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THE FEATURES OF DRAMATURGY AND FORMATION OF S. RACHMANINOFF «VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF F. CHOPIN» FOR PIANO, OP. 22

The purpose of the work is to consider the features of dramaturgy and formation of the cycle S. Rachmaninoff «Variations on the theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22. **The methodology of the research** is complex and is connected, first of all, with the use of historical-logical and structural approaches. **Scientific novelty.** There has never been consideration of the first work of Sergei Rachmaninoff on someone else's theme – «Variations on a Theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22 – from the position of polygenre features, internal suite features, interaction of variations among themselves; specific principles of the motive and intonational development of musical material. Such terms as «large variational form», «small variational forms», «one-theme drama» are introduced (latest publications on this topic belong to us [2, 3]). **Conclusions.** «Variations on a Theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22 is the first reference of Rachmaninoff to someone else's theme, which took place in 1902 – 1903. The composer choose the theme of the tragic prelude c-moll of his favorite composer F. Chopin, which is often associated with a mournful procession, with «a small requiem». «Variations on a theme of Chopin» were conceived by Rachmaninoff as a work of a great concert plan that is different in range and monumentality of scales, while striving to achieve greater flexibility, versatility and sophistication of piano texture. Such concepts as «large variational form» – a complete variational cycle and «small variational forms» – a series of variations, united by similarity of thematic, textual, dramatic, tonal, and even genre development are introduced. The whole work is like a non-conflict drama, which has one theme, where the composer constantly highlights its various elements. But in one of the mid-variations (XV) the composer uses dies irae theme (which often appears in his various works). Dramaturgy of the work has a direction from sorrow (deep minor – c-moll) to optimism (triumph of major – C-dur), which is contributed by the internal structure of the cycle, created on the principle of suite features – a series of small variational forms.

Keywords: large variational form, small variational forms, one-theme drama, cycle, theme, variations, suite features, principles of development, genres.

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Особливості драматургії і формоутворення «варіацій на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепіано, оп. 22 С. Рахманінова.

Мета роботи – розглянути особливості драматургії і формоутворення циклу С. Рахманінова «Варіації на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепіано, оп. 22. **Методологія дослідження** є комплексною та пов'язана, насамперед, із застосуванням історико-стильового та структурного підходів. **Наукова новизна.** Вперше розглядається перший за хронологією написання композитором твір на «чужу» тему Сергія Рахманінова – «Варіації на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепіано, оп. 22 – з позиції поліжанровості, внутрішньої сюїтності, взаємодії варіацій між собою; специфічних принципів мотивного та інтонаційного розвитку музичного матеріалу. Використовуються поняття «велика варіаційна форма», «малі варіаційні форми», «однотемна драматургія». (останні публікації на дану тему належать нам [2, 3]). **Висновки.** «Варіації на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепіано, оп. 22 – це перше звернення Рахманінова до «чужої» теми, яке відбулося в 1902 – 1903 роках. Композитор обирає тему трагічної Прелюдії c-moll улюбленого їм композитора Ф. Шопена, яка часто асоціюється з траурною ходою, з «маленьким реквіємом».

«Варіації на тему Ф. Шопена» задумані Рахманіновим як твір великого концертного плану, що відрізняється широтою і монументальністю масштабів, з прагненням досягти якомога більшої гнучкості, різнобарвності і витонченості фортепіанної фактури. Введені поняття «велика варіаційна форма» – повний варіаційний цикл та «малі варіаційні форми» – ряд варіацій, об'єднаних спільністю тематичного, фактурного, драматургічного, тонального, а то і жанрового, розвитку. Твір базується на неконфліктній драматургії, однотемний, з розкриттям різних смислових граней одного образу. В одній із середніх варіацій (XV) композитор використовує мотив dies irae (який часто з'являється в його різних творах). Драматургія твору має напрямок від скорботи (глибокого мінору – c-moll) до оптимізму (торжество мажора – C-dur), чому сприяє внутрішня структура циклу, створена за принципом сюїтності – малих варіаційних форм.

Ключові слова: велика варіаційна форма, малі варіаційні форми, однотемна драматургія, цикл, тема, варіації, сюїтність, принципи розвитку, жанри.

