stylization, citing, connection of different genres elements are used. It also defines specifics of musical material of the musical for which "the dictionary of the Odessa musical intonations" becomes the cementing element. Thin stylization of musical material creates recognition illusion at the listener.

**Keywords:** musical comedy, grotesque figurative sphere, stylistics of musical language.

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**Элементы гротеска в музыкальном языке мюзикла «Однажды в Одессе... или Сонька – золотая ручка» Сияны Лосинской**

**Цель исследования** – выявить проявления гротеска в музыкальном языке мюзикла «Однажды в Одессе... Или Сонька – Золотая Ручка» Сияны Лосинской. **Методология исследования** опирается на сформированную М.М. Бахтиным в рамках литературоведения теорию гротеска, изложенную в работе «Творчество Франсуа Рабле и народная культура средневековья и Ренессанса». **Научная новизна исследования.** Данное исследование открывает направление определения специфики воплощения гротескной образной сферы в жанре мюзикла, для которого гротеск как художественный приём является имманентно свойственным. Впервые предпринимается попытка исследования специфики музыкального гротеска на материале музыки современного одесского композитора С. Лосинской. **Выводы.** Для воплощения гротескной образной сферы, в мюзикле использованы такие музыкально-стилистические приёмы как стилизация, цитирование, соединение разножанровых элементов. Это и определяет специфику музыкального материала мюзикла, цементирующим элементом для которого становится «словарь одесских музыкальных интонаций». Тонкая стилизация музыкального материала создаёт у слушателя иллюзию узнавания.

**Ключевые слова:** музыкальная комедия, гротескная образная сфера, стилистика музыкального языка.

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**Элементы гротеску у музичній мові мюзиклу «Одного разу в Одесі ... Або Сонька - Золота Ручка» Сіяни Лосинської.**

**Мета дослідження** - виявити прояви гротеску в музичній мові мюзиклу «Одного разу в Одесі ... Або Сонька - Золота Ручка» Сіяни Лосинської. **Методологія** дослідження спирається на сформовану М.М. Бахтіним в рамках літературознавства теорію гротеску, викладену в роботі «Творчість Франсуа Рабле і народна культура середньовіччя і Ренесансу». **Наукова новизна дослідження.** Дане дослідження відкриває напрям визначення специфіки втілення гротескної образної сфери в жанрі мюзиклу, для якого гротеск як художній прийом є імманентно властивим. Вперше робиться спроба дослідження специфіки музичного гротеску на матеріалі музики сучасного одеського композитора С. Лосинська. **Висновки.** Для втілення гротескної образної сфери в мюзиклі використані такі музично-стилістичні прийоми як стилизація, цитування, з'єднання різножанрових елементів. Це і визначає специфіку музичного матеріалу мюзиклу, цементуючим елементом для якого стає «словник одеських музичних інтонацій». Тонка стилизація музичного матеріалу створює у слухача ілюзію впізнавання.

**Ключові слова:** музична комедія, гротескна образна сфера, стилістика музичної мови.

Nowadays, the genre of musical, as a kind of musical comedy, is one of the most popular theater genres. The breadth of the spectrum of plot and content, brightness of

entertainment, universality of musical language, primarily focused on the modern intonation vocabulary give it enough recognition from the wider public. It is the musical that makes up a significant part in repertoires of the domestic and foreign theaters of musical comedy. And the Odessa Academic Theatre of Musical Comedy named after M. Vodyanoy is not an exception, having become, during its more than 50-year-old history, one of the symbols of the city.

