

*N. Lysenko***POETICS OF CANTATA GENRE AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN
CHORAL WORKS BY S.S. PROKOFIEV**

The article covers historical and evolutionary ways of cantata genre establishment in Western European and Russian musical and historical tradition in addition to the peculiarities of its implementation in the poetics of choral works by S.S. Prokofiev. The cantata genre accompanying practically all the periods of composer's activity ("Seven, they are seven", "Aleksandr Nevskiy" and etc.) depicted not only the style specifics of his creative works but cultural and historical and spiritual quest of his era.

Keywords: cantata, "on purpose" cantata, choral works by S.S. Prokofiev, mythopoetics in the culture of Socialist realism.

In 1927 A.F. Losev stated in his research on the study of myth dialectics that this phenomenon is "... a category of thought and life being of transcendental necessity. ... It [a myth] is not a fiction, but includes the most severe and specific structure and is logically i.e. first of all dialectically necessary category of mind and existence in general" [12, p. 36-37]. The fact that this kind of research appeared was largely caused not only by rich experience of the author cited in the matters of spiritual and philosophic generalizations of world history and culture, but also their culture-bound items in the period of socialist realism establishment. According to A. Gangus the latter can be considered not only at aesthetics level and creative method, but "... finally as a "disguised religion", a form of subjective idealism, mystical religiosity" [15, p. 22], captured in the phenomena of "communist hagiography", "Sovietics", "archetypes of Soviet culture" in all type of diversity of their mythopoetic implementations [see in further detail about it: 18].

One of the most important places in the process of establishment of this type of culture belongs to the musical and historical tradition that played a significant part in its "great style" formation actively investigated in the national Art Studies and musicology within the last decades. According to I.S. Vorobiev "in the 1930s due to the doctrine implementation of socialist realism aesthetics into the art of music a genre system was created to most fully conform to the totalitarian goals and mythology. The hierarchy top in this system is given to the genres directly related to the poetic word, theatre in addition to the genres of descriptive music". When analyzing their typology within the framework of demand under the specific social and political conditions of Soviet reality in the first half of the XX century, the author concludes that first of all the area of cantata and oratorical music serves as a universal genre field as "these are cantatas and oratorios that have managed to naturally synthesize

democracy and vocal sense of rhythm in melodiousness (thus emphasizing the genre succession in the folk and household tradition), scale of symphonic evolution (that would meet the requirement to monumental, epic heroics), plot and descriptive specificity in theatrical music ... Finally, the meaning of cantatas and oratorios in the “great style” history was so great due to actually performing a “new religious mission” revealing the connection with the spiritual and religious music of the past” [5, p. 74, 77]. The demand on such a research perspective in relation to the national choral music of the stated period and other genre areas [see: 19, 1, 16, 3, 4 and etc.] determines that the topic of the given article is relevant. Its subject matter is focused not only on the investigation of evolutionary ways of cantata genre on the European musical and historic tradition, but on the way this genre projects its typology and semantics in coral works by S.S. Prokofiev as well.

A cantata is one of the most important genres in the European musical culture of the last four centuries. The etymology itself of its genre definition emphasizes the basic importance of singing, vocal in it. It should also be stated that the cantata genre is the subject of research and creative work of both musicians and literary scholars whose encyclopedic editions also include its definitions. In this case, first of all the emphasis is given on the conditions of genre existence and application defining its semantics: “A Cantata is a genre of poetic and musical piece performed on a solemn occasion... Its main line is official and religious praising” [8, p. 75].

In our opinion, the listed features also are largely traced to the root of its genre definition – cantus – singing, a song included into the term cantus choralis (a choral chant) capturing “the common name of traditional (canonized) single-voice chants in the Western Christian Church”. The stated base can also be found in the definitions of Gregorian chants: English – chant gregorian, plain chant; French – chant gregorien; Italian – canto gregoriano; Spanish – canto plano. The Protestant chants were initially called korrek canticum (Luther – Germany), on other countries – chant eclesiastique, Calvin cantique and etc. It is characteristic that this tradition has started using the very term “chant” much later [11, p. 42].

