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On the Pedagogical Priorities of Teachers-vocalists of the Initial Period of Activity of the Saratov Conservatory / О педагогических приоритетах преподавателей-вокалистов начального периода деятельности Саратовской консерватории

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Аннотация: Объектом данного исследования является начальный период деятельности Саратовской консерватории, предметом можно назвать педагогические приоритеты педагогов-вокалистов данного рассматриваемого периода. В статье на основе редких архивных данных, сохранившихся печатных свидетельств, мемуаров учеников производится попытка восстановления педагогических приоритетов наиболее известных и обладающих весом в музыкальных кругах Москвы и Петербурга, активных участников концертных мероприятий Императорского Русского Музыкального Общества: Михаила

Ефимовича Медведева - первого исполнителя партии Ленского в опере П. И. Чайковского "Евгений Онегин" и Алевтины Михайловны Пасхаловой, воплотившей образ Снегурочки в одноимённой опере Н. А. Римского-Корсакова. К научной новизне исследования относится то, что автор выявляет и впервые вводит в научный оборот данные о педагогических приоритетах наиболее ярких преподавателей-вокалистов, внесших значительный вклад в совершенствование образовательного процесса кафедры академического пения. Выявляется, что к педагогическим приоритетам М. Е. Медведева и А. М. Пасхаловой можно отнести: достаточно низкий тип дыхания, повышенное внимание к выработке чувства опоры звука, осторожное отношение к развитию полного диапазона голоса, выработкой чёткой дикции, ровности звуковедения, слаженности регистрационных переходов; мягкой атаки звука; умения качественно вокализировать различные динамические градации звука; применение в педагогическом процессе «концентрического» метода обучения, повышенное внимание к воспитанию эмоционально-драматической составляющей личности исполнителя. Анализ также показал, что к особенностям, отличающим педагогические взгляды профессоров начального периода деятельности Саратовской консерватории, можно отнести применение в классной работе с начинающим певцом репертуара русских композиторов.

Ключевые слова:

Саратовская консерватория, вокально-педагогические традиции, воспоминания ученика, методическая работа, педагогические взгляды, репертуар русских композиторов, арии, романсы, вокализация, драматическая одарённость

Of great importance to the development of Saratov's musical culture was the activity of the local branch of the Imperial Russian Musical Society, which opened music classes in the city (1873), a music school (1895), and then the third conservatory in Russia and the first in the province (1912).

The appearance of the new higher education institution was a landmark event for the whole country. One of the most prominent theorists of his time, Boleslav Leopoldovich Yavorsky, wrote, "The significance of the conservatory can be enormous if it manages to attract attention and sympathy, and if it goes to meet them, looking for and encouraging talents. Volga has always been famous for its songs, meaning that the creators—musicians and singers—are provided by nature itself ..." [\[1, I. 8\]](#).

The new higher education institution was staffed with a strong teaching team from the beginning of its activity. Among the vocalists, Mikhail Efimovich Medvedev and Alevtina Mikhailovna Paskhalova had the greatest fame and authority in Russian musical circles. They played a significant role in the formation of the training of singers in the Department of Academic Singing. However, due to the few surviving documents, their activities have not yet found sufficient coverage by researchers and musicologists. In this article, based on archival data, memoirs of students, and printed certificates about the initial period of work at the Saratov Conservatory, we will try to identify Medvedev and Paskhalova's pedagogical views, which were the basis for the formation of the Saratov Conservatory's vocal and pedagogical traditions. By vocal-pedagogical traditions, we mean a complex of vocal-technical training tools, techniques, and developments that have high effectiveness in the education of a professional singer and were characteristic of the pedagogical process in the Saratov Conservatory.

Mikhail Efimovich Medvedev, his real name was Meer Chaimovich Bernstein (1852–1925), was a lyric and dramatic tenor, the first performer of the role of Lensky in Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin* was born in the Kyiv region (the town of Rakitnoye) in 1852. His dream of becoming an opera singer began in childhood when he sang in the church choir. At 18, Meer entered the Kyiv Music College and then (at the invitation of Nikolai Grigoryevich Rubinstein) the Moscow Conservatory for his third year in the class of the outstanding professor Giacomo Galvani, who was a supporter of the classical installations of the Bologna vocal school.

After graduating from the Conservatory, Medvedev was invited to the Kyiv Opera, and in 1885, he became a soloist of the Imperial Bolshoi and Mariinsky Theaters, successfully debuting the most challenging part of *Othello* in the opera of the same name by Giuseppe Verdi. Medvedev made his main career in the province, where he conducted stage and entrepreneurial activities.

