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Musical Representations of the Past in Children’s Cartoons Produced in Central- Eastern Europe under Communism¹

Abstract

The subject of this article are the composition strategies employed to represent the past in animated films produced in the integrated cultural space which Central-Eastern Europe constituted during the communist era. Productions made in two countries, the Soviet Union and in Poland, have been considered. Film examples have been discussed in approximate chronological order, according to the time of production of individual cartoons. By selecting specific movies I do not intend exhaustively to analyse these audio-visual works. I have limited myself to reviewing thematic threads related to the past and, in this context, ideas and tendencies in film music composition.

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Keywords

cartoons in Central and Eastern Europe, musical representations of the past, music in cartoons

The twentieth century left behind many animated films presenting the past. Especially popular were the 1990s productions by Walt Disney such as *Hercules* (1997), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), and by 20th Century Fox (*Anastasia*, 1997), as well as the earlier French educational series *Il Etait Une Fois... L'Homme* (Eng. title: *Once Upon a Time... Man*, 1978–1981), with J.S. Bach's *Toccatà in D Minor* in the title sequence.

The music that accompanies scenes from the past usually represents the late Romantic idiom, commonly accepted as universal. Using period music from the age in which the plot is set might entail the risk of historical distance interfering with the perception of the movie. As Zofia Lissa observed, the audience perceives the archaic visual layer of the film merely as a change of stage sets and so it does not fundamentally influence our understanding of the presented world. With music, it is quite a different case: "The authentic historical element "works" as long as it is integrated into the standard modern categories and stylistic norms, that is, as long as it has been subjected to stylisation.² All this finds confirmation also in the field of cartoon music.

I will begin my survey of cartoons produced in Poland and the USSR before 1991 with the oldest animated Soviet sound films from the 1930s. They were made in the Central-Eastern European communist world which constitutes the context of our study. Those 1930s Soviet cartoons cover a quite wide range of topics, from film adaptations of national literature (including folklore) to (educational and other) screenplays dealing with the then everyday reality, to films with oriental or tropical settings, to a number of adaptations of Western classics. Notably, folk fables became a major source of inspiration only in the second half of the 1930s. In the early Soviet period, they had been considered (similarly as other literary works related to folklore) as remnants of feudalism.³ The first Soviet cartoon with a script based

² Z. Lissa, *Estetyka muzyki filmowej* (1964), 340.

³ Ü. Pikkov, 'On the Topics and Style of Soviet Animated Films', *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 4 (2016), 20.

on a fable was *Царь Дурандай*⁴ (*Tsar Durandai*) of 1934. Incidentally, this movie offers an intriguing proof of the fact that that Soviet animated film art was originally inspired by the avant-garde. The movie demonstrates a tendency to 'suspend' realism; the characters are highly stylised and modelled in some cases on folk sculptures, while the music is based on the principle of grotesque bordering even on deformation, which manifests itself in 'false' cadences, glissandi, and the use of exaggerated sound contrasts. At some points we also hear circus music. All this accompanies the folk tale of an inept tsar who has made up his mind to get married.

Musical references to the past can also be found in those 1930s Soviet films which might be described as animated 'comedy-operas', including two adaptations of the Western literary canon: Charles Perrault's *The Master Cat, or Puss in Boots* and Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*. The film *Кот в сапогах*⁵ (*Puss in Boots*), produced in 1938 by Soyuzmultfilm, sparkles with humour. The fact of the action being set in the times of princesses and marquises inspired the authors to create a kind a mini-opera. The music soundtrack opens with an overture, and includes recitatives and arias of various types, which, however, stylistically come closer to songs. Operatic pathos is represented in a humorous manner. Orchestral sound dominates in *Puss in Boots*, as in the other movies discussed here. One interesting exception can be found in the prologue, in which the pages of an ancient book open one by one. In this passage, the instrumentation was reduced to three string instruments; the violin and viola play solo, while the cello provides an Alberti bass accompaniment, which brings to mind associations with the trio sonata and should therefore be considered as a form of archaization. The 1938 Soviet production of *The Three Musketeers*⁶, on the other hand, contains references to the first half of the seventeenth century. In this humorous adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' famous novel, the comic effect is achieved through a clash between the exalted mood of the tale about the adventurers of old and the idea of setting a duck (modelled on Disney's Donald) in the role of the main protagonist, as well as anthropomorphic cats in the roles

⁴ *Царь Дурандай* (1934, dir. I. Ivanov-Vano, V. and Z. Brumberg; music composer unknown). Cf. Ü. Pikkov, 'On the Topics...', 20.

