

**BULGARIAN NATIONAL RADIO**

***Hristo Botev Channel***

**The Urban Detective**

***Episode 7: My Dear Futurist Friends***

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***Music by Angel Dodov***

***With the voices of Ana Blagova and Radoslav Chichev***

***English translation by Rossitsa Petkova***

<https://markdyal.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/futurism-anthology.pdf>

***Music, text running at the background***

**Radoslav Chichev:**

“Let us wander through a great modern city with our ears more alert than our eyes and we shall find pleasure in distinguishing the rushing of water, gas, or air in metal pipes, the purring of motors that breathe and pulsate with indisputable animality, the throbbing of valves, the pounding of pistons, the screeching of mechanical saws, the jolting of trams on their tracks, the cracking of whips, the flapping of curtains and flags. We shall amuse ourselves by creating mental orchestrations of the crashing down of metal shop shutters, the slamming of doors, the bustle and shuffling of crowds, the

varied racket of railroad stations, iron foundries, spinning mills, printing plants, subways, and electrical power stations.

Nor should the latest noises of modern warfare be forgotten. Recently, in a letter written from the Bulgarian trenches near Adrianople, the poet Marinetti described to me the orchestration of a large battle, rendered in marvellous words-in-freedom”.

**00.56** One can hear a documentary recording of ***Marinetti: La Battaglia Di Adrianopoli (recorded 1924)***

***Radoslav Chichev reads as the recording is heard:*** “every 5 seconds siege-cannons to disembowel space with a chord Bam-Boooooomb mutiny of 500 echoes in order to snap to break up to scatter to the infinite In the middle of those smashed Bam-Booombs range 50 square kilometers to bounce sweepings cuttings fists batteries in rapid fire Violence fierceness regularity this low weighty surging the strange madmen agitated taut from the battle Fury torment ears eyes nostrils open! straining! force!”

**Recording of Marinetti singing “Shumi Maritsa Okarvavena” is heard underneath and fades in**

**01.48 Ana Blagova:** You are listening to "The Urban Detective" - a podcast about the hidden stories of Bulgarian cities. What we just heard was *The Art of Noises* - the manifesto with which in 1913 noise music was born, followed by *The Bombardment of Adrianople* - part of one of the most famous poems of the European avant-garde.

This is the second season of “The Urban Detective” and in this season we will go outside Sofia to look for legends from other Bulgarian cities. In nine new episodes running from April to August we will visit Yambol, Kyustendil, Plovdiv, Varna, and we will travel all the way *to Edirne and Turin*.

But first we go further back in time – to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as we are eager to explore what the then-Bulgarian national anthem "Shumi Maritza Okarvavena" (English translation: Maritsa river flows drenched in blood) has in common with one of the great avant-garde poets of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, and to trace the short flight of futurism over the Bulgarian lands. This is episode seven – My Dear Futurist Friends, Part One.

### **02.39 Recording of Filippo Marinetti: Definizione Di Futurismo (1924) – several seconds from the beginning are heard**

**Ana Blagova:** The year is 1909 and Europe is pervaded by revolutionary ideas - not only political but also artistic. In Paris, post-impressionism and Fauvism are already giving way to what will emerge as cubism in a few years' time. In this context, an Italian poet born in Egypt but educated in France - Filippo Tommaso Marinetti - published a manifesto on the pages of the French newspaper Figaro, belligerently calling for a new artistic order.

**03.10 Irina Genova:** The beginning of futurism was turbulent and was produced as an event by its leader and main proponent Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

**Ana Blagova:** This is art historian Irina Genova, an expert on Italian futurism.

**Irina Genova:** In 1909, he published a Manifesto of Futurism and, pay attention to one fact - since everyone experiences their own sense of provincialism, he published it in France in French.

**03.42 Ana Blagova:** The manifesto landed on the front page of *Le Figaro* - a guarantee of immediate attention. Futurism, the text reads, was born of a car accident - Marinetti crashed his car into a roadside ditch trying to avoid a collision with two cyclists.

### **04.15 Music, at the background one hears:**

**Radoslav Chichev:** "O maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain!"

**Ana Blagova:** The poet writes.

**Radoslav Chichev:** "And so, our faces covered with the good factory slime—a mix of metallic scum, useless sweat, heavenly soot—our arms bruised and bandaged, we, still fearless, have dictated our first intentions to all the living men of the earth:

**04.15 Music, underneath sounds the following:**

1. We intend to sing to the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.

2. Courage, boldness, and rebelliousness will be the essential elements of our poetry.

3. Up to now literature has exalted contemplative stillness, ecstasy, and sleep. We intend to exalt movement and aggression, feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the slap and the punch.

4. We affirm that the beauty of the world has been enriched by a new form of beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car with a hood that glistens with large pipes resembling a serpent with explosive breath . . . a roaring automobile that seems to ride on grapeshot—that is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.

5. There is no beauty that does not consist of struggle. No work that lacks an aggressive character can be considered a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent assault launched against unknown forces to reduce them to submission under man."

