

*D. Gultsova*

## **THE PHENOMENON OF ROMANTIC VIRTUOSITY AND PIANOFORTE CREATIVITY OF C. V. ALKAN**

*The article is devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon of romantic virtuosity in the context of the West European cultural, historical and musical tradition, as well as its projections on the creative personality and pianoforte creativity of C. V. Alkan. The analysis of the genre and stylistic specificity of his sketches and sonata "Four Ages" testifies to the author's organic connection with the traditions of Western European musical romanticism with the "transcendental type of virtuosity" indicative of him.*

*Keywords: virtuoso, virtuosity, romantic, transcendental type of virtuosity, sketches of C. V. Alkan, Sonata "Four Ages".*

Reflecting on the specifics of comprehension and perception of the West European romantic culture at the end of the XX century, A.V. Mikhailov, in one of his research notes that «XIX century, which seemed and seems so close and understandable to us, actually now turns around one of the most mysterious centuries of modern history ... We must again and again enter into this world, which is becoming less and less known and less and less familiar "[12, p. 854-855]. To a similar conclusion comes A.Yu. Kudryashov. Analyzing the "content of music ideas of the Romantic era," the author states that "... the thoroughness of the elaboration of many separate manifestations of music of the Romantic era has not yet led to the realization and the performing-practical sensation of the romantic musical era as an integral cultural and artistic organism ..." [9, p. 225]. The foregoing is largely determined by the specific nature of the phenomenon of romanticism itself, determined by the researcher at the level of the "original historical-typological category that characterizes the art of the unusual," open, "infinitely variable, incompletely mysterious, constantly forms making" [9, p. 227].

Let us note that this definition is correlated not only with the musical and compositional principles of the romantics' work, but also with the performing characteristics of the culture of this epoch, the brightest sign of which is the virtuoso principle. The latter in many ways determined the main ways of development of Western European instrumentalism, both in the genre-style and in the performing plans. The marked interaction of these factors, which in turn generated the phenomenon of the "virtuoso composer" (A. Alexeev's term), achieves a special scope precisely in piano art, inasmuch as "in the romantic era it was the piano that was the universal" means of disseminating music (G. Schonberg), "orchestra in miniature", the most important element of everyday music making" [15, p. 3].

Acting as the most important category of romantic performing arts, the phenomenon of virtuosity nevertheless only in recent decades has become the subject of research interest [see: 13, 15, 2, etc.]. The relevance of problem of this kind, as well as the great research interest in the creative and performing activities of the representatives of this era, including C. V. Alkan, is nicknamed "Berlioz of piano", causes the timeliness of the topic of the represented article.

In most encyclopedic publications, the terms "virtuoso" and "virtuosity" are most often associated with "high honed skill," with "the perfect degree of musical performance in both technical and artistic terms" [4]. G. M. Kogan, reflecting on the essence of the phenomenon of "virtuoso", defines it as follows: "Musician-performer (in general, every artist, painter, master), perfectly mastering the technique of his profession. In a more precise sense of the word: an artist, valiantly (that is, boldly, bravely) overcomes technical difficulties "[8].

The presence of generalizations of the author's concepts of "valor", "courage" is not a metaphor, but a sign pointing to the profound implication of the word "virtuoso" and "virtuosity", the root and etymological basis of which comes from the Latin "Virtus", literally means " strength, valor, talent. " This concept took an important place both in the mythological tradition, and in the ethics of ancient Rome. "Virtus (in Roman mythology) is the personification of masculinity as the main virtue of the Roman people. It is closely connected with Honor - honor, serving as a reward for valor "[5, p. 237]. The notion defined at the level of the "Old Roman virtue", the ethical ideal is correlated with the qualities that, above all, the emperor and his subjects had to possess. Analyzing the evolution of the concept of "In the works of the early Roman era, the conceptual component of virtus (the core of the concept) is valor as a gender attribute of a man-warrior [Lat. vir - man]. Gradually, there is a connotative expansion of meaning: virtus means virtue, privilege, exceptional rice, a sign of the affinity of the highest forces. If in the beginning of the Roman statehood virtus was conceived as valor - the main positive feature of her husband, then in the classical age the sphere of comprehension virtus - first of all, morality and philosophy "[16].

