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The Golden Cockerel, 1914 and 1917, Designed by N. Goncharova. Specificity and Differences of Stage Design



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«Золотой петушок» 1914 и 1937 годов в оформлении Н. Гончаровой. Специфика и различия сценографического решения

Abstract. This article is devoted to the study of the evolution of N. Goncharova's artistic manner on the example of her stage designs for the 1914 and 1937 productions of *The Golden Cockerel*. The opera-ballet version of *The Golden Cockerel* is often described in detail in works devoted to S. Diaghilev and his theatre company, and the creative work of N. Goncharova and M. Larionov. However, due to the fact that Goncharova's graphic heritage of the 1930s-1950s has been little studied so far, the scene design of the 1937 ballet version is almost not considered, nor is it traced within the general evolution of N. Goncharova's style. Comparing the two versions of scene design, 23 years apart, as well as identifying the influence of the changed external factors and the social context makes it possible to visually examine the changes in N. Goncharova's artistic manner during emigration.

Аннотация. Статья посвящена изучению эволюции художественной манеры Н. Гончаровой на примере сценографического решения постановки «Золотого петушка» 1914 и 1937 годов. Постановка оперы-балета «Золотой петушок» часто и подробно описывается в работах, посвященных С. Дягилеву и его антрепризе, творчеству Н. Гончаровой и М. Ларионова, однако из-за того, что графическое наследие Н. Гончаровой 1930–1950-х годов до сих пор мало изучено, сценография балетной версии 1937 года почти не рассматривается, так же как и не связывается с общей эволюцией художественной манеры Н. Гончаровой. Сопоставление двух версий одной постановки, оформленной с разницей в 23 года, а также определение влияния изменившихся внешних факторов и социального контекста дают возможность наглядного рассмотрения изменений, произошедших с художественной манерой Н. Гончаровой за время, проведенное в эмиграции.

Introduction

Research on Natalya Goncharova's graphic work is currently at a certain peak: despite the fact that during her lifetime she was often written about by her contemporaries (e.g. V. Mayakovsky, M. Tsvetaeva, G. Apollinaire) [13, p. 657–658; 27, p. 178–188; 32, p. 479], in Soviet art history, the appeal to the creative work of N. Goncharova, as well as of other emigrants, was still the exception rather than the norm. Some of the first to address her artistic legacy were N. Khardzhiev [25], G. Pospelov [15], and D. Sarabyanov [19].

Since the 2000s, references to the production of *The Golden Cockerel* opera-ballet in M. Fokine's interpretation have been increasingly common in individual monographs [12, p. 223–233] and in the works devoted to emigration [23, p. 255–263] and S. Diaghilev's theatre company [21, p. 443–446; 5, p. 26–27]. Taking into account N. Goncharova's close relationship with the Ballets Russes, the studies that appear to be particularly useful are the recent ones [3, p. 130–138] revealing the connection between choreography and stage design, as well as the influence of economy on the existence of the troupe, which allows adding to the knowledge of the influence of external factors on N. Goncharova's artistic style.

However, due the fact that N. Goncharova's stage design is commonly considered in connection with the Ballets Russes, her graphic work of the 1930s–1950s, produced after the end of S. Diaghilev's theatre company, remains understudied. An illustrative example of the changes in N. Goncharova's artistic style can be the analysis of the stage design she created for two productions of *The Golden Cockerel*, the 1914 and 1937 ones. In order to perform this analysis, first, we need to define the position of the Ballets Russes in the 1910s, then recognize the prerequisites for S. Diaghilev's cooperation with N. Goncharova and identify her artistic statement between the aesthetics of *Mir Iskusstva* and futurism. Then we analyse the stage design solution for the 1914 production of *The Golden Cockerel* and the main features of N. Goncharova's style in the 1910s.

With regard to the ballet version of *The Golden Cockerel*, we consider the changed external factors associated not only with N. Goncharova's emigration and the end of the Ballets Russes, but also with the new socio-cultural conditions. Finally, we analyse the new stage design solution for the ballet and identify the changed features of N. Goncharova's artistic manner, which adds to the existing knowledge of the 1937 production of *The Golden Cockerel*.

