

## Key Words

Rockwell Kent, Margarita Slutskaia, *Peter Grimes*, collaboration, friend of the USSR, opera, realism, scenery, set design, Cold War politics, US socialist artist.

Thornton Miller

## Incompatible Interpretations of Operatic Realism: Rockwell Kent and the Kirov Theater's Production of *Peter Grimes*\*

In 1965, the Kirov Theater gave the Soviet premiere of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33 – an opera depicting the psychological struggle of the title character, a poor fisherman who was alienated by the denizens of his seaside English village. To create the set designs for this piece, the directors of the Kirov Theater invited the American artist Rockwell Kent to submit sketches to the theater to serve as the basis for the production's scenery. Kent had been shunned from American cultural life due to his political beliefs during the early Cold War, and had since sent his works to be exhibited in the Soviet Union. As a self-pronounced realist and socialist, whose illustrations for the 1930 edition of the classic novel *Moby Dick* were republished in the USSR in 1961, Kent seemed to be the perfect choice to design the sets for the Kirov production of *Peter Grimes*.

However, differences arose between Kent's and scenery director Margarita Slutskaia's conceptions of operatic realism. He dedicated himself to researching the historical appearance of nineteenth-century Aldeburgh and creating an accurate depiction of the town. Slutskaia, however, was interested in psychological realism: to truthfully present the subjective experience of the doomed fisherman in a town that despised him. Kent's *Moby Dick* illustrations and his political art from the 1930s to the early 1950s were evocative and stylized, while his more recent work spurred these elements and concentrated predominately on landscapes. It was clear that Slutskaia favored the younger Kent, and considered his attempts at historical objectivity to be wholly inappropriate for her vision of the work: the immersion of the audience in Peter's inner struggle and his conflict against the Borough. It is evident in their correspondence, which is preserved in the Central State Archives of Literature and Art in St. Petersburg, that the irreconcilable aesthetic differences between Kent's literal and Slutskaia's psychological interpretations of realism led to the collaboration's untimely collapse and resulted in a production that arguably fell short of both of their ideals.

## Ключевые слова

Рокуэлл Кент, Маргарита Слуцкая, «Питер Граймс», сотрудничество, друг Советского Союза, опера, реализм, сценография, декорации, политика холодной войны, американский художник социалистических убеждений.

Миллер Т.

### Несовместимые интерпретации оперного реализма: Рокуэлл Кент и постановка «Питера Граймса» в Кировском театре

В 1965 году Кировский театр осуществил советскую премьеру оперы Бенджамина Бриттена «Питер Граймс», соч. 35, на психологически напряженный сюжет о невзгодах заглавного персонажа — бедного рыбака, отвергнутого его согражданами, жителями приморской английской деревушки. В качестве сценографа дирекция Кировского театра пригласила американского художника Рокуэлла Кента; его задача заключалась в том, чтобы представить театру эскизы декораций. В период холодной войны Кент, вследствие своих политических взглядов, оказался на обочине американской культурной жизни и подарил ряд своих произведений Советскому Союзу. Как убежденный реалист и социалист, чьи иллюстрации к классическому американскому роману «Моби Дик» (1930) были воспроизведены в советском издании романа (1961), Кент казался как нельзя более подходящим кандидатом на роль сценографа данной постановки.

Однако Кент и режиссер Маргарита Слуцкая трактовали оперный реализм по-разному. Кент стремился в точности воспроизвести исторический облик Олдборо XIX века, тогда как Слуцкую интересовал прежде всего психологический реализм; свою задачу она видела в том, чтобы правдиво представить переживания злосчастного рыбака среди людей, испытывающих к нему ненависть и презрение. Иллюстрации Кента к «Моби Дик», его политические плакаты и другие произведения 1930-х – начала 1950-х годов выполнены в оригинальной выразительной манере, тогда как среди его позднейших работ преобладают более сдержанные пейзажи. Несомненно, Слуцкая предпочитала более ранние работы Кента и считала, что его стремление к исторической объективности противоречит ее концепции: представить аудитории душевные терзания Питера Граймса и его конфликт с окружающими. Переписка Кента и Слуцкой, хранящаяся в Центральном государственном архиве литературы и искусства (Санкт-Петербург), свидетельствует о том, что непримиримые эстетические различия между буквальной трактовкой реализма у Кента и психологическим реализмом Слуцкой в конечном счете сделали их сотрудничество невозможным и привели к появлению спектакля, не соответствовавшего в полной мере представлениям каждого из них.

\* I would like to thank Christina Bashford for providing me with feedback on this article, and I am grateful for the guidance of Lyudmila Kovnatskaya during my research in St. Petersburg. I am also indebted to the Fulbright Program for providing me with a nine-month fellowship to conduct research in St. Petersburg and Moscow. I would also like to thank Maxim Serebrennikov who helped me immensely in acquiring sources and familiarizing me with the archives and libraries in St. Petersburg. A version of this article (which was titled "An Ill-Fated Collaboration: Conflicting Conceptions of Realism in the Soviet Premiere of *Peter Grimes*") was given at the 2020 North American British Music Studies Association Conference at Illinois State University, and I would like to thank Jenny Doctor and Danielle Ward-Griffin for their invaluable feedback.

## Introduction

The question of realism in opera has been complicated by varying interpretations of this term, as well as differences in its application. As it has been discussed many times before, the simple act of having actors and actresses sing on stage—whether to communicate with other characters or to express their inner thoughts and emotions—already distances opera from the more inherently realistic theatrical play and from film.<sup>1</sup> Two of the characteristics of operatic realism that Danielle Ward-Griffin introduces in her article on realism in the television productions of Benjamin Britten's opera *Billy Budd* (1951), are particularly important for this article: that realism is linked to the accurate or truthful portrayal of the opera's world, and that it pertains to the persuasiveness of the production's attempts to depict the work's psychological dimension.<sup>2</sup> While these two considerations are not mutually exclusive or diametrically opposed, they could detract from each other. A purely historical recreation of past life on the operatic stage can completely ignore the inner life of the characters that inhabit it and create a cold world populated by unfeeling automatons, while a vividly stylized exploration of character psychology can take excessive liberties and create an outlandish fantasy world. At the same time, it is completely possible to be successful on both fronts. In any case, the criteria for such judgments are purely a subjective matter of personal preference.

