

TV Project "Old Songs About the Most Important": the Destiny of Nostalgia in the Context of Post-Soviet Culture*

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Abstract—The article is dedicated to the elicitation of dramatic features peculiar to a series of TV music programmes called "Stariye pesni o glavnom" ("Old Songs About the Most Important"). Drawing on the first three episodes, the author analyzes how the revival of Soviet culture began in the crucial '90s. A thorough analysis of various songs performed on the project helps to trace the emergence of a new form of a New Year TV show. The author compares the distinctive features of characters and plotlines in the original works and their reconstruction. As a result, the conclusion is drawn that the project, starting as nostalgia for the Soviet period, has gradually turned into the deconstruction of this nostalgia by means of total irony.

Keywords—Soviet culture; popular music; Soviet variety art; television; the nineties; recycling; nostalgia; film music; music clips

I. INTRODUCTION

"Stariye pesni o glavnom" ("Old Songs About the Most Important"), a series of TV music programmes broadcast on Channel One from 1995 to 2001, have set a powerful media trend for re-actualization of the Soviet time. Besides the fact that the first three episodes of the TV project have presented a quaint retrospective of Soviet popular culture (not only of the music but also of the cinema, TV and social life), they have, at the same time, quite unconsciously reflected the socio-cultural paradigm of the '90s. In spite of its initial commercial focus and entertaining content, the TV project has accumulated a stream of controversial meanings connected with the conceptualization of the past and incidental response to the present.

"Old Songs About the Most Important" have caught the tendency which now seems to be natural and universal. However, in order to understand the revolutionary character of the idea of referring to the Soviet period in the middle of the '90s, it is necessary to remember how different the landscape of the popular culture was at that time.

The floodgates that opened once the Soviet Union collapsed first of all brought foreign pop culture on the wave of public demand. Thus, television in the beginning of the '90s was aimed at the adaptation of western broadcasting formats: live programmes, talk shows, modern music clips and various foreign series ruled the day¹. The growing trend for watching videos at home was based on Hollywood movies of various periods: in their "private cinemas", average Russian citizens watched what they had not managed to watch in the Soviet time. Record-players and vinyl records with Soviet variety songs were gone and replaced by cassette tape recorders and stereos with discs, most of which were contemporary foreign and Russian pop hits.

Equally drastic were the changes in the popular music itself. As early as the end of 1980s, it is possible to trace a fundamental shift which led not only to the renaming of the pop music industry into show business in the beginning of 1990s, but also radically changed its essence. The characters performing the songs of the new age were building their image as if "a contrario", contradicting the traditional rules of Soviet variety music. The topics of popular songs were sealed in the space between "me" and "you" while such dimensions as "we", "the world around" and "our country" were neglected. Big trained velvety voices of the Soviet variety artists were replaced by deliberately unprofessional, modest in relation to the diapason and timbre, "teenage" voices of show business stars. Detailed arrangement meant for the full symphony pops orchestra was replaced by flat, almost primitive timbres of amateur keyboards equipped with a drum machine. In short, all the musical expressive means got ultimately simplified, and their lack was supposed to be compensated by visual special effects and the artists' extravagant garments.

However, at some point, the public, on the one hand, got satiated with the riot of new forms, and, on the other hand, there was an acute shortage of ideas in the new-fashioned popular culture. Even Konstantin Ernst did not try to conceal that in one of his interviews when he recalled the reason of turning to the Soviet variety art: "Why did we create the

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¹ For details refer to [1].

"Old Songs About the Most Important" at some point? This was not because there was nostalgia. No. We were not able to make a New Year show because the artists lacked hits in their repertoire to fill in the three hours of broadcasting time. And then we clung to the media library of the century" [2].

Nevertheless, the innovation of the "Old songs..." was not only in turning to the "music library of the century", but also in the creation of a new format of a TV show. Up to that point, even on the Soviet television neither the "Little Blue Light" nor the Yevgeny Ginzburg's legendary "New Year Attraction", let alone the traditional "Song of the Year" had tried to make a storyline out of a range of pop songs. The implication was that a kaleidoscope of variegated songs and the atmosphere of New Year's Eve automatically unite both the participants of the programme and the TV audience. Instead of the usual New Year decorations and singers in evening dresses performing on stage, the first episode of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" was set in a Stalin-era collective farm, the artists were dressed in pseudonational costumes, moreover, the characters had various types of relationships between each other (love, friendship, family, business and professional relationships, etc.) Certainly, this kind of unsophisticated dramaturgy fell short of a full musical, nonetheless, it managed to create some coherent picture of the world, which was unique in its own way and extremely attractive.