Thus, the Latin word “cantus” (singing, song) and all its derivatives since the Middle Ages have been primarily related in one way or another to the area of sacred Christian hymns “God worshiping and praising” which specifics has given the way to some extent for the cantata to develop in the future in addition to its closer genres (e.g. cant) in the Modern Times.

This emerged genre along with the emerged opera and oratorio simultaneously marked a new style to be approved that inclined to the synthesis of music and poetry, to a new expressive accompanied monody. To a large extent the emerged cantata was also caused by an active development in different types of vocal music known in Italian music culture as far back as in the XVI century, – chamber arias, songs with the lute, canzones, madrigals. As far back as in the beginning of the XVII century the collections of chamber vocal works for 1 – 4 voices accompanied by basso continuo generally called “Aria and cantata” were published in Italy (A. Grandi “Cantate et Arie”, 1620). Such cycles could also be defined as “Distinct music”, “New music”. Not being properly cantatas actually they anticipated its emergence. In the previously mentioned samples the term “cantata” rather meant belonging to the *vocal* creativity contrary to a sonata as a purely *instrumental* composition.

By the beginning of XVIII century the content and semantic varieties of cantata genre had also been determined namely social (lyrical, formal, greeting) and spiritual (philosophic, instructive). The creativity of Italian composers is characterized by preferential interest in the social type of the genre. The spiritual cantata was greatly stimulated to develop exactly in Germany as it turned out to be closely linked with the specifics of Protestant liturgical worship. On the one hand German spiritual cantata in the works of J.S. Bach, his predecessors and contemporaries absorbing the best achievements of musical art of its era was represented as a type of music free of strict church regulation and corresponding genre canons, on the other hand it had a deep ground connection with the religious and cultural traditions of Protestant Germany, its national consciousness.

The importance of the cantata pales into insignificance conceding the right of leadership to opera and stage, chamber and vocal genres and extremely overgrown field of instrumental music in the creative works of Western European composers of the XIX century. The area of choral music in the creative works of the Romantics mainly focused on a large-scale oratorio or (choral work by Franz Liszt) or transformed spiritual genres such as Mass, Requiem, and others.

The history of Russian cantata is stamped with originality and uniqueness. It is obvious that the genre scope of cantata and oratorio music in Russian musical culture turned out to be successive from the Western European and first of all Italian tradition that became an integral part of the process for the common European experience to assimilate in Russian culture as a whole in the XVIII century. At the same time, natural and organic perception of

the stated creative genre area to a large extent was caused by the richest traditions of Russian vocal and choral art that reached its unbelievable zenith in this period. The forms of its manifestation could be distinguished as rich and diverse. They included the assimilated elements of folk songs in the adaptation form of authentic folk melodies and their free creative interpretation, solemn style of Peter Choral chant and finally majestic monumental forms of part choral singing and the genre of spiritual choral concert formed on its basis.

The cantata creation in Russian culture belongs to the XVIII century. Its early examples are closely linked with major significant events in the history of Russia and the life in the imperial court. The demand for this genre, the variety of its practical purposes, respectively, generates its versions. The researcher E.E. Yazovitskaya marks two main types of cantatas – *solo* and *choral*. Herewith the *solo* cantata “... was designed to serve the life of the royal court and courtiers: the birth of heirs, the wedding days, the arrival of noble guests, anniversaries and etc. Praised virtues of the august personage were personified in the cantata lyrics depicted as the Gods of ancient mythology ... or in the form of abstract concepts of love, hatred, wisdom, courage, bravery, glory, genius, good, evil, and etc. The praise covered with a heavy veil of allegory and hyperbole reached its extremes” [20, p. 145].

