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## ***The Undiladze Family and V-Effekt concept***

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### ***Abstract:***

*This article aims to study Teimuraz Bakuradze's tetralogy, The Undiladze Family, from the concept of theatrical dramaturgy, particularly concerning Bertold Brecht's so-called V-Effekt (the alienation effect). Hence, this research explores the following issues: to what extent does the V-Effect itself manifest through the musical language and the polylingual libretto of the tetralogy; to what degree is it revealed in the genre of the composition, including other types of temporal art, namely cinematography and theatre, in polychronicity and the coexistence of text and comments, as part of the whole text of a work, and so on. So, the article's objectives are to reveal how the V-Effekt manifests through the multiple musical and dramaturgical layers in the tetralogy The Undiladze Family and determines its influence on all aspects of musical thinking.*

*As a result, the opera tetralogy, The Undiladze Family, can be considered an interdisciplinary work united by a holistic artistic concept; whereas, on the one hand, occurs the principles of Brecht's epic theatre, and on the other hand, the Wagnerian idea of total theatre, interpreted by Gordon Craig and Antonin Artaud; later, modified in the theatrical practice of Jean-Louis Barrault, Peter Brook, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Kote Marjanishvili.*

***Keywords:*** Teimuraz Bakuradze; The Undiladze Family; V-Effekt; Opera Tetralogy; Interdisciplinary Artwork.

The relationship between music and drama has been a topic of debate in the world of art and art studies for many centuries. Long before their synthesis gave birth to a completely new genre, opera, which the great Italian director Giorgio Strehler deemed as an '*incredible misunderstanding*' [1]. Today, our paper explores one of the features of this 'incredible', but still 'misunderstanding' that originated in the palaces of Florence. Specifically, we aim to examine Teimuraz Bakuradze's tetralogy, *The Undiladze Family* from the perspective of the principles of theatrical dramaturgy, with a particular focus on the so-called V-Effekt (the alienation effect) established by Bertold Brecht. It is important to note that we do not seek to identify direct influences of Brecht's theory, which we believe to be impossible, but rather to uncover a distinctive echo of Brecht's ideas within Teimuraz Bakuradze's tetralogy.

Why do believe it to be impossible?

We believe so first of all because the V-Effekt is primarily significant for Brecht as a director, and only then for Brecht as a dramatist. In the case of Teimuraz Bakuradze, we can only talk about the dramaturgical manifestation of the V-Effekt.

We should remind you at the outset that the V-Effekt is closely tied to the principles of the epic theatre that Brecht expounded upon in his theoretical writings on the subject. These works include his manifesto of principles, *Kleines Organon für das Theater (A Short Organum for the Theatre)*, *Der V-Effekt (The Alienation Effect)*, *Episches Theater (The Epic Theater)*, *Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst (Alienation Effects In Chinese*

*Acting*)<sup>1</sup>, and many others. It is in these very articles that the key tenets of Brecht's theatre are set forth, which give rise to the V-Effekt, alienation, distancing, with specific manifestations such as narration instead of acting, seeking reasons instead of emotions, engaging with an imaginary world rather than a real one, and so on [2].

To achieve our set goal, we must examine the object of our research, *The Undiladze Family* tetralogy from various angles. Specifically, we need to determine how and to what extent V-Effekt manifests itself in the musical language of the tetralogy and its polylingual libretto, in the genre and in the inclusion of other types of contemporary art, namely cinematography and drama theatre, polychronicity and the coexistence of text and commentary as part of the text of the work, etc. Thus, the objective of the paper is to present the manifestation of the V-Effekt in *The Undiladze Family* across different layers of the tetralogy, i.e., to determine its influence on all characteristics of musical thinking.

Thus, we will examine how the composer, who is also the author of the polylingual libretto of the tetralogy, interpreted Bertolt Brecht's key concept and phenomenon of V-Effekt, specifically, we will show *The Undiladze Family* through the lens of the V-Effekt concept.

Before we delve into the main topic, let us revisit the main purpose of the V-Effekt according to Brecht. In his writing, Brecht states that 'the alienation effect is a social action' [3]. In another article, he further expands on this idea, suggesting that the V-Effekt can be understood as 'the transfer of social relations between people of a certain era by mime and gesture' [4]. When examining this thesis, we can see that every work of art has a "social purpose," in addition to other, no-less-important aesthetic, cognitive, and educational functions. For Brecht, as a politically engaged artist, the theatrical performance itself and the social act of the alienation effect in it were of primary importance. Based on this artistic and social concept, he formulated his own theatrical principles.

We think to accept this definition by Brecht as a fact, but not make it the cornerstone of our research. Moreover, in addition to the V-Effekt itself, Brecht pays a lot of attention to the ways of achieving it, which is extremely interesting for us.