In spite of being undoubtedly popular and semantically diverse, the "Songs..." have not yet been the subject of a detailed conceptualization. There were some journalistic reviews varying in depth and details when the project emerged². Many major scholars investigating the problem of re-actualization of the Soviet culture referred to the "Old Songs About the Most Important" as the starting point, however, they have not provided a detailed examination of the project³. Finally, a separate area of contemporary research focuses on the Soviet variety songs⁴, but it is, if anything, one more manifestation of a general trend of reconsideration of the Soviet heritage.

It must be said that this article will address the first three episodes of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" as the study material in which the recycling of the Soviet variety music gets the most striking expression that has become iconic with time. The authors behind these three episodes of the project manipulated three specific periods in the Soviet history for which they had chosen corresponding locations. The first episode reconstructed the life in a collective farm of the Stalin era in its iridescent, ecstatic form. The second episode was dedicated to the Thaw period as the time of total liberation, largely caused by westernization and urbanization of the Soviet society. The third episode addressed the 1970s and presented the Era of Stagnation as a fantasy adaptation of its famous motion pictures. The chronological framework of the above-mentioned periods was not rigorously observed, especially in the beginning, and the bounds of Soviet variety

music became fuzzy with time as well. Nevertheless, in all the episodes the authors tried to convey the spirit, the atmosphere of a certain period not only reconstructing, but also mythologizing it.

Notwithstanding the inelaborate dramaturgy of the "Old Songs About the Most Important", it seemed to be a breakthrough in the middle of the 1990s and afterwards started to replicate and formed the basis of the canon of a New Year show in the beginning of the 2000s. The cyclical nature of the TV project provides an opportunity to trace the evolution of this dramatic device from the revue genre to the form of a quasi-musical consisting of various clips. Firstly, we will analyze how the connection between the performances in a particular episode has changed. Secondly, we will outline the features of the characters and plotlines in the original performances and their reconstruction by means of comparison. Looking at this TV project from the culturological perspective, we will examine specific examples and the nuances of meaning quite thoroughly.

II. EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNAL DRAMATURGY

One of the peculiar features of the dramatic base in the "Old Songs About the Most Important" is almost complete absence of a coherent storyline. It is well-known that the genre of musical has to meet quite lenient requirements in terms of the plot since the predominance of the "music focus influences the film dramaturgy considerably, sharply decreasing the role of the plot-forming factors" [17]. However, the "Old Songs About the Most Important" refuse to have even the slightest dramatic conflict in the plot and present a range of various character portraits which interact with each other only indirectly. Separate music performances are connected largely with the help of the setting consisting of a certain location and historical time (period). On these grounds we can consider the "Old Songs About the Most Important" to be a re-actualization of the protoform of a musical — a musical revue. Defining the dramatic peculiarities of this form, Dmitry Zhivov specifies that "the scriptwriters in this case put emphasis on the self-sufficiency of the songs (or of one song) and the entire show and its structure are to make them look in the most advantageous way. The plot in this case performs the function of connecting music performances between each other and cannot be sophisticated in order to avoid shifting of the focus from the music hits" [18].

At first sight, the "Old Songs About the Most Important" have practically no switching of narration between two dimensions, which is immutable for classic musicals: imaginary dimension (the dream world, the fantasy world, the world of magic) and realistic one (the everyday world) [19]. Those occasions when the characters start to sing are often not related to breaking through the cycle of their daily routine, very few performances take both the characters and the audience into the fairytale world.

However, it does not mean that the "Old Songs About the Most Important" completely lack switching between the realistic and imaginary types of narration. It just takes place on another level: not inside the plot itself, but rather between

² The most vivid and detailed of them are Sergey Guryev's articles. See: [3]; [4].

³ See: [5]; [6]; [7]; [8].