Before starting his career at the Saratov Conservatory (1912–1925), the singer already had some pedagogical experience: in 1898, he taught at the Kyiv Blumenfeld Music School, in 1901–1905, at the Music and Drama School of the Moscow Philharmonic Society (since 1903 as a professor), in the Moscow "Studio near the Arbat Gate," in the Kyiv Philharmonic (from 1905), from 1905 at the Kyiv Conservatory, and later opened the "Kyiv Opera Higher Music and Drama Courses," where, in addition to vocals, he lectured on music theory and engaged in diction and stage skills. In 1907, in Rostov-on-Don, the teacher taught a vocal class at the Pressman Theater School, then was invited to the Kyiv Opera as a stage teacher [\[2, pp. 242–242\]](#).

Unfortunately, Medvedev did not leave behind any work or methodical instructions. However, only data has been preserved that he composed vocal exercises for all types of voices, but the manuscript is currently considered lost [\[3, p. 74\]](#). To identify the pedagogical views of the first professor of the Saratov Conservatory, we will consider the memoirs of his student at the Kyiv Higher Music and Drama Courses, baritone S. Y. Levik (1883–1967) and what he published in his memoir *Notes of an Opera Singer*.

Levik wrote that the peculiarity of the professor's pedagogical style was his ability to create a certain emotional and psychological environment in the classroom that helped students fully understand and perform the tasks assigned to them. According to Levik's memoirs, the teacher completely denied any scientific voice production methods. He did not consider it necessary to give students any information about the physiological structure of the vocal apparatus, arguing that such information could negatively affect the process of voice formation. This information is confirmed by S. K. Arkhangelsky, a professor at the Saratov Conservatory [\[4, I. 3\]](#). Medvedev proclaimed the empirical method the priority teaching method (showing with one's own voice). Levik noted that the teacher could qualitatively demonstrate to the student any, even the most technically tricky place in the work.

In his opinion, Medvedev always observed the most optimal duration of a lesson—not less than fifty minutes. The vocal lesson always started with working on the voice via exercises. When singing exercises (performed with the most conveniently sounding middle note), the teacher used both solmization and solfegging, which was given only to technically advanced students. The peculiarity of the selection of Medvedev's exercises was the presence of chants in the chromatic conduct of the melody, which, according to the teacher, contributed to the development of evenness and uniformity of vocalization and also brought up the purity of intonation. Medvedev used a variety of exercises for all types of vocal techniques—

legato, staccato, etc. Work was carried out on the ability to use dynamic shades and uniformly build positional transitions in intervals, developing the mobility of the voice. Only after the student had mastered the principles of proper sound science was he allowed to proceed to the study of vocalizations, which always correspond to the singer's capabilities at this stage of training. According to Levik's memoirs, Medvedev did not attach much importance to using vocalizations in his pedagogical process. Therefore, little attention was paid to them. Basically, only a few vocalizations were performed in the lesson. At the same time, the teacher demanded the quality and correctness of vocalization. Then, the student was given simple works with text.

Medvedev considered learning to master singing breathing as the basis of the vocalist's voice production. Levik recalled that the teacher preferred to develop a lower-rib-diaphragmatic type of breathing. A large amount of time in the lesson was devoted to developing the correct breathing. Before taking a breath, it was necessary not only to monitor the posture ("stand straight, do not hunch over"), relaxation of the muscles of the body and face ("do not twist your mouth"), as well as several "lower your head so that the Adam's apple does not bulge ..." (which indicates the priority of the neutral position of the larynx—not lowered, as there is no indication of a "yawn") [\[5, p. 101\]](#). The teacher explained that in no case is it impossible to artificially strengthen the respiratory stream with the help of the diaphragm ("do not press on the breath").

In his pedagogical work, Medvedev was of the opinion that singing was an active process and required considerable strength and help from the body. The professor said: "You need to sing all the notes with equal vigor, without exception; you can't relax anywhere." To develop an active vocalization, Medvedev selected works for each student individually with a very close arrangement of intervals in the melody. At the same time, the teacher carefully monitored not only the activity of phonation but also the preservation of a high position of sound in various melodic constructions [\[5, p. 103\]](#).