The genre of musical comedy by itself has become familiar to the Odessa's character that implies a peculiar sense of humor and multicultural interactions having created a unique atmosphere of Odessa. It is interesting that among the performances of the repertoire of the Theatre, the plays with Odessa content (i.e., written by local screenwriters and composers on stories from the city's history), line up in a separate row. For example, musicals "Count Vorontsov" (libretto and music by Eugene Ulyanovskiy) and "Hadzhibey, or Love to Three Thousand Oranges" to the music of operettas and musicals beloved by the audience (libretto by Igor Losinskiy and Yan Gelman) . This series continues the jazz musical "Once in Odessa... Or Sonya – Golden Hand", performed in the Theater in April 2016 of during the celebration of the International Jazz Day. The libretto after the play of Yan Gelman was written by Igor Losinskiy. As a composer there debuted Siyana Losinskaya, a graduate of Odessa Conservatory, an author of a number of musical works.

Elegant adventurous story based on the life of the legend a gangster Odessa Sophia Bluvshstein was embodied on the basis of the typical Odessa musical material in compliance with all the laws of the genre of musical. That's "Odessa style" musical language, as well as the originality of the literary style of the script, provide the organic realization of the theme. Noteworthy is the phrase that ends with a list of personages in the libretto: "The common love of all the characters is one: it is Odessa – the city where they sell, steal, catch, treat, love and hate." This same love for their native city united the authors. The idea of creating a Musical belonged to Yan Gelman – a well known Odessa scriptwriter, artistic director of the popular theatrical group "Gentlemen of Odessa University", the author of a number of popular Russian TV projects, the laureate of a prestigious Taffy Award.

Working in the field of comic projects both in Odessa and Moscow, Yan Gelman was always faithful to his hometown that was reflected in his literary style presenting a high sample of the Odessa wit and smart. The scriptwriter was guided by the idea of staging the

plays he wrote “for Odessa” and “about Odessa” (the first was a performance-review “Carnival of the French Boulevard” was successful in the Theatre in 1990s). As “Hadzhibey, or Love for Three Thousand Oranges”, the play “Once in Odessa ... Or Sonya – Golden Pen” is based on several historical anecdotes from the life of the city, with real characters represented, however, in a somewhat unusual light. An admirer of the Theater of Musical Comedy, the author hoped to see the story of Sonya on the stage in the genre of musical. He offered to write the music to Siyana Losinskaya, for whom this work became the first major work in the musical theater genre. According to the composer, “The musical was being written easily, because the images were outlined very clearly and vividly, the script’s text naturally went to the music, the words of vocal could be sung with ease. Odessa musical vocabulary was guessed in the figures of speech.” But though the musical was soon ready, the preparatory work for staging stopped due to the tragic death of Y. Gelman in 2012.

A new chance to present a theatrical life to the musical emerged in 2016, when the “Jazz Theatre of Mikhail Freidlin” undertook the musical “Sonya – Golden Hand” to perform. Time limits associated with the festival format, required more than a significant reduction of the scenario. In addition, it was necessary to work in the stylistic framework established by the recently born jazz theater, which was looking for and found new, innovative approaches to the theater arts. The necessary changes and additions were made by a co-author of Yan Gelman, his friend, screenwriter Igor Losinskiy.

Despite the fact that as a result of reductions several storylines presenting very colorful characters (a couple in love Nusya and Mosya, two gendarmes, merchants of the first guild) were withdrawn from the action, the jazz-musical proved to be dramaturgically solid and dynamic. And most importantly, it was in a genuine “Odessa style” that corresponded to the original idea. And as an integral feature of the Odessa thinking is irony (and in particular self-irony), the characters of the play were presented in a somewhat grotesque light.

Grotesque as an artistic technique is inherently peculiar to the genre of musical comedy. Plot collisions, typical for operettas and musicals, are based on substitution, deception of expectations, disguise, revelations, and transformations. They suggest diverting of action from one plan to another and on the linguistic level – mixing of heterogeneous

elements. In the comedy genres it often happens a “rise of banality” and “banalization of sublime” indicating their connection with the carnival type of thinking.

This ambivalence, along with a tendency to contradictoriness and non-compliance with aesthetics of the beautiful and sublime, M. Bakhtin identified as essential features of the grotesque in his book “Creative Works of Francois Rabelais and the Popular Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance” [1].