In the case described below, an international collaboration between the Soviet scenery director Margarita Slutskaya and the American visual

<sup>1</sup> The theatrical and film musical genres are obvious exceptions.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, Ward-Griffin mentions that discussions of realism also focus on some verismo nineteenth-century operas, and that operas can be situated in relation to the contemporary opera scene. *Ward-Griffin D. Realism Redux: Staging 'Billy Budd' in the Age of Television // Music & Letters. 2019. Vol. 100. No. 3 (July).*

artist Rockwell Kent broke down as a result of irreconcilable interpretations of operatic realism. The object of their ill-fated efforts was the 1965 Soviet premiere of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* (1945) at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad. It should be noted that it was not the first of Britten's operas to be performed in the Soviet Union. By 1965, *Albert Herring* (1947) was performed by the Komische Oper in Moscow in 1959<sup>3</sup> and by the English Opera Group, which also presented *Rape of Lucretia* (1946) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), in 1964. In addition, partial presentations of *Peter Grimes* included the *Four Sea Interludes from "Peter Grimes"* (1945) under the baton of Nikolay Anosov in 1955,<sup>4</sup> and two unstaged performances of the opera under Djemal Dalgat in 1964. However, the above concerts were isolated events, and several of them were carried out by foreign companies. The Kirov production of *Peter Grimes* was the first staged work by a living Western composer to be included in the standard repertoire of a major Soviet theater since the 1920s, and the opera was frequently performed at the Kirov over the next three years.<sup>5</sup>

During the preparation of this production, the directors of the Kirov Theater invited the American visual artist Rockwell Kent to provide scenery and costume designs for the production because he was aesthetically and politically poised to be a cultural friend of the USSR. Kent was a member of the socialist party since 1908, he considered the USSR to be the forefront of the world labor movement, and he was a sympathizer to the Soviet cause for nearly his entire professional career. His artistic style was influenced by the nineteenth-century realist painters of arctic landscapes and seascapes William Bradford and Frederick E. Church,<sup>6</sup> and Kent created political poster art to agitate

<sup>3</sup> *Šumila E. and R. Stanevičiūtė. Adeodatas Tauragis—Benjaminas Brittenas: Iaiškai ir tyrinėjimai [Adeodatas Tauragis and Benjamin Britten: Letters and Exploration] // Ars et Praxis [Art and Practice]. 2014. Vol. 11. P. 197-218.*

<sup>4</sup> This file discusses the British Embassy in Moscow's reaction to this concert, and it questions whether the Soviet government was becoming more receptive to Western contemporary music. British Embassy, Moscow to Northern Department, Foreign Office, 30 March 1955 (GB-Lna: FO 371/116811, NS 1751/3).

<sup>5</sup> Lyudmila Kovnatskaya's article "'Peter Grimes' at the Kirov Theater" describes in detail the conductor Djemal Dalgat's efforts in adding the opera to the Theater's 1965 season. *Kovnatskaya, L. G. "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theater / trans. from Russ. N. Winter // Melos: En Musiktidskrift. 1997. No. 19/20 (9 August).*

<sup>6</sup> *Martin C. Rockwell Kent's Distant Shores: The Story of an Exhibition // Arctic. 2002. Vol. 55. No. 1 (March). P. 102.*

for various pacifist, military, labor, and socialist causes in the United States as a propagandist. His political art featured representations of soldiers, workers, unionists with large, muscular, and heroic forms not unlike Soviet socialist realist art. Kent criticized abstractionism and cubism and praised artistic forms that communicated directly to the emotions of the people.<sup>7</sup> The inclusion of Kent in the Kirov Theater's production of *Peter Grimes*, however, poised several unforeseen aesthetic disagreements and practical complications that jeopardized the success of this collaboration. These difficulties were rooted in Kent's and the Kirov Theater directors' differing interpretations of realism in artistic practice, which—despite their political agreements and shared ideological beliefs—forced their collaboration to collapse.

### Rockwell Kent and his Political Position in the United States and the Soviet Union

In order to place Kent's involvement in the Kirov production in context and to explain why the artist was receptive to working with a Soviet theater, we need to cover his aesthetic and political stances in the decades before the invitation. Kent's activities as a socialist artist sympathetic to the USSR and the labor movement was somewhat acceptable during the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933–1945); however, his position became suspect to the postwar anti-communist US government. To understand the extent of Kent's loyalty, it is important to add that his ideological stance on international politics changed in accordance to the Soviet party line.

For example, he shaped his political art in 1939 and 1940 to discourage American intervention in the Second World War during the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which facilitated the German occupation of the western part of Poland and the Soviet invasion of the eastern half of Poland and the Baltic States. However, his artistic and political stance suddenly shifted to become anti-fascist and interventionist when Germany broke the pact and began Operation Barbarossa: the assault on the USSR that started in June 1941. In response to the attack, Kent lobbied Roosevelt to encourage American artists to produce more anti-fascist art. Importantly, this shift was well before the Japanese bombing of the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor in December that drove the Americans to enter the war.<sup>8</sup> For Kent, the pivotal moment in the conflict was when the USSR was invaded, which preceded the Axis Powers' assault on the US by roughly

7 Stanley E. H. The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent // *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*. 1989. Vol. 12 (Spring). P. 18.

8 Stanley E. H. The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent. P. 18–19.

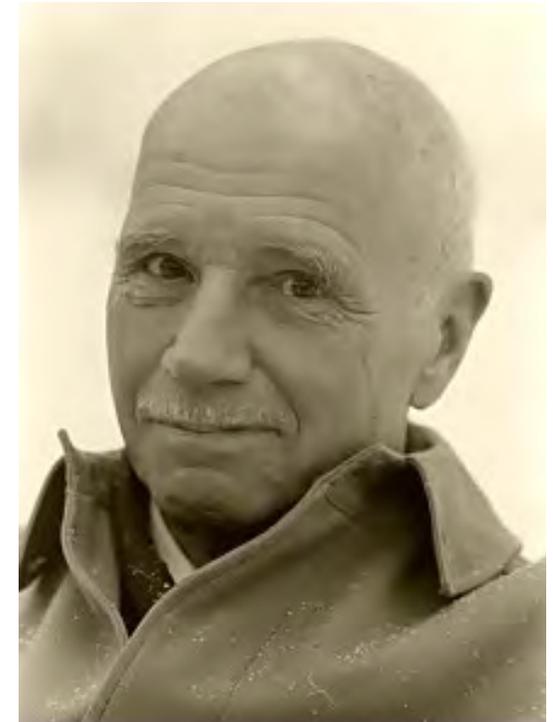


Figure 1: Rockwell Kent (1882–1971)

six months. His change of position in response to the German invasion suggests that he was politically loyal to the Soviets. In addition, the wartime alliance between the USSR and the US from 1941 to 1945 allowed American socialists such as Kent to enter the political mainstream and to openly demonstrate their affinities for the USSR.