⁴ See, for example: [9]; [10]; [11]; [12]; [13]; [14]; [15]; [16].

the image of a pop artist, which is fixed in the minds of the audience, and the character of the persona.

An interesting fact is that in the course of all episodes of the TV project the characters address each other by their real names (stage-names), furthermore, quite often they modify them in an ironic way (for example, Leonid Kuravlyov calls Andrey Makarevich "Makaronych", and Larisa Dolina affectionately calls Oleg Gazmanov "Gazik"). That is, the artists performing in the "Old Songs About the Most Important" firstly represent themselves as "pop stars", secondly, they represent the characters of the musical, and thirdly, they perform in the name of the song personas. Switching between these roles forms the implicit dramatic conflict of this TV project.

As it was mentioned before, separate music performances are linked together by means of setting — a combination of location and historical period. In the first episode of the TV project countryside was chosen as the setting — an imaginary Stalin-era collective farm. The authors did not claim that they were trying to convey the authentic image of the countryside and the social organization of a certain period — both these factors were presented in an extremely conventional way with numerous ironic anachronisms, which had been planned and not. Nevertheless, the fact of turning to the image of a rural area within the frames of a New Year entertainment programme (!) exposed existential crisis which had emerged in culture and society by the middle of 1990s. As Yekaterina Salnikova notes, "our art tends to reflect upon the countryside when there is a special need for adoption of a clear, stable system of life values and ideals, when there is an acute feeling that the peace of mind is unattainable" [20].

The image of the countryside in the "Old Songs About the Most Important" turned out to be very ambiguous. On the one hand, it referred primarily to the patriarchal tradition and was perceived as "an eternal archetype which had not originated in the Soviet period, it rather reminded people about the pre-Soviet life, Russian cultural background, about the ground one cannot completely escape and the ground one cannot identify with again" [21]. On the other hand, characters' direct quotes and quotes from *mise en scenes* and songs from Soviet films generated a peculiar symbiosis of searching for truth in life and nostalgia for total collective happiness. In the middle of 1990s, at the time of pronounced pro-Western social orientation, this kind of turning to national historical roots seemed to be unexpected, and eventually turned out to be long-lasting and very symptomatic.

For the second episode of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" a double setting was chosen, and it referred to the city life and media of the 1960s. To a large extent, the motive of integration of the plot by means of media discourse was implicitly used in the first episode as well, for most songs in it were taken from movies. However, in the second episode this device is rethought as a conceptual one and becomes the leading device. By reconstructing movie scenes, imitating the shooting of the "Little Blue Light" in Ostankino and due to the involvement of recognized actors and TV presenters of the Soviet period, the authors of the

programme manage to establish links between numerous various characters. The city and the media environment intertwine equally as actively, the boundaries between them start to blur.

For instance, Irina Allegrova, who plays a housewife in the episode, is watching the "Little Blue Light" on TV and sings along with Valeriy Syutkin who is performing. Kristina Orbakaite as a fledgling variety singer who happened to be in the "Little Blue Light" waves her little hand during her performance thus saying hello to her friend Leonid Agutin. From time to time various public personalities of the Soviet period appear in front of the local House of Culture: Natalya Varley encounters Aleksandr Demyanenko on the main staircase (although now she calls her dog Shurik, not him); Alla Pugacheva arrives in a "Volga" and starts a heart-to-heart conversation with Vasilyevna who is the janitor (Rimma Markova). In short, not only the time boundaries between epochs, but also the borderline between the world of average citizens and the inhabitants of the behind-the-screen Parnassus start to blur. This device, on the one hand, allows connecting many characters which are technically distant from each other. On the other hand, it reveals that this kind of connection is obviously not always the case. The more the action develops the less motivated the relationship between the characters and music performances seem. The integrity of the picture of the world starts to crumble precipitously.

The setting for the third episode of the TV project implies fragmentariness, a possibility for editing and intertwining of any plotlines. The "Old Songs About the Most Important" are set in "Mosfilm" studio which is depicted as conventionally as the 1970s period which is being reconstructed. Yuri Gladilshchikov notes that "for the first two episodes of the "Songs..." decorations were built that represented specific rural or city environment, characteristic of certain time. Now the action took place in the timeless — in relation to the generation — corridors and pavilions of alleged "Mosfilm" where they shoot films not about the 70s, but about the past" [22]. If the inner dramaturgy of the first episodes of the TV project complied with the requirements of the revue genre, then in the end the "Old Songs About the Most Important" distinctly transform into a range of video clips. Music performances become completely autonomous, self-centered, and the storyline irrevocably loses all the narration logic.