The 1914 production of *The Golden Cockerel*. The opera-ballet version

In 1913, upon the recommendation of A. Benois, S. Diaghilev approached N. Goncharova with a proposal to create stage design of *The Golden Cockerel* for the Ballets Russes. At first glance, the choice of N. Goncharova may seem unexpected, as previously S. Diaghilev had not collaborated with artists outside the tradition of *Mir Iskusstva*. As for N. Goncharova, by that time she had almost had no experience in stage design for theatrical productions⁽¹⁾. Her numerous works in another graphic direction, illustration, were associated with futuristic book experiments and aroused nothing but resentment among the members of the *Mir Iskusstva* movement⁽²⁾. However, if we appeal to the events preceding the proposal, it looks quite predictable.

The 1910s became a time of profound transformations in the concept of the avant-garde. Thus, if in 1913, the French audience booed I. Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* [5, p. 13] expecting the familiar orientalism and exoticism in keeping with the spirit of *Scheherazade* designed by A. Benois and L. Bakst, already in 1917, they were enthralled by *Parade* — the production that traditionally marks the beginning modernism in the Ballets Russes [3, p. 122].

That is, in order for the new imagery to be understood, it was necessary not just to prepare the audience but to recreate it. S. Diaghilev met this change with enthusiasm. Commenting on the failure of *The Rite of Spring* he wrote, “This is an outright victory! Let them whistle and rage! Inwardly, they already feel the value, and whistling is just a mask. You will see the consequences” [cit. ex: 17].

At the same time, there was a breach in relations with the first choreographer of S. Diaghilev's theatre company, M. Fokine. He was never a member of the *Mir Iskusstva* movement, but their creative approaches intertwined [2, p. 88]. The formation of M. Fokine as a choreographer took place against the background of the 1905 strikes at the Imperial Theatres, so many of the ideas he approved were marked by the controversy with the academic ballet approach [22, p. 534].

- (1) Her only experience in this direction was the design of the pantomime *Zobeida's Wedding*, based on the poem by H. Hofmannsthal. What is known about the stage design solution is that it implied a reverse perspective and had a primitivist stylization [See: 27, p. 187].
- (2) A. Benois, for instance, called the futurist editions the “buffoon albums” [See: 8, p. 11].

First, M. Fokine believed that art should be naturalistic, and therefore it should not just follow the classical rules, but accurately depict the chosen time period. Already in 1904, in a note to the libretto for *Daphnis et Chloé*, he wrote, “Choreographers should not make a mistake of staging dance for Russian peasants in the style of Louis XV or ... creating a trepak-like dance to a French plot. Why make the same mistake again, staging ancient Greek scenes — forcing the Greeks to dance in the French style?” [40, p. 175]. That was an approach also characteristic of the representatives of the *Mir Iskusstva* movement. Therefore, while working on the design of *Petrushka*, A. Benois created over a hundred costumes in the fashion of the 1830s-1840s for different social groups [3, p. 55].

Petrushka clearly manifested M. Fokine’s second principle — transition from the expressiveness of the individual to that of the collective. If in the productions by M. Petipa the corps de ballet surrounded the ballerina and served as a background reflecting the existing hierarchy of the Mariinsky Theater (bright examples are the scenes from *La Bayadère* and *The Sleeping Beauty*), in the works by M. Fokine the ballerina illustrated “the expressiveness of mass dance of the entire crowd” [24, p. 353].

Third is the active involvement of body and hands in choreography. Earlier, movement had been concentrated in legs, and body obeyed the vertical; M. Fokine, however, reversed that principle in his works believing that waist, back, and limbs should be equally flexible and expressive. New choreography resulted in a new type of costume. The costume designer to be most consonant with M. Fokine in this regard was L. Bakst: the absence of corsets, softly flowing fabrics, oriental harem trousers and tunics with slits — the costumes were adjusted to body movements, emphasizing the dynamics and inflexion.

