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“Requiem” by Giuseppe Verdi and Alessandro Manzoni’s novel “The Betrothed”: Figurative and Dramatic Parallels

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The paper is devoted to one of the most famous works by Giuseppe Verdi – “Requiem”. The author traces the history of its creation, associated with the death of Alessandro Manzoni, the renowned writer of Risorgimento era, whose novel “The Betrothed” became a milestone in the history of Italian literature and made a huge impression on young G. Verdi. In this connection, the authors of the paper for the first time ever in Russian musicology put forward and justify the idea that the Manzoni’s novel images are close to the Verdi’s requiem mass, by presenting analytical observations of literary and musical works. Dramatic composition of the novel and Requiem is based on the interaction of several image lines: lyrical-psychological, heroic-patriotic and religious. In addition, the historical parallels are found between the time of the novel, and the era when “the maestro of Italian revolution” lived. The authors also explained the reasons for which in the 19th century it became possible for the related arts to penetrate into the spiritual composition.

Keywords: G. Verdi, A. Manzoni, Requiem, “The Betrothed”, dramaturgy.

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Research area: culture studies.

Requiem as a genre has a special place in the history of music. The first requiem with Latin libretto is said to have been composed by the founder of the Netherlands polyphonic school – Guillaume Du Fay (1460), but it has not survived. The earliest survived example of requiem was composed by the Flemish composer – Johannes Ockeghem (1470).

Being originally just a ritual genre, later requiem reaches people beyond the church and became “the genre of author expression” [Rush’evskaia, 2011, p. 184]. Probably the first of

such requiems in music history is undoubtedly Requiem by W.A. Mozart (1791), which became as if the “starting point” and the model for the following generations of composers¹. Strikingly this adherence showed itself in the era of Romanticism, at the verge of which there appeared a “specific type of man – *homo aestheticus*” [Nikonova, 2004, p. 58], consequently many genres including those cult ones underwent radical rethinking.

It was in the 19th century when the art started to reflect social problems. In this connection

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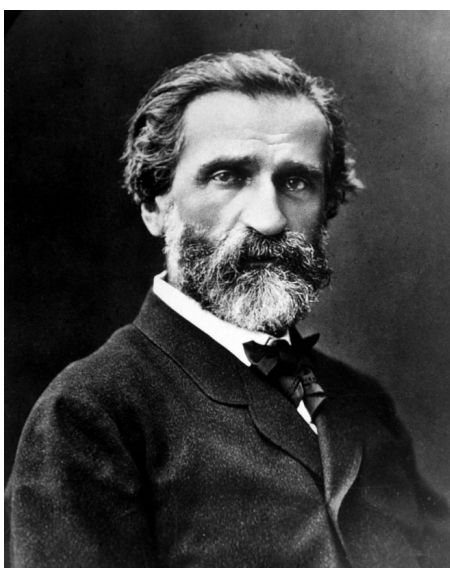
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requiem as the genre allowed composers to understand the issues of life and death deeply and fully. At the same time the main trends of the Romantic epoch were emulated by requiem. The composers paid special attention to the reflection of feelings of an individual, who has a controversial nature, which in turn is closely connected with the strive of Romanticism for individualization of the poetic and musical image. Due to this one can understand why in the 19th century no requiem interpretation copied another: "Each of the Romantics has his own, characteristic of his works range of expressive means and devices of creating the image" [Antonova, 2007, p. 16]. In this row the *Messa da Requiem* by G. Verdi stands out.

The history of the Requiem creation by G. Verdi was covered in detail in the studies of his work. The first sketches of the future work appeared in 1868 in connection with the death of G. Rossini. As evidenced by the letter to Angelo Mariani, G. Verdi offered "the most respected Italian composers to unite to compose a funeral Mass that would be performed on the anniversary of the death" of the creator of "The

Barber of Seville" [Verdi, 1973, p. 142]. By lot G. Verdi had to write the last part – *Libera me*, which is rarely used when writing a requiem, as usually it ends with the part – *Agnus Dei*. However, collective work was not finished, and the part created by the composer remained unclaimed.

In 1873, Italy suffered a great sorrow: writer Alessandro Manzoni died. He was the founder of the historical novel genre. When the composer learned about his death, he did not go to Milan, explaining his decision as follows: "I am deeply saddened by the death of our Great Man! But I will not come to Milan tomorrow, since I do not have the courage to attend his funeral. I will come on one of these days in order to visit his grave alone, so I will not be seen, so that I may (after some reflection and after I assess my strength) offer something to honor his memory" [Verdi, 1973, p. 205]. As one can see, almost immediately, the day after the death of A. Manzoni, the composer decided on his own to respond to the heavy for the whole Italian culture loss by creating a work commemorating the artist. This work was Requiem.



Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)



Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873)

In this regard it is noteworthy that two years before his work G. Verdi wrote to A. Manzoni: "There are a lot too many requiem masses. It is no point in adding one more." (Cited by [Gal, 1998, p. 572]). The fact that eventually the composer took a decision to write a requiem serves as one more proof that A. Manzoni's death was a tragic shock for him.

Judging by G. Verdi's letters, A. Manzoni was for him a "great poet", a "saint", an "Italian glory". Having read the novel "The Betrothed" at the young age, the composer admired the writer's skills, saying the book was "the greatest book of our time and one of the most profound books created by the human mind. This not only the book, it is a consolation for all the mankind" (Cited by [Tarozzi, 1984, p. 249]).

Actually, this work became momentous in the history of Italian literature. The Russian media wrote on this: "Since 'The Decameron' by Boccaccio Italy has been famous for its stories and fairy-tales, but has not had any novels; A. Manzoni presented his country with this type of work" (Cited by [Volodina, 2004, p. 196]). Created in 1822 and published in 1827, the novel "The Betrothed" was "a prominent event in the Italian literature of the time. A. Manzoni was for Italy like N. Karamzin for Russia: he was as if a travel guide and a leader of the language art" [Volodina, 2004, p. 206]. Composing his requiem G. Verdi must have reread this precious for him novel. In this aspect we find interesting intersections between A. Manzoni's novel and a vocal-symphonic work by G. Verdi.

The significance of the novel was largely conditioned by the time of its creation. "The Betrothed" does not only glorify the love of the main characters in the sake of which they pass a lot of challenges, and but also love of the motherland. A. Manzoni thought that for the revival of modern literature one should pay attention to its source,

i.e. "the inner life of the people". This idea led the writer to consider the need to relate the history with the tragedy, to enliven before the readers different episodes from national life, to make them the center, the "focus of individual passions, together with all the memories, lessons, anxieties and hopes of patriotism" [Volodina, 2004, p. 210]. It is also critical that the events described in the novel (in 1628-1629) and the circumstances of A. Manzoni's and G. Verdi's life in Italy were in some ways similar. Like wars and revolts of the 17th century aimed at overcoming the heavy burden of feudalism, the era of the Risorgimento was a high point in the destiny of Italy fighting for its independence and state integrity. Its ideas were reflected in the early operas of G. Verdi (1840s), based on the historical and heroic stories². They earned him loud, really nation-wide fame and love and laid the foundation for his future career.

The novel plot, as indicated by A. Manzoni, evolves in Milan and its surroundings. Here the fate of the characters and the fate of the country are decided. In 220 years, the events repeated once again. At this time the city sealed the fate of the revolution of 1848 and the war declared by Charles Albert to the Austrian government. The rebellion, raised by the Italians, was so fierce that it went down in history under the name "five days of Milan". It is significant that after the war in 1859 it was Lombardy, whose center is in Milan, which overthrew the Austrian rule for the first time and laid the grounds for the future of the Kingdom of Italy. In 1860, it convened the first Italian Parliament, where G. Verdi was the representative of the province of Parma. In turn, Milan was the city that had a special significance in the life of G. Verdi. Here he endured both personal tragedy and unprecedented triumphs. It is remarkable that the first night of Requiem was in 1894 at the Milan cathedral of San Marco and then at La Scala – the main theater for the whole G. Verdi's life.

There is one more interesting analogy that occurs between the literary and musical compositions. The author of the novel "The Betrothed" presents his text as a rewriting of an ancient *Latin* manuscript into the modern language. He explained his plan as follows: "I thought why not to take this whole chain of events from the manuscript and rework its style?" At the same time A. Manzoni called his work heroic labour of "rewriting history from a faded and abundant with corrections manuscript" [Manzoni]. Like the author of "The Betrothed", G. Verdi also created his work on the basis of canonical Latin text of the requiem mass and offered his own reading.

As shown by the study of the novel and Requiem, the similarity between them is found at the level of dramaturgy, where three lines can be traced. However, in the literary and musical works these lines are embodied in different ways due to the specificity of the genre characteristics. The first line can be described as lyrical and psychological; in the novel it is connected, first of all, with images of lovers – Lucia and Renzo (Lorenzo). In addition, the author devotes a lot of passages to description of internal experiences of other actors, as well as to the changes that happen to the characters under the influence of the events.

