

**Title:** Music and Sound in Kama Ginkas's Комната смеха  
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Since the mid-1980s MTiuZ director Kama Ginkas has rarely staged traditional plays. When he does, he often takes liberties with the text. For example, his 2009 production of *Medea* incorporates multiple source materials – the plays of both Seneca and Jean Anouilh, and the poetry of Brodsky. Ginkas has also shown little interest in contemporary playwriting, largely steering clear of the new drama movement in Russia. An exception to both of these general rules is his 1998 staging of Oleg Bogaev's play *Русская народная почта* (*The Russian National Postal Service*). While he renamed the show based on Bogaev's subtitle, "Комната смеха" ("Room of Laughter") and significantly changed the ending of the play, he remained otherwise "faithful" to Bogaev's text.

Despite this verbal fidelity, Ginkas's production departs significantly from the overall tenor of Bogaev's play. The playwright's tragicomic humor is abstracted and intensified. In this paper, I will argue that it is Ginkas's use of music and sound that transforms Bogaev's text. In Ginkas's show, none of Bogaev's words are spoken until the eighth minute of the performance. Instead, we hear the noise of construction, the sound of pipes clanging, a toilet flushing, and the hero's attempts at music—singing, hollering, hammering on walls, tapping on bottles. Ginkas has claimed that the music in his shows reveals his own voice: "It leads and provides direction, and it offers a view, as it were, from neutral territory—an objective view. Music provides something of a cosmic or divine view" (197). The sound and music of *Комната смеха* create a cosmic realm not present in Bogaev's play.

Ginkas, Kama and John Freedman. *Provoking Theater: Kama Ginkas Directs*. Hanover, NH: Smith and Kraus, 2003.