⁵ *Кот в сапогах* (1938, dir. V. and Z. Brumberg, mus. Nikita Bogoslovsky).

⁶ *Три мушкетера* (1938, dir. I. Vano, mus. Nikita Bogoslovsky).

of the three eponymous soldiers. Musically, the soundtrack employs the sound of a large orchestra and the neo-Romantic idiom prevails, though archaising stylisations are also present (as in the theme accompanying a cat's preparations to sing a serenade, played by a flute and resembling a historical duple-time dance). The film's situational humour is further enhanced by the juxtaposition of (stylistically inappropriate) music characterised by serious-type expression with the protagonists' humorous lines (though spoken in earnest) and funny situations. The leitmotif of *The Three Musketeers* is the duck's archaising song, in which a rhythmic ostinato in the accompaniment illustrates a horse's hoofbeat. The style of the melody evokes associations with early music, and the verbal layer – even more so, since the text draws on the convention of the brave hero addressing his horse as the most faithful companion in his adventures.

Images of the past return in cartoons produced after World War II⁷. Soviet filmmakers continued to draw inspiration from fables and folklore, similarly as in other countries of the Eastern bloc⁸. One of the fruits of these inspirations was *Сказка о рыбаке и рыбке*⁹ (*The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish*), produced in 1950. Its visual layer reproduces in detail the folk costumes and wooden architecture, including the interior of an old Ruthenian cottage. The soundtrack, which betrays neo-Classical influences, features intertextual elements and stylisations of folk and courtly music. The first Polish cartoon for children, *Za króla Krakusa*¹⁰ (*When Krakus Was the King*, 1947) recounting the legend of the Wawel Dragon, was made by Zenon Wasilewski using the stop motion puppet animation technique. The soundtrack is dominated by illustrative music performed by a large orchestra, in which the woodwinds (particularly the clarinet) are especially highlighted and frequently follow the notes of the pentatonic scale.

During the Khrushchev thaw that came after Stalin's death when Nikita Khrushchev took over as leader of the USSR (1953), Soviet animation underwent changes analogous to those taking place in other disciplines of art. A certain liberalization¹¹ manifested itself, among

⁷ During the war, Soviet animators continued their work to a limited extent. Soyuzmultfilm studios were evacuated to Samarkand (Uzbekistan).

⁸ Pikkov, 'On the Topics...', 23.

⁹ *Сказка о рыбаке и рыбке* (1950, dir. M. Tsekhanovsky, mus. J. Levitin).

¹⁰ *Za króla Krakusa* (1947, dir. Z. Wasilewski, mus. S. Wisłocki).

¹¹ Pikkov, 'On the Topics...', 24.

others, in the greater freedom of choosing film subjects, as well as in growing stylistic diversity. Notably, it is apparently from the time of the thaw that we have the greatest number of cartoons set in the past.

It is in a fairy-tale court, at some indefinite time and place, that the plot of *Двенадцать месяцев*¹² (*The Twelve Months*, a 1956 adaptation of a play by Samuil Marshak) is set. The eminently Disney-like animations are accompanied by Mieczysław Weinberg's remarkable music, rather high-calibre for a cartoon soundtrack, which is partly due to the monumental sound of a large orchestra. In the palace scenes we hear, among others, a waltz (the figurations played by bells suit both the rich chamber setting and the spoilt princess's character). During the New Year's concert, the orchestra performs a rather peculiar programme, featuring a polonaise tinged with... oriental elements (probably because one of the courtiers comes from the Far East). Though there is but one couple on the dance floor, it performs steps known from that Polish dance.

A considerable number of cartoons draw on various medieval themes and on works inspired by those motifs. An interesting portrayal of heroism and the ethos of pre-Christian Slavs can be found in *Детство Ратибора*¹³ (*Ratibor's Childhood*, 1973), made in the USSR. The leitmotif of this movie is a vocalise-lullaby based on a modal scale sung by a mixed choir. The austere contemplative sound of this music (attained primarily through imitating the early tonal models) deliberately emphasises the temporal distance which separates the viewers from the presented events, while on the other hand bringing to mind associations with the Russian choral tradition and with sacred music.