After the war, the American political climate shifted dramatically against the USSR and American socialists. The Smith Act of 1950 resulted in the compilation of a list of so-called “subversive” leftist organizations, in which Kent was an active member.<sup>9</sup> At approximately this time, his passport was revoked by the American government, and, as a result, he temporarily lost the right to travel internationally.<sup>10</sup> In 1951, the libraries of American embassies around the world were ordered to remove and burn Kent's travel books, which prompted him

9 Stanley E. H. The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent. P. 29.

10 Biographical note for the Rockwell Kent Papers, [c. 1840]–1993, bulk 1935–1961 [Electronic Resource] // *Archives of American Art*. URL: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/rockwell-kent-papers-9557/biographical-note> (accessed 01.08.2020).

to create his last explicitly political piece of art: a lithograph depiction of an angel standing on a heap of books being burned at the stake.<sup>11</sup> His depictions of monumental figures declined throughout the 1950s and 1960s, while the artist continued producing realistic landscapes for the rest of his career.

While Kent did not declare himself to be communist, it was publicly known that he sympathized with the Soviet cause. For the remaining years of his life, very few galleries presented his works and few commissions materialized in the US. Meanwhile, the USSR proved to be very receptive to his artwork and it appreciated his political loyalty. His ostracization in his home country eventually led him to withdraw from American political discourse and to dedicate himself to the presentation of his works in the USSR.<sup>12</sup> In 1958, a one-man exhibition of his works was held to great acclaim at the Hermitage Museum of Art in Leningrad.<sup>13</sup> Three years later, he donated his personal collection of his artwork to the Soviet state, which included over eighty paintings and hundreds of manuscripts and other graphic materials.<sup>14</sup> After recovering the ability to travel internationally, he visited the USSR twice with his third wife, Sally Kent, in 1962 and 1964.<sup>15</sup> While Kent's political position was tolerated during the 1930s and the Second World War, he found it difficult to exhibit his art in the US during the beginning of the Cold War. As he lost opportunities in his home country, his Soviet allies considered him to be a politically loyal artist and ideally suited to participate in the Soviet arts.

## The Collaboration between Kent and the Kirov Theater

Due to the recent success of his Soviet exhibitions and his aforementioned political loyalty, Kent was thought to be an ideal collaborator for the *Peter Grimes* production. In order to invite the American artist to take part in the production, the directors of the Kirov Theater needed to obtain permission from the Ministries of Culture of both the Russian Soviet Federation (RSFSR) and the USSR. On October 22, 1964, they argued that both Britten and Kent were friends of the USSR and that they were considered to be “progressive,” which meant that their aesthetic styles and their political stances resonated with the official Soviet position on

11 Stanley E. H. The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent. P. 29.

12 Stanley E. H. The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent. P. 29.

13 Biographical note for the Rockwell Kent Papers.

14 Stanley E. H. The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent. P. 29.

15 Biographical note for the Rockwell Kent Papers.

both.<sup>16</sup> The directors proposed that Kent would be expected to submit draft sketches, which would then be developed into their final versions by the theater's artists.<sup>17</sup> Soviet Minister of Culture Ekaterina Furtseva approved of his involvement,<sup>18</sup> and General Director of the Kirov Theater Petr Rachinsky formally invited him to collaborate on the production sometime in November or December 1964.<sup>19</sup>

In his letter, Rachinsky compared the upcoming opera production to Kent's earlier work as an illustrator for the 1930 edition of Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*,<sup>20</sup> and surmised that the opera's set and costume designs would be very similar to his illustrations.<sup>21</sup> The novel, with Kent's illustrations, were republished in the USSR in 1961.<sup>22</sup> His collaboration with the Kirov Theatre, however, was plagued by the difficulties inherent in long-distance communication, his inexperience in working on theatrical productions, and the creative differences that arose between the artist and the theater's stage director Margarita Slutskaya. Despite his status as a political and cultural ally and his completely voluntary adherence to realistic art, there were enough aesthetic differences between Kent's and Slutskaya's interpretations of realist expression to complicate the collaboration.

At this point in his career, Kent's interpretation of realism was rooted in the truthful recreation of the historical object. He sought to recreate and portray the architecture and the geography of the town of

16 Unlike Kent, Britten was not a socialist. Nevertheless, Britten was still a left-leaning intellectual who pressed that musicians should serve society with accessible music, and denounced excessive stylistic experimentation that alienated audiences. Examples of these statements include Britten's 1961 interview with *Pravda* and his acceptance speech for the Aspen Award in 1964. Britten B. On Receiving the First Aspen Award. London: Faber, 1978. P. 10-17. Художник–народу // Правда. № 77. 1963. 18 мар. С. 3. The fact that both Britten and Kent were viewed as “progressive” was important because, as Kovnatskaya notes, Soviet opera productions could be put under investigation if political or ideological concerns were raised. Kovnatskaya L. G. “Peter Grimes” at the Kirov Theatre. P. 67-68.

17 Unpublished letter from K. Sadovnikov and R. Tikhomirov to G. P. Berdnikov, 22 October 1964 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 1-2, Д. 1047, Л. 73-74).

18 Unpublished letter from R. Tikhomirov to G. P. Berdnikov, undated (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 1-2, Д. 1047, Л. 75 and ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 3).

19 The copy of Rachinsky's invitation to Kent is undated; however, it was most likely written after Kirov Theater conductor Djemal Dalgat's November 4 letter to Rachinsky. In this letter, Dalgat reported that he had read a draft of Rachinsky's invitation to Kent, and stated that it would not be difficult to translate it from Russian to English: Unpublished letter from D. E. Dalgat to P. Rachinsky, 4 November 1964 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 6).

20 Melville H. *Moby Dick*. New York, NY: Random, 1930.

21 Unpublished letter from P. Rachinsky to R. Kent, undated (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 5).

22 Мелвилл Г. Моби Дик / пер с англ. И. Берштейн. Москва: Географиз, 1961.

