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GENRE AND STYLE PECULIARITIES OF CONCERTO GROSSO FOR VIOLIN AND STRING ORCHESTRA BY IULIIA GOMELSKAYA

The work of a known Odessa composer Iuliya Gomelskaya is one of few examples of this genre in the Ukrainian music and honorably represents Concerto grosso in the world music. The used modern musical language and being novel in its quintessence, Concerto grosso does not break away from tradition peculiar for this genre and possess a latent program revealed in the course of analysis and thoughtful listening.

Keywords: Iuliia Gomelskaya, Concerto grosso, violin, orchestra.

The objective of this paper is to analyze Concerto grosso for violin and string orchestra by a known Odessa composer Iuliia Gomelskaya that is one of few specimens in this genre in Ukraine. The concert was created in 2009.

As it is known, concerto grosso emerged in the last quarter of the XVII century on the basis of the trio sonata, due to extension of its scoring, and the other genres as well: vocal-instrumental concert of the Venetian school on the verge of XVI – XVII centuries and organ and orchestra canzone of the same centuries. Thus, concerto grosso has various roots thereby displaying its synthetic gist which is remarkably indicative of the Baroque time when this genre emerged and reached its culmination. As I.M. Yampolskyi indicates in the Musical Encyclopaedia, «the first work based on Concerto grosso principles was written by Alessandro Stradella (named “Sinfonia...”, 1976)... The first perfect paragon of Concerto grosso was created by A. Corelli (about 1680, published posthumously in 1714)» [3, p. 932]. Concerto grosso by Arcangelo Corelli present cyclic musical works consisting of four – seven parts contrasting to each other. Performing musicians are clearly divided into two unequal groups: concert instruments (two violins and string bass – bass viol) and the main orchestra group (ripieno – two violin parts, altos and string basses with possible participation of a keyboard instrument - a clavecin or an organ included in the basso continuo group) that can play same parts either together or be opposed to each other. To our mind, A. Shering (the first researcher of the instrumental orchestra): «We usually speak about concerto grosso where comparison of two sound masses becomes a principle» [cited as per: 2, p. 8].

As regards the musical form and correlation of the instrumental parts, there is no any stability in concerto grosso, on the contrary, the variety is cultivated. The string bass role in the concertino group might be very modest with the leading role given to both violins; in the mutual play concertino and ripieni may run into one another but may also be considerably different, etc. In context of our paper it is essential to note that the case is possible when concert of only one instrument out of the concertino group takes place; it creates the concert texture for the soloing instrument with the orchestra – such correlation of the instruments is vividly seen in G. Torelli's concerti grosso op. 8 (published in 1709). The result is «the change value», as the baroque theoretician H. Wölfflin defined it, which was so typical of this époque [see: 2, p. 21].

There existed still another variety of the big concert where «the concerting group sort of dissolves in the general composition coming in front only in the required moments» [1, p. 45]. Apparently, the orchestra composition and texture diversity in concerto grosso is a style feature of this genre.

It is worthwhile to mention as well that concerto grosso emerged, as we have already pointed out, in the baroque epoch when, on the one part, a personality becomes the central figure, and, on the other part, there is «a feeling of the irreversible farewell to the past and an end of the Renaissance ideals. The historical events proper seem to destruct the harmony of the world and the man...» [2, p. 9]. The baroque epochs is known for its tragic perception of the world.

Somewhat later than concerto grosso (on the verge of the XVII – XVIII centuries) a solo concerto for violin with orchestra appears – it occurs in G. Torelli's creations and, particularly, with A. Vivaldi, when just one soloing instrument is opposed to the orchestra. However, in this orchestra type we also see the instances when the orchestra instruments are soloing in opposition to the orchestra which makes it closer to concerto grosso. A concert for a soloing instrument and the orchestra pays way for assertion of classicism – this concert type is very specific for the mature period of classicism. In the second half of the XVIII and in the XIX centuries concerto grosso vanishes from the composers' works completely and is restored in the XX century within the frame of the neoclassicism; however, later this genre, according to its

figurative content, is no longer restrained by its affiliation to any specific direction but remains as such due to external signs only: composition of instruments and organization of texture. Concerto grosso appears in creative works of M. Reger, G. Kaminsky, O. Respighi, E. Krenek, B. Martinů, A. Casella, V. Khaèt, E. Bloch, K. Penderetsky, Ph. Glass, M. Chekalin, A. Schnittke... The concerto gross genre adjoins also the so-called «Ebonite concert» of I. Stravinsky and the concerts of W. Fortner and E. Tamberg... Quite often the genre name concerto grosso is added with a specification connected with composition of the concerto group of instruments or accentuation of the soloist. So, that is the case with V. Khaèt's (who, incidentally, studied in Odessa Conservatory and graduated from it in its first cohort) Concerto grosso for piano and orchestra and K. Penderetsky's Concerto grosso for three bass-violas and orchestra.