It is with exotic productions (oriental and Russian) that M. Fokine became well-known in Paris. The audience craved extravagant oriental flavour, and every year got a variation on the theme: *Cleopatra* (1909), *Scheherazade* and *The Firebird* (1910), *Sadko* and *Petrushka* (1911), *Tamara* and *Le Dieu Bleu* (1912). However, despite the success with the audience (and largely because of it), the friction between the choreographer and the impresario was growing: S. Diaghilev was rearing a choreographer in V. Nijinsky, believing that M. Fokine “was exhausted and out of date” [24, p. 163]. The definitive break happened after the production of the ballet

Daphnis et Chloé in 1912: according to the choreographer, S. Diaghilev had made several attempts to disrupt the premiere [24, p. 164].

In 1913, after M. Fokine left the theatre company, V. Nijinsky staged *The Rite of Spring*. There are two circumstances we consider significant for the further development of events. The first is S. Diaghilev’s fascination with the ideas of futurism, which coincided with the release of F.T. Marinetti’s manifesto *The Variety Theatre* among the key provisions of which is anti-naturalism: “We are deeply disgusted with the contemporary theatre <...> because it vacillates stupidly between historical reconstruction (pastiche or plagiarism) and photographic reproduction of our daily life; a finicking, slow, analytic, and diluted theatre worthy all in all, of the age of the oil lamp.” [37, p. 126–127]. Not only historical credibility was criticized but also the psychologism of the characters — that is, exactly what was brought by M. Fokine’s aesthetics.

The second important point is that *The Rite of Spring*, as already mentioned, was not well-received by the audience: the rhythmically complex music by I. Stravinsky and the choreography by V. Nijinsky in which the dancers dressed by N. Roerich in wide sundresses, shirts, and bulky bast shoes hardly took their feet off the stage, beating the rhythm to the floor. A breakthrough in terms of choreography and music, the production ran into incomprehension. S. Diaghilev still considered changing the form of the Ballets Russes, but taking into account the preferences of the audience, he changed tactics: in 1913, he turned to M. Fokine again, convincing him to return for the last pre-war season. Together with A. Benois, they decided to stage the opera-ballet *The Golden Cockerel* to the music by N. Rimsky-Korsakov.

For M. Fokine, that decision was a compromise in his dream to choreograph a ballet to the music of *The Golden Cockerel*⁽³⁾, as well as a new variation on the issue of the proportion of ballet and opera performers: the previous attempt in this regard had been undertaken in 1911 when staging the opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* M. Fokine mixed ballet and opera

(3) In 1913, during the argument with S. Diaghilev, the ballerina A. Pavlova addressed M. Fokine with a request to stage ballets for her enterprise. At that point, the choreographer first proposed the ballet *The Golden Cockerel*: it was only a suite created by A. Glazunov and M. Steinberg based on the opera by N. Rimsky-Korsakov, but in terms of its length and content, it could make an independent work. However, the plan remained unfulfilled then [See: 24, p. 173–174; 16, p. 123].

performers in such a way that “it was impossible to distinguish where was the choir and where was the ballet” [24, p. 178]. In the case of *The Golden Cockerel* another decision was made — to separate the vocal and dance parts: “The peculiarity, the “novelty” of such a duplicated staging technique (not applicable to most realistic operas) was particularly appropriate in this “fiction in faces”, which required much dancing and stylized plasticity from actors. It added a special fabulousness, dollish pleasantness, and sometimes a mystical dread” [24, p. 176].

It was decided that the design should be entrusted to N. Goncharova — thereby continuing the path towards the avant-garde. In December 1913, in her workshop, N. Goncharova met M. Fokine. The only thing the choreographer had known about N. Goncharova by that time was that she belonged to the group of Moscow futurists, which was the reason for him to be wary of the choice [24, p. 175]. However, already by the time their first meeting finished, he had changed his mind and left the workshop “having this absolute conviction that Goncharova would produce something unexpected, colourful and picturesque, deeply national and at the same time fabulous” [24, p. 175]. It was in Moscow that N. Goncharova started working on the production; in April, 1914, she and M. Larionov left for Paris [14, p. 200].

As conceived by A. Benois and M. Fokine, ballet was supposed to dominate the stage. The singers did not participate in the action: both the choir and the soloists were amphitheatred on the sides of the stage, thus framing the action. Their identical maroon costumes multiplied the decorative effect, colliding with the blazing yellow of the stage.