Aldeburgh in the early 19th Century (time period of the source material) as closely as possible.<sup>23</sup> In a letter to Slutskaia, he explained that he would only deviate from this pursuit if it fell into conflict with the stage directions explicitly stated in the libretto.<sup>24</sup> In accordance with what he gleaned from the old prints of the town, as well as the recollections of his friends from the area, Kent considered Moot Hall to be the focal point of his set design sketches. The structure was centrally located on the broad primary street and the rest of the town's buildings were situated around it. Given the importance of Moot Hall to both the action of the opera and as the most outstanding architectural feature of Aldeburgh, he believed that it should be placed prominently in the scenery backdrop in opposition to the other structures important in the plot such as the Boar's Inn and the church.

Moreover, Kent had strong opinions on the historical accuracy of his designs, and he rejected past productions of the opera that included unrealistic and anachronistic embellishments. In his preliminary research, he obtained photographs of the Metropolitan Opera's 1948 production and forwarded them to the Kirov Theatre. In Kent's opinion, the Metropolitan Opera's set designs appeared to be more suitable for California's Disneyland than for an actual English fishing town.<sup>25</sup> He ultimately dismissed the stylized set design of the original Sadler's Wells production for a lack of adherence to the actual appearance of Aldeburgh's architecture. He objected to the following details: thatched roofs as opposed to more water-resistant slate or tile, the proximity of buildings to the sea as they would have already been washed away decades earlier, and the existence of large square-rigged ships near a fishing village with no natural harbor, in which would have only resided fisherman who caught herring with small boats.<sup>26</sup>

Here we should step out of the narrative to clarify that Aldeburgh was not originally intended to be the setting of George Crabbe's poem "The Borough" or Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. While the opera was inspired by Crabbe's poem, which portrayed the lives of several characters living in a small nineteenth-century fishing village on the eastern coast of England, Crabbe didn't specify that Aldeburgh was the exact location of the work. Instead, the characters and locations of the poem were inspired

23 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to P. Rachinsky, 6 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 31-34).

24 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to M. Slutskaia, 10 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 37-40).

25 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to P. Rachinsky, 6 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 31-34).

26 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to M. Slutskaia, 15 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 41-47).



Figure 2: Metropolitan Opera 1947-48 Production of *Peter Grimes*: The Borough and The Boar's Inn<sup>27</sup>

by his personal experiences and acquaintances as a doctor residing in Aldeburgh, but the work was set in a fictional, unnamed borough that could hypothetically be any or none of the villages in existence on the Suffolk coast.<sup>28</sup>

While buildings exclusive to Aldeburgh, such as Moot Hall, are not specified, the "Borough" of the poem and the actual town of Aldeburgh both shared geographical features. The most notable being a tidal estuary that passes to the west of the town (the North Sea being located to the east) which allowed for the construction of a small seaport, a shipping as well as a fishing industry, and the docking of larger ships with two masts.<sup>29</sup> In his poem, Crabbe described the docks on the river, which included both single-masted "hoys, pinks, and sloops," as well

27 Mélançon L. A Scene from the Met Premiere of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, Metropolitan Opera Premiere: *Peter Grimes* (1947-48), Metropolitan Opera Archives, New York..

28 Crabbe G. *The Borough: A Poem*, in *Twenty-Four Letters*. Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskip, 1810. P. xi.

29 Hawkyard A. Suffolk. In *The Counties of Britain: A Tudor Atlas* by John Speed. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989. P. 165.



Figure 3: Rockwell Kent Sketch, "Village Street" (Boar's Inn on the left, Moot Hall on the right)<sup>30</sup>

as ships with two square masts: "brigs, brigantes, and snows."<sup>31</sup> In light of Kent's complaint about the depiction of square-rigged ships in his aforementioned March 15 letter, it appears that he was not aware that while Aldeburgh did not have a harbor on the sea, it did have one on the river. Frank Whitehead notes, however, that Crabbe exaggerated the scale of the settlement, by listing far more inns and churches than those in Aldeburgh, and, at times, the town he described appeared more like larger population centers like Woodbridge or Beccles.<sup>32</sup> Crabbe drew from his personal experiences in Aldeburgh to create his Borough and while the two did share some similarities, they also had significant differences. The overall impression from Crabbe's poem is that the Borough was an amorphous, semi-fictional entity that lacked exact definition and defied literal connections to particular and real locations such as Aldeburgh.

<sup>30</sup> Kent R. Village Street (Variation V), reel 5741, frame 299, Rockwell Kent Papers [circa 1840]-1993, bulk 1935-1961, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

<sup>31</sup> Crabbe G. The Borough. P. 4-6.

<sup>32</sup> Whitehead F. George Crabbe: A Reappraisal. Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1995. P. 67.



Figure 4: Moot Hall in 2018<sup>33</sup>

This ambiguity continued within Britten's opera. His Borough draws from Crabbe's, is not identified by name, and exists somewhere between the town on which it was based, and a completely fictional locale. Moot Hall, the quintessential architectural feature of Aldeburgh, was identified by name in the opera's libretto, but, like Crabbe's version, the overall impression of being rooted in Aldeburgh was not made explicit. Christopher M. Scheer explains that when Britten was composing the piece, his conceptualization of the town was generalized, simplified, and vague. In Scheer's words, "the village of Aldeburgh and the fictional Borough represented two distinct and different locales that happened to share an occasional similarity."<sup>34</sup> Britten's Borough was ultimately still a stylized depiction of a Suffolk fishing village, which in hindsight weakened Kent's case for a strict depiction of historical Aldeburgh.

After Kent's March 15 letter, serious issues manifested in the differences between Kent's and Slutskaya's conceptions of the opera's set design. While Kent emphasized historical accuracy, Slutskaya's

<sup>33</sup> Photograph taken by author, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Scheer C. M. Crosscurrents in the Britten Legacy: Two Vision of Aldeburgh // The Sea in the British Musical Imagination. Ed. by Eric Saylor and Christopher M. Scheer. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2015. P. 70-71.