Ukrainian composers resorted to concerto gross not frequently: the works of that genre can be found with G. Taranov, V. Gubarenko, D. Kitsenko and Z. Almashi; the Odessa composer A. Krasotov created Concertino grosso for bass-violola duet and chamber orchestra in five parts.

The genre name of Iu. Gomelskaya concert - Concerto grosso for violin and strings is not, as we see, an exclusion; in order to specify and understand the genre specificity of the Concerto it is necessary to pay special attention to analysis of the correlations between the concerting instrument with the orchestra and between the strings' parts between themselves. The used composition of instruments has been not accidentally: we shall show that such composition is predetermined by the Concerto concept. Right away attention is attracted to contraposition of the soloing violin and the strings group. The soloing violin part is associated with a person who seeks, cogitates, suffers, loves and struggles – this person is opposed to the environment which is impersonated by the strings group of the orchestra. The Concerto is filled with struggle full of drama and all kinds of peripeteia. This concept has a distinct romantic colouring; taking into account the means of modern musical language laid in the basis of the Concerto, it is possible to define the art movement it belongs to: it is a synthesis of neo-romanticism (by concept) and expressionism (by means of musical expression) that are

organically blended in the work. According to its genre, the Concerto is lyrical and dramatic piece of music.

The Concerto consists of a single-movement which is rather typical for the contemporary specimen not only of this genre but also of those pieces that are of a cyclic nature. However, beginning from F. Liszt's symphonic poems that are single-movement from the musical form viewpoint (having a latent cyclicity), widely spread in the XX century music are single-movement pieces – symphonies, symphonettes, sonatas, concerts and various by their composition chamber and instrumental genres. The Concerto is written in a free form comprising five sections, however, there are leit-intonations and musical and thematic repetitions that bond together the form of the work as a whole and create certain drama based upon alternation of episodes of the soloing violin only and the strings group of the orchestra together with it. The soloing violin may play solo, i.e., at pausation of the orchestra, and dominate in the total sound (the orchestra accompanies), be an equal component in opposition to the *ripieno*. In particular, rather rare instances, the orchestra comes to the fore when the soloist makes a pause. The orchestra parts are equal: they are equally given important themes and the great role is attached to polyphonic techniques that exist in all orchestra parts. This is, also, a specific feature of *concerto grosso* genre as distinct from the concert for a soloing instrument with the orchestra.

Iu. Gomelskaya Concerto is based on tonal thinking with the use of an extended tonality which was so peculiar for harmony of the XX century.

From the very beginning the Concerto reveals a strong conflicting opposition of the soloing violin and the strings (Example 1), and the composer emphasizes it with all means of expression: after the three-beat voice of the violin solo with the tearing rise that is associated with a desire to break away from the negative environment, which is represented by a shake on *as*, to the exalted (f^2), the strings group enters with its time and time again repeating chords¹ based on a cluster (note that the cluster sounds in the work piece play an essential role carrying out both coloristic and dramatic functions)

¹ Термин «аккорд» мы употребляем, конечно, в современном его значении как созвучия, звуки которого образуют определённую систему; в данном случае все аккорды вступления имеют в своей основе кластер.

where the Phrygian mode sounds from *e*, excluding *c* (of the VI step), speak simultaneously making a rather hard dissonance.

Example 1

The musical score for Example 1 is written for a string ensemble. It consists of seven staves: Violino solo, Violini I, Violini II, Violini III, Viole, Violoncelli, and Double Basses. The time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score begins with a *molto espressivo* marking and a *vibr. molto* instruction for the solo violin. The solo violin part features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a *vibr. molto* instruction. The other instruments (Violini I, II, III, Viole, Violoncelli, and Double Basses) are marked *f* (forte) and *non div.* (non-diviso). The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the solo violin playing a melodic line. The score ends with a *vibr. molto* instruction for the solo violin.

Further accords sound still more dissonant which is stressed by the sounds distribution among the instrumental parts and by specific arrangement of chords and the articulation – picking marcato; in this respect the last chord is particularly sharp and is perceived as dominant (actually, it is a dominant ninth chord of the Phrygian mode with the included fourth tone) – cluster speech of all Phrygian mode sounds, also without the VI step, is formed now from *h*, and the main chord is tripled – it is given not only to bass strings but also to viols making a three octave sound thereby forming a conflict nature of this accord (Example 2). Thus, the strings represent a force that fights against a personality who aspires to really achieve ideal goals (this chord sequence will be reiterated with some alternations in the concluding section of the Concerto). Introduction to the Concerto is an epigraph to the entire work and clearly presents the conflict unfolding throughout the Concerto.