**05.05 Ana Blagova:** Futurism is intoxicated by the speed of modernity, by industry, cities and machines. The "vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards", "greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents", the "adventurous steamers", cars and airplanes must replace the ruins and renaissance masterpieces that cover Italy "like graveyards".

**Radoslav Chichev:** "We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind."

**Ana Blagova:** And something that heralds the not quite bright future of the movement:

**Radoslav Chichev:** "We intend to glorify war—the only hygiene of the world—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of anarchists, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and contempt for woman."

**05.42: Irina Genova:** Amongst the series of nascent isms, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti perceived himself as standing somehow aside from the turbulent events in Europe and felt that some sort of ism needed to be invented, that is, some movement must be branded as coming from Italy but it should conquer and fascinate the entire world.

**06.12 Ana Blagova:** Soon Marinetti was joined by a number of painters, including Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini and Russollo who published in 1910 the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* and the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*. Another favourite activity of the group at that time became the so-called "serate futuriste" or futuristic evenings - performances in urban venues, where futurists recited their manifestos, and the audience - to their delight - often hurled ripe tomatoes at them.

**06.37 Irina Genova:** In 1910 at the Venice Biennale, one year after the manifesto was published, Marinetti climbed the tower of San Marco and from there scattered leaflets. They included in their content calls that an end must be put to this art called "passatista" or which is related to "passato", the past, and stigmatizes the Venice Biennale as a magnificent, putrescent sore of the past, that has nothing to do with the present. Of course, a little later, he himself organized futuristic exhibitions within the biennial.

**07.24 Ana Blagova:** In this manifesto *Contro Venezia passatista* (Against past-loving Venice) Marinetti tells the Venetians that their city should be razed to the ground and its canals - filled with the rubble from the "old, collapsing and leprous palaces". Campaigns such as this ended with a fistfight, arrests and a guaranteed place on the papers the next day. And so the influence and followers of futurism began to multiply - manifestos started to emerge relating to sculpture, architecture, music, even a manifesto of the futurist woman. But Marinetti was a poet, and the great literary agenda of futurism was still missing.

**07.55 Luigi Russolo - Risveglio Di Una Citta (1913), several seconds are played, then text starts at the music background:**

**08.04 Ana Blagova:** We are listening to a fragment from *Awakening of a City* - the only original recording left by the author of the manifesto *The Art of Noises*, Luigi Russolo. It was presented at the first concert with futurist music, along with works such as *Dining on the Hotel Terrace* and *Meeting of Cars and Airplanes*. The airplane, of course, stood highest in the hierarchy of futurist machines. And several Bulgarian pilots would inadvertently fly through the most famous poem of futurism.

**08.30** In 1912, Marinetti was sent as a correspondent to report on the advance of the Bulgarian troops against the Ottoman Empire in the First Balkan War.

**08.39 Radoslav Chichev** "The automobile Isotta Fraschini one hundred horsepower, with which I cut into the muddy roads dotted with poor houses of Romania and Macedonia 30 years ago, had to stop due to a severe technical failure in Sofia, while I was getting accustomed to the place at the cafe-restaurant of Hotel Bulgaria, where hundreds of journalists, politicians, party leaders, writers and bearded poets were smoking and drinking tea alongside with peasants wearing tsarvuli with a crooked top."

**09.03 Anna Blagova:** Writes Marinetti in his memoirs, which contain vivid and even comical memories of that time. The Italian purchased a horse, but it was seized by the Bulgarian army, forcing him to continue first by train and then by the ox cart of the Viennese correspondent, in the words of Marinetti: "more of a cattleman than a journalist." Yet the true exultation for Marinetti started on the front, where the Bulgarian army unexpectedly won the siege of the Fortress of Adrianople with the help of the new miracle - the airplane.

**09.29 Music, text continues underneath the music:**

**Ana Blagova:** In 1912 the Bulgarian Air Force was new-born. This was the year of the first Bulgarian flight, the first Bulgarian patent for an aircraft, the first aerial photograph. And the Balkan War is the first in which both sides

could test the new air force. Mercenaries and amateurs of aviation from different countries flocked to take part in the hostilities. The Bulgarian army, which had just launched its first balloon, brought to the front 29 aircraft assembled on the spot by newly trained technicians. Against this backdrop - among the cannon salvos and the shouts of "five per knife", Marinetti enthusiastically painted his "revolution in world poetry", the sound and concrete poem *Zang Tumb Tumb*.

### **10.14 Marinetti: *La Battaglia Di Adrianopoli* (recorded in 1924)**

**10.32 Ana Blagova:** The Bulgarian aerial bombing over Adrianople is not the first in the world, as is often claimed, but it becomes the most famous part of Marinetti's most famous work, an apotheosis of his idea of words free from the shackles of syntax and glittering with the beauty of the letter and the sound. On 150 pages, *Zang Tumb Tumb* reproduces, in onomatopoeic and typographic terms, a detailed picture of the war, from mobilization to the types of aircraft and even the positions of the troops. But one episode, in the poetic interpretation of Georgi Gospodinov, synthesizes the literary revolution born on the battlefield. On October 30, 1912, at 5 o'clock in the evening, writes Marinetti, a Bulgarian airplane cast a slow snow of small manifestos over Adrianople.