Figure 5: Margarita Slutskaya (1916–2002)

interpretation of realism was derived from the truthful portrayal of the psychological drama. In the course of two letters written in late March and early April, she responded to his sketches and indicated to him that the scenery needed to illustrate the relationship between the central elements of the opera: the sea and the people. Furthermore, she expressed concern that his fixation on the Moot Hall's depiction and placement, his detailed study into the history of Aldeburgh, and his focus on the libretto's stage directions distracted him from more important considerations: a musical understanding of the opera, the portrayal of the overarching theme of man's relationship with the sea, and the evocation of an atmosphere conducive to the characters' psychological struggle. In the set designs, Slutskaya sought a sharp juxtaposition between darkness and light, a skewed visual perspective, and a rugged view of the sea on the horizon.<sup>35</sup> To illustrate her point, she referred to Kent's earlier lithograph titled

<sup>35</sup> Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, 3 April 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 50-56).

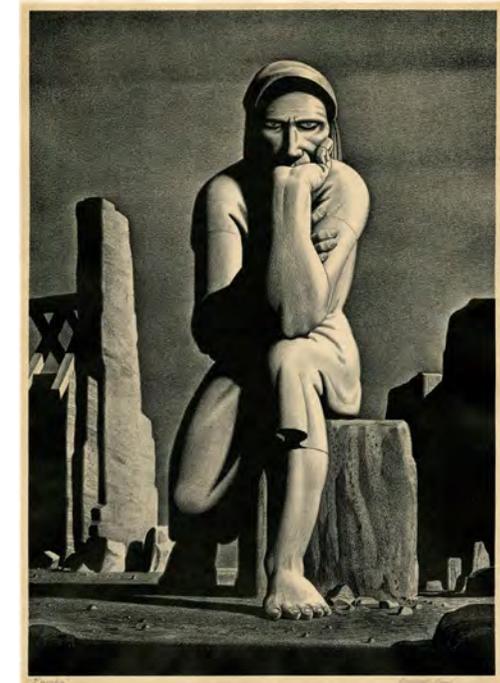


Figure 6: Rockwell Kent Lithograph, "Europe"<sup>36</sup>

"Europe,"<sup>37</sup> which he created after the devastation of the Second World War to illustrate Europe's struggle to rebuild. She then explained her interpretation of the term "image" in the following passage:

In my conception they are thoroughly realistic, even though they are not mere copies of nature. In a generalized, I should say, a mercilessly laconic form, they express great, intensely emotional thoughts with the help of a definite, exact coordination of elements. Such works of art are the source of emotions, associations, they arouse new ideas. In a word, they are *images* and not copies of reality [original emphasis].<sup>38</sup>

She also insisted that the practical focus on the action prescribed by the libretto should not distract from the expressiveness or the overarching

<sup>36</sup> Kent R. Europe, lithograph, rights courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York, USA, Rockwell Kent Collection, bequest of Sally Kent Gorton. All rights reserved.

<sup>37</sup> This letter is a copy of the English translation that was sent to Kent. The translator was anonymous, but was possibly Dalgat. A copy of Slutskaya's original Russian draft is not held in the archive. Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, 27 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 48-49).

<sup>38</sup> Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, 27 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 48-49).

Figure 7: Rockwell Kent, *Moby Dick* Illustration, *The Spouter Inn* (Chapter 3)<sup>40</sup>

themes of the set design. Elements such as the entrance of the church, the stairs of Moot Hall, and the windows of the Boar's Inn were important for the action; however, they should be placed in context in a set design that prioritizes the themes of the Borough's dark, ominous atmosphere and of man's paradoxical opposition to and dependence on the sea.<sup>39</sup> To Slutskaya, Kent's literalism resulted in a pale, almost photographic imitation of Aldeburgh, which could not support the lived experience of the characters that inhabit it. In other words, she considered his attempts to be neither realist nor suitable for the expressive content of the opera.<sup>41</sup>

39 Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, 27 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 48–49).

40 Kent R. "Moby Dick" illustration, "Ahab's Legs," rights courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York, USA, Rockwell Kent Collection, Bequest of Sally Kent Gorton. All rights reserved.

41 In an interview with Lyudmila Kovnatskaya several years after the collaboration, Slutskaya admitted that she was disappointed with Kent's *Peter Grimes* sketches. She felt that Kent's fixation on photographic realism lacked a unifying expressive idea and resulted in little more than reproductions of what appeared to be modern Aldeburgh. Kovnatskaya L. G. "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theater. P. 67.

Figure 8: Rockwell Kent, *Moby Dick* Illustration, *Ahab's Legs* (Chapter 106)<sup>44</sup>

In her feedback to Kent, Slutskaya consistently referenced his illustrations for *Moby Dick*, which were recently republished in the USSR.<sup>42</sup> She indicated that she considered them to be both expressive and realistic, and that the tragic nature of these works also perfectly encapsulated the personalities of the characters in Britten's opera. She then cited specific examples from the novel in her letter and compared them directly to particular characters in *Peter Grimes*.<sup>43</sup> Throughout their correspondence, Slutskaya's criticisms of Kent's scenery sketches were often directly linked to a favorable impression of a specific illustration from *Moby Dick*, which she believed captured the emotion of the operatic scene more effectively. She generally criticized sketches that were too clean, symmetrical, and cluttered with superfluous details. Instead, she requested changes to make such scenes more asymmetrical, the buildings more dilapidated, and the sea more omnipresent.<sup>45</sup>

42 Мелвилл Г. Моби Дик.

43 Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, 27 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 48–49).

44 Kent R. "Moby Dick" illustration, "Ahab's Legs," rights courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York, USA, Rockwell Kent Collection, Bequest of Sally Kent Gorton. All rights reserved.

45 Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, 3 April 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 50–56).

On April 4, one day after Slutskaya sent her criticism, Kent acknowledged the unsuitability of his conception of Aldeburgh and set off to create a new set of sketches to accommodate her requests and to resolve the issues apparent in depicting a well-known English town on the operatic stage. Kent maintained, however, that the aesthetic choices for the illustrations of *Moby Dick* were a specific result of his research on the history of whaling in New Bedford, Massachusetts. For this reason, he believed that the style of the *Moby Dick* illustrations was inappropriate for *Peter Grimes*. It was his intention to carry out a new round of historical research on small-scale fishing in Aldeburgh, and to use this research as the inspiration for his sketches. He still planned to create as much a realistic resemblance to historical Aldeburgh as can be realized on the operatic stage.<sup>46</sup> Thus, he sought to reconcile his historical literalist realism with Slutskaya's more psychological one.