Example 2

Musical score for Example 2, measures 19-20. The score is for a string ensemble and includes parts for Violin (Vln.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Violin III (Vln. III), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.). Measure 19 is marked with a fermata over the soloing violin part. Measure 20 shows the strings playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the violins marked 'non div.' and the cellos and double basses marked with accents (>).

As of the 20th bar the soloing violin conducts an important theme speaking in the Concerto conclusion which is based upon encirclement of the strike note *f* of the minor and major seconds, as well as upon minor third with the follow-up of the rising step to sixth that plays later an essential role in the intonational drama of the piece (Example 3). Associations also arise with the plain chant and deep national song and romance intonation as well as with the initial theme of the Third symphony of S.V. Rakhmaninov.

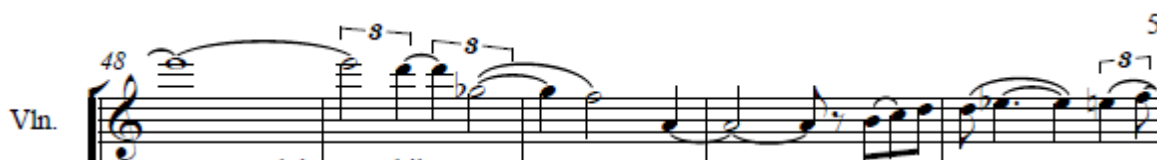
Example 3

Musical score for Example 3, measure 19. The score is for a soloing violin (Vln.) in treble clef. The measure is marked with a fermata over the first few notes, followed by a melodic line starting on a half note. The tempo/mood is marked 'dolce espressivo' and the dynamics are marked 'mp'. The melodic line consists of a series of eighth notes, with several triplets (marked '3') and a final triplet of eighth notes.

The contemplated conflict of the soloing violin and the strings group develops further, however the opposition acuteness is not stable – it changes permanently. So, following a short monologue of the soloing violin, full of expression and having plenty

of jumps to sevenths and ninths (bars 35-45), the strings group chords soften, violins and altos speak with sordines, dolce cantabile, pianissimo, the clusters sound soft and coloristic and not dramatic as before (bars 46-53). In parallel, the soloing violin continues its monologue with its thematic core being the ascending tetrachord which further sequentially ascends and descends. The desire to ascend to the high spiritual sphere goes on but in this episode the soloing tessitura gradually descends and the decay comes. Repeatedly sounding step by a tetratone down followed by resolution of the distance base (Example 4) and sequential movement of this motive that acquires the leitmotif meaning, up and down, indicates all complexity of the achievement of the ideal process (in the last step the tetratone is replaced with the perfect fifth).

Example 4



The episode terminates with the 76th bar and a long sound of almost the lowest violin tone – as. The strings are given the function to accompany the soloing violin. Still, the latent opposition is felt because the soloing violin, in terms of harmony, does not fuse with any orchestra parts which are individualized, becomes more independent and departs from the chord texture which peculiar to the epigraph.

Beginning from the last part of the 76th bar the new phase in the Concerto development commences (till 118th bar): the strings group is no longer opposed to the soloing violin but forms a certain unity in terms of images. However, thematically there is a contrast: the orchestra is forming a new theme which begins pianissimo and then gradually grows being enriched with backgrounds (Example 5). Still, its novelty is relative: the theme arises out of the tetrachord already known to us – here it is repeated many times by the soloing violin though now it is enlarged. So, both thematic unity is ensured while the further opposition acquires the nature of unity and struggle of opposites.

Example 5

80

Vln.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

pp

pp

pp

pp

3

3

3

4/4

3/4

3/4

3/4

4/4

3/4

3/4

3/4

Parts of the first and second violin and altos form the movement in parallel accords, including the seconds, acute dissonances, thematic contrast of the soloing violin and the orchestra – all these techniques show that the conflicting onset is by no means overcome, however, now it is just latent. Further development is enriched with polyphonic actions in kind of free imitations. The sound becomes more and more thick and stressed, especially after the contrabasses enter. The orchestra is embraced in the sequential ascending movement based upon the ascending tetrachord which now acquires the leit-thematic complex meaning. Tense sounding is facilitated by linear parallel movement of the strings playing rather complex cluster accords. All parts of the orchestra, together with the soloing violin, ascend culminating in fortissimo. Consequently, the entire episode presents an ongoing climax of its dynamics and tension of sounds. Following the general pause (bar 119), a new development phase adverts: the movement to the ideal has not been crowned with its assertion, meaning the achievement. Soft falling-off with gradual lowering of the general tessitura (bars 120 – 124) indicate quite opposite (Example 6).

