

VERISMO AND SYMBOLISM IN PIANO PLAYS OF ODESSA

**COMPOSERS IN THE 1950-S – 1960-S (BY EXAMPLE OF WORKS MADE BY
K.DANKEVICH AND S.ORFEEV)**

This work enlightens, by the example of K. Dankevich and S. Orfeev – talented composers from Odessa, jointly with analysis of their most popular compositions, their stylistic trends having a special cultural context of contingency with musical traditions of Odessa, with simultaneous response to stylistic paradigm of the Ukrainian art in whole and trends of the corresponding historical periods. Their works bear a syntactic nature of national Ukrainian phenomena: K. Dankevich, being adherent to the Ukrainian ideas, has no direct contact with the Ukrainian folklore, while S. Orfeev, having Russian origin, quotes folklore materials of various nations, including the Ukrainian, Russian and Moldavian ones. Both composers emphasize the contrast polyphonic motives in structure of their works, both comply with moderate modern style of verismo school (K. Dankevich) and neoclassicism in soft form (S. Orfeev).

Keywords: verismo, symbolism, piano style, style of musical epoch, musical genre.

Vitality of this article is provided by relevance of works made by K.Dankevich and S.Orfeev in musical and artistic legacy of Ukraine (the 20th century) as well as by objective involvement of the aforesaid compositions in displaying the regional style and image of Odessa as the largest musical center of the Southern Ukraine. This aspect of understanding essence of works made by K.Dankevich, S.Orfeev and other outstanding artists of the Southern Ukraine cause a special interest for the author of this article – a musician from multinational China. Here not only the global sense figures play vital role (e.g. represented by Xi Xinhai, Ne Era, Tang Dung and other authors), but also those who impressed the unique features of Chinese regions and provinces, e.g. Shu Longma in organic correlation with Taiwan, as a historically localized part of Chinese state cultural range. Piano compositions, the nature whereof highlights their penetration into repertoire of professional musicians from various countries, has preserved general and supranational stylistic features, including their correlation with any artistic trends. But even the genre values of piano music display clearly the local stylistic features determined by stylistic intersections which differ from global and general artistic preferences.

Purpose of this article is familiarization with works of talented composers K.Dankevich and S.Orfeev from Odessa, by the example of their most popular

compositions among audience and musicians, stylistic preferences having a special cultural context of correlation with musical traditions of Odessa with simultaneous response to stylistic paradigms of the whole Ukrainian art and echoes of the corresponding historical period. Its certain tasks include systematization of the data about cultural typologies and their displaying in the collective subject of Odessa, as compared with all-Ukrainian artistic positions, as well as analysis of *the Poem for Piano* (by K.Dankevich) and *the Album for Youth* (by S.Orfeev) in correlation with and differences between general artistic typologies.

The article is based on the following methods: intonation approach of B.Asafiev's school [4] in Ukraine, including works of the Odessa musicological school representatives [1; 10; 11], as well as approbation of correlation between Chinese artistic and musical projections of such approach [6].

Object of the research shall be the national paradigm of the Ukrainian music (the 20th century), while subject of the research shall be the piano deflection of the aforesaid typologies. Scientific innovation is the theoretical independence of setting the issue of general and local deflection of stylistic typologies for a certain period (i.e. for the middle of the 20th century). Moreover, another innovation is an approbation of B.Asafiev's idea of the *intonation glossary of the period*, based on the piano works of such stylistically different authors as K.Dankevich and S.Orfeev. Practical importance of the work is determined by its correlation with demands of pianists' playing practice, the opportunity of using these approaches in enrichment of theoretical and historical studying courses (including the history of music) in high and higher musical schools.

As classified by Yu.Lotman [7], cultural types have distinct syntactic and semantic values and create typological antitheses: the first ones cultivate their artificiality in behaviour psychology while the second ones reproduce natural guidelines in artificiality of cultural activity. Individuals grown in the *syntactic* city environment have some psychological and cultural inherent qualities, the most outstanding is hyperartistism (i.e. highly expressed autonomy of artistic psychology, including national features realized in their activity quite ambiguously). According to V.Mironov's classification [1], N.Ogrenuch, S.Stolyarskiy, K.Dankevich and other artists had expressive features of *Native Odessa Habitants*. Of course such list should be continued by S.Orfeev, treated as

successor of K.Dankevich both as Head of Odessa Musical Academy (since 1951) and in composing practice.