The medieval legend of the Wawel Dragon and the shoemaker Skuba (Twine), which had inspired the 1947 production *Za króla Krakusa*, was taken up again by Polish animators in the 1960s. 1965 saw the publication of Stanisław Pagaczewski's novel *Porwanie Baltazara Gąbki* [Eng. title: *The Abduction of Balthazar Sponge*], which became the basis for the famous eponymous TV series¹⁴. This is a completely new version of the legend, in which the events and role division are radically

¹² *Двенадцать месяцев* (1956, dir. M. Botov, mus. M. Weinberg).

¹³ *Детство Ратибора* (1973, dir. R. Davydov, mus. W. Krivcov).

¹⁴ *Porwanie Baltazara Gąbki* (1969–1970, dir. W. Nehrebecki, A. Ledwig, E. Wątor et al., mus. T. Kocyba).

altered. Still, the film adaptation contains numerous historical elements, from the view of Cracow's Main Market Square to references to the city's university traditions and the presence of Italians at the Polish royal court. The clarinet reigns supreme in the soundtrack (a possible reference to the 1947 production¹⁵). The place of action is represented by the well-known opening music from the title sequence (in the rhythm of a *krakowiak* dance) and a quotation from St Mary's Trumpet Call (played regularly from the tower of the city's Saint Mary's Church). The humorous character of the music, devoid of any pomposity, makes it suitable for the young audience. There are virtually no archaising stylisations. This agrees with the aesthetic and convention of the entire production, which leaves room for a modern¹⁶ perspective, in the form, for instance, of walkie-talkies and license plates.

In some of the more 'recent' animations (those made during the political thaw) the temporal setting may sometimes change even multiple times in the course of one movie. This is the case with the production *Як козаки у футбол грали*¹⁷ (*How Cossacks Played Football*, Kiev 1973). The swashbuckling strongmen play their first match with German knights in a medieval monastery, the next one – with French courtiers, and the last – with English gentlemen. All these events are accompanied by a jazzy soundtrack with comical references to music of the long-gone eras, such as the piano repeating a low note in imitation of a burden (drone) or the use of percussion in the role of a harpsichord. There are even courtly dance steps, although the ethereal movements of minuet dancers can hardly stand the competition with the Cossacks' jumps and *holubetz* figures.

Among the Central-European film adaptations of fables and fairy-tales, there are also cartoons with the standard indefinite 'once-upon-a-time' settings, which cannot unequivocally be situated on the axis of

¹⁵ This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by another similarity – a humorous detail: In Wasilewski's cartoon, the king ponders on the monster pestering his subjects while soaking his feet in a bowl. In the first episode of the now cult TV series, likewise humorous, it is the Dragon that sits with its feet in a basin, while the monarch himself is paying him a visit.

¹⁶ The concepts of 'modernity' and 'the contemporary', as in the whole paper, should be interpreted as referring broadly to the present, but also to the entire 20th century.

¹⁷ *Як козаки у футбол грали* (1970, dir. V. Dakhno, mus. B. Buyevsky).

historical time. This is the case with *Винни Пух*¹⁸ (*Winnie-the-Pooh*), a Soviet cartoon version of A.A. Milne's eponymous book, with music by Mieczysław Weinberg. Already the music in the title sequence, a harpsichord piece¹⁹ in the late Baroque style, specially composed for this purpose, introduces us into the 'archaic' atmosphere; there is motivic work, ornaments associated with the harpsichord idiom, and a texture resembling the fine constructions known from the French harpsichord masters.



Ex. 1. M. Weinberg, title sequence from *Винни Пух* (1969, dir. F. Khitruk) – fragment of the top harpsichord part.

All the examples I have listed so far come from films set in the past, in which the music serves to illustrate the times when the action is taking place, what Lissa calls 'represented time'.²⁰ Another type of musical representations of the past can be found films with contemporary settings in which the past is only briefly and locally recalled or imagined. Phenomena that accompany such references to the past can thus be labelled 'double representations', as the viewers project in their imagination the way in which the imaginary toon character possibly projected the given situation in his or her own mind.