In subsequent periods of history, the root of the word and the etymology associated with it was established in Western European spiritual, aesthetic, theoretical, and also in artistic and performing practice. Virtuosity was regarded as "the highest measure of mastery in any practical activity, equivalent to the concepts of" talent, professionalism ", as well as

aesthetic categories of " perfection ", " harmony ", etc." [7, p. 27]. Beginning with the Baroque era, the notion of virtuosity penetrates into the musical science from the theory of affects. M. Lobanova in his study on aesthetics and baroque poetics, presents a description of the strictly regulated teachings of F. Lang about the affects and their artistic embodiment. On the title page of his treatise in the center is placed precisely Valor (Virta, Virtus), surrounded by the other affects allegorical - anger, fear, hatred, sadness, courage, love, joy and hope [see. more about this: 11, p. 159].

Formation of the concept of "virtuoso musician" was actually carried out within the framework of, on the one hand, the process of autonomizing music as an art form, on the other - gradual nomination from the "anonymous" performing environment of virtuoso masters who perfectly master the voice and instrument, as well as musical rhetoric and inherent in her spiritual and semantic "filling". The definition of "virtuoso" given by I.Kunau is indicative in this respect: "Essentially, the word" virtuoso "makes sense moral and even state, it means that a person deserving this title is noble and has a great mind and knowledge in his field ... "[Ref. on: 11, p. 148].

The epoch of romanticism, as mentioned above, has become one of the culmination points in the development of the phenomenon of virtuosity, since it was in the XIX century, according to A. Mikhailov, that "the consciousness of music as a meaningful and semantic art" crystallized. At the same time, this era demonstrates "a radical revision of the social status of a musician erected to the level of the Artist-medium, the herald of Divine revelations, or even the" demiurge ", whose creative process, due to its uniqueness, acquired an emphatically creationist character" [15, p. 10].

Revealingly in this regard is the classification of historical "types of virtuosity", presented in the doctoral study of B.B.Borodin. "The ethical type of virtuosity" with the dominant role of the spiritual factor, the author associates with the Middle Ages. "The aesthetic type of virtuosity", focused on "harmony of artistic design, historically understood boundaries of musical art" and "natural abilities of the performer" the author associates with the Renaissance. The Baroque era, in B. Borodin's opinion, puts forward a "universal type of virtuosity", which presupposes "the virtuoso having a versatile and integral complex of knowledge and skills", including "the inventory of thinking" [13, p. 6]. Finally, the era of romanticism, according to the position of the researcher, generates a special "transcendental type of virtuosity", characterized by the desire to go beyond the capabilities of a particular

instrument and a particular art form "[2, p. 27]. By giving a detailed description of this phenomenon of the art of musical romanticism, B. Borodin actually points to the points of contact between virtuosity and its etymological genesis: "Virtuosity is permeated with intoxicating risk fluids, when a creative act demanding valor and courage is performed as if" over the barriers "rights. Virtuosity is extremely inherent in fearlessness. The desire for excellence, inherent in true virtuosity, does not stop before the violation of the "general rules" - it creates them themselves "[2, p. 26]. According to A. Levintov, "virtuosity [in its romantic sense] is measured in the universal-spiritual space, accessible to all, but achieved by a few." Accordingly, the virtuoso in the context of such a representation is associated with the "translator of truth and spirituality" [10].

The creative and performing practice of Western European Romantics fully represents this type of virtuosity. It is represented not only by luminaries, whose legacy has long been the subject of scientific research, but also by less well-known names whose writings and creative discoveries are currently experiencing a peculiar "renaissance". This is also related to the creative and performing activities of C. V. Alkan, an outstanding French composer of the mid-19th century. His extensive piano heritage, as well as pianistic talent, for a long time remained, as it were, "in the shadow of glory" of his outstanding contemporaries.

C. V. Alkan is considered one of the strangest and mysterious musicians of the Parisian piano school of the mid-19th century. "Contemporary Chopin and Liszt, he stands somewhat apart from the mainstream of romanticism, although much of his personality and work is romantic. A recluse who neglects external success, a pianist with enormous technical potential, an irrepressible creative imagination and yet rarely appearing in public, a Bible interpreter (from Hebrew to French), author of many works that simultaneously served as a subject of admiration and harsh criticism, but did not leave anyone indifferent - already almost forgotten during life, but suddenly attracted the attention of the virtuosists of the second half of the 20th century, he finally begins to take his place in the history of music "[3, p. 120].

