

ON AN UNKNOWN COLLECTION COLLECTION OF SKETCHES

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The museum of Shota Rustaveli State University of Theater and Cinema, which has changed names repeatedly since inception in 1970 (the International Friendship Office, the Theater History Office), houses collections of photos, print materials, and paintings depicting the history of the university, theater and cinema. There are programs and posters of plays staged since 1939, repertoires, photos, personal archives of prominent artists, studies, and the like. Among the exhibits is a collection of sketches unknown to experts and the public at large to this day.

Shota Rustaveli State University of Theater and Cinema originally, named as the Institute of Performing Arts, was founded at A. Pagava's (a Georgian theater director) drama studio in 1923. A. Pagava and celebrated theater director K. Marjanishvili were its first rector and artistic director, respectively. In 1926, the institute closed down but, through the efforts of A. Khorava (an outstanding actor of the time) and A. Pagava, was restored on September 1, 1939. The two were appointed rector and the vice-rector, respectively. The Institute was housed in Rustaveli Theater in 1923 and 1939, when the sketches of plays staged at the institute and displayed in the museum originated. Materials of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s are relatively comprehensive. There are but a few sketches of the subsequent period and only several dozen dating back to the 1990s.

The sketches depict the theatricals of term and graduation plays by the students of the institute's department of acting. Junior and senior students used to stage one term and 2 graduation plays, respectively. Besides, there are sketches of the stage setting and costumes of plays by the institute's directing department students at Griboyedov, Youth, Batumi, and other theaters.

Some of the sketches have annotations likely made when the museum was referred to as the Theater History Office. They bear stamps and identification numbers (We

failed to find the inventory document. The inscription on the stamp says: "Rustaveli State Drama Theater, the Theater History Office"). Unfortunately, not infrequently, the stamps were set on the sketches themselves.

Over 250 sketches of the collection dating back to 1940s were made by some of the distinguished set designers, such as Irene Stenberg, Ms. Tinatin Heine, Messrs. Dmitry Tavadze, Givi Tseradze, Boris Loktin, Parnaoz Lapiashvili, Alexander Tevzadze, Ivenho Chelidze, and others. As to the plays, they were staged by prominent Georgian theater directors and actors like Akaki Khorava, Akaki Vasadze, Akaki Pagava, Dmitry Alexidze, Michael Tumanishvili, Giga Lortkipanidze, Ms. Lili Ioseliani, and others. On some of the sketches we see their autographs, the words "approved," "to be altered," "acceptable," and so on.

The museum also displays repertoires and information concerning plays staged at the institute (premiere dates, names of playwrights, producers, designers, composers, and the like). The document named the Repertoire of the Theatrical Institute, dated 1940-1959, lists 126 plays. A. Vasadze's *Pavel Grekov*, premiered on May 25, 1940, and K. Pataridze's *The Old Man*, premiered presented on July 1, 1959, are at the top and bottom of the list. The museum also preserves the Register of the Term and Graduate Plays Staged at the Tbilisi Rustaveli Theatrical Institute since 1939, which lists all pieces up to the 1968-1969 academic years. The two documents are very important for identifying the collection of sketches preserved at the museum. Apart from the artists above, Irakli Gamrekeli, S. Virsaladze, G. Totibadze, G. Gunia, T. Gotsadze, Iv. Askurava, and others designed plays staged at the institute. Those were the top artists whose contributions to arts are invaluable, especially when it comes to the 20th-century Georgian scenic design.

Some authors of sketches were, for years, set designers for term and graduate plays staged at the The-

atrical Institute. For instance, sketches in the 1940s were made by several artists who continued working in the field: D. Tavadze (1940-1968), A. Tevzadze (1940-1951), B. Loktin (1940-1966), G. Tseradze (1957-1969). Unlike them, the greats like S. Virsaladze or Irakli Gamrekeli worked on just a handful of plays.

From the 1950s, the stage design at the Theatrical Institute was made by I. Stenberg (1951-1968), P. Lapiashvili (1951-1971) and, especially, G. Tseradze who designed dozens of plays. D. Tavadze's artistic works are equally noteworthy.

In the collection there are only two sketches from the 1970s and none from the 1980s (or maybe they have not been identified yet). Several sketches from the 1990s (1994-1999) were made by T. Heine.

Investigation of the collection is important in terms of a comprehensive study of those artists.