K.Dankevich's position in respect of S.Orfeev and the latter's devotion to his predecessor's ideas both in administrative and creative work is deemed as *syntactic*, according to Lotman's typological classification, because both musicians were different from the points of view of appearance, behavior and creative styles. Dankevich is the successor of dedicated and demonstrative Ukrainian patriotism, his father's son (his father was keen of Revolution and was killed in the struggle for its ideas). Orfeev's parents were priests. Revolution was a merely historical fact for all his family while his Russian ancestors had neither Ukrainian mentality nor Ukrainian actions. As stated by my teachers who knew Dankevich personally, he was enormous, mobile and emotional, while Orfeev was small, sluggish (especially due to the wounded leg), always spoke quietly and detachedly.

But what was the common both for Dankevich and Orfeev – their devotion to art, lots of artistism in communication (both of them liked holidays, jokes, funs, subtle phrases). Both of them supported their colleagues offended by the power bodies (see the memories of Y.Malyukova-Sidorenko about K.Dankevich [12, page 223], namely about invitation of V.Malishevskiy in Odessa, despite the official positions of the 1950-s etc.). Unfortunately, both of them died tragically, without being recognized for merits before Motherland. From the musical point of view, even despite stylistic difference of their works, both authors *highlighted the contrast polyphonic components, counterpoint lines*, even though both of them used special imitative polyphonic forms quite carefully.

The Poem for Piano (by K.Dankevich) made a brilliant contribution to repertoire of pianists and displayed extraordinary possibilities of the composer recognized, inter alia, as the player, the winner of the All-Ukrainian Contest of Pianists even in the 1930-s. Features of the Poem (the range of four octaves from the first bar) reflected the composer's seat whose large body required for straddling arms.

This play is stated as the Poem, despite generic, tempo and tonal shifts (typical of Ferenc Liszt) are made within the short scope of 46 bars. But monothematism, such as melodically burst shift to the tritone f-ces (1st theme, 4th bar), d-gis (2nd theme, 15th bar), in the harmony with generic oppositions (cantilena in the 1st theme, in Wagner's and

Skryabin's style, dramatic 2nd theme of nocturne style) corresponds to the canons of poem, as well as tonal dynamics in the 1st section Andante amoroso Des-b and reprise Des-as (expositional and reprise tonal and modal adhesion in Chopin's style). But the *short composition* of principally different themes (Andante amoroso - Animato e molto espressivo) shows such stylistic source of such *dramatic laconism* as verismo.

The concept of verismo is usually correlated with operas of Italian composers and representatives of other national schools, such as Czech verismo by L.Janacek [14, page 622], veristic compositions by S.Rakhmaninov [5, page 109] and others (see Lu Binqian [8, pages 143-185]). Veristic operas by K.Dankevich were mentioned in the articles of Ye.Markova [10, pages 15-18]; therefore, under the psychological principle of the unified display of person in the certain activity, veristic features are shown in other genres, besides opera. Veristic short composition generating the special poetic vocals in single/double-section operas (P.Mascagni, R.Leoncavallo etc.) has unique reflections in the instrumental music. Such sincere veristic quote is typical of the main culmination of *The Poem for Piano* (by K.Dankevich), namely the 24th – 27th bars, with typical parallelisms of the seventh chords in *ff* and a leap emphasized with broken rhythm.

Dramatic conflict of themes is represented by a short introduction (three bars) where the bass line shows a hard chromatic splitting of tetrachord in the following sequence: de-c-h-b-(g-)as, in respect whereof a chromatic line in the upper voice (the 3rd bar) makes up a free canonic imitative figure, i.e. rhetorically *enlarging* the aforesaid bass line (a motive of Repentance based on catabasis figure). Polymotive texture of *all* the themes shows a special distinctive feature of Dankevich (similar to S.Orfeev with multiple polymelodisms).

Reverse tempo of romantic poem (Andante in the boundaries, while the plays of Ferenc Liszt have such feature in the middle – Allegro) is obviously similar to arioso-opera structures and thus creates features of primary sonatas as an instrumental reproduction of aria [13, page 194], correlative with piano reproduction of the play image.

