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A GENRE ASPECT OF THE MUSICAL FORM

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“Genre” and “form” in the present theory of music stand for two separate notions. The relations between the phenomena which they represent are usually tackled in terms of the influence of extra-sound factors on compositional sound principles and structures. It is considered that the genre (besides other characteristics) comprises extra-sound components – either extra-artistic or extra-musical ones – and also those which are connected with the conditions of music existence, performing score and so on. However, the form is thought to be free of these components and limited mostly by pure compositional sound manifestations. Thus, both the genre and the form seem to acquire the relation of generating, specifying the non-specific etc.

At the same time there are other perceptions of the connection between the genre and the form, presupposing their real and, consequently, notional affinity, if not identity. Genres are frequently named as applied forms (for example by E. Praut). The word “form” here means the “type” of music not in the least limited by its compositional sound aspect, but comprising other musical characteristics. It is known that such language use has deep roots: the Greek word “eidos” and its Latin calque “species” meaning “type”, “appearance”, “image” referred once to both the genre and form. The similarity between the two was also fixed by the term “Kunstform” (used by A. B. Marx , for instance). C. Dahlhaus comments on it in the following way: “the terms genre <...> and form (“artistic form”) are frequently used as synonyms or with a vague distinction” . In spite of all, not unreasonable, attempts to strengthen this distinction both in the XIX century and later, the attempts to separate the concepts of genre and form and the doctrines connected with

them; in spite of our firm mental habit to consider the form as a “pure” unalloyed compositional sound structure; in spite of all these factors the opposite tendency still remains viable. For example, the intention to preserve the genre component within the form itself is quite symptomatic.

When A. Schoenberg, following A. B. Marx, analyses the systematics of instrumental classical forms and habitually mentions among them minuet and scherzo, he seems to be acting in the traditions of “vague distinction” of the XIX century. When V. D’Indy and M. Dupre name the motet, aria and song as forms they also add to it the national interpretation. But when modern scientists, taking into account the perception of a musical form as an independent from a genre autonomous phenomenon, as an evolving in time sound structure, insist on the necessity to consider the genre nature of the material and the entire musical whole, while attributing it to this or that type of form, they demonstrate something new in the course of the musical form development – a kind of “negation of the negation”. For example, one female researcher, analyzing the structure of Schubert’s songs, quite expectedly emphasizes the “significance of genre for vocal form-building” at the same time stating that the “phenomenon of a form <...> can’t be reduced to a scheme, fixing the main parts of a composition, but comprises (the use of the italics is mine – T. Ch.) it”. It undoubtedly means that the form is wider than the compositional scheme. Let me give you a further quotation: “the form also includes the perception about a genre, because a genre is a generalized type of content; the form acquires the content-bearing component through the genre dependence of the material” . And here is C. Dahlhaus’s opinion: “the musical doctrine about a form is at the same time the theory of genres <...> the performing score, which the composition is optimized for, can’t be mistakenly regarded as the secondary instrumentation of abstract musical phrases” .

These true statements, introducing the genre component into the form itself as its own indispensable aspect are not only the product of theoretical reflections; it is inevitably produced by analytical practice. Frequently, reliance on the traditional systematics of musical forms, Marx’s, for example, (which he wanted to be regarded as universal in relation to music of the second half of the XVIII-XIX centuries) with its generality and constructive orientation, substantially contradicts the genre essence of the music under analysis. Thus, treating the form of Larghetto in Chopin’s Concert in f-moll as a small rondo speaks a little for the vocal nature of this music, the very image of which (including the structure) dates back to the so-called contracted da Capo with a recitative in the centre of composition. Moreover, the given definition is contradictory from the historic point of view: aria da Capo and aria-rondo in Chopin’s times were thought to be different types of vocal forms regarding their compositional structure (e.g. German “Guidelines to

composition” by H. C. Koch, 1782-1793, or a further work of a Frenchman Alexander Choron named “New guidelines to vocal and instrumental music, 1838). Let us give another example. What would be more exact: to define the form of Francesca’s Arioso from Rachmaninoff’s opera, which is written in the AAB scheme, as a form of bar or as a musical verse of a canzona, taking into account the plot borrowed from Dante, the figurative meaning of the text and the music of the Arioso, treated from the position of proto-renaissance, as well as Dante’s canzonas? The examples can be numerous.

From all the above mentioned I would like to draw the following conclusion: a weak point in the treatment of balance between the genre and the form is understanding a form, which is frequently limited by its compositional sound structure. Such treatment of a form had been completed only by the middle of the XIX century.