Genre features of *choral* cantatas had completely different orientations as they were closely associated with the holidays of national importance. “Such celebrations varied by great glamour and glitter, accompanied by “illumination”, fireworks, readings of welcoming speeches, congratulatory odes and etc. The best masters of the word, painting, fireworks took part in them. The nature of the performed music should meet all these events. The huge choral masses of several hundred people, doubled orchestras with the bell ringing and cannon firing created the desired effect of power and grandeur” [20, p. 145]. The similar compositions were also well-known in the history of Russian music as the cantata “on purpose” [see. in greater detail: 10]. The choral cantata has always been focused on a large mass audience causing the public means of musical expression and diversity of intonation origins to be chosen where folk-song expressions and heroic fanfare intonations of panegyric chants of Peter's time and the elements of Orthodox church and singing were quite appropriate. The latter largely specified the lyrics of choral cantatas often borrowed from church hymns and psalms. It should be noted that the typology of the genre in its solo and choral versions made the Soviet cantata as relevant in the 20s - 30s of the XX century only under different social and historical realities. (see below).

The genre specific character of Russian cantata of the XVIII century originally combining secularity and spirituality makes this genre ranked as the most revealing phenomena of Russian culture of this period. “ The period of Peter's reforms imbued with pathos secularization parted the previously unified Russian culture (a synthetic “culture-faith”) into the “culture” and “faith”. The consequence of the ecclesiastical reforms was “the most important secular institutions were sanctified ... and a new and specific phenomenon was generated for the Russian culture – “the secular holiness” ...the monarch to be sanctified” [14, p. 454], it should be mentioned that it would preserve the domestic cantata to be relevant both in the XIX century (the solemn and praising cantata could be seen in the works of M. Balakirev, A. Glazunov, P. Tchaikovsky, etc .; the lyrical and philosophic cantata could be found in the works of S.I. Taneyev as a generalization of the spiritual and moral quests of the Russian intellectuals in the late XIX – early XX centuries) and the first half of the XXth century touching the spiritual and aesthetic aspects of Socialist Realism culture.

In such a way the generalized typology, semantics and evolutionary ways in the development of the cantata genre in the European musical and historical tradition allows us to study it as a so called “intermediate” genre binding religious and secular traditions. Ideological preaching pathos of the cantata as a high genre of spiritual and ethical nature largely specifies the base for its lyrics, appealing to Biblical primary sources and their peers, as well as supported by typical universally valid means of musical expression representing a particular epoch, its social and historical, national and spiritual realities. The stated qualities remain important in the XX century as well. In the latter case the cantatas by S.S. Prokofiev are among the most outstanding examples of the genre.

One of the features that defines a genius is that he is inexhaustible. Therefore it is no coincidence that the hugest collection of works devoted to the creative work of this classicist in Russian music, new studies being constantly added are focused on the comprehension of multidimensional meanings of his heritage, thereby according to T. V. Safonov forming “new “hermeneutic circles” approaching us to a deeper and adequate understanding” of the creative work by this author [16, p. 3]. The cantatas by S.S. Prokofiev (in addition to other works by the composer) performs its most important part. According to E. Voytsitskaya “only now, at a certain historical distance it is time to study the phenomenon of Soviet Prokofiev” [4, p. 115]. The vast study of Prokofiev considers (in the framework of private

issues) only a few choral works by the composer, where “an era document”, partly Aesop “dispel” of Stalinism and etc. are often seen. However, not only integrally generalized approach to the study of the cantata oratorio heritage by S. Prokofiev, retaining not only his genre and style evolution, but mythopoetical, archetypal, spiritual and semantic basis of the stated part of the composer are left behind.