In this case the nineties take over the Soviet age, decisively reshaping all the narrative canons, "varying — as Kirill Razlogov once said — cinematographic motives as well as song motives" [23]. And although in the first episode film quotations are cited quite closely to the original, with initial soundtrack being saved, then by the third episode in the movie scenes start to sound differently, new music is used. The music and the images are mixed in a chaotic manner, forming a quaint collage of meanings. For example, Nikolay Rastorguyev performs a song from "The Land of Sannikov" movie ("There's just a moment..."⁵) surrounded by the decorations from the "White Sun of the Desert"; Larisa

⁵ Music: A. Zatsepin, lyrics: L. Derbenyov.

Dolina sings "I'm looking for you"⁶ from the "31 June" playing the role of Anne of Austria from the "D'Artagnan and Three Musketeers" movie; Valeriy Meladze, citing the famous phone call from the "Mimino" suddenly switches to "My little bright star"⁷ from the repertoire of the VIA "The Flowers". Some of the songs coincide with the personality of the film characters to which they are attributed (for instance, the character played by Marina Neyolova in the "Autumn Marathon" could have really sung "You Don't Give Up On Love"⁸), while some songs contradict the movies for which they are chosen (for example, that it is the case with the reconstruction of a scene from "Hello, I'm Your Aunt!" (1975). The effervescent mise en scene with Donna Rosa and Colonel Chesney is accompanied by the song from "The Sandpit Generals" (1971) telling the audience about the miserable destiny of social outcasts⁹. As a result, we see skillful quote juggling when famous scenes from some films become visual sketches for music clips based on the songs from other films. This quaint mix makes up a nostalgic riddle about the entire Soviet cinematography and at the same time is the "raw material" for the rise of quite a different culture: clip culture.

III. INTER-TEMPORAL DRAMATURGY: ORIGINAL VS. RECONSTRUCTION

Owing to the fact that the basis of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" is the principle of "playing the past", we have an opportunity to trace not only the inner dramaturgy of the TV project itself, but also the non-linear, inter-temporal dramaturgy which emerges when the original and its modern version are compared. In this case the dramaturgy of short plays comes into the foreground when a relatively independent performance is perceived as part of a larger whole. In other words, the song becomes a concentrated expression of the atmosphere of a movie where it played initially and of the historical period when it was written. Numerous meaning gaps occur when the music performance is taken out of the original context (for instance, from the movie plot) and is transferred to a newly created context (it may not necessarily be modern, but it is created in the present).

In the first episode of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" the authors are drunk with the opportunity of playing with context. They do not reflect upon the contradictions in meaning between the original and the reconstruction, they rather draw on the character of the music which, as it seems to them, better suits the image of one

contemporary artist or the other. It is not surprising that when the initial and the new song versions are compared, there are contradictions which are almost absurd, but they have not been in any way thought over and are a free flight of imagination of the project creators.

One illustrative example of such inversion of meaning is the song "You are waiting, Lizaveta"¹⁰ from the "Alexander Parkhomenko" movie (dir. by L. Lukov, 1942). In that movie the song is sung by the Red Guard while they unhurriedly change positions. A long row of horses with horsemen in military uniform and flying flags resonates with the song lyrics: "We will win, I will ride to you on a high-mettled steed". In this case the song which is sung at the time of inactivity becomes a way for the characters to switch over, reminds them about the existence of the forgotten chronotopos of peaceful life. The lyrical nature of the song is vividly expressed, especially in comparison with the war days filled with shooting and chasing. In the "Old Songs About the Most Important" this song is performed by Alexander Malinin who plays the role of an idyllic shepherd. The meaning of the lyrics turns out to be complete nonsense when compared to the visual part where spineless, soulfully sighing shepherd in ridiculous clothes declares his love to his sweetheart (played by Alyona Apina, sitting in front of a samovar). What does he want to win if the desired idyll is already implemented into the surrounding peaceful reality? An apparent "demagnetization" (depreciation and derision) of the initial message of the song takes place: war horses are replaced by clumsy cows, and manly lyric turns into smarmy mawkishness.