For each of the three acts, N. Goncharova designed separate sets in the neo-primitivist style. Act one opened with a landscape in which a stylized fiery city intertwined with a yellow sky and a red sun in the form of a face (a technique commonly used in lubok images). Against such a background, fantasy trees in the shape of flowers grew — not a hint of naturalism; just the contrary — exceptional decorativeness and fabulousness, originating from sources that inspired both M. Fokine and N. Goncharova: icons, lubok images, and handicraft toys. Such imagery contributed to that unnaturalness of the action which could be in line with the words of Astrologer in the closing part: “Perhaps the Queen and I / Were the only living people in it / The rest were — a delirium, a dream / A pale spectre, nothing more ...” [cit. ex: 24, p. 177].

Technically, the artificiality of what was happening was fuelled not only by the libretto, but also by the music itself. As stated by A. Kandinsky,

“the composer only depicts — usually with a touch of irony — the feelings of the characters, but does not express them in earnest” [cit. ex: 4, p. 76]. An illustrative example is the musical theme of Dodon: designed to proclaim the greatness of the tsar, the music truly follows the features of a pompous march. However, just like the image of the tsar himself, the march appears to be a parody.

The stage design for act three was sustained in the same style, with the fiery shades of the royal palace supplemented by lavish floral ornaments. In both cases, the space was interpreted as flat, devoid of that clear linear perspective pronounced in the 1908–1909 sketches for *The Golden Cockerel* by I. Bilibin.

The decorativeness of design also extended to the costumes of characters who were deliberately devoid of historical authenticity. In I. Bilibin’s design for the production, the maid had her head covered and wore a caftan resembling a Turkic national costume, whereas N. Goncharova created a fabulous image by means of appealing to colourful semi-transparent fabrics and exposing the character’s hands and abdomen in the manner of L. Bakst.

The similarity between the sketches of maids by N. Goncharova and the oriental costumes designed by L. Bakst was not accidental and stemmed from the author’s conception of M. Fokine. N. Goncharova had demonstrated such sensitivity to author’s conception earlier, when working on illustrating books.

Such an attitude of hers is clearly seen in the illustration *Vila and Leshy* to V. Khlebnikov’s author’s collection *Mirskontsa* (Worldbackwards). N. Goncharova depicted natural elements, a tree crown and hills, which shape the monumental image of a vila. And if traditionally a vila is a female spirit that owns wells and lakes (which relates her to mermaids of the East Slavs) [11, p. 348], in V. Khlebnikov’s poem it is a personified image of nature, which is also confirmed by the original title *The Nature and Leshy*.

Another feature of N. Goncharova’s stage design which comes from her experience of book illustration is the picturesque graphics. In her design for the books *A Game in Hell* and *Mirskontsa* (1912), we can already see illustrations as independent, monumental images.

N. Goncharova's participation in the futuristic book experiment which aimed at "breaking with the previous tradition"⁽⁴⁾ seems to be of particular interest, given the solid folklore basis of her creative work. There was no contradiction in it, if we assume that illustrating books of futurist poets was not supposed to be a "break" for N. Goncharova⁽⁵⁾. On the contrary, professing "all-ness", she considered it possible to use any styles for her own purposes, arguing that "... for any subject there can be an infinite number of forms of expression" [30, p. 19].

Similarly to working on book illustrations, when creating stage design N. Goncharova did not reject the experience of Art Nouveau, presenting not a break with the previous tradition, but a soft "transition". In her joint article with M. Larionov, in the spirit of futurists she speaks about the independence of stage designs: "Stage designs for a ballet should not have the sole intention of establishing, in accordance with the libretto, the time and place of the action <...> Among other things, stage designs are an independent creation supporting the spirit of a production performed" [cit. ex: 3, p. 131]. While working on stage and costume design, she visited archaeological museums, talked to artisans, and appealed to samples of carpet weaving, peasant costume, royal clothes and rings [33, p. 15].

The premiere of *The Golden Cockerel* in Paris took place on May 24, 1914 and was a resounding success. Yu. Annenkov recalled, "The success of Goncharova, who managed to merge the finest colourful elegance with the simple and naive lubok, was phenomenal, providing the artist with countless theatrical orders" [1, p. 220]. The enthusiastic reaction of the audience contributed to the fact that already on June 15 of that same year the performance was shown in London, on the stage of Drury Lane⁽⁶⁾.

