

**MEME “DANTE” IN THE WORKS OF SERGEY RACHMANINOV**

**The purpose of the work.** “The Divine Comedy” by Dante became a source for inspiration for plenty of artistic works: pictorial, sculptural, prosaic and poetic, musical works of different art workers of all centuries. The research is connected with the study of the phenomenon of meme “Dante” in art; its manifestation in music is considered on the basis of the opera “Francesca da Rimini” by S. Rachmaninov. **The methodology** is complex. An application on historical and structural approaches allows us to analyze the opera “Francesca da Rimini” by S. Rachmaninov from the point of view of the embodiment in his work meme “Dante”. **Scientific novelty** lies in an appeal to a new modern science – memetics, engaged in studying the causes of the appearance and distribution of memes. “The Divine Comedy” miraculously combines the system of the hereafter, developed by the church orthodoxy of the Middle Ages, ancient mythology and Dante’s real painful love for Beatrice. Meme “Dante” is the quintessence of the spiritual principle and it embodies the victory of the feelings of love over the moral reflection and faith of the poet. **Conclusions.** The current medium of spreading of memes is television and the Internet, earlier this function was performed by art. Among the strongly pronounced memes in art, meme “Dante” is quite notable, which predetermined the main features and properties of the aesthetics of the Renaissance, and has not lost its influence until the present time. Dante’s comprehensive work did not leave Sergei Rachmaninov indifferent either. His impressions from the poetic content of “The Divine Comedy” the composer embodied in the lyrically entertaining opera “Francesca da Rimini”, based on the famous fifth song of the “Hell”. A feature of Rachmaninov's work is the rejection of the unfolding drama, which forms the external background of action. Attention is concentrated on the highest points in which the true passions of the protagonists are manifested. Meme “Dante” is embodied in the phrase, which appears in the epilogue and prologue, which became literally a winged expression: “There is no greater sorrow than remembering the time of happiness in misfortune”.

**Keywords:** Dante, “The Divine Comedy”, meme, Paolo, Francesca, husband, hell, love.

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**Мем «Данте» у творчості Сергія Рахманінова.**

**Мета роботи.** «Божественна комедія» Данте стала джерелом натхнення для величезної кількості художніх творів: живописних, скульптурних, прозових та віршованих, музичних творів різних діячів мистецтва усіх століть. Дослідження пов'язане з вивченням феномена мема «Данте» в мистецтві; його прояв в музиці розглядається на прикладі опери С. Рахманінова «Франческа да Ріміні». **Методологія** дослідження є комплексною. Застосування історико-логічного та структурного підходів дозволяє проаналізувати оперу С. Рахманінова «Франческа да Ріміні» з точки зору втілення в його творчості мема «Данте». **Наукова новизна** полягає в зверненні до нової сучасної науки – меметики, що займається вивченням причини появи і поширення мемів. У «Божественній комедії» дивним чином поєднуються система загробного світу, розроблена церковної ортодоксією Середньовіччя, антична міфологія і реальна болісна любов Данте до Беатріче. Мем «Данте» являє собою квінтесенцію духовного начала та втілює перемогу почуття любові над моральною рефлексією і вірою поета. **Висновки.** Сучасним середовищем поширення мемів є телебачення та інтернет, раніше цю функцію виконувало мистецтво. Серед яскраво виражених мемів в мистецтві виділяється мем «Данте», який визначив основні риси і властивості естетики Відродження, та не втратив свого впливу до нинішнього часу. Всеохоплюючий твір Данте не залишив байдужим і Сергія Рахманінова. Свої враження від поетичного змісту «Божественної Комедії» композитор втілює у лірично проникливій опері «Франческа да Ріміні», основу сюжету якої складає знаменита п'ята пісня «Пекла». Особливістю твору Рахманінова стає відмова від розгорнутої драматургії, що складає зовнішній фон дії. Увагу сконцентровано на найвищих драматичних точках, в яких проявляються справжні почуття головних героїв. Мем «Данте» втілюється у фразі, яка звучить в епілозі та пролозі, та стає буквально крилатим висловом: «Немає більшої скорботи, як згадувати про час щасливий у нещасті».