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Особенности драматургии и формообразования «Вариаций на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепиано, ор 22 С. Рахманинова

Цель работы – рассмотреть особенности драматургии и формообразования цикла С. Рахманинова «Вариации на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепиано, ор. 22. **Методология исследования** является комплексной и связана, в первую очередь, с использованием историко-логического и структурного подходов. **Научная новизна.** Впервые рассматривается первое по хронологии написания композитором произведение на «чужую» тему Сергея Рахманинова – «Вариации на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепиано, ор. 22 – с позиции полижанровости, внутренней сюитности, взаимодействия вариаций между собой; специфических принципов мотивного и интонационного развития музыкального материала. Вводятся понятия «большая вариационная форма», «малые вариационные формы», «однотемная драматургия» (последние публикации на данную тему принадлежат нам [2, 3]). **Выводы.** «Вариации на тему Ф. Шопена» для фортепиано, ор. 22 – это первое обращение Рахманинова к «чужой» теме, которое состоялось в 1902 – 1903 годах. Композитор выбирает тему трагической Прелюдии с-moll любимого им композитора Ф. Шопена, которая часто ассоциируется с траурным шествием, «с маленьким реквиемом».

«Вариации на тему Ф. Шопена» задуманы Рахманиновым как произведение большого концертного плана, которое отличается широтой и монументальностью масштабов, со стремлением достичь как можно более яркой красочности и утонченности фортепианной фактуры. Введены понятия «большая вариационная форма» – полный вариационный цикл и «малые вариационные формы» – ряд вариаций, объединенных общностью тематического, фактурного, драматургического, тонального, а то и жанрового, развития. Произведение базируется на неконфликтной драматургии, однотемно, с раскрытием разных смысловых граней одного образа. В одной из срединных вариаций (XV) композитор использует мотив *dies irae* (который часто появляется в разных его произведениях). Драматургия Вариаций направлена от скорби (глубокого минора – с-moll) к оптимизму (торжество мажора – C-dur), чему способствует внутренняя структура цикла, созданная по принципу сюитности – малых вариационных форм.

Ключевые слова: большая вариационная форма, малые вариационные формы, однотемная драматургия, цикл, тема, вариации, сюитность, принципы развития, жанры.

Relevance of a topic of the study is to consider the first work by Sergei Rachmaninoff on someone else's theme – «Variations on a Theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22 – from the point of view of a new approach to the variational cycle as a large variational form, small variational forms, one-theme drama. It is relevant, because it is a popular work that needs explanation of the drama of execution (tone plan, polygenre features, internal suite features, interaction of variations among themselves; specific principles of motive and intonational development of musical material).

Scientific novelty. There has never been consideration of the first work of Sergei Rachmaninoff on someone else's theme – «Variations on a Theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22 – from the position of polygenre features, internal suite features, interaction of variations among themselves; specific principles of the motive and intonational development of musical material. Such terms as «large variational form», «small variational forms», «one-theme drama» are introduced (latest publications on this topic belong to us [2, 3]).

Statement of the main material. In the piano cycle «Variations on a Theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22, the first (1902 – 1903) reference to someone else's theme by S. Rachmaninoff took place – piano «Prelude» of Chopin, whose works were close to him. The variations were conceived as a great concert work. Prelude c-moll is a simple tragic sketch associated with a mourning procession, with a small requiem. A. Corto calls it «Funeral

procession». It combines the genre features of the funeral march; chorale; Chaconne, Sarabande or Passacaglia: from the time of the Baroque, the chromatic upward moves in bass from I to V degree have the meaning of rhetorical figures of sorrow and death. Numerous dissonances penetrate the tissue with severity and strain. The effect of gradual distance movement of procession is created by change in dynamics – from *ff* to *pp*.

The variational cycle consists of a theme and 22 variations (the composer pointed out possible omission of the 7th and the 10th), which can be divided into three parts. As we know, variations traditionally begin to move away from the theme gradually. *Rachmaninoff violates this tendency, immediately using only certain intonations of the theme which dissolve in almost lace figurations*. But sometimes the composer returns to the chord-choral associations with the theme, using them as if they were a refrain in a rondal form.