From the period of the thaw, we have numerous animations which, though basically set in the contemporary realities, nevertheless refer to the past under such pretexts as, for instance, the workings of a child's imagination. In *Bycze przygody Gapiszona*²¹ (*Gapiszon's Fantastic*

¹⁸ *Винни Пух* (1969, dir. F. Khitruk, mus. M. Weinberg).

¹⁹ The harpsichord is rather rarely heard in cartoons. Czech composers are an exception, as this instrument seems to have been their favourite in evoking the atmosphere of bygone times. It appears as one of the soundtrack components in, among others, the TV series *Pohádky z mechu a kapradí* (Eng. title: *The Tales of Moss and Fern*) and *O makové panence a motýlu Emanuelovi* (*Tales of the Poppy Doll and Emanuel the Butterfly*).

²⁰ Lissa, *Estetyka muzyki filmowej*, 169.

²¹ *Bycze przygody Gapiszona* (1964, dir. J. Kotowski, mus. P. Hertel).

Adventure with the Bull, 1964, part of the Polish TV series *Przygody Gapiszona / Gapiszon's Adventures*, illustr. by Bohdan Butenko), the title hero parades around in a meadow wielding a sabre and a shield. We can easily guess that his mind has wandered into the Middle Ages since the clarinet imitates the sound of early court trumpets, playing a stylised melody. The toon boys Bolek and Lolek also play at medieval knights (in the episode *Dwaj rycerze*²² / *Two Knights*), accompanied by a trumpet, which emulates a medieval instrument (fanfare motifs). The same TV series contains a reference to *Don Quixote* (in *Zabawa w rycerza / Playing at Knights*: Dulcinea is minding geese while the protagonists are battling windmills). The repeated musical section in which the clarinet and the trumpet engage in a dialogue brings to mind associations with early music.²³

In *Коля, Оля и Архимед (Kolya, Olya, and Archimedes)*²⁴ of 1972, two Soviet pupils are transported into an even more distant era, namely, to Syracuse in the times of the Second Punic War. The ancient city's architecture is represented in detail,²⁵ including details of sculptures. In the soundtrack, the Greek plucked instrument bouzouki plays a major role. The filmmakers even introduced some musical jokes, as when the cruel Romans sing in twentieth-century popular music style and a young inhabitant of Syracuse holding a harp in his hands sings a piece after the fashion of Soviet children's songs, starting with a typical rock intro (a descending semitone progression performed on an electric guitar).

In some movies the time boundary is crossed thanks to museums, including open-air ethnographic centres, presented in a citizen-friendly urban space. Such places are visited by the most famous four-legged Polish toon character, the dog Reksio (Rex). The episode *Reksio przewodnik*²⁶ (*Rex the Guide*) depicts a kennel museum. Here, the atmosphere of bygone times is evoked by a contemplative flute theme,

²² *Dwaj rycerze* (1964, dir. W. Nehrebecki, mus. W. Kazanecki).

²³ In a whole series of films featuring Bolek and Lolek, the eponymous characters are accompanied by figures from fairy-tales, which get involved in events taking place in the present, cf. *Bajki Bolka i Lolka (Bolek and Lolek's Fairy Tales)*, 1970–1971.

²⁴ *Коля, Оля и Архимед* (1972, dir. J. Prytkov, mus. J. Ptichkin).

²⁵ The film makes fun of some historical conventions, as when on a catapult we see an inscription, stylised on the Greek alphabet, saying: 'Made in Syracuse'.

²⁶ *Reksio przewodnik* (1977, dir. L. Marszałek, mus. Z. Kowalowski).

characterised by broad phrases and an improvisational character. Some of the exhibits receive a separate musical commentary. For instance, a kennel with an ancient portico is depicted by the composer by means of a semitone progression played by a synthesiser, while the image of a palace-like doghouse is accompanied by an electronic minuet. In the same film, the protagonists also visit a zoological museum, which is illustrated by a neo-Baroque miniature familiarising the young audience with a type of sound typical of the age of figured bass. The atmosphere is quite different in the museum visited by the Wolf and the Hare in *Hy, nozodu!*²⁷ (Eng. title *Well, Just You Wait!* 1978, twelfth episode of this TV series), where the wolf puts on huge protective museum slippers and ‘skates’ along the slippery floors like a figure skater, to the rhythm of Ion Ivanovici’s *Waves of the Danube*.

