

MIKHAIL SECHKIN: CREATIVE PORTRAIT**MIHAIL SECICHIN: PORTRET DE CREAȚIE****INNA HATIPOVA¹,**Doctor of Fine Arts and Cultural Studies, Acting Professor,
The Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts

CZU 785.11.071.2(478)

780.8:780.616.433.071.4(478)

The present article reflects the milestones in the life and artistic career of the exceptional conductor, pianist and professor, Master of Arts, People's Artist of the Republic of Moldova, Mikhail Vasilyevich Sechkin. The author reveals M. Sechkin's essential contribution to the growth and consolidation of the national symphony and opera conducting traditions and, last but not least, to the musical education, being an inspiring promoter of professional classical music. In essence, the purpose of this article is to shed light on the multilateral and prodigious activity of the maestro by emphasizing his great influence and defining his role in developing and fostering music in the Republic of Moldova.

Keywords: Mikhail Vasilyevich Sechkin, opera and symphonic conducting, piano performing art, musical education

Articolul dat vizează momentele cruciale care au marcat viața și cariera artistică a distinsului dirijor, pianist și profesor, Maestru în Artă, Artist al Poporului din Republica Moldova, Mihail Vasilievici Secichin. Autorul descrie aportul substanțial pe care l-a adus M. Secichin în formarea și consolidarea tradițiilor naționale în arta dirijorală simfonică și de operă și, nu în ultimul rând, în pedagogia muzicală, fiind promotorul muzicii academice de înaltă calitate. În esență, articolul tinde să pună în lumină activitatea prolifică multilaterală a maestrului, reliefând influența și rolul definitoriu al acesteia în dezvoltarea și promovarea artei muzicale în Republica Moldova.

Cuvinte-cheie: Mihail Vasilievici Secichin, dirijat simfonic și de operă, arta interpretării pianistice, pedagogia muzicală

Introduction

For thirty years now, Mikhail Vasilyevich Sechkin has made a significant contribution to the development of the musical culture of the Republic of Moldova as an excellent pianist, a wonderful opera and symphony conductor, a sensitive teacher and a prominent music and public figure. Mikhail Vasilyevich has almost always combined three types of activity: pedagogy, concertmaster work and opera and symphony conducting. Especially significant are the results of M.V. Sechkin's activity as a conductor; since 1988, he has created over one hundred opera and ballet productions in the Republic of Moldova and has performed about two hundred chamber-vocal and chamber-instrumental works, compositions for symphony orchestra. The coverage of various areas of musical professional activity indicates, on the one hand, Mikhail Vasilyevich's desire not to be limited to the framework of only one type of creativity; on the other hand, it is a characteristic tendency of contemporary art, when a musician-performer manifests himself as diverse as possible.

M.V. Sechkin's activity as a conductor in the Republic of Moldova

In 1990, the students-pianists of the Moldovan Music University A. Oizboid, A. Kuznetsov and the person writing these lines (who passed into his class after the death of his brother, Professor Vitaliy Vasilyevich Sechkin) successfully completed their conservatory education under his direction; over one hundred vocalists of the same educational institution underwent training in his opera class; among his pupils-conductors are Mikhail Amikhalakioaye, Vladimir Andries, Dumitru Kircumaru, Denis Chausov.

From 1988 to 1990, the author of this article had a chance to study with Mikhail Vasilyevich Sechkin in the special piano class, and since then the creative communication with him, the personal contact and fruitful cooperation have not been interrupted. Since 2000, every five years, we have been preparing concerts dedicated to the memory of Vitaliy Vasilyevich Sechkin, where the piano, vocal and chamber-

1 hatipovainna@yahoo.com

instrumental compositions of this outstanding musician are played. Our annual creative projects are held in the Organ Hall, the National Philharmonic named after S. Lunkevich, and at the Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts. So, in 2004, 2005 and 2010 in the Chisinau Organ Hall, the author of these lines and the students of her class with the National Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Mikhail Vasilyevich performed all the double clavier concertos by J.S. Bach, concertos by W.A. Mozart for two and three claviyers (for the first time in Chisinau), as well as a triple concerto by L. Beethoven. Until now, Mikhail Vasilyevich remains my teacher and mentor: He can always be consulted on musical issues and he always knows how to charge other people with his energy, strength of dedication, perseverance and persistence.