First of all, we note that although the term alienation existed before Brecht<sup>2</sup>, the V-Effekt as a concept and event is established and understood by Brecht as the main component of non-Aristotelian theatre, while he considered the Eastern, namely Chinese theatre as one of its perfect manifestations (*Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesische Schauspielkunst*, [5]). As per Brecht's theory, unexpectedness is a crucial factor in ensuring the alienation effect. Thus, we aim to explore how unexpectedness is manifested in various layers of the structure and dramaturgy of Teimuraz Bakuradze's *The Undiladze Family*.

First, we will focus on the characters and libretto of the opera tetralogy, where we will highlight a notable unexpectedness: the fact that the libretto of the tetralogy was composed after the score was already completed.

Besides the somewhat traditional characters of the opera cycle, such as the Undiladzes, the people of Akvirina, those who came to the village of Undiladzes, guests, and others, three characters stand out at the top of the list of characters. These are: 'Mariam-Marusa Marusia Mari-sow Marika Maro Stutterer the subject of everyone's care and still a waif whose origins parentage and age remain unknown as she never seems to age'<sup>3</sup> [6]; Four hidden eyeless souls – 'Irakli Teimuraz Bagrat Davit whose last names and deeds have been forgotten over time the Undiladze family's house patron angels' [7], and, perhaps the most unexpected of all – six

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<sup>1</sup> While working on the paper, we relied on two publications: Brecht, B. (1966). *Über Theater*. Leipzig: Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, Bd. 277; Брехт, Б. (1960). *О театре*. Москва: Издательство Издательство иностранной литературы.

<sup>2</sup> The term *остранение* ("making it strange," or defamiliarization), which can be translated as "alienation", was introduced by the Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky (Шкловский, Виктор) in 1916 to denote a literary principle that aims to bring the reader out of "perceptual automatism".

<sup>3</sup> The punctuation of the original libretto is preserved in the quotations.

Buddhist monks, 'who consider the Undiladzes and their family as the most suitable subjects for their esoteric activities' [8]. In addition, attention is drawn to the Nibelung Fortinbras-Mime, the German circus Ajust<sup>4</sup>.

Among those listed, we would distinguish the Buddhist monks who found refuge with the Undiladze family. These six monks are not directly involved in the development of the plot and seem to be invisible, but their existence and esoteric actions serve as a certain moral-ethical camerton. This is especially apparent when the first four of the six monks, and then the fifth one also, leave the village of the Undiladzes, leaving only one behind. The author described his function in the introduction to the libretto as follows: "The wheel of fate turned in such a way and the times changed to worse so that at first two monks were left with the Undiladzes and later it as only one monk left to show to the Undiladzes (and probably to others too) that if a country has one destitute who sacrifices himself then the castles of this country are unshakable and the people undefeatable<sup>5</sup>" [9]. Thus, the presence of Buddhist monks on the stage directly relates to the alienation effect, as the monks do not participate in the action, but play the role of spectators, more precisely, observers, while the real audience in the hall, is expected to see all the horrors and misfortunes happening on stage through the eyes of these Buddhist monks.

In discussing the libretto, it is essential to acknowledge the importance of comments, which is also one of the forms of manifestation of the V-Effekt. It is worth noting that in Brecht's theater, the commentator often plays the part of the narrator, in this way contributing to the achievement of alienation, like Igor Stravinsky in his *Oedipus Rex*. However with Bakuradze, despite the expectations, it does not follow the same pattern. Comments are not typically performed on stage and often exist only in the libretto, or it is achieved in other ways, engaging other fields of art, as will be discussed below.

We would like to highlight here another factor related to the libretto. The polylingual libretto of the tetralogy draws upon the following languages: Georgian, Russian, English, German, French, Italian, Latin, Aramaic, and Hebrew. This raises the issue of how audiences from different countries, who may only understand one or two of the languages used in the libretto, will comprehend the sung text.

We need here to assume that in theory, the opera audience is generally able to understand the sung text, as the libretto is often translated. However, this poses a significant challenge that can impact the strengthening of V-Effekt. The use of "language mix" in various historical periods, including in the history of our country and in modern times, is an important socio-cultural phenomenon and is especially characteristic of the epochs as emphasized by the author in the more or less accurate dating of the individual days of the tetralogy. The First Day is dated 1914-1917, the Second Day: 1624 – September 26 – 1924, the Third Day: 1907, *Le roi est mort – Vive le roi*, 1908, and only the fourth day has no reference because it is a postludium to the '*Dreams of the First Day of Freedom*'.