Example 6

After a small but tense monologue of the soloing violin (bars 126 – 135), full of painful thoughts, that relates to its previous similar speech (bars 35 – 45), a new episode follows (bars 136 – 151) which expresses still more acute opposition and struggle as it was before. Passionate burst of the violin with its syncopating movement full of jumps by wide intervals that create special impression is opposed with the advancing string basses playing the same theme but a contrast of the registers and timbre creates impression of conflict and dramatizes the image. The other orchestra parts make a restless and agile background with polyrhythms which still augments the tension. The next violin solo (bars 152 – 154) is accompanied with separate chords of the orchestra, i.e., a new texture emerges that did not occur in the Concerto earlier. Rapid movement of the violin smoothly transforms into the second episode of the Concerto (bars 155 – 171). Both the soloing violin and the orchestra parts ascend with all their differences in the movement types: the flying rush of the sixteenths of the violin is opposed by a gradual gamma-like ascend of the strings, in other words, their thematic content is based on already known to us ascending tetrachords. There is a differentiation of the orchestra parts: the violins three parts) are opposed to string basses with altos; though they have a

single intonation base, they do not coincide by metric rhythm. Beginning from the 163th bar the bass instruments take over the movement in the sixteenths from the solo, and the violin plays the thirty seconds, i.e., the general rhythmic movement is quickening and. Consequently, the tension augments. In the next episode (bars 173 – 185) the leading part is given to the soloing violin which signifies a victory of the personality, the orchestra strings are limited to individual replicas only but these are furious and protesting – the struggle goes on. From the 188th bar the soloing violin speaks a bright melody in piano – the personality conquers though not due to rough force but due to other qualities based upon high morale ideas.

The next episode (from the 202 bar) begins with further phase of the struggle. Here opposition is expressed by a sequential alternation of various utterances of the soloing violin (pizzicato, by brisk double notes, glissando) and, in the beginning, the suppressed sounds of the strings group *sul ponticello* in *pianissimo* that is perceived as a certain rustle. Still, after two similar repetitions the strings regain all its might and speak *fortissimo ordinario* with bass instruments. The orchestra steps forward for a short period. In the orchestra parts both pizzicato and glissando occur. But the soloist does not retreat bravely rushing to the attack. The struggle reaches its climax (bars 234 – 245). The soloing violin part develops taking the theme from the introductory section of the Concerto based on encirclement of the reference tone (see Example 3), however now it speaks *fortissimo* in octave. Then a thunderous theme, that is similar to the melody played by the soloist now, emerges with string basses and first violins, but this time it has an opposite semantic meaning – the clash of the opponents having the same base arises again. Agile background is created by the other instruments of the orchestra playing their restless figurations. This is the general climax of the entire Concerto. Afterwards, saying of the strings sound drooping in *pianissimo* symbolizing their defeat.

As of bar 252 the recapitulation episode *Meno mosso* emerges which corresponds to the section of the initial opposition phase (from bar 46, *dolce cantabile*) but it is quite different thematically in the soloist part, and the theme conducted by the soloing violin now stay with the bass violas. Nevertheless both themes are interlinked and are freely inverted to each other (Example 7).

Example 7

Further on the altos part becomes more active – it also intones the theme spoken by bass violas. The advancing development in this episode leads to rise of the sound but it does not achieve the earlier tension.

From bar 286 the final stage of development takes place. Opposition of the soloist and orchestra dissolves, the former vividly dominating. Thematic elements played by the soloist are taken up and developed by the orchestra parts. Opposition is still felt by long lines (from bar 311) with the string basses, altos and, then, with the first and second violins while the first hold a dialogue with the soloist. Lasting intensification results in the chord sequence in the orchestra, somewhat changed (bars 359 – 364), which sequence was in the epigraph – the forces opposed to the personality does not surrender. As a result, still another «burst» takes place (from bar 365). The orchestra parts are based on the theme which passed off for the first time in the initial episode of the Concerto (from bar 81) – opposition did not disappeared and the struggle heats up. However, after the climax (bars 403 – 408) it declines very quickly. Coda gets underway (as of bar 417, *Poco meno mosso*). The orchestra dies away on three pianos and, after the flageolet tones of the soloing violin, a theme based on encirclement of the reference tone is heard in its part – this theme was repeated in the Concerto and symbolizes identity. Soft and pathetic sounding finalizes the entire musical

composition: on the background of coloristic cluster sound of the orchestra strings, the soloing violin speaks the phrase by pianissimo where the important part belongs to the twice repeated arising step by minor sixth – the interval plays an essential role in all Concerto.

Thus, as we see, Concerto grosso for violin and strings by Iu. Gomelska reveals the latent programme based, as we presume, on opposition of the personality and the environment ending with reconciliation of a man who still stands firm on his beliefs. The personality does not win, does not triumph but remains undaunted. Harmony is achieved in conclusion of the musical piece which results from very tense struggle.

It appears that Concerto grosso for violin and strings by Iu. Gomelska is one of few specimen of this genre in the Ukrainian music and makes a worthy contribution not only in the national but also in the world musical art as well.

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