Some of the sketches are dated and signed by the institute's rector, the producer, or the artist. Occasionally, we see appraisal notes, sometimes all or none of the above. All these add up to the value of the collection. On one hand, these are artworks created at various times by a group of prominent set designers of the 20th century, and the autographs of distinguished directors, scene designers and actors, on the other. The signatures of A. Khorava, D. Alexidze, M. Kveselava, L. Kiknadze, and I. Tavadze are recurrent. All of them were rectors of the Theatrical Institute at various times (1939-1973) and continued working on scenic designs of the term and graduation productions.

The collection of sketches kept in the museum allows us to look into the history of the Georgian scenography for it depicts the artistic trends prevalent in 20th century. "The Georgian scenic design of the 1930s and 1940s exhibits a keen interest in the scene painting. At that time, because of Soviet ideological restrictions, artists had to give up constructivism condemned as modernist and formalistic and forcedly replaced with Realism that quite often turned into Naturalism neglecting conventionality of the theatrical art and putting constraints on it. Since then, stage design, similar to easel painting, becomes two dimensional and makes the impression of a painting boxed into the stage. Stage design inclines toward concreteness, a kind of a detailed narrative about

a daily routine. For all talented artists' efforts to preserve their individuality, avoid "excessive naturalism" and keep up the specific characteristics of the theatrical art, and retain its conventionality, they had to acquiesce to ideological requirements. A group of talented artists, such as E. Akhvlediani, D. Kakabadze, L. Gudishvili, T. Abakelia, S. Virsaladze, S. Kobuladze, I. Charlemagne, M. Gotsiridze, K. Sanadze, I. Stenberg, D. Tavadze and A. Tevzadze, who got involved with the theater in the late 1920s, still worked there at the time."¹ Most productions in the 1940s were designed by D. Tavadze, and A. Tevzadze.

The earliest works of the collection, sketches made for *Pavel Grekov*, a play by B. Voitekhov and L. Lench directed by A. Vasadze, belong to D. Tavadze. All nine of them are set sketches bearing the signatures of D. Tavadze and A. Khorava (ill.1).

I. Gamrekeli made the scenic design for *You'll not See What You Have Seen Anymore*, a play by A. Tsagareli produced by K. Pataridze. His name is found in the registry but missing from the other repertoire document, along with a missing premiere date. We were unable to find the sketches either. The fact that I. Gamrekeli made scenic design of students' productions since the restoration of the Theatrical Institute is very informative. Later on, there is no mention of him anymore (the artist died in 1943). As for D. Tavadze and A. Tevzadze, they continued working on students productions, with a number of their sketches preserved in the museum.

Among the three plays staged at the Theatrical Institute in the first academic year (1939-1940), *The Matchmaker* by I. Chavchavadze was the last (1940, director A. Vasadze, scenic designer A. Tevzadze). There are seven sketches of the production in the collection. The artist must have made several drafts because some of them are numbered as I and others as II. There are also some watercolor sketches of the same production in the museum. In some ways (composition, identical details), they are similar, but they differ in terms of artistry and arrangement of space. Although they are not signed, all of them must have been made by the same artist. Documents reveal that *The Matchmaker* was never staged (in the 1968-69 academic year), which confirms our assumption concerning various drafts of the sketches by the same artist.

¹ თუმანიშვილი, რუსთაველის თეატრი, 2015

The sketch made for *The Hero* by J. Singh, a term production directed by S. Chelidze (1947) (scenic designer D. Tavadze), it is dated 1946.

Director Sergo Chelidze, worked at Rustaveli State Theater in 1944–1948, among theaters in Georgia. The play was performed around that time. As to D. Tavadze, a 1930 graduate of the Tbilisi Academy of Fine Arts (painting and graphics), he was also engaged with Rustaveli Theater at the time. In 1948, he was appointed chief set designer, serving as artistic director from the 1970s until his death in 1990.

A. Khorava, the rector of the Theatrical Institute from 1935, was also among the administration of Rustaveli Theater (serving director in 1949–1955). Some of the most prominent directors and scenic designers of Georgia's leading Rustaveli Theater worked on a number of Theatrical Institute productions.