Another important aspect that we will focus on is the musical language of Teimuraz Bakuradze's *The Undiladze Family*. We should note here that the peculiarity of the musical language, which determines the opera tetralogy, is generally characteristic of the author. His method, which Bakuradze calls the method of citation-allusion, or the method of high parody, is based on using, in this particular case, opera masterpieces written from Monteverdi to the present, but also using individual themes, intonations, remarks, and other elements. '*Using*', in

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<sup>4</sup> Nibelung Fortinbras-Mime is a multifaceted and multi-meaningful wordless character. His name is particularly noteworthy, as it is composed of several independent characters: the Nibelung Mime from Wagner's tetralogy, Fortinbras, the Norwegian prince from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Ajust, the circus dwarf clown from the prologue to Alban Berg's *Lulu*.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase 'If a country has one destitute who sacrifices himself, the castles of that country are also unshakable and the people undefeatable' is the central message of the tetralogy and was borrowed from Niko Lortkipanidze's 'Unbowed'.

this case, does not mean direct quotation as might be expected. Bakuradze breaks down the existing musical material and creates a completely new whole from the new elements. That is, he deconstructs the existing text and reconstructs it in such a way that it's almost impossible to identify individual elements, except when the author wants to emphasize the primary source. It should be noted that Bakuradze's method is fundamentally different from the method where various quotations are used, understood as "someone else's" text in opposition to "one's own", which mostly sounds like a 'foreign body'. Such quotes, or if you like, collages, as a rule, have the function of a certain symbol, a sign, mainly a positive beginning, which opposes the disordered, turbulent, negative emotions of modernity. Conventionally, conflicting relationships between good and evil, harmony and disharmony, culture and civilization, etc. are formed.

According to general principles, Bakuradze's method of composition is more similar to the so-called parody technique, commonly found in the 16th century, where different beginnings are not opposed to each other but united by changing their function. The leitthemes of Bakuradze's opera tetralogy, or "portal-leitthemes" (as the author called them), provide examples of such functional modulation. These themes transfer us from one dramaturgical layer of the work to another. Musical, verbal, and visual leitthemes are used in the tetralogy, among which we can distinguish Shakespeare's *I Will Not Sup Tonight* from *Richard III*, the titles of René Char's poems from *Le Marteau sans maître (The Hammer without a Master)*, a *Plea* from John Griffith's movie *The Birth of a Nation* flashing on the monitor and the orchestra's concertmaster and orchestra's "empty" fifths on A, the titles of Galaktion Tabidze's early poems and Anton Webern's early opuses, including vocal works<sup>6</sup>.

To further contribute to the discussion on musical language, we would like to make an additional point.

Brecht considers the so-called self-alienation as one of the crucial elements of his theatre concept, alongside other factors of alienation. As a dramatist and director, he sees self-alienation as manifested in the actor's specific technique. While studying an yet unstaged opera work, it may not be possible to talk about the actor's skill, but in our opinion, self-alienation in Teimuraz Bakuradze's *The Undiladze Family* is manifested in the author's monogram B-A-C-A-D-E, which is featured prominently at key moments of the work and takes on the role of the narrator.

We continue the theme of unexpectednesses with unexpectednesses on the stage.

The tetralogy stage action is replete with unexpectednesses, including the stage being set in front of the audience for all four days, which transforms the stage workers into actors; the use of iron technical, opera theater, and performance curtains, as well as the inclusion of the orchestra and conductor in the stage action, who, in certain circumstances, will move from the orchestra pit to the stage and get involved in the action. The place of action of each evening of the tetralogy such as the Undiladze table or Titanic desert is no less interesting. However, to discuss the stage action without acknowledging the role of music would be inappropriate. The score of *The Undiladze Family* is full of musical unexpectednesses that deviate from stereotypical expectations, with soloist-instrumentalist characters playing music on stage and reacting to other characters. A number of such unexpectednesses can be attributed, for example, soloist-instrumentalist characters playing music on stage, studying, reacting to the actions of other characters, etc. But the most extraordinary and striking unexpectedness is the "storm scene" from the first act of the third evening.

In the realm of music, both instrumental and scenic, there are numerous depictions of storms that we can easily recall. Some notable examples include Beethoven's *Pastorale*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Liszt's *Preludes*, Wagner's *Die Walküre*, R. Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*, etc. In each of them, despite the varying characteristics of the era and individual style of each

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<sup>6</sup> It's worth noting that Galaktion Tabidze and Anton Webern are also a chronological couple, with their first works dated in 1908.

composer, similar techniques are utilized to create the storm effect. These techniques often involve a fast tempo, broken movements, sudden sharply dissonant and short chords that evoke the impression of lightning, and other such musical elements. However, Bakuradze doesn't use any of these common, already stereotyped storm techniques but rather his storm creates a startling unexpectedness that enhances the drama of the scene even more. Bakuradze achieves this effect by using a slow tempo (*Largo*, *molto espressivo*), slow movement, and a distant solo piano sound (rather than an orchestra). Furthermore, the storm scene involves only one character – ritual dancer 'strazhnik' Prince Dadeshkeliani – who is visible to the audience only when lightning momentarily illuminates the otherwise pitch-black scene.