### **11.12 Music, text against the background**

**Radoslav Chichev:** "We, Bulgarians, are at war with the Turkish government, which is incapable of ruling decently. We are not against the Muslim population and we do not want to shed blood. Adrianople is besieged on all sides. The road to Constantinople is blocked. Adrianople can't get help from anywhere. Under these conditions, why do you want to shed more blood? Thousands of guns are directed at Adrianople. If the city does not surrender, it will be completely destroyed and devastated. "

**11.43 Ana Blagova:** It seems to me, writes Georgi Gospodinov in his essay "The Bulgarian Airplane", that as much jokingly as seriously, we could say that by 5 pm on October 30, 1912, a circling airplane and the free-falling words from it gave birth to the idea of "parole in liberta". The literalness of the flying texts can be seen graphically on the pages of this poem, after

which, as a matter of facts, polygraphy was no longer the same. As it turns out, “the great roarrrrrrrrrrrrrrring of one Bulgarian monoplane has propelled a new poetics into Marinetti's ear.”

**12.16 Irina Genova:** This appearance of the Bulgarian trace, for me personally, is very ambiguous. It’s neither a reason for pride, nor shame. I remain somehow indifferent to this fact, whether it was a Bulgarian aircraft or not.

**12.30** The first futurism, its fascination to this day is that it is not politically bound. It is tied to the modern times, to the fascination with technology, with the machine. With the imagination and imaginary idea of what technology can bring to humanity.

### **12.53 Music, text is heard underneath:**

**Anna Blagova:** Marinetti's fascination with the war and his later association with fascist ideology would impede the most creative period of futurism. At his urging, many futurists enlisted as volunteers and disappeared in World War I. This is what happened to artist Umberto Boccioni, whose sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* was to become one of the emblems of futurist art. Without realizing any of his projects, the author of the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*, Antonio Sant’Elia, also remained forever at the war front. The influence of the sketches from his *New City* - an elegant yet fearsome machine made up of monolithic and monumental skyscrapers - can be felt from architecture to films like *Blade Runner*. And Antonio Russolo, who quotes in *The Art of Noises* the gunfire from the battle of Adrianople, created the first analog musical instruments and pushed music into a whole new direction. These inspirations - and especially the noisy manifesto practice of futurists - was to be later intertwined with vorticism, constructivism, Dadaism and the series of vanguards and isms that would emerge.

**13.57 Irina Genova:** This practice of spreading and distributing various materials that you mention is very interesting and here, in this regard, I think Marinetti was a pioneer. Futurism is not the first “ism” but in terms of PR, Marinetti was truly brilliant, and today we can find in numerous archives



and archival collections his editions with personal signature, with dedication for people he did not know personally or had never met, also many postcards, letters. In our story, we see him in his communication with Kiril Krastev and with the Crescendo magazine, those youngsters fascinated by futurist art who wrote to Marinetti, they were still high school students, they were 18-years-old and received a letter from him with this already so famous address: Yambol, Kiril Krastev.

**15.08 Ana Blagova:** In the next episode: About Yambol as a cradle of the avant-garde, Bulgarian futurist artists and a Dadaist joke.

***Music, text at the background:***

**15.21 Ana Blagova:** You've been listening to "The Urban Detective", our podcast about urban legends. I'm Ana Blagova, and in this episode you heard also Radoslav Chichev, Professor Irina Genova and briefly Hristo Karastoyanov.

Our second season is made possible via a project funded under the Culture Programme of the Sofia Municipality. Do tune in for our new episodes every two weeks from April to August, on our website [www.detectivepodcast.com](http://www.detectivepodcast.com), online in Dnevnik daily and on the radio waves, in Alarma show of the Hristo Botev channel.

You can subscribe to our podcast in all podcast applications, and you can also follow our Facebook page The Urban Detective where we will post images of all artwork mentioned on the show. The music to this episode is written by Angel Dodov. Excerpts from the *Manifesto of Futurism* are translated into Bulgarian by Neva Micheva, and those from *The Art of Noises* by Todor Karastoyanov. Until next time!

**Ending**

**Explanatory notes:**

The episode uses original recordings stored by The Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing at the University of Pennsylvania: *Definizione Di Futurismo* (1924), *La Battaglia Di Adrianopoli* (recorded 1924) by Luigi Russolo - *Risveglio Di Una Citta* (1913) and quotes from the *Manifesto of*

*Futurism* translated into Bulgarian by Neva Micheva, *The Art of Noises* in Bulgarian translation by Todor Karastoyanov, *The Bulgarian Airplane or How the Balkan Wars gave birth to Futurism* by Georgi Gospodinov and *An Italian Sensibility Born in Egypt* - an excerpt from Marinetti's memoirs published in "Literary Journal" translated by Neva Micheva.

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