The author by various technical and textual means shows the possibility of figurative transformation of the theme: from classical figurations to the most complex multilayer texture; through polyphonic activation of the homophone texture; by a combination of regularities of «strict» and «free» variations; rhythmic, tempo, genre transformations; development from simple to complex; from the exposition to the climax-saturated presentation. If in the first variations the structure and harmonious plan of the theme, tonality are preserved in more or less intact form, then the composer is going further away from them, developing the intonational sphere of the theme freely and giving the character of independent, complete miniatures to many variations.

The theme radically changes in the process of variation, and in the finale it is completely transformed: «from strict and restrained-sorrowful it turns into a solemn, pompous chorale» [4, c. 138]. The general character of the variations is strongly transformed in relation to the figurative content of the theme. It is «festive, exalted; it has many features of romantic admiration of perception of the world, generally characteristic of the works of Rachmaninoff in 1900's» [4, p. 139].

The main method of variation used by Rachmaninoff is clearly stated by V. Bryantsev, pointing out that his characteristic desire for «polyphonic activation of the homophone texture ... introduction of polyphonic elements in the synthesis with the homophone ones into it» is reflected in the work [1, p. 432]. This is done by the composer in the wide application of various means of imitating polyphony, bringing to the fugue in XII variation; and in the

general melodization of the texture, saturation of figurations with separate thematic elements; in the free interweaving of various variant transformations of the theme, and in combination of independent textual parts in the counterpoint.

Rachmaninoff shortens *the prelude of Chopin*, does not use the reprise of the second phrase, and the theme of variations is the normative period of two sentences, with the final strengthening of tonics in the 9th bar. The basis of the theme is the melodic-rhythmic initial phrase, which represents a complete harmonic reversal in c-moll; then it is in the tone of the VI degree – As-dur; and, developing the same intonational material, returns to the main tonality, leading to dominant half cadence. The second sentence also consists of 4 one-bar phrases. Bass contains the above-mentioned downward chromatic course from I to V degree.

The first three variations are interconnected and create a small variational cycle. The first one is – one-part – and resembles *proposta*, that is, the performance of the thematic material that is hidden in melodic figurations. The melody by a fanciful pattern outlines configuration of the theme by upper tones. The second as if performs the function of *risposta* in tonic and counterpoint. The third variation completes a small variational cycle: a similar melodic figuration, which is performed freely in both hands. The variation is polyphonic in composition, the upper voice begins the movement (*proposta*); one beat later, the middle (*risposta*) starts imitatively, however further, the composer does not follow the exact succession of imitation. From the third bar there is a vertical rearrangement of voices, this time in the key of dominant. A similar tonal structure resembles the theme-response correlation. Imitation is not long again and turns into sequential development. The second sentence is like a reprise, after which, again in a vertical rearrangement, it takes place in subdominant – f-moll. At the end of the variation, an updated downward canonical sequence appears, leading to its open completion.

This variation in relation to the previous ones plays the role of active polyphonic development and reprise. There is *an initial simulation push*, which will get development in subsequent variations, reach the climax in XII, which is written in the form of a fugue, and will continue to be actively used.

The fourth, fifth and sixth variations are again interconnected and create a second small variational cycle. As if a new stage of development begins. For the first time there is a change in time signature from 4/4 to 3/4 – in IV, and 6/4 – in VI; the scale increases to 24 –

in IV, to 12 – in VI; three-part structure in IV and VI (tempo - the same). The texture of layered: in the left hand - the downward broken arpeggio, which contains explicit (and even hidden) double voices; the upper voice outlines melodic phrases that are close to the rhythmically graded version of the theme. In reprise the theme is partially imitated in the introduced alto voice. In V variation, tempo becomes much more restrained (*Meno mosso*). Everything is moved to the middle-high register (treble clef). The melody is concentrated in the lower voice and develops the intonations of the theme from the previous variation, with triplets in the end. It is accompanied by arpeggiated figuration in the right hand in the tuplet rhythm with a pause at the beginning of each beat; duplicate the melody of the left hand in third - a variant of free imitation. VI variation according to the character and type of textual presentation continues the previous one with small lengths. This is the climax of three variations (IV, V, VI). Tempo somewhat slows down, features of the lyrical excited nocturne with polyrhythm are notable.