The most challenging task for Medvedev was developing the upper register of the student's voice, which needed to be worked on carefully and consistently without force. He said that a prematurely "stretched up" voice loses its beauty and volume of timbre not only in the middle but also in the lower part of the range. According to Levik's memoirs, Medvedev had the ability to perfectly set the top notes of all types of singing voices: not only tenors but also sopranos, baritones, and basses. The high notes of the range of Medvedev's students were always stable, well-built in a high position revealed in volume, but "in timbre, they sounded somewhat impoverished, emasculated, became as if alien and less beautiful" [\[5, p. 107\]](#). Thus, in her work, E. V. Milovanova recorded the peculiarity of such a sound of the upper register in the leading soloist of the Baku Opera Theater named after Mirza Fatali Akhundov, the lyric-dramatic tenor A. A. Drozdov (a student of Medvedev's), whom she often heard in the parts of the lyric-dramatic repertoire [\[6, L. 39\]](#). According to Levik, the reason for the insufficient timbral evenness of the voice of Medvedev's students was an individual feature of the teacher's methodology: he did not work on rounding the entire range but only asked to "cover," "somewhat sombrate" the notes of the transitional register.

One of the main disadvantages of vocalization, Medvedev considered sound forcing. However, Levik wrote that the teacher justified such sound studies when performing works requiring "great emotional intensity." At the same time, Medvedev explained that "people with warm blood and a warm heart cannot but force. It's bad, but it's better than doing accounting."

In his work, Levik recorded that the professor attached great importance to selecting the training repertoire when teaching a singer. Medvedev considered the vocal compositions of Russian composers as a priority at the initial stage of voice training: Aleksandr Varlamov, Aleksander, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, etc. Working with baritones, the professor advised to learn the part of the Demon from the opera of the same name by Anton Rubinstein, as he saw in it the benefit for developing long breathing, good sound support, evenness of sound science. Arias from Domenico Cimarosa's operas "The Secret Marriage" and Gaetano Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor" were used in the classroom work. Subsequently, Medvedev repeatedly stated that productions of these operas must be performed without fail in opera houses to maintain the vocal form of soloists [\[5, p. 108\]](#).

The basis for the formation of a professional performer, Medvedev proclaimed the obligatory presence of temperament and dramatic talent. Levik recalled that the professor asked to start from the dramatic, emotional content and the author's intention when studying and performing the vocal repertoire, as "the experience will necessarily generate the appropriate timbre, gesture, and facial expressions," overcome technical difficulties, give truthfulness to the stage image" [\[5, p. 109\]](#).

One of the brightest professors of the initial period of the Saratov Conservatory's activity was the outstanding singer Alevtina Mikhailovna Paskhalova—the first performer of the role of the Snow Maiden in the production of the opera of the same name at St. Petersburg (conducted by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov himself).

Paskhalova (1875–1953) was born in the village of Sokur in Saratov province. After graduating from the Saratov Mariinsky Institute of Noble Maidens, she entered the Moscow Conservatory in the class of Professor Yelizaveta Andreyevna Lavrovskaya. Subsequently, the young singer became a soloist in the Savva Mamontov opera theater [\[10, p. 205\]](#) and then the Mariinsky Theater (1905). On the famous stage, the singer sang the most difficult parts of the world opera repertoire for a coloratura soprano: Dolls in Jacques Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffmann," Esclarmondes in Jules Massenet's "Esclarmonde," Freys in Richard Wagner's "Gold of the Rhine," Birds in Wagner's "Sieglinde," Queen Margarita in Giacomo Meyerbeer's "Huguenots," Lyudmila in "Ruslana and Lyudmila" by Mikhail Glinka, Lacme in the opera of the same name by Léo Delibes and others [\[7, p. 28\]](#).

Already quite famous then, the singer performed in Russian provincial theaters from 1909 to 1914, during which she accumulated a vast repertoire and gained significant stage experience.

Paskhalova's pedagogical activity at the Saratov Conservatory began on August 12, 1918 [\[18, pp. 406–407\]](#). Subsequently, the famous singer's whole life would be connected with Saratov. During her long pedagogical practice at the Saratov Conservatory (1918–1950), Paskhalova wrote a significant number of methodological works. Among them: *Education and Protection of Children's Voices*, *What Is Needed to Improve the Voice at the Beginning of Training Vocal Pedagogy and its Tasks*, *The Scientific Foundations of Voice Production On Chamber Singing and its Tasks*, etc. To identify Paskhalova's pedagogical views, we will analyze a fairly complete and informative methodological development, *Work on Voice Production for the Leaders of the Russian Folk Song Choir*, stored at the Glinka State Music and Music Center.

The peculiarity of this work is that it gives a detailed description of the structure and work of the organs involved in singing sound formation. The professor writes that for effective

teaching, both the student and the teacher need scientific knowledge of the methodological support of the voice production process. The aim of teaching academic vocals, Paskhalova considered, is "to develop the consistency of the work of the organs taking part in singing" [\[9, L.14\]](#).