The appearance of the lyrical sphere in G. Verdi's Requiem is explained by two reasons. First, the composer comes to the interpretation of the genre as a sensitive psychologist, who created a large number of opera masterpieces, the center of which is always "the drama of the human heart". However, G. Verdi's Requiem is the work of the romantic composer, the representative of the era, who discovered the depth and diversity of human inner world. That is why in Requiem there are many lyrical episodes. In number 2 these lyrical episodes are "Quid sum miser", "Recordare", "Qui Mariam", "Lacrimosa"; in

number 3 – "Domine Jesu", "Hostias"; in number 5 – "Agnus Dei". Their music pieces are close to each other because of a smooth tune with a lot of chants, cantus; while genre topics resemble those of lullaby. Arrangement is noted for fineness of word painting, transparent sound of mostly string and woodwind sections.

As it was already mentioned, A. Manzoni's novel is not limited to the narration of the love relationship between the characters. The story of the loving couple and their vicissitudes of fate becomes an incentive to the plot development. Once forced to separate, Lucia and Renzo get into the cycle of historical events, which changed abruptly their destiny. So the story acquires another line – the historic one, connected with the heroic pages of the Italian history. Certainly, such a dramatic "move" is characteristic of most romance novels of the time. But A. Manzoni gave a very thorough and detailed account of life of actually existed individuals; rendered a chronicle of what was happening, so that the historical component of the novel is much more meaningful than the romantic one. The critics wrote on that occasion: "Rather than in the fate of individuals A. Manzoni was primarily interested in major historical events of the era and the movement of the masses, which intertwined with the individual fates" [Rush'evskaia, 2011, pp. 208-209]. History is thus presented in the heroic and patriotic manner, as we stated earlier.

Naturally, in the Requiem heroic imaginary sphere is revealed somewhat differently. The possibility of its occurrence in Requiem was motivated by the scene, imprinted by the Scriptures. The image of God is given as the image of the soldier acting against any unrighteousness. Most explicitly this image is presented in the second issue (sections "Tuba mirum", "Liber scriptus", "Rex tremendae", "Confutatis"). However, the first piece shows the man with a strong will, who does not want to humble before his fate.

Originating in number 1 the heroic line finds its continuation in numbers 4 "Sanctus" and 7 "Libera me". Thereby a kind of dramatic "skeleton" forms and it which "moulds" the composition of Requiem. It is essential that in all parts the important role is played by polyphonic techniques.

In addition to the lyrical and historical lines, the novel has a religious line. Moreover, the writer presents it quite diversely, making the whole gallery of portraits of the church clergy. There is Don Abbondio – curator (the parish priest) of the area, where the main characters live. Frightened by local bandits' threats, he dispensed with the duty and refused to marry Renzo and Lucia, which serves as a stimulus to the plot development of the lyric line³. Two other priests – Fra Cristoforo and Cardinal Federigo Borromeo are the examples of true service to God. They took an active part in the fate of lovers, helping them to find the right solution in times of trouble and overcome fears and doubts. Finally, in the novel there is Gertruda, whose way to God was full of difficulties and contradictions. Longed to live in the secular world, she agreed to the vows under family pressure. As if in revenge for the injustice committed against her, the heroine broke the vows and helped braves (bold knights of the road) Don Rodrigo to kidnap Lucia, who hid in the convent.

It is interesting that in the novel there are several references to death and thoughts about what awaits a man after it. For example, Fra Cristoforo decided to become a monk after the terrible shock, after murdering his "mortal enemy" in the battle. "The fall of the enemy, his altered face, which because of rabies and threat turned immediately to the suffering and the majestic tranquility of death – this was a spectacle, which at once turned the life of a murderer upside down" [Manzoni].