**Ключові слова:** Данте, «Божественна комедія», мем, Паоло, Франческа, чоловік, пекло, любов.

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**Мем «Данте» в творчестве Сергея Рахманинова.**

**Цель работы.** «Божественная комедия» Данте стала источником вдохновения для огромного количества художественных произведений: живописных, скульптурных, прозаических и стихотворных, музыкальных творений различных деятелей искусства всех столетий. Исследование связано с изучением феномена мема «Данте» в искусстве; его проявление в музыке рассматривается на примере оперы С. Рахманинова «Франческа да Римини». **Методология**

исследования является комплексной. Применение историко-логического и структурного подходов позволяет проанализировать оперу С. Рахманинова «Франческа да Римини» с точки зрения воплощения в его творчестве мема «Данте». **Научная новизна** заключается в обращении к новой современной науке – меметике, занимающейся изучением причины появления и распространения мемов. В «Божественной комедии» удивительным образом сочетаются система загробного мира, разработанная церковной ортодоксией Средневековья, античная мифология и реальная мучительная любовь Данте к Беатриче. Мем «Данте» представляет собой квинтэссенцию духовного начала и воплощает победу чувства любви над моральной рефлексией и верой поэта. **Выводы.** Современной средой распространения мемов является телевидение и интернет, раньше эту функцию выполняло искусство. Среди ярко выраженных мемов в искусстве выделяется мем «Данте», который предопределил основные черты и свойства эстетики Возрождения, и не утратил своего влияния до нынешнего времени. Всеобъемлющее произведение Данте не оставило равнодушным и Сергея Рахманинова. Свои впечатления от поэтического содержания «Божественной Комедии» композитор воплотил в лирически проникновенной опере «Франческа да Римини», в основе сюжета которой лежит знаменитая пятая песнь «Ада». Особенностью произведения Рахманинова становится отказ от развернутой драматургии, составляющей внешний фон действия. Внимание сконцентрировано на наивысших драматических точках, в которых проявляются истинные чувства главных героев. Мем «Данте» воплощается в звучащей в эпилоге и прологе фразе, ставшей буквально крылатым выражением: «Нет более великой скорби, как вспоминать о времени счастливым в несчастье».

**Ключевые слова:** Данте, «Божественная комедия», мем, Паоло, Франческа, муж, ад, любовь.

**Relevance of the research topic.** There is no doubt that the “Divine Comedy” by Alighieri Dante is one of the most popular works of world literature. It is filled with mythological symbols, love and compassion for sinners, human sins and their varieties, almost naturalistic pictures of Hell. Dante's “Divine Comedy” is deservedly considered almost a poetic standard and has become a source of inspiration for a huge number of works of art: paintings, sculptures, prosaic and poetic, musical creations of various artists of all ages.

The majestic literature masterpiece the “Divine Comedy” has created Dante's immortal glory, in which the author’s descent to hell, his passage through purgatory and ascension to heaven, where he was able to see the Creator, is presented with real vividness.

It is hardly possible to find another primary source, that would be retracted so often and repeatedly, which is specifically reproduced in a similar or different kind of art than Dante's “Divine Comedy”. The source that have so vividly influenced the worldview (and beliefs) of the people and played such an important role in the life of an infinite number of people of many ages, representatives of various population strata, various specialties, types of arts and cultures.

It is simply impossible to overestimate the influence of Dante's work. It can be said with certainty (with the exception of the Holy Scripture), in none of the types of art (nor in music, painting or literature) there is a work that caused such a number of enthusiastic reviews, variations, inheritance, like the “Divine Comedy”.

**Purpose of the study.** In order to comprehend the influence of the “Divine Comedy” on the world culture evolution, we addressed to a new science, memetics, which develops the concept and theory of memes. The embodiment of the “Dante” meme phenomenon in art, its

manifestation in music is considered on the example of Rachmaninoff's opera "Francesca da Rimini".

**Scientific novelty** lies in the addressing to the new modern science - memetics which studies the causes of the emergence and spread of memes. The "Divine Comedy" miraculously combines the system of the afterworld, developed by the church orthodoxy of the Middle Ages, ancient mythology and Dante's real tormenting love for Beatrice. Meme "Dante" is the quintessence of the spiritual beginning and embodies the victory of feeling of love over moral reflection and poet's faith. Meme "Dante" is a cultural phenomenon and its study can become a new direction in art.

**The presentation of the main material.** The meme theory is quite young. By analogy with the concept of a gene, which involves the transmission of information by dividing and reproducing a DNA strand, the term "meme" means information, such as the thought that is quickly transmitted from person to person through communication. If genes are involved in biological evolution, then memes are in cultural evolution.