A fancy compound of truth and fiction, the beautiful and ugly, the tragic and comic, the reliable and improbable creates a specific poetics of the musical comedy genres. And exaggeration of certain features of scenic characters represent them somewhat (or completely) caricatured, causing the audience’s laughter reaction. Although the grotesque sometimes rouses a “bitter laugh,” “laughter through tears”, as it often appeals to painful aspects of life, the humor of musical-comedy genres is kind as a rule and provokes bright, positive, and joyful laughter.

In this sense, the musical “Once in Odessa... Or Sonya – Golden Pen” is not an exception. A grotesque approach was implemented already in description of the central characters. According to the scenario, Sophia Bluvshstein is characterized as follows: “Sonya – Golden Hand, the queen of thieves, and also Countess of San Donato, Baroness of Bobruisk and Zhelobinsk, Duchess of Buinaksk. She likes risk, excitement and Michael Bluvshstein”. The image of the main character of the play is extremely idealized and romanticized. Sonya is presented as a high society lady, sophisticated and refined, with impeccable manners and delicate taste that obviously corresponds to only one of the masks, which that versatile criminal-adventurer bore. In addition, in the musical she is an embodiment of female fidelity, whereas the real Sonya, according to most conservative estimates, had five official husbands not counting the other seduced and duped males. This deliberate elevation of the image combined with her illegal acts is reflected in the musical characterization of the protagonist.

Presentation of the character is Sonya’s romance “Where is the Beginning of My Love?” which is full of deep and sincere lyricism. However, in the next vocal party of Sonya, composer uses grotesque reception. Into the thematism of the passionate tango “I Shall be Waiting” in the refrain it invades the tune of the cancan. This dance, for a long time

having been considered obscene, has nevertheless found its place in the operetta, and its citing successfully emphasizes

the meaning of the text:

And I shall wait for him, the thread of love's not rended.

And let him know the marriage-bed of mine.

As Odessa women can, he will be waited,

But not to waste, but not to waste for next to nothing time!

The next song of Sonya – “Jewelry Quadrille” – again characterizes her as a passionately loving nature. However, this time the object of her love is jewelry, and it is absolutely impossible to doubt the sincerity of her feelings. The musical expression means of this song are simple and convincing. The composer uses typical for operetta quadrilles of the 19th century harmonic techniques and texture solutions. The melody is based on a combination of broad passages and gamma-shaped movement. Sliding half-tone intonations emphasize the inner awe that Sonya feels in relation to the diamonds:

And without jewelry, we're just in negligee!

What would do the all of us without Faberge!

This duality in description of the protagonist serves not only for deepening of the character, but also allows the greater use of the musical material, and it also “rouses” the viewers with a lack of uniplanar solutions, when the character is either a “villain” or a “hero.” Indeed, the behavior of Sonya is not heroic, but the spectator admires the irony, skill, and ease she demonstrates to carry out her quite dangerous stunts. Musical passages from the lyricism to sarcasm and back enhance the degree of emotional impact.

The image of Michael Bluvshstein is also presented in a romantic light: “At first glance he looks like an ordinary thief – he is well dressed, his manners are excellent, and if he differs somewhat from the respectable public, then only for the better. But his uncommonness lies in the fact that he is a thief-romantic. Most often he works alone, preferring may be not so profitable, but more beautiful in execution crimes.”

However, Michel symbolizes the world of Odessa gangsters, organized by its internal rules, with its own code of honor:

The bandits from Odessa – they always live like brothers,

And even to each other the bandits never shoot!

The Odessa beauties, when going with another,  
To their only lover in soul will be true!

Musically, this song (“Gangster Quadrille”) is a center of intonation vulgarisms. The composer very naturally uses the stylistic of the Odessa criminal chanson: the refrain resembles popular restaurant gypsy-style songs. It’s not a direct citing, but the musical-language environment, authentic to the portrayed characters, is reproduced.