The thought of death disturbed and confused two other heroes of the novel, characterized by the author as "terrible villains". One of them was Don Rodrigo, who saw a bad dream while suffering from plague: "He looks at others: all have wax, decaying and disfigured faces with dull, frozen eyes, with sagging lips; all were dressed in some hanging in tatters rags, and through their hole spots and blisters were visible. He fancies that he shouts to them: 'Make way, hey, you, you bastards!' And as if he looks at the church door, but it is far, far away, and his cry is accompanied by a threatening expression on his face, but he cannot get off the ground and only shrinks, trying not to touch these repulsive bodies, which are surrounding him from all sides. But none of these madmen made a sign of intention to step aside, and none seems to have heard him screaming. On the contrary, they are increasingly advancing on him, and most importantly, it seemed to him that someone from them whether with an elbow or something else pushes him in the left side between the heart and the armpit, and he felt a painful prick at this place and then as if some severity... He understood that he was doomed. He was embraced with *the fear of death*" [Manzoni – emphasis added]. Suffering overtake Don Rodrigo for his unjust life of a murderer, a liar and a sensualist. Having learned about their host's disgrace, all servants left him and his close associate – Griso passed him into the hands of monatti.

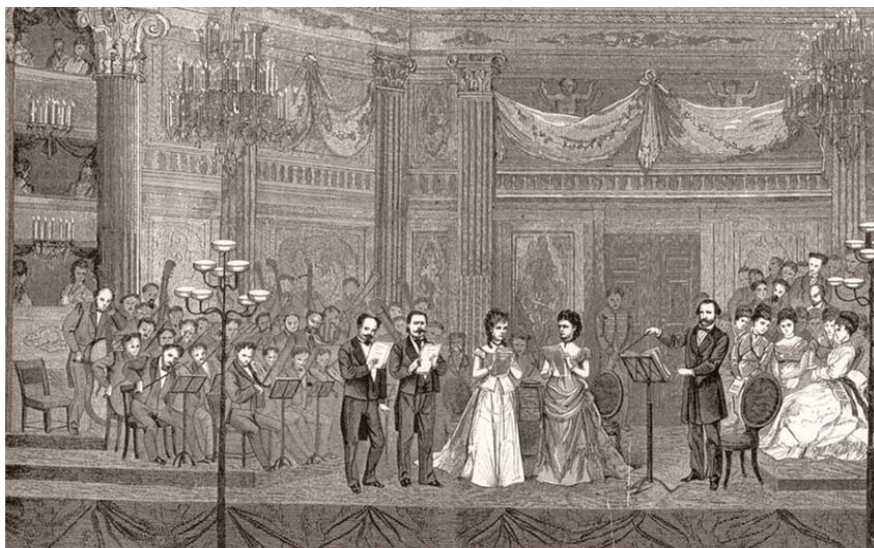
A different fate awaited Unnamed⁴. His meeting with Lucia occurs when aging powerful Signor started to think about the consequences of their bloody deeds. "That disgust, which he felt committing the first crime but then entirely overcome, almost disappeared and now again it came to be felt again. But if in those days the image of an unknown future, and a strong sense of vitality filled his soul with carefree confidence, now, on the contrary, even the thought of the future made

his present more and more melancholic. Old age – death and what is then?” And the amazing thing is that *the image of death*, which in a moment of the terrible danger in the face of the enemy usually doubled the ardor of this man and incited his anger and courage, the same image, standing before him now in the silence of the night, in front of his inaccessible castle, threw him in the state of sudden loss. It was not a death threat from the enemy, being a mortal too; it could not be overthrown by a sharp weapon or a deft hand; it approached on its own, it originated from the inside; maybe it was still far, but every moment it was coming closer; and while the mind painfully struggled over how to ward off the very thought of it, it was coming... Now at times in his soul there rose a vague but horrible idea of *personal responsibility*, mental independence of whatsoever examples. Now he sometimes felt a terrible loneliness precisely because of that standing out from the masses of villains he stood in front of them all. The God of whom he had heard, but whom he had never considered necessary to either deny or praise, because he was busy only with how to live, as if the

God does not exist; now, in moments of causeless melancholy, in the moments of fear for no apparent danger, it seemed to him that the God cried out in his soul: ‘And yet I do exist!’ In the early years of fierce and fiery passions the law proclaimed in the name of God as if repelled him. Now, when the law suddenly came to his mind, his mind in spite of the will took the law as something immutable” [Manzoni – emphasis added].

Consequently, Rodrigo and Unnamed at some point of life thought about the other life after death and experienced genuine fear at the thought of what would be ordained for them beyond death? Their imagination offered them a picture of the Last Judgment.

Similarly, Requiem states the pose of the human soul in the afterlife in intercession with the Terrible Judge, whose decisions would determine the clemency. Perhaps that is why in G. Verdi's Requiem it is part of Dies Irae which became the center of the whole composition. Contrary to common practice, the composer maintains the integrity of the text of the medieval sequence within one part, so that he manages to



Maisi Coppini signora Walmann signora Stale Verdi
LA MESSA DI VERDI SUL PALCOSCENICO DELLA SCALA.
(Dieggo del vero del signor Totini, locia, del signor Baldi).