The term "Meme" is used to define a unit of cultural information. Accordingly, a meme can be any idea, symbol, manner or course of action that is transmitted from person to person through language, writing, video, rituals, gestures and other information systems, consciously or unconsciously. The term meme and its concept were proposed in 1976 by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in the book "The Selfish Gene".

Dawkins proposed the idea that all cultural information consists of basic units — memes, just like biological information consists of genes. Examples of memes cited by Dawkins himself are melodies, stable language expressions, fashion, and arch-making technology [3].

A means of disseminating information today is television or the Internet. Douglas Rushkoff's book entitled "Media virus. How pop culture secretly affects your mind" also considered the idea of memes. The author defines that memes are able to spread through the media and the Internet, while initiating socially significant consequences, for example, to influence the election of politicians, to change public beliefs, to influence children's audiences. What television and the Internet serve today, art used to serve.

Medieval ideas about the post-mortem punishment of a person were radically rethought after the appearance of Dante's "Hell" in the early 1300s. "The hellish torments have never seized the thoughts of so many people before. Dante's creation transformed the

abstract idea of hell into a bright and frightening picture - visible, tangible and unforgettable. It is not surprising that after the poem was proclaimed, frightened sinners flooded into the Catholic churches, seeking salvation from the fate that threatened them with the new image of the underworld” [1, 64].

Of course, Hell is the most vivid and memorable “Dante’s” meme. From the moment of its creation it has become, along with all its circles, a common name and even today having heard the name of “Dante” somewhere people imagine the hellish hearth first of all.

It’s not surprisingly that Dante's songs prompted many representatives of various art forms to write essays on texts and images of the “Divine Comedy”. The composers did not overlook this: Claudio Monteverdi, Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Giacomo Antonio Puccini and many others put this masterpiece into the basis of their dramatic and musical works.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, as well as his colleagues, did not avoid the influence of the meme “Dante”, which indicates the unchanged ethical focus of the composer’s work in general.

The third Sergei Rachmaninoff’s opera - “Francesca da Rimini” - op. 25, 1904-1905 year of creation, was written on the plot of the famous episode - the fifth song – from Dante’s “Hell” (and only the final scene of Paolo and Francesca from the second act was written earlier, in 1900).

The libretto to the opera was written by Modest Tchaikovsky. The one-act "Francesca da Rimini" by Rachmaninoff seems to synthesize the features of his two operatic predecessors. Like “The Miserly Knight”, this opera is truly symphonic; a significant role is assigned to the orchestra. At the same time, a melodic beginning gets a special development as in “Aleko” and “Francesca da Rimini”. The episodes of arioso character appear in the most important lyrical "knots" of the opera. These are some sections of Lanchotto Malatesta’s party in the first scene and the final part of Francesca and Paolo’s duet - in the second one.

The plot of the opera is simple. An honorable Italian lady Francesca got married with the sovereign of Rimini Lanchotto Malatesta through fraud. But she loves his young brother Paolo. The cruel tyrant Malatesta kills them having learned that Paolo and Francesca love each other.

Meme "Dante" justifies the love of Paolo and Francesca, Rachmaninoff emphasizes this in the dramatic art of the opera. Striving for the greatest psychological richness the composer asked M. Tchaikovsky to significantly reduce the original plan of the libretto which made it significantly closer to the original source. Instead of four actions with a prologue and epilogue, only a prologue, two scenes and an epilogue remained in the final variant. In spite of the reduction of many household details, the opera has sufficient "life background" in order to bring a realistic character into the action and not to give the impression of happening outside of time and space.

The prologue is a kind of "symphonic poem" in which the composer paints a picture of Hell, it consists of three sections that form three waves of sequential, continuous growth. The orchestral intro represents the first and second circles. Within each section, the principle of wavy development is preserved. The intro consists of two expanded constructions. The first wave is based on chromatic passages that are simultaneous (free imitation) in different voices of the orchestra. Further, the fugato sounds, the theme of which covers the range of both initial voices and combines them into a single melodic line expressed by a canon, which turns into canonical sequent in a fifth (6/8, Largo, pp, p). The sound matter is gradually compacted and the chord sequences move in a slow and chromatic way at the top of the second wave, like a moan and a sigh of souls persecuted by the hellish whirlwind, and merge into one formidable howl. The first circle of hell is characterized by a change in the pattern of chromatic passages and a key plan (the main key of the section is e-moll, unlike the intro where d-moll is used, that is, distant key spheres are used). The chorus joins the orchestral sound, as a kind of orchestral paint that sings without words with its mouth closed, it personifies the mournful groan of wandering ghosts. A similar technique used by the composer in the cantata "Spring", finds a wide and varied application here.