- (4) The first author's editions were related to I. Zdanevich's report *Marinetti's Futurism* and the manifesto by futurist poets *Slap in the Face of the Public Taste*. Among other things, both mentioned a break with the existing tradition [See: 8].
- (5) It was a possible option, considering V. Khlebnikov's statements that, firstly, "mood changes the writing style", and secondly, that "modified by the mood, the writing style conveys this mood to the reader, independent of words", and his conclusion that an author must write their book themselves or "give their brainchild not to a typist but an artist" [26, p. 248]. That is, the literary revolution was taking place, within which a poetic text could no longer exist without an artist. Artists, in turn, did not need to abandon any tradition.
- (6) Here is what Ch. Ricketts wrote about *The Golden Cockerel*: "I am unbelievably delighted. <...> The music is subtle, enchanting and original; the idea of placing the singers on sides of the stage, like in an oratorio, and the pantomime and dancing in the center is fascinating. <...> Karsavina's dance and facial expressions <...> are unparalleled, and so is the intellectuality of the organization of the performance and its choreographic inventiveness" [39, p. 139].

However, equally strong to the audience's delight was the criticism from the composer's relatives: shortly after the premiere, the *Apollo* magazine published an article by the composer's son, A. Rimsky-Korsakov, who considered it illegitimate to use the music from the opera in experiments like that, since "... the experience of bracketing the entire vocal part of the opera out of stage action <...> emphasizes movement and plasticity at the expense of the musical dignity of the work, brings them to the fore; in other words, it distorts the key features of the opera" [18, p. 48].

In addition, due to the copyright convention between Russia and France, heavy fines were levied on S. Diaghilev [16, p. 123–124; 21, p. 443–446]. Those obstacles did not let *The Golden Cockerel* become a regular production of the theatre company. Nevertheless, despite this fact, its importance for the further development of the Ballets Russes would be difficult to overestimate.

The troupe became talked about by the representatives of the French avant-garde — G. Appolinaire wrote about the success of *The Golden Cockerel*, "Not repeating the attitude of the French audience and high society towards young artists, the Russians ensured the roaring success of Madame Goncharova <...> This is how Russian futurism will manifest itself in Opera in its full splendour, whereas the new French painting <...> is only ridiculed here" [32, p. 479]. Thus, it was recognized that N. Goncharova's right proportion between the usual Russian exoticism and the "new painting" allowed S. Diaghilev to prepare the audience for further, more ambitious experiments.

The 1937 production of *The Golden Cockerel*. The ballet version

N. Goncharova returned to working on *The Golden Cockerel* only 23 years later, when in 1937, V. Voskresensky decided to resume M. Fokine's productions and asked her for permission to use her designs [24, p. 179]. Since by that time N. Goncharova had no longer had all the necessary sketches, she started creating them anew [5, p. 27].

It was supposed to be a ballet version, with no opera component. As was often the case with M. Fokine, the conception developed progressively. At first, it was expected to resume the 1914 production (a logical decision, given the warm reception of *The Golden Cockerel* by the English audience)

with a supplement of a separate ballet suite intended for the upcoming touring season.

However, taking advantage of the favourable circumstances, M. Fokine made another attempt to fulfil his old dream — to stage a ballet to the music of *The Golden Cockerel*. That time it was successful; “I asked Basil to get the opera production cancelled and give me the opportunity to stage a new, ballet version. He managed to do it, and having finished working on my other ballets in London, I took the advantage of a break in the season and went to Switzerland to compose a new, ballet production of the *Cockerel*” [24, p. 179–180].

The new version required a lot of cutting. Bearing the critical reviews on the 1914 production in mind, M. Fokine approached the work on abridgement with extreme care. It is for this reason that on his way to Switzerland he visited N. Cherepnin, composer and student of N. Rimsky-Korsakov.

Later, the choreographer described the meeting as follows: “Nikolai Nikolaevich looked at my project, approved most abridgements, even changed some and, among other things, found a 72-bar one indicated by the composer himself. He marked what instruments should replace soloists and the choir, and blessed me to work” [24, p. 180]. Thus, all vocal parts were replaced by an orchestra.