The first time I saw Mikhail V. Sechkin was in the summer of 1986 in the apartment of his famous elder brother Vitaliy V. Sechkin, a famous pianist, composer, Honoured Artist of Ukraine, professor of the special piano department of the Kyiv State Conservatory named after P.I. Tchaikovsky, who moved to Chisinau in 1984 at the invitation of the administration of the Moldovan State Conservatory. That summer, Mikhail Vasilyevich, at the request of his brother, gave me several lessons and pieces of important advice. In 1988, after the sudden tragic passing away of V.V. Sechkin, I continued my conservatory studies in the class of Mikhail Sechkin. Gradually, I got an idea of his creative biography.

Pages of maestro's biography

M.V. Sechkin was born on March 31, 1943 in the Ukrainian city of Kharkov. He received his first music lessons at the age of three from his mother, Maria Klymentyevna Sechkina-Zakharchenko, who, as a representative and follower of the school of the great Russian pianist and teacher Konstantin Nikolayevich Igumnov, worked for more than thirty years at the Kharkov Conservatory. His father Vasiy Fedorovich Sechkin, accountant by profession, was an amateur musician and played a little the guitar.

Having entered the Kharkov secondary special music school at the age of seven, Mikhail Sechkin was admitted to the class of Regina Horowitz (sister of the outstanding pianist Vladimir Horowitz). According to his words, the years from the fifth to the eleventh grades became the most memorable. At this time, the knowledge of the "secrets" of the high pianistic school was being formed. Regina Horowitz was able to interest the student in the idea and the pianistic problems arising from it. In such cases, I could study at home twelve hours a day, without a lunch break. I experienced creative happiness when I was able to „realize" the tasks set at the lesson. And I was really lucky in life: I was a favourite student of Regina Horowitz, I understood her perfectly, and often she was just going to offer something, and I had already fulfilled her wish" [1 p. 223]. During the years of study with R.S. Horowitz and the local philharmonic orchestra, Mikhail Sechkin played the Concerto d-moll (K. 466) by W.A. Mozart, the Concerto-moll op. 16 by E. Grieg and the Concerto No. 2 f-moll op. 21 by F. Chopin. At the final exam, the young musician, along with other compositions of his solo program, brilliantly performed the first Concerto for piano and orchestra by P.I. Tchaikovsky.

In 1966, M. Sechkin graduated from the Kharkov Conservatory as a pianist (at that time already the Kharkov Institute of Arts), taking a special piano course with the head of the department, Professor Mikhail Khazanovsky. At the final state exam, he brilliantly performed Concerto No. 2 for piano and orchestra by S.S. Prokofiev and by the assignment of specialists was left at the department as an assistant. However, his dream of the career of a symphony and opera conductor, which he had had since he was fourteen, led the young musician on another path.

Mikhail Sechkin became interested in conducting in 1957 after visiting the performance of *Aida* by G. Verdi at the Kharkov Opera House. The orchestra was conducted then by Leonid F. Khudoley¹, the pupil of the outstanding Russian conductor Nikolai Samoilovich Golovanov. Young Mikhail Sechkin, conquered by the sound of the symphony orchestra and carried away by the profession of conductor, independently learned to play the trumpet in his school years, and when he was a student, he learned to play percussion instruments, thus studying the orchestra in practice.

1 Note an interesting fact: in the years 1963-1984, L.F. Khudoley was the main conductor of the Moldovan Opera and Ballet Theater and worked in the opera class of the State Institute of Arts named after G. Musicescu.