We cannot talk about the unexpectednesses of *The Undiladze Family* without mentioning an important component of this complex and multifaceted work, which enhances the manifestation of the V-Effekt. This is the monitor, one of the most peculiar "characters" of the opera tetralogy. The monitor, placed in front of the audience, has its own unique personality and "behaviour". Occasionally, turns on or off of its own accord, showing various video sequences, modified by opera music, thus adding new content to it.

The monitor is a multi-functional "character": it reacts, predicts, or summarizes the events on the stage, is a tracking tool and shows the main staircase, foyers, halls, backstage, basements, attic, etc. of the opera house.

On the monitor, during different actions of various days of the tetralogy, in certain cases, we can see the same video sequence, but it is not a mechanical replay. Each repetition changes its meaning and function depending on the stage situation and context. Ultimately, it serves to create dramatic arcs that remind the audience of a particular situation and its meaning. In a new situation, it draws attention to new details. Thus, many different images are captured on the monitor that we see while in the hall. We constantly hear its voice not only in the hall but also in the foyers and during intermissions. The monitor and its two components, image and sound, function both separately and together, synchronously and asynchronously.

The monitor is one of the most active 'characters' in Bakuradze's opera cycle, and its 'part' and constituent units can become the object of extensive research by film critics. We would like to single out one short element of the monitor's 'part' that creates a strong effect of unexpectedness and is repeated several times with different music. This is a several-minute musical number by the Spanish clown troupe, *Los Rudi Llata*. Although the original performance is entertaining and impresses the audience with its virtuosity, its repetition five times in the gloomy catacombs on the Second Day of the tetralogy, each time coinciding with a different terrifying stage situation, creates an incredibly strong impression on viewers. This effect goes beyond the usual emotional response and compels the audience to seek the reason for the appearance of these terrifying video sequences hidden behind the joyful music. This approach is reminiscent of Brecht's assertion that 'representation is much more than transformation' [10] and evokes the concepts of Antonin Artaud's *théâtre de la cruauté*.

Another important factor of the sudden appearance of the alienation effect in *The Undiladze Family* is the genre of the work. Although we commonly refer to it as an opera cycle or a tetralogy, the author described it as '*Dramma giocoso, or The Song of Songs*'<sup>7</sup>.

The question arises: what does the author mean?

These two terms in Bakuradze's tetralogy function similarly to various allusions and quotations introduced into the musical language. Specifically, *dramma giocoso* redirects not to the genre in general but specifically to Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, while the *Song of Songs* is, of course, reminiscent of Solomon's *Song of Songs* but it derives directly from Vazha Pshavela's parody of it.

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<sup>7</sup> Let us remind you that *dramma giocoso*, born in the second half of the 18th century, was initially connected with the musical performances of Carlo Goldoni's plays, and later, just a few years later, other works, opera librettos, which were called *dramma giocoso* by authors such as Lorenzo da Ponte, appeared.

Thus, Teimuraz Bakuradze applies the method of distancing i.e. V-Effekt also while defining the genre.

At the end of the paper, we think there is a need to answer one more key question: if V-Effekt is so intensively used in *The Undiladze Family*, does that mean that Bakuradze's tetralogy is an example of epic theatre?

But the model of the epic theatre created by Brecht and Piscator, as we mentioned earlier, is primarily connected with an active socio-political position. This cannot be ascribed to *The Undiladze Family*, although we cannot say either that Bakuradze's tetralogy is completely devoid of an active public position. Moreover, *The Undiladze Family* is an important document of our era, a work that reflects the diversity of the world in various expressive ways. Therefore, it can be called an interdisciplinary artwork, in which different components of art, such as music, theatre, cinematography, pantomime, dramatic action, and fine arts, all play an equal role. This multicomponentity and the equal standing of all components give us the grounds to attribute *The Undiladze Family* not to epic theatre, but to a type of total theatre stemming from Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This is confirmed by not only specific artistic manifestations but also the title page of the score, where we see two surnames. These are the greatest conductor, composer, and musician-thinker of our time, Pierre Boulez, and the greatest director of our time, one of the founders of the principles of total theater, Peter Brook. And we cannot avoid mentioning Jean-Louis Barrault, Antonin Artaud, Giorgio Strehler, Kote Marjanishvili, as practitioners and theoreticians who gave a stimulus to the principles of *The Undiladze Family*. Among these authors, Kote Marjanishvili deserves a special mention, as it is his free theatre ideas that are realized in *The Undiladze Family*, the ideas that remained an unfulfilled dream for him.

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