The Album for Youth (by S.Orfeev, devoted to his sons Nikolay and Vladimir) consists of the cycle of mainly wordless songs inheriting the Biedermeier's demonstrative simplification but featuring the ambiguous symbols of musical archetypical impregnations showing the artistic polysemy of clear images – for example,

the Sheet from Album opening a series of pieces (in the form of 2/4-bar waltz) and developing the P.Tchaikovskiy's ideas of the Russian Waltz based on differences of birhythmic feature, with regular low voices and melodically free rhythms of the upper voice.

Of course, the idea of *the Album for Youth* was influenced by works of V.Rebikov – a Moscow composer, successor of P.Tchaikovskiy, devoted to the moderate symbolist modern. V.Rebikov lived and worked in Odessa but was not recognized among the native composers for the ideological reasons. Of course, S.Orfeev was familiar with compositions of his compatriot from Odessa; even if he was unable to refer thereto directly, he stylized his thin chamber style with great pleasure but could face a lot of critics due to monumental forms and genres typical of the official art.

As of the high spiritual symbols, there is a plenty thereof in S.Orfeev's compositions, including in the first piece of *the Album*. It includes the descending chromatic bass line catabasis with chromatic hardness, displaying the ideas of Repentance/Redemption from the period of ancient church music: d-cis-c-h-b-a in the 1st – 7th bars. Such image was obviously important for Orfeev because he used such approach thoroughly almost of each piece of *the Album* (see the coda of main theme of the 2nd piece in the 5th – 8th and 22th – 24th bars, low voice in the 3rd piece (the Joke – without chromatisms), in central theme of the 4th piece (the Waltz) etc., till the beginning of the 10th piece (the Typical Piece)).

Orfeev's devotion to the ideas of Repentance/Redemption in his light pieces is not accidental: he had a narrow escape from repressions in the 1930-s due to church origin of his name (Serafim) and his surname (derived from the Orpheus). He was a famous singer-martyr associated with Jesus Christ [15, pages 90-91], he faced the hardest conditions of the war (despite that musicians of his qualification were free from call-up) and many other hardships. Everything is a history of the country and people having lots of common features with history of my Motherland – China, history of professional musicians who faced a hard way to recognition in the national society.

Besides of catabasis and anabasis lines (typically used by N.Leontovich, highly appreciated by Orfeev and being treated as a contributor of counterpoints in the national Ukrainian traditions) which also symbolized the Way to Perfection (see the Theme No.2,

the Canon), Orfeev also highlighted other high expressions, such as the motive of Circle (a symbol of the Universe, the God [6, pages 25-27]) different from the initial motive No. 3, 4, 5, 9; these pieces have unserious themes (the Joke (No.3), the Waltz (No.4), the Prelude (No.5), the Playing Tag (No.9)), but such light images bear the value of Youth blessed by the composer – father of two children (he was proud of his sons and hoped that they would support spiritual principles of the family; see the abovementioned devotion to his eldest and middle sons – Nikolay and Vladimir).

The Album for Youth (by S.Orfeev) consists of recommendatory (not mandatory) performance of all the pieces. But a certain suite-shaft is constructed by means of suite variations of ancient harpsichord players opened by the sacral Prelude (from the point of view of the French tradition). Such types of compositions (a classical example – Pièces by F.Couperin) were used as variation of the rhetoric theme by means of essential interval composition originated from typical melodies. In *the Album for Youth* (by S.Orfeev) such penetrating and leading motive is a tertial line (see the tertias in Plays No.1 and No.7 (the Moldavian Cradlesong), customs displayed in pieces the Joke (No.3), the Waltz (No.4), the Prelude (No.5), the Ukrainian Folk Song (No.8), while motive boundaries collected to the thematic melody are the following: the Canon (No.2), the Round Dance (No.6), the Playing Tag (No.9), the Typical Piece (No.10).

It should be noted that the second – small tertia means an interval boundary of standard and modest intonation while the great tertia shows tension (i.e. prevailing vertical with minor tertia in madrigal and old church music while the major tertia coincides with such words as *suffering, death*). In the ancient French music for harpsichord the themes emphasizing a melody based on second or tertia played essential role and demonstrated a modest and tender musical expression.