At this point, we should call attention to the issue of time in Slutskaya's expectations of Kent and his art. In their correspondence, she requested elements of the artist's earlier style: the psychological realism of his 1930 *Moby Dick* illustrations, and the monumental realism of his political works of the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s. It is possible that Slutskaya considered Kent in the context of the recent Soviet republication of *Moby Dick*, and of his political art that was being exhibited in Soviet museums. However, she did not realize that these aspects of Kent's oeuvre had fallen to wayside and that he had changed his focus to a more literal realism in his landscape paintings. By requesting that he provide her with sketches more in line with his earlier psychological and monumental realist styles, Slutskaya might have been asking Kent to revert to earlier stages of his artistic development.

## The Breakdown of the Kent/Slutskaya Collaboration

Soon after his April 4 letter, Kent's confidence in his ability to carry out the next round of sketches before the stage rehearsals later that month appears to have been shaken. In his April 9 letter to Slutskaya, Kent relinquished his commission to provide sketches for the Kirov Theater's production. He confessed that he did not fully understand the fundamental requirements for creating stage design, that his aesthetic conceptions were far from what Slutskaya desired, and that the delay inherent in such a long-distance collaboration prevented him from

<sup>46</sup> Unpublished letter from R. Kent to M. Slutskaya, 4 April 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 57-60).

being able to adjust to her feedback in a timely manner.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Kent remarked that he had just read Soviet theater director Konstantin Stanislavsky's autobiography *My Life in Art*, and realized that a successful collaboration required constant communication between the director and artist during every stage of the project's preparation.<sup>48</sup> While it was still possible to start from the beginning and attempt another round of sketches, he worried that there would be no assurances that they would be closer to Slutskaya's requirements. Moreover, Kent finally capitulated by abandoning his literalist stance and accepting her requests to use his illustrations for *Moby Dick* as a basis for the *Peter Grimes* designs. He suggested that the Kirov Theater contact a new designer, who would be free to use both his new sketches and the *Moby Dick* illustrations for guidance. He then expressed regret that he would not be able to continue working on the *Peter Grimes* project, offered to help the production in a reduced capacity, and informed Slutskaya that he would send her images of the Metropolitan production and of Aldeburgh for her reference.<sup>49</sup>

Kent then stopped working on the sketches for the *Peter Grimes* production, and he did not receive any confirmation that the Kirov Theater had received his last round of sketches. In a cablegram sent to Kent approximately nineteen days later, Rachinsky mentioned that he had just obtained Kent's message and requested that he send the theater all of his unfinished sketches so that the theater's artists would be able to use them in conjunction with the *Moby Dick* illustrations to create the sets.<sup>50</sup> Kent reluctantly agreed to prepare a new round of sketches, but he was concerned that such efforts would be too late. He was aware that the Kirov Theater had already begun rehearsals two weeks prior, which meant that the preliminary stage designs had already been put into place. He then communicated to Rachinsky that Slutskaya should proceed without him should his sketches arrive too late to be useful to her.<sup>51</sup>

Considering Kent's attempts to accommodate Slutskaya's demands for a more expressive stage design, we can revisit Figure 2. In his earlier correspondence, Kent explained that in the course of his research, he found that Moot Hall was in the center of Aldeburgh, and that erosion had since swept the buildings between it and the ocean into the sea. Moreover, he

<sup>47</sup> Unpublished letter R. Kent to M. Slutskaya, 9 April 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 64-66).

<sup>48</sup> *Stanislavsky K. S. My Life in Art*. Boston, MA: Little, 1924.

<sup>49</sup> Unpublished letter from R. Kent to M. Slutskaya, 9 April 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 64-66).

<sup>50</sup> Unpublished letter from P. Rachinsky to R. Kent, undated (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 2).

<sup>51</sup> Unpublished letter from R. Kent to P. Rachinsky, 1 May 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 68-70).

voices his intention to abide by Slutskaya's interpretation that centers on the sea in future sketches.<sup>52</sup> These two points result in the high likelihood that earlier versions of this sketch did not include the beach alongside the hall, and that Kent sought later to include the sea (with dramatically high breaking waves) in the background in order to accommodate Slutskaya's wishes. If this line of reasoning is correct, then Figure 2 is Kent's compromise between his more literal realism and Slutskaya's more psychological one. However, the buildings themselves were still not reminiscent of the claustrophobic and dilapidated structures of his earlier *Moby Dick* sketches, which opens the possibility that Kent did not go far enough in facilitating the truthful expression of Peter Grimes's tortured experience in the Borough.

In early June, the Kirov Theater formally invited Soviet theatrical designer Alla Tsesevich to create the final stage sets for the opera.<sup>53</sup> With the help of her husband, the artist Anatoly Kotov, and Vladimir Kucherenko, they shaped the scenery around the relationship between the people and the sea.<sup>54</sup> Kovnatskaya recalled that in their set designs, the ocean was either present in the background and in close proximity to the village, or it was just out of view. Moreover, Kovnatskaya explained that Tsesevich intended to depict the sea as an overbearing presence, which was exaggerated in moments of heightened drama.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, Kent, who had resumed work on his sketches, proceeded to send these revisions to the Kirov Theater on June 8. He did not receive confirmation that these sketches had arrived or what Slutskaya thought of them. In a July 24 letter to Rachinsky, Kent assumed that the drawings were of little value, and he requested that they be returned to him as soon as possible.<sup>56</sup>

Slutskaya drafted a response to Kent in September, but it is unclear whether it was actually sent to the artist.<sup>57</sup> In the event that the letter was not sent, it still provides insight on her position in this matter. In this draft, she apologized for the break in their correspondence, and explained that his most recent sketches had arrived when the preliminary sets had already been put into place and rehearsals on stage had already begun.

52 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to M. Slutskaya, 10 March 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 37-40).

53 Kovnatskaya notes that Tsesevich received permission to work on *Peter Grimes* on June 7, 1965 (precisely one month before the premiere) directly from the Ministry of Culture of the RSFSR. Kovnatskaya L. G. "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theater. P. 67.

54 Kovnatskaya L. G. "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theater. P. 67.

55 Kovnatskaya L. G. "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theater. P. 67.

56 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to P. Rachinsky, 24 July 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 71-74).

57 Unlike the other letters from Slutskaya to Kent, it does not include a translation into English nor a complete date; and it did not result in a response from Kent. It is possible that the letter was drafted, but not sent to the artist.