Judging by the sketches preserved at the museum, in 1940–1968 Mr. D. Tavadze designed over 30 productions for the institute. The artist was most prolific in 1950's; for instance, in 1950–1955, he made sketches for 20 plays. Among his works from 1950's there are sketches made for the plays *Khanuma* by A. Tsagareli (1952, directors A. Vasadze and A. Dvalishvili), *Kvarkvare Tutaberi* by P. Kakabadze (1953, directors O. Gvichia and G. Sebisveridze), *The Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare (1955, D. Aleksidze), *Lizzie Mackay* by Jean-Paul Sartre (1956, producers L. Mirtskhulava, G. Zhordania, K. Glonti, N. Gachava, R. Katsia, T. Meskhi, V. Rtskhiladze, A. Ninua, Sh. Gatserelia, N. Mtchelidze), a term production of junior students of the directing department. Apart from the sketches in question, pencil works depicting the city views deserve special mention (ill. 2). The sketches of *For Honesty* (1955, director A. Gamsakhurdia) are atypical. In the background we see graphic variations of the same set composition; *The Siberian* by A. Tsagareli (1956, K. Pataridze; premiered in 1948, with D. Tavadze as scenic designer). The sketches form but a part of the scenic design made at the institute by D. Tavadze, who was engaged with Rustaveli Theater for over 60 years (1911–1990). D. Tavadze designed over 150 theatrical productions of some of the most prominent directors across Georgia (excluding the ones at the Theatrical Institute).

Along with D. Tavadze, Mr. A. Tevzadze designed productions at the restored Theatrical Institute in 1940–1951. At the time, he made scenic design for seven plays.

We mentioned *The Matchmaker* by I. Chavchavadze staged in 1940. The sketches for *Talents and Admirers* by A. Ostrovsky are dated the same year (directed by D. Aleksidze, premiered in 1941). There are also three sets sketches for term production and six drawings of characters and costumes, which highlight the artist's individuality and artistry, especially in terms of characters (these sketches have no signature). The artist's approach to *The Lawyer* produced by V. Gunia is much the same. Of the eight sketches in the museum, only one is for the set, the others depict characters portrayed using austere but impressive lines (ill. 3). These sketches made for *The Dispute* by G. Eristavi, directed by A. Vasadze, are quite realistic, with focus on details (1941). The subtle and impressive coloration of the works is typical of A. Tevzadze.

In 1944–1952, Boris Loktin made scenic designs for about ten productions (The Register lists 18 plays he had worked on). In the museum there are B. Loktin's sketches for productions like *The Immortal* by A. Arbuzov, A. Gladkov (1944, director D. Alexidze), *The Last Ones* by M. Gorky (1946, director D. Alexidze). There are two set and one sketch depicting a group of characters, a composition of 12 distinctly portrayed characters. The costumes are detailed and the rhythmic gestures of the characters are accentuated. The set sketch has a number of autographs and approvals: ("Loktin, the artist," "I believe the sketch is acceptable: D. Alexidze," "Approved, submit the cost estimate by 8/10. A. Khorava," "Academic year. Premiere.") (ill. 4): *The Marriage of Figaro* by Pierre Beaumarchais (1947, director D. Alexidze, reproduced in 1951), *The Pleasant Care* by I. Jaluner (1949, director A. Mikeladze), *Someone Else's Shadow* by K. Simonov (1949, director A. Vasadze), *The Innocent Culprit* by A. Ostrovsky (1950, director D. Aleksidze), *Voice of America* by B. Lavrenev (1950, director A. Pagava).

B. Loktin (1905–1980) worked mostly as stage designer for Griboyedov Theater since 1938. In the same capacity he worked at the restored Theatrical Institute (1939), where he designed scores of productions. He was also involved with the Russian Youth Theater. Unlike the artists above, B. Loktin's biography is the only one mentioning his work at the Theatrical Institute.

In the 1950's, I. Stenberg and P. Lapiashvili also designed the institute's productions, though most designs still belong to G. Tseradze. The register of the institute plays lists several productions designed by I. Stenberg.

Among the sketches in the collection we see those made for *The Lutonin Family* (1951) by T. and I. Piriev and *Platon Kretchet* (1951) by Al. Korneichuk (ill. 5,6), both produced by A. Khorava. The sketches bear the autographs of I. Stenberg and A. Khorava. Apart from the set, the artist made 14 sketches for the *The Lutonin Family*' characters.

I. Stenberg (1903–1980) is a significant figure in scenic design. From the 1930's, she was closely involved with various theaters, mostly Griboyedov Russian Drama and the Tbilisi Theater of Musical Comedy. In her sketches, a seemingly ordinary environment is somewhat elevated, poetic. She was especially skillful in portraying characters.

Apart from the ones staged at the Theatrical Institute, she designed over 300 other productions. The artist, who started her career in 1951, designed productions in 1952, 1954, 1957, 1963, and 1968. She made scenic design for 14 Institute productions. Her works are preserved at her family collection, the National Museum of Georgia, the Museum of The History of Culture, and private collections in Georgia and abroad. As mentioned earlier, some of them are preserved at the University of Theater and Cinema.