Performance of Requiem in La Scala

create a large-scale musical piece, organized as indivisible opera scene.

The latter is quite natural. The composer addresses the work on Requiem, having extensive experience in the opera genre. It is no accident that G. Tarozzi noted that "Requiem had much of the opera. It is the only language which G. Verdi speaks" [Tarozzi, 1984, p. 252]. The composer, who for his whole life had been writing musical dramas, not having a go at other genres, created a spiritual work as a work for the theater. And most vividly G. Verdi's theatrical thinking reveals in Part II – Dies irae, which gives the picture of the Last Judgment.

Thus, the Italian composer as if transforms two "plots" in his work. The first is the story of the Last judgment, which is embodied in the text of the medieval sequence. However, discovered parallels with A. Manzoni's novel "The Betrothed" allow us to speak about the plot of the

second plan, which influences Requiem forming three imaginative and dramatic spheres. Each is presented with its own characteristic intonation and tonal range. As a playwright G. Verdi interprets the spiritual genre from the point of opera style. This is evidenced by numerous solo and ensemble scenes, the use of recitative and arioso. Arioso scenes demonstrate characteristic style of G. Verdi's later operas – stilo misto. Various in images and emotional content, they are interspersed with choral scenes making the big thorough scenes.

The concept of G. Verdi's Requiem expresses his understanding of death as a tragedy of all humanity. This led the sequence Dies Irae to playing the dominant role in intonational, dramaturgical and compositional structure. Occupying a central position in the cycle, it serves as a kind of "intonational fund", which exhibits the main thematic elements of Requiem.

¹ See in detail [Sapsuev, 2014, pp. 508 – 509].

² "Nabucco" (1842), "I lombardi alla prima crociata" (1843), "Ernani", "I due Foscari" (both 1844), "Giovanna d'Arco", "Alzira" (both 1845), "Attila" (1846), "Macbeth", "I masnadieri" (both 1847), "Il corsaro" (1848), "La battaglia di Legnano", "Luisa Miller" (both 1849).

³ Bravoes (knights of the road, thugs) were sent to Don Abondo by local villain Don Rodrigo, who wanted to get Lucia with foul purposes. He argued with his friend, that she would belong to him, and the wedding of the characters could thwart the evil plans. The curator rejected to marry the passionate couple, yet, wishing to marry, the young lovers asked for help from the monk Fra Cristoforo, who advised them to postpone the wedding, and to seek refuge in other areas. Lucia was sent to the monastery in Monza, and Renzo decided to go through Milan to his brother. There he became an unwitting participant in the terrible "hunger riot", as a result he was announced state criminal subjected to persecution. For a long time the main characters lived separately. They survived a terrible plague and lost their loved ones. But in the end, they reunited to live long and happily ever after.

⁴ Here is how this character is described in the novel: "Doing what is prohibited by law or which interferes with this or that force; being a judge and a master of others' affairs with the sole motive - a thirst for command; giving everybody scare; disposing of people who themselves are accustomed to dispose of others - these were passions gripping the man" [Manzoni].

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«Реквием» Джузеппе Верди и роман Алессандро Мандзони «Обрученные»: образно-драматургические параллели

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Статья посвящена одному из известнейших произведений Джузеппе Верди «Реквием». Прослеживается история его создания, связанная со смертью писателя эпохи Рисорджименто Алессандро Мандзони, чей роман «Обрученные» стал важной вехой в истории развития итальянской литературы и произвел на молодого Верди огромное впечатление. В связи с этим авторы статьи впервые в отечественном музыкознании выдвигают и обосновывают идею об образной близости романа Мандзони и заупокойной мессы Верди, излагая аналитические наблюдения над литературным и музыкальным произведениями. Драматургия романа и «Реквиема» основывается на взаимодействии нескольких образных сфер: лирико-психологической, героико-патриотической и религиозной. Кроме того, обнаруживаются исторические параллели между временем действия в романе и эпохой, когда жил «маэстро итальянской революции»; объясняются причины, по которым в XIX веке стало возможным проникновение в духовный жанр закономерностей смежных видов искусств.

Ключевые слова: Дж. Верди, А. Мандзони, «Реквием», «Обрученные», драматургия.

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.