Tertial base of the vertical highlighted with cognominal, parallel and single-tertial compositions, jointly with tertial guidelines of melodic steps, created tonal mini-series; therefore Orfeev's works were similar to heritage of Debussy and protoserial works of harpsichordists. Orfeev recognized the French spirit of saloon culture (see S.Artamonov, [3, pages 191-193]) by placing *the Sheet from Album* at the beginning of cycle. This piece highlights the principle of prelude. Even the name itself (*the Sheet from Album*) is symbolic and typological, since it shows correlation with the culture of artistic

aristocratic saloons determining many advantages of developing the national art both in Ukraine and Russia (see O.Andriyanova [1]). It shows correlation between the first (basic psychological) piece and the Russian Waltz image, while the last piece highlights *avocalency* of melodic motion. But instrumental *accord* sequences in the melody detach (by means of arpeggio) direct modeling of a wordless song which will be disclosed completely in pieces No. 2, 6, 7, 8, 10.

Dispersion of homophonic and harmonic structure (except No.1) is shown in *the Prelude* (No.5). This piece opens a so-called second small cycle ion *the Album*; first small cycle consists of pieces No. 1-4 having the common tonic attachment as follows: three pieces (No. 1, 3, 4) are based on *a*-sound as a melodic basis (No. 1, 4), harmonic tonic (No. 3), similar to basis of this sound in “Kamarinskaya” by Glinka.

Moreover, first four pieces of *the Album for Youth* (by S.Orfeev) follow each other like an old sonata-suite since the polyphonic piece No.2 (the Canon) shows implication to “serious church music”, as highlighted by symbolic tonality E-dur in the romantic traditions of ideal tonality (as compared with E-dur of the Second Etude No.10 by Chopin – the composer highly appreciated by Orfeev). It should be noted also that the piece reproduced the bi-partial form No.2 (Bach) where the first part (Bo.2, 1st – 8th bars) shows the theme exposition while the second part shows the theme development (9th – 21st bars) with the code reprise of the last four bars (21st – 24th bars).

In the piece No.3 (*the Joke*) there is a scherzo in 2/4 supported by a clear tri-partial reprise, while the piece No.4 (*the Waltz*) has a rondo structure typical of final parts of both cycles. Since in the bi-partial reprise (1st – 32nd bars: part 1, 33rd – 64th bars: part 2, where 57th – 64th bars show the short reprise of part 1) the refrain cadence (9th – 16th bars) confronts the theme development (4th – 8th and 20th – 24th bars) and “goes through” (41th – 48th bars) the development as such (33rd – 40th and 49th – 56th bars). Piece No.10 in the 6-partial small cycle has a similar structure (rondo): first theme (1st – 16th bars) is repeated 4 times (see the 1st – 16th, 29th – 36th, 77th – 92nd and 105th – 112th bars) while the scherzo fragment (17th – 28th and 93th – 104th bars) and Poco meno mosso, Più mosso (37th – 76th and 114th – 117th bars) are introduced as episodes.

In the second small cycle pieces No.6 (*the Round Dance*) and No.8 (*the Ukrainian Folk Song*) have a polyphonized construction, featuring serious church motives. All the

other pieces of the aforesaid 6-partial small cycle have forms of either tri-partial reprise (No.5, 7), or bi-partial reprise (No.6, 9), or variation (No.8).

Thus, S.Orfeev has trends to prosymbolist and soft neoclassic style of Biedermeier, as compared to definite verist trends of K.Dankevich (with compressed poetic structure and tempo transformation, like B.Bartok, S.Prokofiev etc.). Both authors have clear traces of contrast polyphonic and polymelodic features, in parallel to discoveries of N.Leontovich, showing their opposition to the Ukrainian consecutive modern style of B.Lyatoshinskiy and his strict folkloristic features.

According to analysis of famous works by K.Dankevich and S.Orfeev:

1) Syntactical features of the national Ukrainian phenomena: K. Dankevich, being keen on the Ukrainian ideas, has no direct contact with the Ukrainian folklore while S. Orfeev, having Russian ancestors, quotes folklore materials from various nations, including the Ukrainian, Russian and Moldavian ones;

2) Both composers specially emphasize polyphonic contrast in features of their compositions; both are adherent to the moderate modern of verismo school (K.Dankevich) and neoclassicism soft form (S.Orfeev);

3) Both composers have a trend to the European-style demonstrative expressions: K.Dankevich is grounded on the opera reproduction (piano) while S.Orfeev prefers the chamber mood, as stated in heading of the publication.

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