P. Lapiashvili (1917–1994) designed the Theatrical Institute's productions in the 1950's. By then, he was already a full-fledged artist involved with the Drama and Opera Theaters. He designed ballet performances and movies (*Keto and Kote* [1948], *Magdana's Donkey* [1955], *Tsiskara* [1955], *You'll not See What You Have Seen Anymore* [1965], and others). According to the register, in 1951–1961, P. Lapiashvili designed 8 productions for the Theatrical Institute; the sketches of those put on in 1951–1954 are in the collection, namely those for *Mashenka* (1951) by A. Afinogenov (director A. Dvalishvili). Characteristically to P. Lapiashvili, out of the three set sketches, one is made with pencil, and so are the sketches for *The Last Ones* by M. Gorky (1953, director D. Alexidze), *Spring Morning*' by V. Gabeskiria (1954, director A. Vasadze) (ill. 7.), *Belated Love*' by A. Ostrovsky (1954, director D. Alexidze). There is no conventionality in the sketches from the 1950's. Owing to the detailed environment, the viewer experiences the narrative and the reality of space. As for the painted sketches, bold brushstrokes and decorativeness are striking.

P. Lapiashvili made scenic design for over 100 theatrical productions both in Georgia and abroad. Sketches

made for those of the Theatrical Institute form an integral part of the works by the versatile artist.

Most of the sketches of the collection belong to G. Tseradze (1931–1987). He was the scenic designer of a bigger part of the productions (81 all all) listed in the register of the institute. As the final records in the register are dated the 1968–1969 academic year, it is evident that his works are much more numerous. A 1956 graduate of the Tbilisi Academy of Fine Arts, in 1957 he designed his first production at the Theatrical Institute, *The Soldier's Heart* (director A. Khorava). In the subsequent 22 years (until 1979), G. Tseradze was the scenic designer of the Theatrical Institute. At the same time, he was chief artist at the Youth Theater (1961–1974). He also made scenic designs for some of the productions at K. Marjanishvili and A. Griboyedov Theaters and those in Tskhinvali.

The museum collection also includes sketches for the Theatrical Institute's productions by G. Tseradze: *The Siberian* by A. Tsagareli (1957, director A. Khorava), *Jupiter Laughs* by A. Kronin (1958, director A. Mikeladze), *The Doctor In Spite of Himself* by *Moliere* (1957, director K. Pataridze), *The Nameless Star* by M. Sebastian (1958, director A. Tavzarashvili)—here is an interesting inscription on one of the sketches made by D. Alexidze: "Approved. Only the second act will have to be altered, the picture is to be vertically projected and the set is to be made exactly according to the sketches... In the painting style.... D. Alexidze 30.04.58"—also *The Children of The Sun* by M. Gorky staged in 1950 (director D. Alexidze, scenography by B. Loktin). The play was reproduced in 1958 (director A. Gamsakhurdia) and 1960 (director A. Mikeladze). G. Tseradze designed both plays. *Angelo*' by V. Hugo (1958, director A. Khorava), *The Bear* by A. Chekhov (1959, director A. Pagava), *The Old Man* by M. Gorky (1959, director K. Pataridze) *Moody* by A. Tsereteli (1959, director A. Pagava), *The Crucible* by A. Miller (1960, director A. Mikeladze) (ill. 8), *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* by A. France (1959, director A. Pagava), *Love the Greatest Enchantment* by P. Calderon (1960, director G. Gviniashvili), *The Mole* by O. Chijavadze (1960, director A. Vasadze), *Heaven and Hell* by P. Mérimée (1960, director A. Pagava), and others.

The following stage designers were engaged with Theatrical Institute in 1940–1960's: D. Tavadze, I. Gamreli, A. Tevadze, B. Loktin, S. Virsaladze, P. Lapiashvili, I. Stenberg, Iv. Askurava, G. Totibadze, G. Tseradze, T.

Gotsadze, E. Doncova, A. Jemilishvili, G. Gunia, and T. Samsonadze. According to the register records, the students of the Academy of Fine Arts also designed term and graduate plays.

The sketches of the collection made for term and graduation plays, which vary in terms of number, chronology and typology, are presently under study. Therefore,

more names of artists and new works may come up. What makes the collection significant for the history of Georgian scenography is that it has not been investigated yet. It allows us to look into the nearly centennial history of the University of Theater and Cinema and analyze its traditions and best practices.

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