It is expected that the changes to the genre of the production also affected its design. In N. Goncharova’s stage design solution, in many respects similar to the previous version, there were many changes, stemming not only from the new choreographer’s concept, but also from the changed manner of the artist herself and the new cultural context.

The 1930s became a turning point in the lives of many Russian émigré artists. On August 19, 1929, S. Diaghilev died, which also meant the end of the Ballets Russes. The theatre company disintegrated into several touring troupes which inherited the repertory. One of them was the company Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo founded in 1934 by V. Voskresensky (Colonel W. de Basil).

The situation was aggravated by the economic crisis, which severely affected France and Russian emigrants in particular. Recalling the times, K. Somov wrote in his memoirs, “Everybody here talks about things being tough, going broke and so on. Russians find it particularly hard here. Many have lost their jobs and are struggling to make ends meet, not knowing

what to do. <...> All foreigners in France are getting worse off...” [cit. ex: 31, p. 100].

What also contributed to the change of attitude towards Russian emigrants was the assassination of President of the French Republic, P. Doumer, carried out in Paris on May 6, 1932 by P. Gorgulov, a member of the Society of Young Russian Writers of Paris [20, p. 78–79].

Being a consultant in the theatre company of Colonel W. de Basil, M. Larionov recalled, “During the crisis Paris has emptied, foreigners have left, theatres give few new shows — nationalism has developed, the first duty is to give <...> work and orders to the French, and only what they cannot do by themselves is given to foreigners” [cit. by: 12, p. 448]. During those years, M. Larionov did stop working for the theatre, but N. Goncharova, conversely, due to financial pressure took on more and more orders: in 1939 only, she created stage design for ten ballets [14, p. 25].

Such a demand for N. Goncharova’s work could be explained by how she managed to adapt her artistic style to the changing tastes of the audience. Those changes, in turn, were significant: the reaction to World War I was an appeal to figurative painting, to the heritage of the masters of the Renaissance and academism [34, p. 12]. In the popular consciousness, futurism was inextricably associated with the aesthetics of war, and therefore was losing its dominance.

In his manifesto on the war in Ethiopia, F. T. Marinetti compared war to the futurist revolution: “War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others... Poets and artists of Futurism! ... Remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art ... may be illumined by them” [38]. However, in the 1920s, the new aesthetics was formed, proclaimed in the essay *Return to Order* by J. Cocteau [36].

The influence of the new aesthetics extended over theatre. In 1923, *The Wedding* ballet choreographed by B. Nijinska premiered — the production that traditionally marks the beginning of neoclassicism in ballet [3, p. 183]. *The Wedding* was a turning point for the aesthetics of Russian ballets in general and for N. Goncharova’s artistic manner in particular. Mainly because, in B. Nijinska’s theory, staging a performance was considered a choreographer’s element; and if S. Diaghilev’s ballets had primarily

been artists' works, then it was the choreographer to come to the fore. Costumes, as well as scene designs, were subordinated to dance.

In the final version of N. Goncharova's sketches for *The Wedding*, one can clearly see how the silhouette of dancers changes — monumentality of the image is replaced by the previously unusual subtlety and flexibility. Later, the ballet was written about as follows: "The stage design and costumes themselves are devoid of meaning; they do not exist independently, do not attract attention; it takes effort to notice them, to abstract from the whole..." [29, p. 2–3]. That was the key point in the evolution of N. Goncharova's stage design in the 1930s-1940s, when the choreographer's idea became decisive, while the main pictorial means was not a costume but a dancer's body.

Such was the context for N. Goncharova to approach the stage design of the new production of *The Golden Cockerel*. As the survived photographs of the 1937 performance show, the stage design solutions did not have fundamental changes, almost completely repeating the 1914 version. However, if we turn to the sketches, we can see the increased role of decorativeness in design. Thus, the backdrop of act three has more details than before: it is framed by elaborated wings, and stage architecture is decorated with details and openwork.

The depicted characters are equally detailed. The tsar's cart and harnessed horses are increasingly elegance and light. Unlike the previous sketchy portrayal, each figure in the crowd meeting the tsar is detailed drawn. Even the sky this time is complemented by the city spreading on the background and thereby deepening the space.