Incidentally, the *Hy, nozodu!* series itself has historical value today, since it documents the everyday life of a great Soviet city, its fashion, architecture, even the musical tastes of its inhabitants²⁸, thus reflecting the atmosphere of the late communist era.²⁹ In that tale of the modern times, the past is most prominently present in the tenth episode³⁰ (1976), where relics of wooden architecture are being demolished to make room for blocks of flats. The world that is just disappearing is represented by the sound of a recording of the *Vstrechi* tango sung in the 1930s by Klavdiya Shulzhenko, played from a gramophone standing in a window with decorative shutters. Nostalgic recollections of the pre-revolutionary past also seem to have been hinted at in other Soviet movies made in the so-called Era of Stagnation (Rus. *Период застоя*) that followed the takeover of power by Leonid Brezhnev (1964). This is a paradox, considering the renewed tightening of censorship in that period, which, however, concerned the contents of artistic works rather than their aesthetic. In effect, this made it possible for animators to act with more freedom than in the previous two decades.³¹ This is evident in movies where a thoroughly modern setting is accompanied

²⁷ *Hy, nozodu!*, ep. 12 (1978, dir. V. Kotyonochkin).

²⁸ Cf. K. Babulewicz ‘Nu, pogodi!, or the Musical Chronicle of the Late USSR’, in *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia. Konteksty kultury medialnej. Perspektywa Rosji i Ukrainy*, M. Brzezińska-Pająk, K. Dwornik, J. Getka et al., eds (2018), 167–178.

²⁹ Cf. O. Romanova, ‘“Hy, погоди!” или беготня на фоне “застоя”’, <http://www.polit.ru/article/2006/09/22/nupogodi>, publ. 22 Oct. 2006, accessed 9 Aug. 2019.

³⁰ *Hy, nozodu!*, ep. 10 (1976, dir. V. Kotyonochkin).

³¹ Pikkov, ‘On the Topics...’, 28–29.

by evocative music conjuring up the spirit of the past and of the Russian romances. These are, first and foremost, animations featuring Gena the Crocodile and the Three from Prostokvashino, as well as the series *Кот Леопольд* (*Leopold the Cat*). In the episode *Месть кота Леопольда*³² (*Cat Leopold's Revenge*) the noble and quiet title character, an intellectual living in an old-fashioned flat, is musically represented by M.K. Ogiński's *Polonaise*, which had gained popularity in Russia already in the nineteenth century.

In the 1980s, the Soviet Union's final decade, the idea of evoking the past using a gramophone record (as in *Ну, погоди!*) was taken up again by the cartoon director Vyacheslav Kotyonochnik, who developed this concept and interpreted it in an unequivocal manner. In the film *Старая пластинка*,³³ he confronts two musical worlds, the old and the new, assessed by an objective jury of aliens from outer space, who take to their planet a set of records by Leonid Utyosov (1895-1982)³⁴ and listen with great pleasure to five compositions. Of special interest in the context of our subject (representations of the past) is one of them, entitled *Song of the Old Coachman*, accompanied by animated scenes in which an old man crosses contemporary Moscow driving an old-fashioned carriage. In the song, he addresses his old friend, the horse. His vivid recollections unfold a panorama of old Moscow, whose green and atmospheric streets they used to traverse together at full speed. The old man nostalgically recalls the bygone age, now replaced by the era of asphalt and the Metro. The old Russian style of this piece is additionally brought out by being contrasted with electronically generated sound effects in the previous scene (the aliens put on the record; the 1980s brought a widespread use of electronics in Central and Eastern European animated films).

Cartoons produced in the communist period frequently feature modern urban settings. This is also the case with films made in the last decade of that era, whose action takes place in various locations,

³² *Месть кота Леопольда* (1975, dir. A. Reznikov, mus. B. Savelyev).

³³ *Старая пластинка* (1982, dir. V. Kotyonochnik).