The following two variations are again interconnected by continuation of sequential fragmentation of duration and single tempo – this is the third small variational cycle. In VII, tempo (*Allegro*) is animated in its original form. The triplet texture alters considerably (*p*, *leggiere*): in six bars, one-voice vivid figuration of the sixteenths is distributed between both hands, as if creating two voices (in treble clef). *Marcato* melodic peaks of figurations form a hidden voice with downward second motifs, which are further developed in the next variations. VIII variation (*pp*, *leggiere*) continues the development of the previous: invariable time, tone, tempo, form. The texture consists of 3 elements: from VII variation the tuplet figuration of the sixteenths remains, being in the middle layer; it is complemented by short second motifs in the upward direction on staccato; the arpeggiated figuration sounds in the left hand; vertical rearrangement of textual elements and the principle change of figurations in the left hand are used (5-6 bb.).

The following section begins, the most saturated with contradictions, because Rachmaninoff pointed out possible omission of VII and X variations. *IX variation – as if the variant of a theme-refrain* – returns mourning with bright dynamics (*ff*) and harmonies, constantly emphasizing the upward seconds of choral chords with *sempre marcato* marking. The texture has two images, it is dialogic. It is formed by two layers of different registers and directions. At the end, for the first time, bright c-moll cadence sounds on *sf*.

In *X* tempo increases even more (*Piu vivo*); the structure is expanded to a non-normative period of 14 bars and is divided into two sentences (8 + 6). The variation is polyphonic. There are constant free imitations (like in III) in the basis at different intervals. The final cadence in c-moll sounds more emphatically than in IX, differentiating the groups of variations in the middle of the cycle.

Thus, we can conclude that *in the first ten variations* (with possible exception of VII and X) by the direction of the composer) the principle of strict variations and deviation from them prevails: the key remains, the deviations from the structure of the theme are insignificant; the theme or its elements are sometimes barely recognizable. The unity of the section is emphasized by the lack of persistent cadences in variations that turn one into the other; although III and VIII are ended with tonic; IX and X with tonic chords (*sf*, *ff*, fermata). Rachmaninoff demanded to add bright cadence to the variation that completes this part of the cycle.

During this section of the cycle there is a gradual progression towards the polyphony of the texture and methods of the thematic material development.

It is *XI variation* that starts the *second, non-standard, part of the cycle*. Traditionally, the middle part of the variation cycle is intonal, often opposite to the direction of the main key (in minors - major, minor is major), lyrical; it is an island of new feelings, genre and textual properties. Rachmaninoff goes the other way: he has a tonal plan – Es-dur (parallel), c-moll (return to the main), f-moll (subdominant), b-moll, b-moll (subdominant to subdominant), that is, from a single major we return to minor. In the middle, tempo and genre orientation of the variations are really changing: Lento, Moderato, Largo, Moderato, Allegro scherzando, Lento, Grave, Piu mosso; soft dreaminess, fugue-scherzo, funeral procession, scherzo, song lyric, mourning march, etc. The variations become more independent in time (from 12 to 43 bars) and genre.

XI – 12/8 (like the 15th), Es-dur (parallel to the main one), Lento, is about twice as slow as the previous one (it performs as considered a connecting function). But it is major, with unstable chromatic pattern, a non-normative period of three sentences and finale: 5 + 4 + 4 + 3. In the first bar (mF), the lower voice with a delay of one beat imitates the upper one in a downward perfect fourth; then delicate, dreamy theme saturated with chromatic scale is laid with constant double notes on the basis of semi-toned circles of melodies by equal

eighths. An accompanying voice with similar rhythmic and intonational characteristics, supplemented by the organ point «es». It is ended with perfect cadence.

XII variation is polyphonic. Rachmaninoff refers to the genre of four-voice fugue, in which he deviates from strict traditions and interprets in somewhat free form, establishing romantic traditions. The theme of fugue is a reflection of the first bar of theme of variations (leit-themes) in a rhythmic version and diminution. The exposition section is traditionally composed: themes go up «by ladder steps». After it successive introductions of variants of themes go, canonical sequence, metric, rhythmic and intonational modifications, diminution, sequencing chains from themes in diminution and joining (end with beginning). In the development, there are different variants of the theme: stretto, diminution, inversion, doubling (both in inversion and version), in mode, in polymode, in the chromatic variant. The texture and character of the presentation of musical material suddenly change (from b. 24): the theme is given in diminution (sixteenths) and doubling in third; in changing of the rhythmic, with intensification of the sounds. Open completion of the fugue on tonic in the melodic position of the third, accented fermato and leads to the next variation.