A similar increased decorativeness is found in costume sketches, even when the overall composition is no different from the original version. The 1914 and 1937 images of the women are similar in many respects: the monumental figures of dancers are depicted face forward and hide behind heavy dresses decorated with a large bright pattern. However, in the later images, the generalized convention, typical of the early sketches, disappears.

The flat, ponderous solution of the costume is also replaced by another one, where the clothes accentuate the body — a change stemming from the experience of costuming *The Wedding*. However, there was another, intermediate sketch of 1934: when collaborating with the Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo, among other productions, N. Goncharova designed the

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Specificity and Differences of Stage Design

ballet *Toys*. The drawing of a peasant woman repeated the posture and the sketchy monumental costume of a woman from *The Golden Cockerel*, but was characterized by a greater naturalism and a more detailed drawing of the dancer's face. Another example of repeating the same composition with varying degrees of elaboration can be seen in the sketches of a dancer — while maintaining the same dynamic posture, N. Goncharova carefully elaborated on all the elements of the old costume.

Another way is not repeating but reworking the image. To this type, we can refer the costume of the housekeeper Amelfa: if in the original version the design solution was a simple wide costume with picturesque convention and large fills of colour, later N. Goncharova dressed the character in lavishly decorated clothes with a delicate ornament.

N. Goncharova broke with the former conventionality of primitivism not only in costume solutions, but also in the interpretations of the characters' images, filling them with psychological insight and portrait details. The same increased role of naturalism and decorativeness is reflected in the image of the tsar, whose tunic is replaced by a richly decorated fur coat. Another change that can be seen in both cases is avoidance of blue in costumes, and the introduction of costumes to an overall red and yellow colour palette. Such a decision could have been made for greater contrast with another group of characters: Astrologer and Tsaritsa of Shemakha (the "daughter of air" in M. Fokine's interpretation) — they were the only characters to stand out from the general colour scheme.

In the new production, their roles were key ones. N. Goncharova created two costumes for Tsaritsa of Shemakha: the first was a heavy coverlet decorated with thick floral patterns, it completely hid the body and was complemented by massive jewellery; the second costume was intended for a subsequent dance, and therefore was very comfortable: a light tunic and harem trousers decorated with oriental patterns — a silhouette that brings us back to the aesthetics of L. Bakst.

The airiness of this image and the use of light fabrics and pink shades were supposed to distinguish between the "daughter of air" and other characters. However, there also was a practical reason behind this decision. In the 1914 version, the dance part consisted of "a big dance based on one wide movement (Pas balancé)" [24, p. 183] and was performed by the maids only, complementing the aria of Tsaritsa of Shemakha who stood motionless. In the new version of the production, as the opera part was

absent, she performed her own dance encompassing “the most difficult, most masterful” elements [24, p. 182].

The dating of the costume sketches for Tsaritsa of Shemakha is still uncertain. For instance, the sketch captioned “T. Karsavina dans le role de la Reine de Chemakha” [33] is often dated 1914. Indeed, T. Karsavina participated in the first production only, but the refined, elongated silhouette and careful elaboration of the image, as already mentioned, was characteristic of N. Goncharova’s style of the 1920s-1930s. Undoubtedly, this is a separate issue for research, but the characteristic manner and the changed colour scheme suggest that the sketch refers to the 1930s. In this case, the caption can be explained as follows: at times N. Goncharova created separate sketches for dancers, for example, in 1921, Caryathis had her two costumes made to sketch for the unstaged *Triana* [6], and in 1929, the artist created a costume for K. Sakharova, who performed the choreographic miniature *The Firebird* [12, p. 423].

Also, the sketch could have been made as a gift for T. Karsavina who at that time lived in London [9, p. 369–370]. This assumption can be confirmed by a similar gift for M. Fokine made in 1937 — a sketch of the scenery for act one of the production, signed “To Dear Mikhail Mikhailovich Fokine. In the memory of *The Golden Cockerel* of 1914 in Paris” [35].

Considering N. Goncharova’s changed manner of costume design, it is necessary to mention another ballet which was an active source for her to borrow new images from — *The Firebird* of 1926⁽⁷⁾.