Much attention in this work is paid to analyzing the work of breathing while singing. The author considered the most correct type of breathing to be lower-rib-diaphragmatic. For the proper activity of the respiratory system during phonation, it was recommended: "When inhaling while singing, it is necessary to hold the air for 1-2 seconds. You do not need to take an extremely deep breath—do not overload with breathing, do not forcibly help the abdominal contraction—the work of the muscles is involuntary. A calculation is needed so that breathing is enough to reach the end of the phrase" [\[9, L. 9\]](#). The teacher advised the development of a long exhalation by training the muscles of the chest and diaphragm with the help of sound exercises.

Considering the register structure of male and female voices, the author concluded that "smoothing register transitions" is one of the main problems of vocal pedagogy. To overcome this disadvantage, it is recommended to "round off" and "darken" the transitional notes, as well as "lighten" the preceding ones [\[3, L.4\]](#).

Paskhalova investigated and described all the classical types of sound attacks adopted during vocalization: aspirated, soft, and hard [\[10, p. 218\]](#). Each type can find its application in classroom work with a student to form the correct sound and correct various voice problems. Still, the teacher recommended using a soft sound attack as a reference and the most accurate in classical vocalization.

Paskhalova attached great importance to the ability to perform various dynamic shades, such as forte and piano. The author saw the greatest difficulty in the correct vocalization of the piano as "there is a danger of removing the sound from the support." With such a vicious construction of a dynamic shade, there can be no high-quality sound science [\[9, L.10\]](#).

According to the professor, it is necessary to start teaching academic singing by finding a "primary tone," which is characterized as "the brightest, correctly formed by nature, sounds freely, naturally in the first octave." Then, with the help of simple melodic exercises, gradually transferring the found sound to the nearby notes of the singer's range was recommended. The author advises: "Sing everything slowly so that the student can consciously fix the correct sound" [\[9, L. 28\]](#).

According to Paskhalova, the complex tasks of educating the voice of an academic vocalist are the construction of a covered, rounded sound over two octaves of the range [\[9, L. 29\]](#), as well as the development of a singing support. The teacher believed that "good support is achieved as a result of consistent and systematic work on this." If an operatic sound is found that satisfies both the teacher and the student, then the sound becomes stable and bright in timbre, and a good legato appears [\[9, L. 30\]](#).

The problem of the position of the larynx during phonation is also reflected in Paskhalova's work. She recommended a slightly lowered position of the larynx, which requires the use of a small yawn. Also, this technique is suitable for relaxing the student's voice apparatus.

According to the author, a thoughtful selection of the vocal and pedagogical repertoire for each student is of particular importance when setting the voice of a novice singer. Untrained singers need to study the technically simple romances of Russian composers' folk

songs. Old foreign arias are also useful at the initial stage of the vocalist's training [\[9, I. 40\]](#).

Paskhalova attached great importance to musicality and performing talent in the upbringing of the singer-artist [\[9, I. 41\]](#). She believed it was necessary to develop these qualities of the singer's personality from the earliest stages of training.

At the conclusion of her research, the professor concludes that for a successful professional stage activity, a singer must have developed active singing breathing, full range of voice with "open," free upper notes, uniformity of timbre over two octaves, high position in sound; pure intonation, clear diction; ability to perform legato, staccato, crescendo, diminuendo, etc.; presence of virtuoso technique; possession of dynamic shades [\[9, L. 42\]](#).

So, having considered Medvedev and Paskhalova's pedagogical views, we can highlight the provisions underlying the formation of the vocal and pedagogical traditions of the Saratov Conservatory. The fundamental importance in the production of the voice is given to the education of proper singing breathing (lower-rib-diaphragmatic type). It is also necessary to develop strong sound support, uniformity of sound science with a balanced sound of transitional notes, a high position in the sound, pure singing intonation, the ability to build intervals, mobility and legato techniques; high-quality performance of dynamic shades; the position of the larynx is recommended as neutral or slightly lowered with the help of a yawn; careful and careful development of the full range is necessary voices. The singer's training should begin with the primary tones of the voice (the "concentric method") and use vocal exercises for different types of vocal techniques (including chromatic construction), as well as vocalizations. The following features distinguish the vocal and pedagogical repertoire: At the initial stage of training, vocal compositions by Russian composers and folk songs are used (in classical settings of vocal pedagogy—arias by ancient Italian composers). Great importance is attached to musical and dramatic talent, so the singer's education from the very first lessons is recommended to be carried out in a combination of technical vocal and performing sides.

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Рецензия скрыта по просьбе автора