The cantata genre accompanies almost all periods of S.S. Prokofiev creative activity. As a result 1917-1918 marked the created cantata “Seven, they are seven” for a dramatic tenor, mixed choir and orchestra (or. 30), which along with the “Scythian Suite” became one of the outstanding works of the young composer. The “ritual” and pagan nature of this work was largely influenced by the text of “Chaldean spell” by K. Balmont (updated by S.S. Prokofiev himself) taken from the collection “The calls of antiquity”. “The image of the dull enthusiastic pagan cult action-conspiracy depicted Russian spiritual atmosphere within the period of revolution” [9, p. 16]. Prokofiev himself called his work on the cantata as a “revelation”. Feeling as a composer “beyond time and space” he correlated the earliest periods of the world history with dramatic events of the early XX century. Therefore, according to I. Vishnevetzkiy “to find a clue to the fact that was awakened in Mesopotamia four thousand years before us or even earlier, and, if possible, to exorcise the awakened, to return it to its original place, it meant to place back the unsettled world, to correct the universe” [2, p. 183]. The artistic implementation of this idea also causes connotations with the works by many composer’s fellow men, in particular, A. Scriabin and his unfulfilled conception “Mystery”. It should also be stated that the indicated approach is also related to the ways how the cantata-oratorio genre scope developed, which typology and semantics, according to I. Vorobyov, converges with the Mass and liturgy in the first half of the twentieth century in its urge for transformation of the world and mankind [5, p. 78].

The subsequent revival of the cantata genre in the works by S.S. Prokofiev deals with 30-40s, i.e. with a period when the composer comes back to his homeland and gets involved in the process of creating a culture nowadays generally referred to as the term of “sovietics”. The latter refers to “the works depicting the peculiarities of Soviet aesthetics with the topics, symbols, propaganda of timely issues, praising of the heroes and events of the Soviet period” [4, p. 115]. However, according to E. Voytsitskaya “Sergei Prokofiev was a special citizen of the Soviet country. He was distinguished not only by composer's talent, but the experience gained in the pre-Soviet “years of adventures” causing a major impact on the formation of

the composer's personality. ... It is important that not being present at the process of painful transformation of the Russian Empire into the Soviet one, the composer could probably preserve his creative personality, mental health, and a common sense to the events in his own country" [4, p. 114]. At the same time, without altering his creative credo in the relentless urge for the new, S.S. Prokofiev always maintained a deep ground connection with the cultural historical and spiritual traditions of the past always forming a significant semantic "layer" in his works of the stated period.

The mentioned above also correlates with the poetics of his cantata "Alexander Nevsky" created, on the one hand, at the intersection of creative discoveries in stage directions by S. Eisenstein and film music by S.S. Prokofiev, on the other hand appealing to Russian cultural and historical and spiritual and ethical tradition created over many centuries and as one of the most significant giving the interest in the history, heroic and patriotic topics, in the topic of Fatherland protection and its spiritual values, good and evil confrontation and etc. It is also descriptive that the author appeals to the charismatic personality of Alexander Nevsky famous not only for its strategic victories, but also as canonized bringing to the cantata not only certain historical, but also hagiographic character. At the same time, the prophetic events in the history of the era of Alexander Nevsky were related by composer's contemporaries to the events of the late 30s of the XX century. "The result of the legendary battle described in "Alexander Nevsky" was predetermined by an unshakable faith filling this musical score with the triumph of good principles of life. It was artistically supported by strong ties with the classical traditions and the national and epic solidity. And together with all the "history" this oratorio story predicted the scenario of the Great Patriotic War with amazing accuracy. The only difference was that the real war turned out to be not so quick and easy" [6, p. 80].

A similar ideological and semantic orientation also characterizes the cantata "Ballad of an unknown boy" (or. 9) for the lyrics by P. Antokolsky created in the midst of the Great Patriotic War (1942-1943). As the previous work of art, on the one hand, this essay faces the historical realities of the Second World War represented as a dramatic confrontation of war topics, mocked childhood, orphanage. On the other hand, the image and plot and semantics of the "Ballad ..." are addressed to deep archetypes of the world culture dating back to the Old Testament idea of vengeance ("eye for eye ...), not physical strength (which the cantata character being "a boy" does not possess at all) prevails in the confrontation with the enemy

but the spirit powers, finally, correlated dramatic events of the character's fate with the initiation becoming the source of his early adulthood. This cantata is combined with the previous work of art ("Alexander Nevsky") by common dramaturgical principles based on the contrast of a generalized image of the enemy ("stranger") and "close ones" depicted in the intonation and genre rhythmic antinomies of instrumental and dissonant and fundamentally non-melodious complex and strongly marked melody, vocals supported by the best traditions of Russian musical and historical tradition and typology of the cantata prevailing in Western Europe (see above).