His poor life of external events (1813-1888) was held in Paris. Alkan studied at Paris Conservatoire with J. Zimmermann. He widely performed until about the age of 24, having earned the fame of one of the greatest virtuoso pianists of his time, along with Liszt, Thalberg and Kalkbrenner. Then, however, he practically ceased to appear in public, although in the last decade of his life he performed with a series of chamber semi-private concerts. At

certain times of life Alkan privately taught, using the highest reputation (in particular, moved thereto pupils Chopin after the last death in 1849 g.). About other periods of Alkan's life little is known, except that he studied the Bible and the Talmud [cf. in more detailed: 1].

The works of Alkan has an extraordinary technical complexity, as evidenced, in particular, his sketchy compositions specified in many texture - technical specifications of many of his works, including Sonata, Op. 33. His 24 etudes (12 major, op. 35 and 12 minor, op. 39) compete in technical sophistication with Franz Liszt's Transcendental Etudes. Some of the works of Alkan were written for a special type of piano - pedal pianoforte, which further complicates their performance on a modern piano (but allows to play them on the organ). The magnificent possession of the instrument, the knowledge of its richest timbral possibilities, earned C. V. Alkan the glory of "Berlioz piano". We also note the unusually wide genre range of the composer's heritage, although oriented, like F. Chopin (with whom he was in longstanding friendships), mainly on the piano.

Among his works are sonatas, nocturnes, marches, etudes, program pieces and many others. etc. In addition, his pen belongs to a number of transcriptions of Bach, Handel, Marcello, Gluck, Gretry, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Among them are the arrangements for piano solo of the minor key concert Mozart and the pre-minor piano concerto of Beethoven with extensive cadences of C. A.T. Alkan, exceeding in its technical level the musical material of the concerts themselves. At the same time, in the opinion of B. Borodin, "the processing of Alkan testifies to his deep piety before the classical heritage curbing the virtuosic beginning. The instrumental aspect of most of its transcriptions is completely devoid of any traits of the demonic virtuosity of the romantic plan precisely because they are absent in the original "[3, p. 121-122]. This experience testifies not only to the great creative potential of C. V. Alkan, but also about his ability to creatively master the manner of other authors and the accompanying genre and style indicators of their eras, which is also very important for the poetics of the sketch that occupies an important place in the work of this musician.

Etudes op. of 39 of the author shows curious microcycles, of which №. 4, 5, 6, and 7 actually represent a symphony in miniature («First Symphony», «Funeral March», «Minuet, Final»), while №.8, 9, 10 of the same opus imitate a concert cycle ("The first part of the concert", "Adagio", "Allegretto alla barbaresca"). In the latter case, the researcher S.

Grigorenko sees a parallel to «Gradus ad Parnassum» of M. Klementi, which also includes a series of studies in the form of a sonata cycle (cf. about this in more detailed: 6, p. 11].

In the context outlined above, and the creative and performing the composer's spiritual quest, as well as the traditions of romantic virtuosity and decided one of his best known works, popular among modern pianists - Grand Sonata, which has the subtitle «Les Quatre Ages» (« Four Ages »), which was established in 1848 at the height of the revolutionary events in Paris.

The concept of composition, its form and tonal plan are very unusual. The four parts that make up the work, like four acts of drama, have names denoting a certain age of a person and a circle of eternal images and meanings that are related to him. So through the prism of the age, "life-meaning" (G.D. Gachev), meaningful both for the author and his heroes, opens. Unlike the classical sonata cycle, built on traditional tempo "oppositions" (fast - slow - fast), this work has a different sequence of parts, largely due to its program intent. The arrangement of parts in the sonata of C. V. Alkan is oriented towards the principle of a sequential slowing of the tempo from part to part. The first part, having a program sub-title "20 ans" ( "20 years"), and embodies the image of youth, youth, focused on tempo remark "Tres vite » (« Very fast »). The second part - "30 ans» ( «30» «Quasi Faust »), associated with the initial period of spiritual human maturity, represents a big sonata Allegro remark « Assez vite » (« Soon enough "). These parts impose extremely high technical skill requirements on the pianist performer. The second part also anticipates the Sonata F. Liszt in B minor in technical-executive, program-semantic, and scale parameters. The third part of composition C. A.T. Alkan "40 ans» ( «40» «Un heureux menage » (« Happy marriage ") is associated with images of family idyll, childhood home of prayer and therefore focused on the rate of « Lentement » (« Slowly "). Finally, the fourth part of the "50 ans» ( «50» «Promethee enchainé " "Prometheus Bound") is associated with the end of life's journey man, composer perceived through the prism of the heroic and tragic image of the hero of the tragedy of Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound ", as evidenced by the final part of the epigraph of this sonata. This kind of software design not only reflects the various stages-ages of a person's life path, but also their "rhythm-pace" characteristic of them.