There are many similar examples of clear discrepancy between the personas and the characters of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" in the first episode of the TV project. Nevertheless, it must be repeated that these mismatches are not a deliberate dramaturgic move, they are unplanned and occur as if by themselves. For instance, the "Na-Na" band dressed like four hapless ploughmen sings a song on behalf of pilots ("Airplanes go first"¹¹). In this case not only the occupations of the characters are fundamentally far apart, but also the interpretations of the song. Initially the chorus lyrics, albeit jocular, correspond with the devotion of a new Soviet man who is not afraid to sacrifice his or her individual interests for the industrial needs. In the post-Soviet reality, with the rise of individualism, sexual freedom and the cult of pleasure-seeking, this kind of self-consciousness of the personas is patently profaned and is interpreted solely in ironic way. That is why the visual picture shows that the minds of the "Na-Na" boys are set on women exclusively.

An analogical discrepancy between the lyrics and the character's actions can be traced in the image of Leonid Agutin who sings about faithfulness ("So as not to make your loved one cry, hold on to the wheel, driver"¹²) and plays

⁶ Music: A. Zatsepin, lyrics: L. Derbenyov.

⁷ Music: V. Semyonov, lyrics: O. Fokina.

⁸ Music: M. Minkov, lyrics: V. Tushnova.

⁹ Babbs Babberley (Alexander Kalyagin) personating Charley's Aunt initially is a maverick, but in this case the emotional modes do not match. In "Hello, I'm Your Aunt!" the social exclusion of the characters is seen only from the comical side and causes total farce while for the characters of "The Sandpit Generals" the fact of being rejected by society is an existential drama which is extremely serious and overwhelming. The soundtrack conveys this state and completely contradicts the careless atmosphere of the love affair which is acted out by Valdis Pelšs as Donna Rosa.

¹⁰ Music: N. Bogoslovsky, lyrics: E. Dolmatovskiy..

¹¹ Music: V. Solovyov-Sedoy, lyrics: A. Faratyanov. The song is from the movie "Heavenly Slug" (1945)

¹² Lyrics of the "Driver's song". Music: K. Santoro, Russian lyrics: A. Vinitskiy.

a real ladies' man. Anzhelika Varum zealously casts soulful looks at the camera and strikes seductive poses while singing breathily about a girl's modesty ("Oh, the Kalina Flowers Are in Bloom"¹³). In short, the initial meaning of the songs is completely altered and profaned under the influence of new show business rules and the atmosphere of the age. In this free interpretation of the original material one can trace, first of all, perceptible ecstasy from the chance to play with the artifacts of the past with impunity. This is not about careful scrutiny of the artistic heritage, this is about taking separate fragments, applicable to the embedment of the present reality with cute retro allusions, out of it.

The second episode of the "Old Songs About the Most Important" recreates the style of the Soviet time in a far more detailed way, yet it is done solely by means of the formal entourage. The dresses and everyday objects of the 1960s are shown in a most careful and loving way (old TV sets, utensils, furniture, even the picture on the wallpaper), copies of decorations for various TV programmes ("The 13 Chairs Tavern", "Time", "Little Blue Light") are created. However, in this pursuit of authentic external details the internal content — the spirit of the reproduced age — slips away.

For instance, the girl played by Valeria who performed the song called "The Little Prince"¹⁴ in character of tram driver Lyuba from the "Beware of the Car" movie is dressed in a cute beret, snow-white roll-neck sweater, gauzy scarf in accordance with the fashion of the sixties and drives an old "tubby" tram. Moreover, trying to materialize the lyrics literally, the scriptwriters included a levitating boy in character of the Little Prince into the picture as well as a scholar-professor and a story-teller dressed like a star-gazer, they used special effects to draw a planet with the fox, added smoke and snow, in short, they used all possible means for visual recreation of the mysterious land described in the song. However, this huge pile of images disguised the meaning of the song itself — it turned out to be a varnished fairytale which did not reveal anything from the content of the song. The emptiness and superfluity of the chosen form is especially apparent when compared with the video recording of Elena Kamburova performing this song. In that black and white 1972 recording the singer sits in a studio in front of an abstract table which becomes the projection of that small, invisible, but clearly tangible magic land in her imagination. An incredible immersion into the character is done by minimum means: the camera is static, there are no decorations, everything is done through the artist's gestures and body mobility. She is introspective, there is not a slightest shade of grandstanding, the image of the elusive state of being between the world of children and the world of adults becomes the most important thing. Kamburova's magnetic power of imagination pulls the audience in, and, owing to the absence of special effects, the music and the song lyrics come in the foreground. An amazing sincerity of the artistic image is achieved with minimum help of external devices.