The cantata genre is also represented in the works of S.S. Prokofiev through special "ordered" musical scores among which "Peroration" (1939) and "Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October" (1936) stand out. The mentioned compositions became the subject of intense debates over the last few decades devoted to aesthetic evaluation of the Soviet cultural patterns in the era of social realism. The history of these works to be created, in the first case is related to Stalin's 60th anniversary, secondly to the anniversary of the October, indicates the connection with rather significant cantata "on purpose" genre for the history of Russian music (see above.). The textual basis for these works is also indicative. In the "Peroration" it is focused on stylization of folk poetry with the generalized author indication to the diverse national sources (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Kumyk, Kurdish and etc.). The quoted works by Lenin, Marx and Stalin's speech became the base for the lyrics of the "Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October". In the latter case, the appeal to these texts can be perceived not only at the level of "the contemporary sign", but also as a typological "sign" of the cantata genre as it is. Moreover, as stated above, in the previous stages of its development the cantata was often connected with the biblical texts or their poetic "renderings" while in the opus by S.S. Prokofiev it is linked with the works of the "Marxism classicists" to some extent replacing the Bible in the culture of social realism (on the level of a "new religious mission").

Therewith the mentioned composer's cantatas are recognized as absolute masterpieces of his heritage where an artistic and professional "standard" is quite high, but the expressions are not so unique in meaning and character. According to E. Voytsitskaya they bear the stamp of his difficult times, one of the defining features of which was "duplicity" [3, p. 200]. The essence of the latter is also accompanied with the "creative and playful essence of S. Prokofiev [personality] as a brave daring artist who managed to save individuality under

totalitarianism even in the genre of praise ritually aimed at bowing to the “triple alliance of socialist realism - party spirit - nationality” [17, p. 67].

The “Cantata to the 20th anniversary of the October” created in one of the most difficult periods of the Soviet history” (or. 74) by S. Prokofiev became an important document in the musical culture of his time. “The history how the work was created is full of “creative research and uncreative accidents” (D.S. Likhachev); in some moments it looks like a fascinating detective story, perhaps, without a final conclusion up to this day” [7, p. 96].

The semantic poetic and intonation aspects of the “Peroration” are equally controversial, which appears to be as a hymn praising cantata all in all “does not meet the axiology of the “Soviet / anti-Soviet” artistic discourse”. It bears a significant part of lyrical and melodic factor that allows us to bring this work to the tops of the mature Prokofiev style aimed to search for a “new simplicity”. Reflecting on the ratio of lyrical and philosophical and satirical principles in this cantata at a “semantic heterophony” level A. Liakhovich concludes that the first factor dominates in it: the “Peroration” impresses the imagination not with its satire, not irony, but sublime and soulful lyrics, poetry and sensual beauty of the reviving world ... This world is so valuable and so perfect in itself that its part can not be reduced to the “disguise” of satirical hints; on the contrary, the hints themselves are perceived as a slightly noticed shadow on the background of dazzling perfection of the world” [13]. This type of design and its creative fulfillment are not only a declaration of the hierarchy in “Prokofiev axiology”, but also show the deep connection of his creative works with semantic and typological features of the cantata genre, which at various times anyway always aimed at high topics of spiritual and moral order meaning its proximity, and sometimes a direct link with the cult and religious tradition (see above).

“Neither war nor revolution could overthrow the leader in the fugue and invert the harmonic regime”, - wrote S. Prokofiev in 1924 ..., referring to the lack of purely historical reasons for the profound changes in the art” [2, p.. 680] and it should be added about a deep understanding of the inviolability of the higher spiritual laws of the human life so multifaceted depicted in the poetics of his cantatas.

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