³⁴ While in the case of *Ну, погоди!* we may talk of a kind of 'musical chronicle', *Старая пластинка* draws in a way on the tradition of musical tombeaux composed as a homage to eminent deceased figures, here recalled in the late twentieth century (the cartoon was made to mark the anniversary of the singer Leonid Utyosov's death).

including living interiors. *Reksio remontuje*³⁵ (*Rex the Dog Renovates the Flat*) of 1980 shows the kind of interior decoration (presented in a journal) that was considered as the most attractive at that time; an aristocratic apartment resembling those found in rich tenements. The music refers to that very sphere of past culture; a wistful melody unfolds in the violin, accompanied by a synthesiser, used here to imitate the sound of a harpsichord, just as the old-style interiors are in fact a product of the contemporary times. This stylistic fusion is by no means conceived as a condemnation of the old bourgeois achievements and tastes. In the Soviet movie *Каникулы в Простоквашино*³⁶ (*A Holiday in Prostokvashino*) from the same year we similarly find a 'salon', which, though not very luxurious, clearly draws on the pre-revolutionary rather than contemporary fashion. This is also illustrated by the music. The piano waltz associated with that latter interior could more likely have been performed in a flat of the prewar intelligentsia than in a working-class block of flats. Shop interiors are rather less common in cartoons. One of them, in the fourth episode of the series about Gena the Crocodile (*Чебурашка идет в школу*³⁷ / *Cheburashka Goes to School*, 1983) is the 'Young Pupil' shop, in which the shortage of supplies and shabbiness are easily noticeable, and the two ready-made school uniforms are kept in a glass case as in a museum. Can this be the reason why the visit to this gloomy place is accompanied by a piano fugue?

In some cases, though the time of action is not defined in any way or even suggested by the visual-narrative layer, it is revealed at one point thanks to the musical soundtrack. This is the case with *Przygoda z Franciszką*³⁸ (*An Adventure with Franciszka*, 1983), one of the episodes of the series *Trzy misie* (*Three Bears*) produced by the Semafor Studios in Łódź, in which a toon character (a frog) dances to the rhythm of an instrumental setting of the charleston *Dzisiaj, jutro, zawsze* from the repertoire of Bohdan Łazuka, claiming that this is 'all the rage now', which (since the film was made in 1983) points back to a period more than three decades earlier. Similarly as in the Soviet productions described above, the music thus points to the past.

³⁵ *Reksio remontuje* (1980, dir. L. Marszałek, mus. Z. Kowalowski).

³⁶ *Каникулы в Простоквашино* (1980, dir. V. Popov, mus. E. Krylatov).

³⁷ *Чебурашка идет в школу* (1983, dir. R. Kachanov, mus. W. Shainsky).

³⁸ *Przygoda z Franciszką* (1983, dir. J. Kudrzycka, mus. P. Hertel).

Not all the 80s' productions follow the convention of confronting a nostalgically depicted past with a more or less definite reality. From the same decade, we have Soviet animations which directly concern major historical events. The 1980 film *Лебеди Непрядвы*³⁹ (Eng. title: *The Swans of Nепрядва*) marks the six hundredth anniversary of Rus' victory over the Golden Horde at Kulikovo (1380). The warriors are Christians, as evident from the banners they carry and, even more, from the visit they pay to St Sergius of Radonezh before the decisive battle. Views of the birchwood surrounding the hermitage are accompanied by a flute melody. The instrument's sound, combined with a modal scale, seems to imitate the early wind instruments. The church door is left ajar and for a moment we can hear the monks' chant.

In *Мартышко*⁴⁰ (Martynko, 1987), the time of action is precisely defined by the narrator at the start of the movie: 'It happened long ago, when the old letters were still used to write words, in the reign of tsar Nicholas II.' In this humorous tale of a soldier and magic cards, music is absent most of the time. When it appears, it consists of citations very carefully selected to suit the place and time of action, from the romance *Ugolok* (1905) and two romances once sung by Varvara Panina (1872–1911): *Ne tverdi* and *Kak khorosho*.⁴¹ Quite different are the overtones of *Солдатская сказка*⁴² (*Soldier's Tale*, 1983), the story of a soldier taking part in World War II, though accompanied by music in the spirit of the nineteenth century (sentimental accordion pieces drawing on the poetics of Russian romance), which is juxtaposed with the noise of battle, sounds of nature, and silence. The armed conflict is presented here from a romantic perspective. The scene in which, on his return from the war, the protagonist stands in a field with a young boy, brings to mind associations with the famous postwar movie *Судьба человека*⁴³ (Eng. title: *Fate of a Man*).