The above-mentioned program subheadings of each part are substantially supplemented in the sonata by numerous verbal remarks in the most musical text directing the image-sense perception of the performer and listener. In the role of a kind of program

"sign", in our opinion, the quote of the theme of the fugue of J.S. Bach from the second volume of the "Well-Tempered Clavier" also plays a significant semantic and dramatic role in the second part of the sonata cycle of *C. V. Alkan*. The appeal of C. V. Alkan to this Bach theme and its spiritual overtones is quite natural, as the composer throughout his life showed both creative and performing interest in the heritage of the great German master, being the author of many transcriptions of his works. Interest in the field of sacred music, in particular, a German Protestant, manifested in "Impromptu Hor Luther" Op. 69, and "Pieces in Religious Style" Op. 72. A role is also played by the composer's interest in Bible stories, his translations of religious books (see. above). As part of the analyzed subject it became Bach's works for *C. V. Alkan* sign of spiritual truth and its all-conquering force.

Note that *C. V. Alkan*, focusing on the theme of Bach, does not create a complete fugue, fugato episode but limited, since the latter part of the acts of the total composition of a sonata allegro. This section demonstrates, despite its brevity, polyphonic mastery of the composer. According to B. Borodin, "not by chance is also a comparison of *demonic virtuosity instrumental plan*, which lies in the plane of the material performance, and *the virtuosity of counterpoint*, traditionally carrying a certain ideal start, abstracted from the instrumental factor. Polyphonic development threads results in the formation so difficultly textured fabric that its actual embodiment of tool associated with a number of compromises forced identified in performing copyright facilitated embodiment "[3, p. 123].

Lastly, the final part of the work is preceded, in addition to the common name, yet poetic quotations of Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound ", clarifies the intent of the composer software. "Stoicism" as a defining quality of the emotional tone of the sonata finale is largely determined by his poetic epigraph. The composer selects three pieces focused on 750-754 1051 and 1091 verses of the great works of the ancient Greek playwright. Note also that, in its "program" a composer focuses attention on understanding the death of the ancient hero. "In accordance with the cathartic function of tragedy spectacle of death of the hero is a procedure" gain strength in death" purifies the soul and help to promote the value of life and the recognition of the victory of the socio-cultural space". [14]This perception of the final tragedy of Aeschylus " Prometheus Bound" , I think it was close enough for *C. V. Alkan* completing his sonata cycle" stoic "funeral march of Beethoven's style as a worthy result of the way of the hero, to know life in the fullness of its manifestations - turbulent, fiery youth, love, struggle with temptation, gaining faith idyll hearth and dignified death. Note that this

kind of detailed programme based final sonata in general very indicative of the French instrumental music, beginning with the era of the French Harpsichord. At the same time, this kind of explanation copyrights cause similar and with symphonic works of contemporary C. V. Alkan - Berlioz.

Sonata *C. V. Alkan* devoid of the traditional unity of the tone of the genre. Each of its parts has its own "autonomous centers of attraction" and indicative of the symbology. Thus, in the first part dominates D-dur and H-dur, most conjugate in musical historical practice of modern times with a dynamic, efficient imagery, dynamic life. The basic tone of the second part - dis - moll . In accordance with its "Faustian" subject, stated in the title, overcoming temptations and finding the ultimate hero of the desired product of the spiritual meaning of life translates into action "victory» Fis-dur. Most tonal stability differs third part, written in the G - dur - tonality in European music related with the pastoral topos and correlate, in this case with the images of a family idyll, the harmony of earth and heaven. In the final part Sonata written in the character of the funeral march, dominant tone is gis-moll. In addition to the software "comment" as a unifying factor in this sonata appear intonation ties that unite the product in a single dramatic whole.