Figure 9: Kirov Theater, 1965 Production of *Peter Grimes*: Act 1, Scene 1<sup>58</sup>

As a result, Kent's scenery sketches were too late to have had much of an effect on the scene designs. Nonetheless, she assured him that they drew inspiration from his paintings in general and from his illustrations for *Moby Dick*. Slutskaya objected to the idea that the Kirov Theater based their scenery designs on the Metropolitan's production. She also reported that she expressed relief upon seeing the photographs of the Metropolitan's designs, and she concluded that there were no major similarities between them and the Kirov's set designs.<sup>59</sup>

I. Gusin, the Deputy Director of the Theater for Repertoire, sought to assure Kent that his sketches served as the basis for the production's scenery designs. Gusin's position was slightly different from the one expressed in Slutskaya's aforementioned draft, which admitted that the lateness of Kent's June 8 scenery sketches limited their impact on the Kirov production. In his letter, Gusin expressed the belief that Kent's designs were partly responsible for the great popular and critical success of the opera.<sup>60</sup> However, Kent was able to obtain photographs

58 Бриттен. Б. «Питер Граймс» (д. I, сц. 1). Театр оперы и балета им. С. М. Кирова. 1965.

© Государственный академический Мариинский театр, 2020.

59 Unpublished letter from M. Slutskaya to R. Kent, September 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 76-77).

60 Unpublished letter from I. Gusin to R. Kent, 3 September 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 75).

of the Kirov production from a friend in the USSR,<sup>61</sup> refused to believe Gusin's account, and voiced his complaints in a response to the deputy director in October. He determined that the theater completely ignored his suggestions and sketches, and that they had instead drew inspiration from the same Metropolitan Opera production that he had repeatedly criticized in his earlier correspondence. Kent considered this action to be both an act of betrayal of his wishes and a poor design decision based on questionable artistic judgement. Kent also resented the fact that he was named by the theater's publicity as having a part in the production's design, because he considered it to be a complete failure and in no way related to Britten's or his own artistic vision. He then repeated his request to have all of his sketches returned to him immediately.<sup>62</sup> It appears that on October 27, Gusin complied with Kent's request, and that he also sent photographs of the Kirov production in an effort to confirm that it did not resemble the Metropolitan's.<sup>63</sup> Kovnatskaya notes that all mentions of Kent's name in the program books for the first five performances were summarily crossed out, and it were completely absent in subsequent concert programs.<sup>64</sup> He explicitly resented the theater's perceived misuse of his time and labor, he did not want his name associated with the final production, because he believed that it ultimately did not adhere to his conception of realism.

The Soviet reception of both the opera and the production was very positive. A. Dmitriev's *Vechernii Leningrad* review in particular credited both Kent and the Kirov Theater's designers for creating a set that effectively supported the psychological drama of Britten's opera.<sup>65</sup> However, Cameron Pyke indicates that the British response to the Kirov's staging of *Peter Grimes* was mixed. The cultural attaché of British Embassy, Alan Brooke Turner, lauded the production as inspired, sensitive, and enthusiastic. Turner considered the Kirov production to be both true to Britten's intentions and a powerful gesture of Anglo-Soviet

61 There is no record of these photographs in the Rockwell Kent Papers at the Archives of American Archives. It is possible that these photographs were not preserved in his personal papers.

62 Unpublished letter from R. Kent to I. Gusin, 8 October 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 77-80).

63 Again, there is no record of these photographs in the Rockwell Kent Papers at the Archives of American Archives. It is possible that these photographs were not sent, or that they were not preserved in his personal papers. In any case, several of Kent's sketches of the *Peter Grimes* scenery and costume designs were preserved in this collection, but it is difficult to discern whether the collection is complete. Unpublished letter from I. Gusin to R. Kent, 27 October 1965 (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.: Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67, Л. 82).

64 Kovnatskaya L. G. "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theater. P. 67.

65 Дмитриев А. Питер Граймс // Вечерний Ленинград. 13 июля 1965. С. 4.

friendship. Pyke also notes that the 1965 *Opera* review of the staging was much more critical. The reviewer, J. Egan, respected the efforts of Dalgat and the lead soloists, but dismissed the set designs for being too "pretty and colorful." To Egan, the sets were more suited for the light opera *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879) by William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan or for travel agency posters, rather than the gray Borough in constant battle with the North Sea. Furthermore, the critic denounced the depiction of the Borough's citizens, who become a bloodthirsty mob at the opera's conclusion, as quaint and over-caricatured. Egan argued that the Borough was prettified, and that this "robbed its persecution of Peter of all viciousness and savagery, and emasculated the opera's realistic strength." [emphasis mine]<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

Rockwell Kent's involvement in the Kirov Theater's production of *Peter Grimes* was plagued by several difficulties and misunderstandings. Aesthetically and politically, Kent had appeared to be a perfect choice for such an undertaking: he was a major proponent of realistic art and a lifelong friend of the USSR. If all of the personages involved were enthusiastically dedicated to the opera, then why did the collaboration end on such poor terms?

Several issues contributed to the collaboration's failure. Kent had no experience in working in an operatic production, which required both a knowledge in set design and a musical understanding of Britten's composition. In addition, his actual role in the Kirov Theater's set design process was poorly defined by the theater, and his conception of the extent of his involvement fluctuated widely. He sometimes acted as a helpful provider of material, which the theater directors were free to use at their discretion. However, if the production developed in a direction that he did not approve, the artist complained that his creative labor was being completely ignored and unappreciated.

In a way, both Kent's and Slutskaia's contrasting interpretations of realism were retrospective: Kent idealized historical realism, but was asked by Slutskaia to produce a series of sketches based on the theater's overall interpretation of the work in the aesthetic and expressive idiom of his earlier, more evocative political work and of his illustrations for *Moby Dick*. If true, this raises the question whether Slutskaia wanted to

66 Pyke C. Benjamin Britten and Russia. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2016. P. 223-24. To support his statements, Pyke references a letter from A. B. Turner to B. Britten, 11 April 1964 (GB-ALB: British Embassy, Moscow), and the following review: Egan J. The Kirov's "Grimes" // *Opera*. 1965. Vol. 16 (September). P. 659-60.

harness Kent's realism of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. After learning that Kent was misusing precious time researching Aldeburgh's history in order to create an entirely different and operatically unsuitable depiction of the town, the directors of the theater became frustrated with him. Meanwhile, the theater's insistence on using the *Moby Dick* illustrations, which Kent completed over three decades earlier, very possibly frustrated an artist who sought to create something entirely independent of his earlier work.

