

**The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division**

**Mstislav Dobuzhinsky Papers and Designs
1909-1952**

***T-Vim 2010-082**

Summary

- Main entry:** Dobuzhinsky, Mstislav
- Title:** Mstislav Dobuzhinsky Papers and Designs, 1909-1952
- Size:** 18 linear feet (14 boxes)
- Abstract:** Collection consists of Dobuzhinsky's original drawings, costume sketches, set designs, blueprints and notes.
- Preferred citation:** Mstislav Dobuzhinsky Papers and Designs, *T-Vim 2010-082, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Biographical note

Mstislav Valerianovich Dobuzhinsky (or Dobujinsky; Lithuanian: Mstislavas Dobužinskis) (August 2 1875 Novgorod — November 20 1957 New York City) was a Russian-Lithuanian artist noted for his cityscapes conveying the explosive growth and decay of the early twentieth-century city.

Of noble Lithuanian extraction Dobuzhinsky was born on August 14 1875 in Novgorod into the family of an army officer. From 1885 to 1887 he attended the Drawing School of the Society for the Promotion of the Artists. Between 1895 and 1899 he read Law at the University of St. Petersburg simultaneously studying in private studios. After graduating from the University he was trained from 1899 to 1901 by Anton Azbè in Munich and Simon Hollósy in Nagybánya (Austria-Hungary). In Munich he came to be influenced by the Jugendstil. On his return to Russia he joined the *Mir Iskusstva* an artistic circle which idealized the 18th century as the "age of elegance".

Dobuzhinsky was distinguished from other miriskusniki by his expressionist manner and keen interest in modern industrial cityscapes. He often painted seedy or tragic scenes from urban life which expressed the nightmarish bleakness and loneliness of modern times. Among his works were also humorous vignettes and sketches with demon-like creatures which seemed to embody the monstrosities of urbanization.

Like other members of the *Mir iskusstva* Dobuzhinsky also experimented with scenic design. At first he worked for Constantin Stanislavski at the Moscow Arts Theatre but later on also contributed sets to several Diaghilev productions. He was renowned as an excellent art teacher; among his young pupils was Vladimir Nabokov with whom he maintained correspondence for decades.

During the First World War Dobuzhinsky went with Eugene Lanceray to the front lines to sketch. Later he took part in the Second Congress of the Communist International. In 1918 he supervised the theatrical workshop at the State Educational Workshops of the Decorative Arts (the former Stieglitz School of the Technical Drawing). In 1923-24 he went abroad to study developments in European art and to arrange one-man shows. In 1924 Dobuzhinsky followed the advice of Jurgis Baltrusaitis and withdrew to Lithuania. He was naturalized there in 1924 and lived in Kaunas until 1925. He then emigrated to England and then to the USA in 1939. In Lithuania he worked at a state theatre as scenographer and created scenography for 38 plays besides running a private painting school (1930-1933).

Among his later works are series of masterful and dramatic illustrations notable for Dostoyevsky's *White Nights* (1923) and Yuri Olesha's *Three Fat Men* (1925). Between 1925 and 1929 Dobuzhinsky contributed sets for theatre productions in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Düsseldorf. During World War II Dobuzhinsky painted imaginary landscapes of the besieged Leningrad. He died in New York on November 20 1957. His memoirs were published posthumously.

Scope and content note

Original set designs, working drawings and sketches, blueprints and notes by Mstislav Dobuzhinsky for the following productions: *Anne of England* by Mary Cass Canfield and Ethel Borden adapted from *Viceroy Sarah* by Norman Ginsbury (1941); *Boris Godunov* opera by Modest Mussorgsky (n.d.); *Don Giovanni* music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and with an Italian libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte (1952); *Das Dreimäderlhaus (House of the Three Girls)* adapted into English language versions as *Blossom Time* and *Lilac Time* is a Viennese pastiche 'operetta' with music by Franz Schubert rearranged by Hungarian Heinrich Berté and a libretto by Alfred Maria Willner and Heinz Reichert (n.d.); *Emilia Plater* (Lithuanian National Theatre) (1939); *Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man* by Alexander Ostrovski (1953); *Eugene Onegin* (opera) by P. Chaikovsky (different productions 1923-1953); *The Fair at Sorochinsk* book by Nicolai Gogol, music by Modest Mussorgski (1942); *The Four Ruffians* by Edward J. Dent adapted from *I Quattro Rusteghi* by Goldoni music by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1951); *Die Geburt der Salome* (1944); *Happy Endings* by A. Chekhov (n.d.); *Khovanshina* by M. Mussorgsky (1948-1950); *Love for three oranges* (1949); *Masked Ball* music by G. Verdi (1940); *A Month in the Country* (1909); *Queen of Spades* by P. Chaikovsky (1925-1931); *Radvila Perkunas* by Jurgis Karnavicius (1936); *Wozzeck* opera music by Allen Berg (1952). There are also a few designs for unidentified productions. Most of the designs and sketches are signed.