The lyrical side of Michel’s image is revealed in his duets with Sonya. It is noteworthy that his vocal is fully based on the intonations of Sonya’s romance. It is a duo of agreement, in which the emotional and tonal impulse is set up by Sonya, and Michael only echoes, but he echoes sincerely. In the scenic embodiment of this duo, the producer used a technique, popular in musicals, of doubling of images. The pair of lead actors is doubled by a pair of dancers. Thus, the inner emotional experiences of the characters are embodied on the stage both by vocal-intonation and choreographic means.

Two more characters, which in this story can be attributed to the principal, are Ivan Tazikov (“a merchant who likes hardware and jewelry selling them”) and Carl Gottlieb Lubenau von Weiner (“Professor of Psychiatry, who loves serious mental disabilities”). Both are outlined in a caricature-grotesque light. The executors of these roles were young, but experienced actors of the Theater of Musical Comedy. It was not the first time for them to represent the characters, which with the help of actors’ exaggerations should cause laughter of the audience. The ability to not only sing correctly, but to exactly highlight the key points in the text of the songs helped to embody the author's intention.

Ivan Tazikov is a typical comic character, who is wishful to make a fool of a customer and, as a result, is neatly duped by Sonya. He hasn’t his own musical characteristics, but picks up the theme of “Jewelry Quadrille”, as the love for jewelry is his main passion.

The Professor of Psychiatry, on the other hand, is a character with a brightly individualized characteristic. It is with his participation happen the scenes, connected with the comical denouement of this adventurous story. The grotesque image of the doctor of German origin is primarily created by means of an original literary language built on a mixture of Russian and German words.

Meine Lieblings Idioten!  
Ich liebe dich!

I'm without you not working!  
And money nicht!  
But the imbeciles aren't rare  
Still in our great Empire!  
Who's not in the state a moron,  
Not a nut?

The “Couplets of Psychiatrist” are based on deliberately simple and clearly organized rhythmic motifs that probably should reflect the specifics of the popular German folk songs and military marches. Another detail of the music, indicating the nationality of the doctor, is quoting of an Austrian folk song “Oh, du lieber Augustin” dedicated to a would-be singer, who survived during the epidemic of plague thanks to his addiction to alcohol. However, this quote is not registered in the score and originated in the staged version.

As for the jazz element, it is not so much the author's peculiar musical material, as the one introduced to the bright arrangements, made by a composer Oleg Negrutsa and musician Vladimir Vakulovich. The instruments involved in the performance corresponded to a jazz ensemble (clarinet, tenor saxophone, trumpet, trombone, banjo, piano, drums, and contrabass).

The head of the jazz ensemble Igor Znatokov made his contribution to the fact that the musical component agreed with a humorous nature of the musical. Being a successful solo saxophonist, he has an experience of working as a conductor of the Odessa Circus orchestra, where the grotesque is an integral part of the performance.

Thus, for an embodiment of the grotesque imagery, in the composition there were used such musical and stylistic techniques as stylization, citation, and connection of elements of different genres. This determines the specificity of the musical material of the play, where, let's call it “dictionary of the Odessa musical intonations” becomes a cementing element. For the listener this delicate stylization of the musical material creates an illusion of recognition, when the melodies even at the first listening seem familiar and they are at once well remembered.

Any leitmotif system was not incorporated into the composition, but the musical-dramaturgical integrity is formed by the compound of three main themes – lyrical, grotesque-

comical and “a theme of love to Odessa,” which is most clearly heard in the opening and closing musical scenes.

Even an abbreviated version allows evaluating the undoubted merits of the composition: an elegant ironic style of the literary scenario, the dynamic dramatic development, the bright embodiment of the main characters, the organic musical language presenting a colorful “Odessa slang”. All this gives grounds to assume that the musical “Once in Odessa... Or Sonya – Golden Hand” will take its rightful place among the comic-theatrical works of the Odessa composers.

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