As already mentioned, the main dancing part in the new production was Tsaritsa of Shemakha, due to which the oriental costumes of her maids were replaced by more concise slim fit black and red dresses. Such a neutrality of the costume cut, its secondary role as compared to the role of body, and the colour scheme originated from the costume of Koshchei’s wife in the ballet *The Firebird*. In the design of the ballet, the same technique of the juxtaposition of one group of characters to others was applied: the costumes of the characters of the bright and perfidious kingdoms did not blur together, unlike in the 1908 production, but were opposed to each other. The difference was that in *The Golden Cockerel* such a solution met

(7) Having decided to resume the ballet of 1908 (stage design by A. Golovin and L. Bakst), S. Diaghilev ordered a new design from N. Goncharova.

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the choreographer’s intent, whereas in the work on *The Firebird*, it led to the disunity of a single ensemble and was negatively received by M. Fokine, who later wrote about the artistic design of the production: “Goncharova, who I was happy to work with twice, on *The Golden Cockerel* and then the ballet *Cinderella*, the artist, whose talent I appreciate and love, dealt a fatal blow to *The Firebird*” [24, p. 143].

The experience of working on *The Firebird* affected the creation of the costume of Cockerel. In the new production, instead of a papier-mache bird, it was a sound dance part of a ballerina. In the ballet of 1926, the choreographer highlighted the image of the bird. N. Goncharova broke with the alleged orientalism in the form of trousers following L. Bakst; continuing the idea of neoclassicism, she used a feathered ballet tutu skirt.

It was a separate point, which caused M. Fokine’s dissatisfaction: “When creating the ballet, above all else I did not want to have a “ballerina” there with ballet skirts. <...> The image was replaced by the typical, stereotyped, boring image of a ballerina” [24, p. 149]. Therefore, the new costume was a compromise: a cropped one-piece coverall with a delicate tail not constraining movement, wing-sleeves, and a small comb on the dancer’s head. Thus, costume again was secondary to the body.

In the new production, the part of Astrologer acquired a greater importance. As mentioned before, he and Tsaritsa of Shemakha formed a separate group of characters, which led to a different interpretation of his image. In the previous production, his costume was a long oriental dress complemented with a turban — everything sustained in rich yellow, lilac and red colours, so the design solution united Astrologer with the carnival atmosphere of Dodon’s kingdom. The 1937 version was completely different. There Astrologer was wearing a black velvet suit and a cloak with the lining in the colour of the night sky embroidered with stars. Like in the design of *The Firebird*, the black silhouette of the character stood out against the background of the general diversity of colours. Technically, even Astrologer’s facial profile was largely borrowed from there, presenting a more elegant and gloomy version of the hunchback from Koshchei’s retinue.

That is, the new image of Astrologer was largely formed in the 1920s. Apart from sketches for the ballet, N. Goncharova also used the image of Astrologer in decorating the panel picture for the entrance hall of S. Koussevitzky’s mansion [6] — his figure almost completely repeated

the sketch for the ballet. The same with the costumes of the sons of Tsar Dodon – the photographs of 1937 show the similarity of uniforms, curved swords, and shields decorated with face images, with the images of Polkan and Gvidon in the sketches for the panel picture.

Conclusion

The revived production of *The Golden Cockerel* premiered on May 24, 1937 at Covent Garden and was a success, just like the first version. Both versions became certain milestones in N. Goncharova's work: originating from neo-primitivism, the bright and flat interpretation of the images of 1914 led to a form in which choreography is subordinated to design. That set a new direction for S. Diaghilev's theatre company and foreshadowed more radical stage design solutions for the ballets *Liturgy*, *Triana* and *Spain*.

The design of the second production explicitly demonstrates the development of the decorative line in the artistic manner of N. Goncharova and the gradual abandonment of her former style. Both of those changes were the result of the reduced role of costume as compared to dance. As a choreographer, M. Fokine particularly valued such changes, considering the work to be “one of the most beautiful productions I have ever seen on stage” [24, p. 179]. Meanwhile, the same features already implied the subsequent thinning of form characteristic of N. Goncharova, which would later manifest in the artist's last works for the theatre⁽⁸⁾.

(8) In 1957, in Monte Carlo, the seven ballets by M. Fokine were resumed – the event marked the 15th anniversary of the choreographer's death. Among other ballets, N. Goncharova designed *Eros* and *Islamey*.

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