Unable to incorporate the naivety, the charm and the warmth of the sixties, the "Old Songs About the Most Important" actively start mocking these qualities. Thus, fatal love ("You are the only one for me") turns into a range of male characters in the life of the heroine played by Irina Allegrova who had a lasting image of a "fey empress" in the 1990s. As a result, the touching lyric of the song becomes, according to Sergey Guryev, the subject of "lewd quizzery" [24].

Kristina Orbakaite, dressed in her finest, New Look style: snow white muff, veil on her hat, bouffant skirt, sings "I will wait for you"¹⁵ in the name of a simple girl from the city. Not only the glamorous dress of the pop diva, but also the mechanical, memorized dance moves contradict the initial character of the persona. Everything altogether works for the image of a windup doll — an image absolutely alien to the lively girl from the neighbourhood who is the real heroine of the song.

The image of Vladimir Presnyakov performing the song "The Volga river flows"¹⁶ is no less pretentious and comical. The singer wears an "a la peasant" shirt with an embroidered neck (alluding to the costumes of VIA "Pesnyary") and skinny leather trousers (in accordance with the fashion of the nineties). He musingly runs his hand through his chestnut hair, and this hand has...cheeky rings and bracelets on it. Presnyakov deliberately stands statically as if not being able to move too much in the early days of television while the camera does the dizzying panning of the space. The disguised parody is completed with Presnyakov's falsetto, which becomes an inversion of big trained voices of the Soviet variety artists.

Thus, the "Old Songs About the Most Important, part 2" play down to the 1960s all the time. The visual attraction of the age serves as the basis and it is implemented through the cult of material things. The picture focuses on all kinds of details which are already in the past. However, the authors behind the second episode fail to convey the sincerity and warmth which the Thaw brought. That is why these feelings start to be mocked and replaced by total irony. In contrast to the first episode, inversion is now used consciously with the goal of distancing from the original context as much as possible.

Probably, the most vivid example in this respect is the appearance of Natasha Korolyova in character of Anna Sergeyevna from the movie "Diamond Arm". Although the heroine was supposed to be a woman of easy virtue on a "mission" and was a parody on the sensual heroines of the western cinema, in the new context this kind of aggressive model of "female to male courtship" is perceived as normal and common for an average "Soviet girl". All of Korolyova's poses are deliberately exaggerated and much more sexualized, the original version seems extremely chaste in comparison with them, and the reconstructed version seems vulgar. The scene is made vulgar not only by the shortness of

¹³ Music: I. Dunayevskiy, lyrics: M. Isakovskiy. The song is from the movie "Cossacks of the Kuban" (1949).

¹⁴ Music: M. Tariverdiyev, lyrics: N. Dobronravov. The song is from the "Passenger from the Equator" movie.

¹⁵ Music: A. Ostrovskiy, lyrics: L. Oshanin. The song is from the cycle "In our yard" (1962).

¹⁶ Music: M. Fradkin, lyrics: L. Oshanin.

Natasha Korolyova's dressing gown, her tasteless colourful make up, cheap prostitute's poses, but also by her accent. Natalya Svetlichnaya's heroine in the "Diamond Arm" was a representative of elite escort service, in the new interpretation she becomes a gaudy woman from the market who tries to be attractive. Natasha Korolyova's own image of a 90s pop star takes over the image of Gaidai's heroine. The new age ecstatically grinds the artifacts of the Soviet age and fills the familiar form with a new meaning which is deliberately distant from the initial idea.