XIII variation – again a variant of a theme-refrain – has two images, it is dialogical; sounds majestically and creates a mysterious, frozen sound (like IX variation, which is now conveyed in a complex counterpoint). The time signature is $\frac{3}{4}$, and tempo is even slower (Largo). The variation is written in the form of a large sixteen bars period (8 + 8, a + a1). Initial intonation of the theme (mF, quarter and half) - is constantly alternating with short motifs (two thirty second and a quarter) in the high register (pp). Such register correlation gives the music a sense of space. The second motif of the theme during the development undergoes transformation: the direction of the movement of the melody changes to upward. Since the rhythm and interval remain unchanged, it remains recognizable and has a uniting function with the theme.

XIV variation (Moderato, mF, In melodia ben marcato) – 25 bars: time signature $\frac{4}{4}$ returns, the main key, tempo somewhat becomes more vivid. The melody appears in the middle layer of the texture very clearly in a fourfold increase. In soprano it is accompanied by scale-like passages, which begin and end with the sound that is at that moment in the melody. Tenor at this time contains *free imitation* to soprano: sequencing in the downward

motion, the motifs of the previous variation lie at the basis. The bass line consists of supporting sustained sounds.

The variation turns into the next, which starts «intonational internal cycle of variations».

XV variation is distinguished by changing the key to f-moll (subdominant to the main), changing of time to 12/8, contains already 43 bars and according to the character of the structure can be perceived as an independent miniature. An important role here is played by the dashed rhythm, through and auxiliary diatonic, and especially chromatic, melodic turns. Rachmaninoff inserts tempo-genre remark *Allego scherzando* into the musical text, which, in conjunction with the means of expressiveness emphasize the scherzo character of music. The form can be considered *as a free two-part developing type: the exposition-developing and reprise-developing, with code and features of fantasy in the formation of the form*. This is one of the unusual variations in form, the inner genre - minor f-moll scherzo, with the first use of the theme *dies irae*.

XVI variation returns to 4/4, tempo is slow – *Lento*, contrasts with the previous character of the sound, homophonic-harmonic. Extensive song and lyric melody, extremely characteristic for the composer's works, develops freely during 14 bars against the background of even (but continuously paused) harmonic figurations. The connection with the theme is not bright, resembles it by general features of motion; there is some commonality with the principles of its structure (the second phrase repeats the first one one third lower).

The tonal plan contains a change from the original As-dur, through f-moll to F-dur. The form is periodic, it has three sentences: exposition – As-dur (4 b.), development Des-dur, c-moll (4 b.), dynamic reprise – f-moll – F-dur, with finale, where the upward final passage as if dissolves in pp (4 b.).

XVII variation – *Grave* (the only variation with this tempo) – in time signature 3/4, b-moll, 18 bars. The composer chooses the darkest tonality not by accident, because it is here *the tragic climax of the cycle is concentrated*. The dashed rhythm, which gave the original theme rigorous character, turns here into a rhythm of *mourning march*. It is concentrated in the middle layers of the texture, only in 6-7 bars it comes to the forefront, becoming a melodic peak. The initial second upward motif is consistently repeated every time (ostinato),

creating a feeling of despair. An initial fragment sounds one third lower (characteristic for the development of musical material in the works of Rachmaninoff), after which it undergoes development, increasing emotional tension.

A remark Tempo 1 is indicated by a short two-bar phrase, where the texture of the presentation and the rhythm (p, cresc., rit.) are suddenly changed - even chords that bring the performer and the listener to a so-called reprise – *ff*.

XVIII variation, Piu mosso, b-moll, 4/4, 12 bars, excited. The main melody, in which the intonations of the original phrase of the theme are heard, is concentrated in the middle layer of the texture, where it is supplemented with figurations. At the same time in the upper voices there is a chord accompaniment with even triplet rhythm, the extreme sounds outline another great melody that complements the main theme, acting as a subtlety. Here the composer adheres to a structure similar to the previous ones: an initial two-bar phrase is repeated one third lower and undergoes further development; as well as a hint of reprise.