The timbre of the choir that sings wordlessly, changes due to different principles of sound production. Singing with an open mouth on a loud vowel "a" provides the brighter chorus sounding in the second circle of hell. However, the choir party is based on sustained harmonious sounds here and also does not have a melodic independence.

At the moment when the ghosts of convicted to eternal torment rush rapidly before the eyes of Virgil and the horrified Dante, the rhythm of movement gradually accelerates, the sonority increases all the time, reaching a powerful climax.

After this the terrible violence of the hellish whirlwinds gradually subsides and the magic ghosts of Francesca and Paolo appear. The texture becomes more transparent. The unusual combination of clarinet and cello in Francesca's theme sounds clearly, which makes a particularly bright and soothing impression. Here (unfortunately, for a short time) major occurs after a long unchallenged domination of minor keys. The first introduction of this theme is given in the key of Des-dur, as in the last culminating section of Francesca and Paolo's scene as the atonement of sin with love.

Against the background of soft extended chords performed by woodwind and string instruments with twinkling tremolo of violins and the ringing timbre of the harp, Francesca and Paolo sing the famous sad phrase: "There is no greater sorrow than remembering happy time in misfortune." The melody based on the modified fugato theme from the orchestral introduction reminds of old Russian church melodies. In this theme you can catch some of the similarities with the main part of the Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto. The similarity is enhanced by the key community (d-moll) and the same melody movement; it develops in the reduced fourth range between the VII # and III degrees of harmonic minor - d-moll (Presto. Meno mosso,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , F). The slow and lingering, descending sequences of the violins sound like the sad complaint, and then the oboe solo plays, built on a phrase in which Rachmaninoff embodies the "Dante" meme.

Two contrasting pictures represent the finished portrait of the opera main characters.

The basis of the first monologue scene is the image of a strict and gloomy Francesca's man Lanchotto Malatesta. The cardinal is silent at the beginning of the scene, his musical characteristic is the choral chord sequence in the orchestra. Lanchotta announces that he is going camping. Francesca's party, who comes under his order, consists of several short cues.

The compositional structure of the scene consists of three scenes, which form a single whole. At the heart of their association is the continuous development of two themes that refer to the Malatesta's image. The basis of the first theme is the marching rhythm (constant eighths with a dot and sixteenths), which characterizes him as a cruel and merciless warrior (Allegro vivace, C, cis-moll, sf). It develops extensively in the orchestral introduction of the first scene and in the scene with the Cardinal that opens it. The end of the scene is also built on it but in the key of a-moll but not cis-moll.

The second theme sounds in the orchestral party at the beginning of the second scene, when Malatesta is left alone. It is full of jealous suspicions and the theme, acquiring a darkly

pathetic color, sounds menacingly in trombones in an octave (in bass clef), intensified by four French horns against the background of strings tremolo.

In the structure of Malatesta's party, arioso constructions alternate with episodes of declamatory nature. At the beginning of the second scene the fanfare of the performance and gathering are heard from afar, but nothing is able to drown out Lanchotto's jealous thoughts. He recalls the fatal deception, the victims of which were both Francesca and himself: "Your father, yes, the father is to blame for everything!".

The third scene begins with Lanchotto's appeal full of burning passion: "Not submission, no! I want your love!". In response to Francesca's refusal, a fierce explosion of Lanchotto's unrequited love feeling, mixed with despair and hopelessness, sounds. The pathetic theme of love and jealousy sounds again with vividness and expressiveness but in a modified orchestral arrangement (strings unisons replaced trombones and French horns), which gives it a softer lyrical colouring.

The next section is based on the dotted marching rhythms of the first Lanchotto's theme ("Oh, come down, come down from your heights ..."). It also changes its character here, transforming into a slow funeral march. According to O. Zhukovskaya's statement, Rachmaninoff used a previously written piano prelude here which was not included in the cycle of preludes op. 23 [3, 337-338].

We want to note that these arioso constructions do not have a complete form, becoming an organic part of the overall development of drama. The first of these episodes does not end with the persistent cadence of the basic key of the c-moll and goes directly into the next recitative section, which is characterized by an unstable key plan and orchestral texture that has features of free development.

Individual expressive, accented replicas become the ultimate dramatic climax. So Lanchotto's angry cry at ff: "Oh, Curse!" in the second scene is emphasized by the key shift into the d-moll (as we remember, this key was main in the prologue, but it appears in the first scene for the first time) and an unexpected formidable explosion of orchestral sound.