This brief overview of the creative heritage *C. V. Alkan* and his most famous works indicates thus its organic inscribed in the culture of Western European musical romanticism with revealing to him "transcendental type of virtuosity." Creative figure of the author and its performance capabilities to fully embody this quality of romantic culture in all its breadth and diversity. For *C. V. Alkan* virtuosity paired not only with technical and performing perfection "virtuoso-composer", but also spiritual and philosophical comprehensiveness of its creative nature. Personality of *C. V. Alkan* - composer, performer, teacher, biblical interpreter - becomes the personification of the romantic universalism. Virtuoso transcendental quality characterizes the composer approach to traditional genres, each of which, while retaining their basic typological quality, however, sometimes comes "outside" of traditional frames, forming the original genre syntheses Etudes-symphony Etudes concert et al., as well as the Sonata, scale, texture and program plan which (human life is presented through the prism of spiritual and philosophical, literary and artistic interpretation), really correlate with symphonic canvases, generalizations of contemporaries.



## REFERENCES:

1. Alcan Charles Valantin: Internet resource - access mode: [ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcan\\_Sharl\\_Valanten](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcan_Sharl_Valanten)
2. Borodin B. B. Phenomenon of piano transcription: the experience of complex research. - Author's abstract. Diss .... Doctor of Art Studies: 17.00.02 - Musical Art. - M., 2006. - 46 p.
3. Borodin B. Charles Alcan. "Berlioz piano" / B. Borodin // Music academy. - 2005. - No. 1. - P. 178-182.
4. Virtuosity - Internet resource - Access mode: [dic.academic.ru/dic.usf/brokgauz\\_efron/22467/Virtuoso](http://dic.academic.ru/dic.usf/brokgauz_efron/22467/Virtuoso)
5. Virtus // Myths of Peoples of the World. Encyclopedia: in 2 volumes [Ch. Ed. S. A. Tokarev]. - M.: Ros. Encyclopedia, 1994. - T. 1. A - K. - P. 237.
6. Grigorenko SV The French piano etude: to the history of the genre's formation / SV Grigorenko // Scientific Notes of the Ternopil National Pedagogical University named after Volodymyr Hnatyuk. Series: Art Studies. - 2010. - No. 1. - P. 7-13.
7. Ilyenko MM The notion of virtuosity in the aspect of the musical style (on the example of the phenomenon of trumpeter virtuoso) / M. Ilenko // Traditions and innovations in higher architectural and artistic education. - 2014. - Vip. 4. - pp. 26-31.
8. Kogan G. M. Virtuous / G. M. Kogan. - Internet resource - Access mode: [tnc.dic.com/enc\\_music/Virtuoz-1491.html](http://tnc.dic.com/enc_music/Virtuoz-1491.html)
9. Kudryashov A. Yu. Theory of musical content. Artistic ideas of European music of the XVII-XX centuries. : Tutorial. 2nd ed., Ster. / A. Yu. Kudryashov - SPb.: "Publishing house of PLANET MUSIC"; Publishing House "Lan", 2010. - 432 pp.
10. Levitov A. Dualistic Prints of Culture / A. Levintov. - Internet resource - Access mode: [www.futurisrael.org/Levintov/dualculture.html](http://www.futurisrael.org/Levintov/dualculture.html)
11. Lobanova M. Western European Baroque Musical: Problems of Aesthetics and Poetics / M. Lobanov. - Moscow: Music, 1994. - 318 p.
12. Mikhailov AV Languages of Culture. Educational manual on cultural studies / AV Mikhailov. - Moscow: "Languages of Russian Culture", 1997. - 912 p.
13. Muradyan G.V. Virtuosity as a phenomenon in the history of piano culture. - Author's abstract. diss ... Candidate art history: 17.00.03 - musical art / G.V. Muradyan. - Rostov-on-Don, 2014. - 26 p.
14. Ukrainian S. Ya. The Man of Romantics: Conflicts of the Spirit / S. Ya. Ukrainian // Humanitarian Bulletin ЗДІА. - 2011. - No. 45. - p. 242-250.
15. Usenko NM The influence of romantic virtuoso performance on composer work: from F. Chopin to A. Scriabin. - Author's abstract. diss ... Candidate art history. - Specialty 17.00.02 - Musical art / N. Usenko. - Rostov-on-Don, 2005. - 33 p.
16. Chernenko NA Concept of Integrity as a Universal Dominant of Culture: On the Question of Verbalization / N. A. Chernenko. - Internet resource - Access mode: [Mikks\\_2014\\_47 \(2\) \\_57% 20 \(1\) .pdf](#)