This variation *completes the second section of the whole variational cycle and constitutes a small variational cycle of the median plan* (from XI to XVIII), contains all elements of a single motif development. The tonal plan of the section is gradually changing, deviating from the parallel (Es-dur), the tonal base (c-moll) towards subdominant (f-moll, As-dur - f-moll - F-dur, b-moll). The individual variations are significantly increased in volume and become more independent. Such variation XV is in the character of gloomy scherzo; charming singing-lyrical XVI, in which the elements of the theme create an extensive melody, covering it with light figurations; tragic XVII, resembles mournful procession. Features of the theme are lost, and relatively independent melodies appear on the basis of its intonations.

The third part of the variational cycle begins. XIX variation is in dramatic contrast with the previous one: a sudden change of tempo (Allegro vivace), far tonality (A-dur), dynamics (*ff*, *semper marcato*), character and texture, 35 bars. Bright and majestic in sound, it resembles solemn introductions and bell images of Rachmaninoff.

The variation can be divided into two parts (14 + 21). The first consists of two phrases variationally repeated a quarter lower; A-dur, E-dur (again comparison of sequencing phrases); the next 6 bars represent free development, close to fantasy; they are characterized by a change in the chord texture in the accompanying voices on the figuration, with

highlighting of tenor, and in the chord melody there is syncopated rhythmic. The climax coincides with the beginning of the second part, which is opened with a dynamic reprise (*f*, *cresc.*).

XX variation – Presto, A-dur - cis-moll, 3/4, is written in a developing two-part reprise form, as well as most variations in this part of the cycle. Now the variations become like independent plays. The connection with the theme is felt in the general directions of the melodic line development (similar intonations were found in the variations VIII and XI) and in preserving the basic harmonic functions. The variation significantly exceeds the volume of the previous ones – 107 (36 + 71) bars, which due to vivid tempo (Presto) did not affect its duration. Again, Rachmaninoff uses the principle of exposition and development: in each sentence, during 4 bars, the melody spins in place, and in the next one a gradual melodic motion begins in different directions. Later, waltz texture remains accompanied, ends with a brilliant passage-cadence on the background of dominant cis-moll in the style of virtuoso works of Chopin, dividing the parts (b. 53). The second part is almost entire repetition with not very significant changes.

Penultimate XXI variation – Andante, Des-dur, *mf*, cantabile, 4/4, contains 53 bars. It is divided into three independent sections; in the last ones the composer removes key signs due to saturation of tonality, polytonality, deviations, and constant consolidation of C-dur through organ points. It has a two-genre character – nocturne and scherzo.

The bar in the introduction in the left hand gives, as it is usual in the nocturnes, the texture of accompaniment – the harmonic figurations of triplets; but what is uncommon, with accented extended peaks that constitute the basic light, delicate theme – *proposta*. In alt, distinctive octave sounds of the melody-*risposta* appear from downward quintole second singing and successions (polymetrical features with bass). In the first sentence (8 b.) in the upper register there is a canon of melody in one third upper, constantly complemented by figurations in the quintole rhythm, forming polyrhythm with bass, ending with dominant. The developing part leads to simplification of the texture and comes to a quiet one-voice downward passage-lace, and ends with an independent, perfect cadence.

The second part (16 b.) dramatically contrasts, as it sounds like anxious scherzo, time also changes from 4/4 to $\frac{3}{4}$ and tempo changes to *Piu vivo*, tonality. The composer removes all the key signs, but saturates the period of 4 sequenced variation sentences with deviations,

modulations, altered chords. Again, the principle of construction is used, in which the phrases variationally repeat the first one with shifting at a certain interval (now these are large seconds upwards – from sounds G, A, H, then climaxally from *f*).

The third part (*un poco accel.*) saturates the intonational and rhythmic spheres of the second with: polytone, comparison with constant dominant organ point *g*. A wavelike development leads to the last variation, which with a solemn sounding breaks into the musical fabric of the cycle.