Determined to become a conductor, Mikhail Sechkin in 1968 entered the faculty training conductors, which had just been opened at the Kharkov Institute of Arts, and a year later he was transferred to the Kyiv State Conservatory named after P.I. Tchaikovsky, where he studied in the class of Professor Mikhail Kanerstein, a student of one of the founders of the Soviet conducting school Nikolai Andreevich Malko. This was followed by an assistant-internship led by the outstanding Ukrainian conductor Stepan Turchak.

After the end of the assistant internship M.V. Sechkin worked for two years as the second conductor of the Zaporozhe Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, then, on the recommendation of S. Turchak, he was invited to the Donetsk Opera Theater, where he mastered a vast theater repertoire: about 75 opera and ballet productions. During the „Ukrainian” period of his activity, he toured a lot with the symphonic groups of Kiev, Kharkov, Zaporozhe, Donetsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Odessa, Chernivtsi in the cities of the former USSR. In 1971, Mikhail Vasilyevich participated in the All-Union Competition of Conductors in Moscow, where ... „I learned a lot of interesting and useful things professionally. And there he met a native of Kharkov [Vladimir Ivanovich Rudenko – author’s note], who at one time had music lessons with my mother. He was, at that time, director of the Nikolai Golovanov museum, my idol <...>. I had a happy opportunity to study Golovanov’s scores with his notes, to understand the essence of his incomparable interpretations of various works < ... >. I transferred all his priceless notes to my scores and used them in my work>” [2].

Pedagogical activity of Mikhail V. Sechkin

In 1988, on the initiative of the rector of the Moldovan State Conservatory Konstantin Rusnac, M. Sechkin was invited to work as a teacher at in the Department of Special Piano and the Department of Opera Training. The lessons in the specialty Piano Playing with M.V. Sechkin were interesting and productive. Possessing an excellent professional school and encyclopaedic knowledge, Mikhail Vasilyevich always clearly indicated the performing and artistic tasks, paying attention to the problems of the style and creative character of each composer as a whole and the form of the work performed in particular. I remember many works studied with him such as *The Island of Joy* by C. Debussy, the First Concerto for piano and orchestra by P.I. Tchaikovsky, *Chaconne* by J.S. Bach – F. Busoni, Sonata No. 30 by L. Beethoven.

Mikhail Vasilyevich considers the development of piano technique to be a very important moment in the training of a student-pianist. He repeatedly quoted the words of H.G. Neuhaus: „I often remind students that the word „technique” comes from the Greek word *techne*, and *techne* meant art; any improvement in the technique is also an improvement in art itself, which means it helps to reveal the content, „hidden meaning”, in other words, it is the matter, the real flesh of art” [3 p. 13]. That is why M.V. Sechkin strongly recommends that students play scales, as well as the exercises of Sh. Ganon, J. Brahms, A. Cortot, etudes by F. Chopin and F. Liszt. He also tries to train orchestral thinking skills in pianist students so that they can find vivid performing techniques and pedal effects using various comparisons and associations.

At the Moldovan State Conservatory, Mikhail Vasilyevich, at one time, led the student symphony orchestra, was one of the first conductors of the Opera Studio, which continued its activity until the late 1990s and contributed greatly to the training of young singers, instrumental musicians and conductors. The studio’s repertoire included the best works of Western European and Russian opera classics. The operas *Carmen* by J. Bizet and *Boyarynya Vera Sheloga* by N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov were fully prepared. The students of the conservatory, who passed this school, then successfully worked at the local Opera Theater and performed on prestigious opera stages in the world. Let us note the leading vocalists and soloists of the opera studio: Petru Rakovitsa, Natalia Margarit, Lily Sholomey, Yuri Gyska, Robert Khvalov, Stepan Kurudimov, Methodie Bujor, Liliana Lavrik. The orchestra of the Opera Studio had toured in Italy and Spain.