³⁹ *Лебеди Непрядвы* (1980, dir. R. Davydov, mus. V. Krivcov).

⁴⁰ *Мартышко* (1987, dir. E. Nazarov, music composer unknown).

⁴¹ The expressive power of such a soundtrack concept lies, on the one hand, in the use of recordings which are perfectly 'authentic' in relation to the events, and on the other – in the presence of silence. Nazarov also applies this idea in another film, *Жил-был пёс* (Eng. title: *Once Upon a Dog*), a Ukrainian folk tale in which scenes of village life are accompanied by folk melodies sung by Ensemble Drevo.

⁴² *Солдатская сказка* (1983, dir. A. Gracheva, music composer unknown).

⁴³ *Судьба человека* (1959, dir. S. Bondarchuk, mus. B. Basner).

While taking up historical subjects, the 1980s animators simultaneously continued to draw on legends, tales, fables, and fairy-tales. Towards the end of the decade, Moscow's Soyuzmultfilm studios produced cartoon adaptations of individual ancient Greek myths. The cartoon visuals, maintained in a serious and austere style, are accompanied by suitable music: lofty, emphasising gods' majesty and the heroes' courage, and corresponding to the protagonists' theatrical gestures. The sound of a large orchestra, in which brass plays a prominent role, brings to mind associations with musical drama, emphasising the importance and the monumental scale of the events, while the presence of historical instruments (or others, such as the guitar, which may suggest references to their Greek equivalents) is meant to evoke archaic associations due to their unusual sound. For instance, the composer of the soundtrack for the film *Лабиринт. Подвиги Тесея*⁴⁴ (*Labyrinth. The Deeds of Theseus*, 1986) demonstrates a predilection for combining brass instruments with a harpsichord.

The production that explores the fairy-tale world on possibly the greatest scale is the last episode of the famous *Ну, погоди!* still produced in the USSR (1986)⁴⁵, in which the concept of bringing together characters from different stories foreshadows the one-and-a-half decade later US film *Shrek* (2001). Appearances by figures from various fables and fairy-tales provide the opportunity to include numerous musical quotations, such as the then popular pieces by Igor Sklyar and Yuri Antonov, as well as folksongs, etc. Despite its electronic sound, resembling that of the early computer games, the soundtrack demonstrates elements of classical musical language which are responsible for the impression of archaization on the one hand and for enhancing the comic effect – on the other.

As I have attempted to demonstrate on selected examples, cartoons produced in Poland and the Soviet Union before 1991 contain many scenes which call for music bringing associations with the past. Among the settings that justified such musical choices, the Middle Ages, legends

⁴⁴ *Лабиринт. Подвиги Тесея* (1986, dir. A. Snezhko-Blotska, mus. V. Geviksman).

⁴⁵ *Ну, погоди!*, ep. 16 (1986, dir. V. Kotyonochkin).

and tales about heroes, as well as classic fables (and references to these subjects in films with contemporary settings) enjoyed particular popularity. More 'historical' animations appear to have been produced in the USSR, but it is possible that the multiplicity of examples is due not to their authors' thematic preferences, but to the fact that overall a much greater number of cartoons were made in that country than in Poland. Soviet and Polish composers created successful, interesting and artistically valuable music stylisations, which at the same time were comprehensible and attractive for children. In the films for which those artists provided musical settings, non-diegetic music dominates in representations of the past. Attempts to present political topics in children's cartoons on historical themes are extremely rare. Even in Soviet movies of this kind, the past was not stigmatised; on the contrary, starting with the so-called Era of Stagnation it was even presented with nostalgia and sentiment. Preliminary research does not provide sufficient material to talk about specific qualities of music for children's cartoons containing references to the past. Nevertheless, it seems that historical subjects provided the artists with a kind of refuge and a way to escape from the obligation to represent the communist reality. This may have been the reason why composers of music for the films under study frequently engaged in various games and interplays with early music, evidently deriving much fun from such projects.

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