XXII variation is written in the genre of majestic polonaise (C-dur, *Maestoso*, 3/4, *ff*, *semper marcato*). It also has many parts, in the form of rondo with code. The role of refrains is performed by musical material, close to the theme, but saturated with the triumph of life, light, and not grief.

The refrain begins with powerful chords, which carry out the major version of the theme in C-dur, rather close to the original, and creates a peculiar effect of the frame and unites the form of the cycle (16 b.). The first episode (33 b.) is more lyrical in e-moll, and in the bass line there are also *rhythms of polonaise* that do not come to the forefront. The melody is concentrated in the upper voices, contains intonations of the theme in its basis and is supplemented by fast figurations in the sounds of the arpeggiated or rehearsal type in triplet rhythm with polyrhythm in accompaniment. Three waves of upward passages lead to a refrain (20 b.), which has a more extended development. Instead, the lyrical theme in the second episode is shortened, but the texture and theme are the same (16 b.).

The last refrain is also variational – *Meno mosso*, *pp* (12 b. = 10 + 2). There is a synthesis of the return of the theme of variation, but in a slow, calm variant and a lyrical episode. There are elements of polonaise rhythm, but the melody, repeating every time in lower register and in quieter dynamics, creates peace and tranquility. The impression is that this is the end of the cycle, but the stronger is the contrast with the rapid life-affirming code that summarizes the cycle (*ff*, C-dur).

Thus, *the final variations, forming the third section of the variational cycle*, form the likeness of an independent «small cycle», a small variational form within a large whole. It is like a suite, each part of which has a pronounced genre character. The section begins with dramatic switch in the variation of the XIX into another emotional sphere, a determined and

unexpected tonal shift from gloomy b-moll in light A-dur. The last group of the variations contrasts with the light color of the previous ones.

Thus, *XXII variations* are based on the principle of increasing contrast in figurative, mode, tempo and textual plans. A characteristic feature of the dramatic works of Rachmaninoff is an introduction of style contrast, which leads to the transformation of the theme in some variations to non-recognition. *The entire variational cycle is directed from the feeling of great sorrow to the glory of light, the grandeur of life; that is directed towards optimism.* It is also important to have the motif *dies irae* in XV variation. A number of variations have internal genre features: scherzo of different content direction (VII, VIII, X, XV, the second part of XXI), mourning procession (theme, IX, XIV, X VII), nocturne (VI, the first part of XXI), final polonaise (XXII), song lyrics (VI, XVI, XXI), like a festive introduction (XIX), features of waltz (in XX) and others.

The peculiarity of the cycle is the preservation not of the intonational structure of the theme itself, but the general principle of its motif structure. The variations are built on the development of individual motifs from the theme, giving them the role of leitmotifs, and individual leit-intonations, their combination.

A monumental work, based on relief contrasts and dynamic development, takes a worthy place among the variational masterpieces of the late XIX – early XX centuries.

Conclusions. «Variations on a Theme of F. Chopin» for piano, op. 22 – this is the first reference of Rachmaninoff to someone else's theme, which took place in 1902 – 1903. Why does the composer choose the tragic Prelude to c-moll of the favorite composer F. Chopin, who is often associated with a mournful procession, with a small requiem? These were the years of the flowering of talent of Rachmaninoff, years of happy life and great expectations. And at the same time he chooses this theme for his work, which turns out to be kind of premonition of the future... both in the genre of the work, and in his drama art.

«Variations on a theme of Chopin» were conceived by Rachmaninoff as a work of a great concert plan that is different in range and monumentality of scales, while striving to achieve greater flexibility, versatility and sophistication of piano texture. Such concepts as «large variational form» – a complete variational cycle and «small variational forms» – a series of variations, united by similarity of thematic, textual, dramatic, tonal, and even genre development are introduced. The whole work is like a non-conflict drama, which has one

theme, where the composer constantly highlights its various elements. But in one of the mid-variations (XV) the composer uses *dies irae* theme (which often appears in his various works). through different aspects of life and through different, relevant emotions and feelings, only occasionally returning to the tragic march, and in general leading to the victory of light, the display of the grandeur of life. Dramaturgy of the work has a direction from sorrow (deep minor – c-moll) to optimism (triumph of major – C-dur), which is contributed by the internal structure of the cycle, created on the principle of suite features – a series of small variational forms.

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