Arrangement note

Alphabetical

Container list

Anne of England by Mary Cass Canfield and Ethel Borden, adapted from *Viceroy Sarah* by Norman Ginsbury, 1941

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	Costume designs In pencil with artist's notes, signature and date. The designs are identified by the names of characters.
	2	Costume designs (In pencil and watercolor.)
	3	Invitations (October 3 & 7, 1941.)
	4	Notebooks (Two notebooks, notes in pencil.)
	5	Notes (In English and Russian in pencil and ink.)
	6	Programs (<i>Playbill</i> and <i>St. James Theatre</i> .)
	7-9	Rough sketches 10 sketches in watercolor, some numbered and with notes.
2	1-6	Set designs 6 designs in pencil and watercolor with notes in English and artist's signature .
3	1-4	Set designs 6 in pencil, 3 in watercolor, and 2 cut-out set designs, some with artist's signature.
	5	Technical drawings (Some with artist's signature.)
		<i>Boris Godunov</i> opera by Modest Mussorgsky, n.d.
4	1	Costume designs In pencil and watercolor, some with artist's signature. Includes fabric swatches.
	2	Notes (In Russian and English.)
	3	Set decorations (Furnturln watercolor with artist's signature.)
	4-7	Set designs In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes and signature.
	8-11	Set elements In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes and signature.
5	1-7	Technical drawings (In pencil with artist's notes and signature.)
		<i>Don Giovanni</i> music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and with an Italian libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte, 1952
	8	Graphic design with the production title (In pencil with artist's note in Russian.)
		<i>Das Dreimäderlhaus</i> (<i>House of the Three Girls</i>), adapted into English language versions as <i>Blossom Time</i> and <i>Lilac Time</i> , is a Viennese pastiche 'operetta' with music by Franz Schubert, rearranged by Hungarian Heinrich Berté and a libretto by Alfred Maria Willner and Heinz Reichert, n.d.
	9	Costume designs (In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes.)
	10	Set elements (In pencil and watercolor.)
		<i>The Dybbuk</i> (opera) book by Alex Tamkin, music by David Tamkin, n.d.
	11	Blueprints
	12	Cut-out set designs
	13	Notes
6	1-2	Set designs In pencil and crayons, some with artist's signature.
	3	Set elements (In pencil with artist's notes.)
	4	Sketches (In pencil with artist's notes.)
	5	Technical drawings
		<i>Emilia Plater</i> (Lithuanian National Theatre), 1939
	6	Sketches (Wiyh atrist's notes.)
		<i>Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man</i> by Alexander Ostrovski, 1953
	7	Letter 10 page letter to Petr Fedorovich [Pavlovskii] in pencil in Russian with artist's signature.