Other issues that plagued the collaboration were the physical distance and the language barrier between Kent and Slutskaya. As a first-time scenery designer, Kent would have benefited immensely from working personally with the theater's designers and from being able to physically visit the theater to see the stage himself. The time delay inherent in collaboration via translated correspondence hampered the transfer of ideas, allowed misunderstandings and unresolved creative differences to fester, and complicated the creative process during a particularly short period. Moreover, aesthetic differences are bound to arise in any large-scale theatrical production, and it can be difficult for these issues to resolve even when all of the theater's personnel are available to meet in person and communicate without translators.

All of the above factors exacerbated the fundamental cause of the collaboration's collapse: the incompatibility of Kent's and Slutskaya's interpretations of realism. While both adhered to similar views regarding realist ideals—to truthfully depict the world, to be understandable to the general public, and to promote the ideological cause of socialism—they differed in the practical application of realism in the creation of the set designs for *Peter Grimes*. Kent was interested in presenting a close approximation of the town of Aldeburgh in the opera's historical time period, and to present an unblinking gaze on the realities of working-class life in nineteenth-century England. He carried out historical research on the architecture of Aldeburgh, while reproducing as much of the actual structures as possible without resorting to unrealistic and anachronistic exaggerations. However, he was seemingly unaware that Aldeburgh was not the setting of the opera, and that both Crabbe's and Britten's Boroughs were amorphous stylizations that defied literal representation and did not exist in fixed historical reality. Thus, Slutskaya's criticism of Kent's work was correct: his sketches portrayed Aldeburgh, but not the Borough.

Moreover, Slutskaya believed that Kent's efforts detracted from the central themes in the opera: the relationship between man and sea, the conflict between the title character and his community, and his own psychological struggle. She, and the other directors of the Kirov Theater, were interested in Kent's earlier, more stylized work in his *Moby Dick* illustrations and in his lithographs, which included sharp contrasts between light and dark, overbearing and decaying cityscapes, and both

the brutality and grandeur of nature. The environment depicted in these illustrations was shaped by Captain Ahab's psychological state, thus they were a truthful portrayal of his subjective experience. To Slutskaya, this was essential in the portrayal of *Peter Grimes*'s psychological drama, and she considered Kent's new sketches to be disappointing photographic imitations of a seaside town, which were completely detached from the skewed perspective of the tortured fisherman. However, by considering Egan's criticism, it is possible that the Kirov Theater's production fell to the other extreme by fixating on the Borough as an exoticized and prettified other, which undermined its claim to realism, psychological or otherwise.

**LITERATURE**

- 1 *Anonymous*. Biographical Note for the Rockwell Kent Papers, [Circa 1840]-1993, Bulk 1935-1961 [Electronic Resource] // Archives of American Art. URL: <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/rockwell-kent-papers-9557/biographical-note> (accessed 1 August 2020).
- 2 *Britten B.* On Receiving the First Aspen Award. London: Faber, 1978.
- 3 *Crabbe G.* The Borough: A Poem, in *Twenty-Four Letters*. Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1810.
- 4 *Egan J.* The Kirov's "Grimes" // *Opera*. 1965. Vol. 16 (September). P. 659-60.
- 5 *Hawkyard A.* Suffolk // *The Counties of Britain: A Tudor Atlas* by John Speed. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989. P. 165-68.
- 6 *Kovnatskaya L. G.* "Peter Grimes" at the Kirov Theatre / trans. from Russ. Nick Winter // *Melos: En Musiktidsskrift*. 1997. Vol. 19/20 (5 August). P. 64-71.
- 7 *Martin C.* Rockwell Kent's Distant Shores: The Story of an Exhibition // *Arctic*. 2002. Vol. 55. No. 1 (March). P. 101-06.
- 8 *Melville H.* *Moby Dick*. New York: Random, 1930.
- 9 *Pyke C.* *Benjamin Britten and Russia*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2016.
- 10 *Scheer C. M.* Crosscurrents in the Britten Legacy: Two Vision of Aldeburgh // *The Sea in the British Musical Imagination*. Ed. by Eric Saylor and Christopher M. Scheer. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2015. P. 67-80.
- 11 *Stanislavsky K. S.* *My Life in Art*. Boston: Little, 1924.
- 12 *Stanley E. H.* The Lively Poster Arts of Rockwell Kent // *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*. 1989. Vol. 12 (Spring). P. 6-31.
- 13 *Šumila E. and R. Stanevičiūtė.* Adeodatas Tauragis—Benjaminas Brittenas: laiškai ir tyrinėjimai [Adeodatas Tauragis and Benjamin Britten: Letters and Exploration] // *Ars et Praxis [Art and Practice]*. 2014. Vol. 11. P. 197-218.
- 14 *Ward-Griffin D.* Realism Redux: Staging 'Billy Budd' in the Age of Television // *Music & Letters*. 2019. Vol. 100. No. 3.
- 15 *Whitehead F.* *George Crabbe: A Reappraisal*. Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1995.
- 16 *Б/а.* Художник—народу // *Правда* 77, 18 марта 1963 г. С. 3.
- 17 *Мелвилл Г.* *Моби Дик*: пер. с англ. И. Берштейн. Москва: Географгиз, 1961.

**ARCHIVAL SOURCES**

- 1 Archives of American Art, Washington D.C. Rockwell Kent Papers, [circa 1840]-1993, bulk 1935-1961. Series 3, Subseries 1, Reel 5741, Frames 242-323: *Peter Grimes*.
- 2 Архив Мариинского театра, Санкт-Петербург.
- 3 Britten-Pears Foundation Archives (GB-ALb). British Embassy, Moscow.
- 4 Metropolitan Opera Archives, New York City. Metropolitan Opera Premiere: *Peter Grimes* (1947-48).
- 5 National Archive of the United Kingdom, Kew (GB-Lna). FO 371/116811 Cultural Exchanges between UK and Soviet Union in the field of music, 1955.
- 6 Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York. Rockwell Kent Collection.
- 7 Центральный государственный архив литературы и искусства Санкт-Петербурга (ЦГАЛИ-СПб.). Государственный Академический Мариинский Театр Министерства Культуры Российской Федерации. Санкт-Петербург. 1917–2002 гг. Ф. 337, Оп. 1-2, Д. 1047 Переписка с Министерством культуры СССР и РСФСР о репертуаре театра. Ф. 337, Оп. 8, Д. 67 Переписка с художником Р. Кентом об оформлении оперы Б. Бриттена «Пигер Граймс».