The only precious topic for the "Old Songs About the Most Important" throughout the second episode is the topic of media. It is manifested not only in the detailed recreation of the 1960s TV show decorations, but also in constant glances at the space beyond the TV picture, in careful demonstration of the inner TV workings. Now and then fussy make-up artists who prepare the artists for the broadcast appear on the screen; heavy TV cameras are also in the picture, the "surviving witnesses" of the past; people playing average characters venerate their idols on TV. The modern television sort of plunges into the nostalgia about its own past which was filled with selfless ideas and was very far from the pragmatism of the new context.

It has become locus communis to define the "Old Songs About the Most Important" as the first project which has caused mass nostalgia about the Soviet past. However, few people investigate the evolution of this project which became Soviet culture's "funeral feast". Nothing was left from the affecting past nostalgia. The place of sadness about the gone "glorious age" which was apparent in the first episode was taken by total irony. The patterns were still very familiar, yet the product was far away from the format of idyllic retrospective. The main sign of the change in conceptual attitudes was the fact that television started to mock itself. The abovementioned veneration of media crumbles in the third episode, the principles of a new industry absorb the magic of the old media, reconstruction is replaced by total deconstruction.

The described downgrading of the previous ideals is manifested, first of all, in the abovementioned tendency to dub the scenes of some films with the music from other sources. An artificial intertwining of different contexts takes place, although new, additional meanings rarely emerge. The principle of playing for the sake of playing blossoms. Secondly, the magic of media themselves is downgraded. Although the veneration of the Soviet television was felt in the second episode, the third episode is based on deliberate desacralization of the aura of media itself. A good illustration of this is Valery Meladze's performance of "My little bright star".

The song starts after famous telephone lines of Mimino played by the singer. He is in a Soviet hotel room which is lovingly recreated and furnished with curtains, a floor lamp, a blanket on the bed and a decanter on the table. But suddenly the singer starts to fly away from this interior, and another camera shows that the singer is lifted by a crane with the cameraman. The detailed interior turns out to be cardboard props. And Meladze's plasticity in front of the

camera starts to look as something sham and artificial – the "movement of the soul" which he tries to convey is disavowed with the dismantling of the initial context. Nevertheless, the director's imagination does not stop, and in the next moment Meladze is wearing a snow white costume, surrounded by dancers dressed in Brazilian carnival dresses.

This interpretation of the song discords with all initial meanings of the song. Firstly, it does not match the ballad nature of the music. Secondly, it levels the meaning of the words when solemn declaration of love is accompanied by visuals implying headlong carnival cheerfulness. The lyrical confession is reconstructed by the rules of bodily orgy, depreciating all the nostalgia for the Soviet past. However, the most significant is the fact that Valery Meladze stays in character of a "sad knight", demonstrating the gap between the content and the form. Not only the link between time periods, but also the logic of creation of an artistic image is broken. However, this fact does not interest anyone, for by the rules of the new game entertainment is much more important in the artistic image than the fact of being true to life and sincere.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, having compared the dramatic approach to musical performances in the original and reconstructed contexts, we have observed an important conceptual shift in the relationship between the contemporary time and the Soviet past. From the affecting, in many ways naive and kind look at the Soviet heroes, from the bucolic interpretation of their motivational set, the "Old Songs About the Most Important" turn to totally ironical deconstruction of all the initial contexts and meanings. In the first episode, as if by chance, the occupations of the song characters and their moral compass were changed. The second episode also started to modify the structure of the text, involving "living heroes" of the past and material objects for authenticity. However, at this stage there already were problems with the recreation of the spirit of the past which was the reason why the first episode resonated with mass consciousness so well. Trying to level the crumbling picture of the world, the authors of the third episode decided to reject the concept of integrity of an image, replacing it with extravagant visual feast based on extremely wide spectrum of Soviet music works and films. As a result, something that had started as nostalgia for the Soviet time gradually transformed into total deconstruction of this nostalgia. The heroes from the Soviet songs and films appeared as panopticon of quaint characters which were quite familiar and yet they were not natural, spiritual and convincing anymore. The songs also had lost their aura, their emotional potential, they turned into a background for chaotic film quotations. Thus, instead of an extensive charming retro, the TV project turned into a spontaneous postmodernism in the format of popular culture.

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