- 8 Workbook
Sketches, costume designs, set elements with artist's notes.
Eugene Onegin (opera) by P. Chaikovsky
1923-1924 production (Dresden production.)
- 9 Costume designs
In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes and signature.
- 10 Notes (In pencil and ink in German and Russian.)
- 11 Set decorations (In watercolor with artist's notes)
- 12-13 Set designs (In pencil with artist's notes.)
- 14 Set elements (In pencil)
- 1935 production (Lithuanian State Opera, Kaunas production.)
- 7 1 Costume designs
In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes and signature
- 2 Notes (In Russian and Lithuanian.)
- 3 Set designs (In pencil)
- 4 Sketches (In pencil and watercolor.)
- 5 Technical drawings
- 1937 production (Prague production)
- 6 Set designs (In pencil.)
- 7 Set elements (In pencil with artist's notes.)
- 1953 (?) production
- 8 Set designs (In pencil and ink.)
- 9 Set elements (In pencil and watercolor with artist's signature.)
- The Fair at Sorochinsk* book by Nicolai Gogol, music by Modest Mussorgski, 1942
- 10-11 Cut-out set designs (Painted.)
- 8 1 Notes
- 2 Set designs (In pencil with artist's signature.)
- 3 Set elements (In watercolor.)
- 4 Technical drawings
- The Four Ruffians* by Edward J. Dent, adapted from *I Quattro Rusteghi*, by Goldoni,
music by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, 1951
- 5 Costume designs
In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes and signature.
- 6 Notes
- 7 Program (New York City Opera Company, Fall Season 1951.)
- 8 Set designs (In pencil and watercolor with artist's signature.)
- 9 Set elements (In pencil and watercolor.)
- 10 Technical drawings
- Die Geburt der Salome*, 1944 (Chicago, not performed.)
- 11 Costume designs (In pencil and watercolor.)
- 12 Notes (In Russian and English.)
- 13 Set designs (In pencil.)
- 14 Set elements (In watercolor.)
- Grechaninov A. *Moia zhizn v iskusstve*, n.d. (*My life in art.*)
- 15 Sketch of the title page (With note in English.)
- Happy Endings* by A. Chekhov, n.d.
- 16 Set design (In pencil.)
- Khovanshina* by M. Mussorgsky, 1948-1950
- 9 1 Blueprints

- 2 Costume designs
In pencil with artist's notes. Includes fabric swatches.
- 3 Curtain (7 colored signed designs.)
- 4-6 Cut-out set designs (Colored, with notes.)
- 7 Letters
Two letters in French from M. Dobuzhinski and one to him.
- 10 1 Notebooks
In Russian, English and Old Church Slavonic with some sketches.
- 2 Notes
In Russian, English and Old Church Slavonic with some sketches.
- 3 Program (*Working rehearsal* Friday 13, 1950.)
- 4-6 Set designs (Colored, in pencil and ink with artist's notes.)
- 7 Set elements
In pencil, watercolor and gouache with artist's notes in Russian and Old Church Slavonic.
- 8 Sketches (In pencil and gouache with artist's notes.)
- 9 Technical drawings
- Love for Three Oranges*, 1949
- 11 1 Costume designs (With artist's notes and signature.)
- 2 Cut-out set designs (Colored, with artist's notes and signature.)
- 3-4 Set designs
In pencil and watercolor with artist's notes in Russian and English and signature.
- 5 Set elements (Colored and in pencil with artist's notes.)
- 6 Technical drawings
- Masked Ball* music by G. Verdi, 1940
- 12 1 Blueprints
- 2 Notes
In Russian, English and French with artist's sketches.
- 3 Program (Chicago Civic Opera Company.)
- 4-5 Set designs (In pencil and colored.)
- 6 Set elements (In pencil and colored with artist's notes.)
- 7 Sketches (In pencil and colored with artist's notes.)
- 8 Technical drawings
- A Month in the Country*, 1909 (Moscow Art Theatre.)
- 9 Set designs (In pencil.)
- Queen of Spades* by P. Chaikovsky, 1925-1931
- 13 1 Set designs (In pencil and colored with artist's notes.)
- 2 Technical drawings (With artist's notes.)
- Radvila Perkunas* by Jurgis Karnavicius, 1936 (English title *The Wrath of Radziwill*.)
- 14 1 Costume designs (In pencil with notes.)
- 2 Notes (In Lithuanian and Russian.)
- 3 Set designs (In pencil.)
- 4 Sketches (In pencil with artist's notes.)
- 5 Technical drawings (With artist's notes.)
- Wozzeck* opera, music by Allen Berg, 1952
- 6 Costume designs (In pencil with artist's notes.)
- 7 Notes (In Russian and English.)
- 8 Set elements (In pencil.)
- 9 Sketches (In pencil.)
- 10 Technical drawings (With artist's notes.)
- Unidentified
- 11 Cut-out set designs (Colored.)

- 12 Notes (In Russian and English with sketches.)
- 13 Set designs (Colored and in pencil.)
- 14 Set elements (In pencil)
- 15 Sketches (Colored and in pencil.)
- 16 Technical drawings