M. Sechkin – a symphony and opera conductor

In the National Opera and Ballet Theater of Chisinau, Mikhail Sechkin for several decades (from 1989) was one of the main conductors, and from 1990 to 1992 he held the post of chief conductor and

artistic director. Here he worked on the staging of the ballets *Romeo and Juliet* by S. Prokofiev, *Spartacus* by A. Khachaturian, the operas *The Wedding of Figaro* by W.A. Mozart, *Don Carlos* by G. Verdi, *Iolanta* by P.I. Tchaikovsky. Among his favourite works are the masterpieces of the Russian opera and ballet classics: *The Tsar's Bride* by N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, *The Queen of Spades*, *The Nutcracker*, *The Swan Lake* by P.I. Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet* by S.S. Prokofiev. In parallel with the theater productions M.V. Sechkin showed himself brightly as a conductor of the National Philharmonic named after S. Lunkevich. In 2008-2013, under his leadership the orchestra performed more than twenty concert programs, including premieres of works by P.I. Tchaikovsky (Symphony No. 5, *The Manfred* Symphony), A. Scriabin's Symphonies No. 2 and No. 3, S. Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 3.

The conductor pays a lot of attention to promoting the works of the composers of the Republic of Moldova. From 2000 to the present, within the framework of the festival, *Days of New Music* M.V. Sechkin with the National Philharmonic Orchestra prepared a series of programs from the works of V. Polyakov, V. Zagorsky, V. Rotaru, A. Luxembourg, O. Negruta, B. Dubossarsky and Z. Tkach. For 30 years of his creative activity in Chisinau, M.V. Sechkin collaborated with all the existing orchestral groups: the Teleradio Orchestra, the National Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Chamber Orchestra, the orchestras of the musical lyceums named after S. Rachmaninoff and C. Porumbescu, the Stefan Neaga College Orchestra, the Youth Symphony Orchestra. In the 1990s, with the staff of the National Opera and Ballet Theater and other orchestras of the capital of the Republic, the maestro successfully toured in many countries of Europe and America: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Romania, Chile.

In Romania, the conductor not only toured, but also worked on a regular basis as a conductor, then as chief conductor of the Botosani Symphony Orchestra (1998-2013). During this period, he prepared about 70 concert programs, which were based on the works of the world concert repertoire, accompaniments of concerts for various instruments with an orchestra, where the soloists were musicians from Romania, Moldova and Russia. M.V. Sechkin particularly emphasizes his cooperation with such Romanian soloists as Dana Borsan, Mihai Ungureanu, Daniel Goiti, Csiky Boldizsar.

Conclusions

The multifaceted and fruitful activity of the musician was marked by diplomas of the Russian Center for Science and Culture: For the promotion of Russian art in Moldova, for cooperation with the Congress of Russian Communities. In 1996, Mikhail Vasilyevich received the honorary title of Honoured Master in Art, in 2018 – People's Artist of the Republic of Moldova. Evaluating the activities of this outstanding musician, determining his contribution to the development of the modern musical culture of the Republic of Moldova, one can clearly see the vector of his life and career – it is a faithful service to music, the cause of musical enlightenment, education, training of young performers and listeners of all generations and ages. M.V. Sechkin's reverent attitude to his profession, his fantastic capacity for work and constant striving for self-improvement and professional growth serve as an example of unlimited devotion to musical art for young musicians.

Bibliographical references

1. СЕЧКИН, М. Р.С. Горовиц в моей жизни. В: РУДЕНКО, Н. *Регина Самойловна Горовиц и её уроки*. Киев: КГВМУ, 2001.
2. БОЛЬШОВА, О. Мой кумир – великий Голованов. В: *Газета «Русское слово»*. Режим доступа: <http://moldovanews.md/30052018/lenta-novostej/173847.htm>.
3. НЕЙГАУЗ, Г. *Об искусстве фортепианной игры. Записки педагога*. Москва: Музыка, 1982.