The first scene as a whole forms a through dramatic opera scene in which the means of musical expression (vocal and orchestral) contribute to the disclosure of Lanchotto Malatesta's complex image, full of internal psychological contradictions and confrontation of spiritual aspirations and passions.

The second scene is dedicated to the pure and gentle image of Francesca. Its theme gets a special development (earlier it sounded in the prologue and the first scene), keeping clear and integral an expressive character with all modifications.

Francesca's theme is one of the most poetic lyrical characteristic melodies of the composer, distinguished by the extraordinary subtlety of musical writing. It captures by the breadth, freedom and smoothness, starting from the melodic summit, gradually moving more than two octaves down and rhythmically transforming (Moderato, 4/4, As-dur). A melodic construction consisting of a chain of sequences is also a variation of the theme. (Allegro vivace,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , As-dur).

The whole coloring of the music of the second scene, as if illuminated by a soft and gentle radiance, creates a sharp contrast and makes it stand out among the gloomy and sinister surroundings in which it appears in the opera. Means of the key-harmonic, orchestral and textural plan vividly embody the meme "Dante", the main idea of which is love. In the second scene in contrast to the prologue and the first scene, where minor keys were kept, the major ones are almost always present (except for short-term deviations in the minor sphere). So the main keys of the second scene are: As-dur, E-dur and Des-dur. At the same time, we want to note that As-dur is the most distant from the d-moll key which appears at the end of the prologue and ends the epilogue of the opera. The features of the second scene instrumentation are weightless and transparent presentation with a predominance of string and wooden instruments (the brass group is used sparingly and carefully). The introduction to the second scene is marked with special ethereality. It begins with Francesca's theme, its further development is based on its individual intonations that sound mainly in the flute party, which is sometimes duplicated by the oboe or clarinet against the background of light accompaniment of string instruments. After a short tutti (on the intonations of Francesca's theme) the orchestral sonority becomes transparent again and then subsides.

Then the scene of Francesca and Paolo in the room of the Palace of Rimini comes. In the first part of it Paolo reads a story about beautiful Ginevra and Lancelot occasionally interrupting it with passionate remarks: "Oh, how sweet and scary they were... Happy!.." We want to mark that Francesca's theme is held in the form of a constant refrain in the party of the orchestra in this episode.

Francesca's arioso (Lento, E-dur) sounds in the middle of the scene. Its melodic design conquers with beauty, grace and subtlety, and the general atmosphere is full of



heavenly bliss. But Paolo's fiery speech, engulfed by earthly love ("Oh, the hot bliss of a kiss!!"), interrupts the peaceful sound changing the tempo and orchestral texture.

The final section of the scene is Francesca and Paolo's duet (Maestoso, Presto, Des-dur) conquers with pathos and the power of love, with a fascinating impulse (reminiscent of the duet of Hermann and Lisa from Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades").

In contrast to the intention of the composer the scene of Francesca and Paolo did not become the culmination of dramatic action. With sufficient brevity of the second scene the proportionality of the compositional structure of the opera is disturbed, as a result of which a certain monotony of the overall coloring, the one-sided dominance of heavy, gloomy tones are noted. In this regard many wonderful pages of the work remained unnoticed and misunderstood by musicologists, critics, listeners.

The two scenes of the opera, framed by a prologue and an epilogue, become a kind of dramatic illustration of Francesca's story, who tells about her sad fate to the startled poet. The end of the story cannot be heard because the howl of the hell whirlwinds becomes stronger again. The moment of the murder of Francesca and Paolo is not shown on the stage. Only in the fog of clouds against the background of the music of hell, the figure of the jealous husband Lanchotto appears, which brings the dagger over the beloved ones.

**Conclusions.** The peculiarity of Rachmaninoff's opera "Francesca da Rimini" is the rejection of the open dramaturgy which constitutes the external background of the action. The attention is focused on the high dramatic points in which the true feelings of the main characters appear. In the first scene it turns out to be painful suspicions, Lanchotto's torments of jealousy who vainly seeks the words of love from his wife; in the second scene there is Francesca's passionate feeling which pushes her into the arms of her beloved Paolo. These observations make it possible to emphasize that the meme "Dante" is embodied in Rachmaninoff's opera as a single independent performance of the choir, that chant the phrase, that sounds in the epilogue and becomes literally a catch phrase: "There is no greater sorrow than remembering happy time in misfortune", in unison.

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