Why then the “form”, which has long been understood as the expression, embodiment of an idea of the thing in the appropriate matter, appears to be so clearly reduced? The reasons are evident. On the one hand they lie in the musical reality itself, on the other – in orientation of a musical science to the German classic philosophy. The result of such a crossover is one of the main concepts of the epoch – the concept “absolute music”.

As we know, it was introduced by Richard Wagner in 1846 in his “Programme” to Beethoven’s Ninth symphony, in the meaning of the highest expressive opportunities of music as an independent kind of art. From the position of musical reality it characterizes the ability of instrumental music to exist without the support of other arts and a verbally expressed programme. What is more, it can exist in the form of a complete musical object – a composition. The perception of this ability, the role of a material-sound factor in the specificity of music, the laws of compositional integrity of a music piece, etc. – have all put the compositional sound aspect of a musical form to the most prominent position. Beginning with the last third of the XIX century the term “absolute music” is identified with the ideal schematics of musical forms, with the tectonics of a composition (O. Gostinsky, 1877, A. Halm, 1913). Of course, it is clear, both then and now, that the nature of autonomous music and musical form is limited by the structural sound aspects. Furthermore, this statement is the example of political acuity of judgements. The appeal to the theses of the philosophic thought, however, only supported such opinions.

German idealism, as we know, exaggerated the harmony and eurhythmy of objective reality, the organization and systemacity of the world. The pathos of a form, treated as closeness of the whole, like a harmonistic motive won over the pathos of the processive, “vicious” from Hegel’s point of view, infinity. Here (like in many other aspects) idealism follows the ancient philosophy, which actually was a universal morphology of objective reality, a doctrine about the

ideal structure or architectonics of the world. Hellenization of the German philosophic idealism also manifests itself in the fact, that it is a religious system; idealism is religious in its problematics, intentions and themes. According to its pantheistic essence, it unifies the God with the world, claims the absoluteness and divinity of any actual existence, ascends from occurrence to existence – to God as an idea of cosmic harmony. In accordance with pantheistic contradictions, idealism is coloured in acosmic tones: empiric connections in it appear to be illusive and excessive. In terms of music it means that the unity of sound and extra-sound realities, the materiality of the sound itself are abandoned for the sake of natural harmony, which appears in the sound as exposure of the Divine. In this way, the equity of music and harmony in general is established. Distraction from the time as the empiric insufficiency also takes place in idealism; the time turns into the architectural ground. Thus, determined by the sound and time, due to its material nature, a musical form appears to be an abstract static construction, “winning over” both sound and time. Musical-aesthetic views of the XX century, developing in the same style, deepen the restriction of this concept and make its critical features more apparent.

As a religious system, German idealism, being the foundation of the philosophy of music, needs religious perception as well; it can be criticized only in a religious way. It is difficult to name the forces in the national musicology which would be able to take part in this process, giving another direction to the perception of the essence of a musical form. The inertness of the past is too strong today. It seems to me, the above mentioned tradition is going to exist in the musicological language for a long time. In return, I can offer you a brief discussion of the essence of a musical form and its relations with genre, appealing mostly to common sense and, what is more important, to the musical experience.

As a cultural event, the art of music in its own way is bound to perform the role of cultivation in relation to life, to contribute to the perfection and vivification, thus, creating the form not only in the structural, congruent meaning, but also in the thematic, pragmatic, communicative, anthropologic and other meanings. The music of the XVIII-XIX centuries with its prevalence of the artistic function over the practically applied one, creating the autonomous artistic world in a variety of compositions, didn't refuse from the cultivating purpose of life (contrary to other aesthetic judgements) and, according to I. Iljin, saw it as its own idea and its own artistic subject, no less important than “the proclaiming itself extract of universal sense”. This idea is implemented and brought into life indirectly, unlike the cultural practical activity, and it influences mostly “the apex of creation” – a human. Moreover, autonomous music has at its disposal a composition as a new object among other objects, and even - the object in general, represented by a complex of sounds. Of course, the matter of music is made by the sounds, but not only them, but

also essential life senses, connected with them. The principal cause of music, according to Kant, is both the “free beauty” and the “constrained beauty”, and not only the beauty.

At least two things should be said about the form, as the embodiment of an idea, its imprint. Firstly, the process of form-making has two wings: one of them is harmonizing, the other is elevating and spiritualizing. The form does not only consist in harmony, it also has the anagogical influence on the material. Whereas the principles of harmony and the results of their manifestation are well-known and systematized, particularly, in the field of compositional properties of a musical form, the anagogical approach to creating a form is still waiting to be systematized.

Secondly, manifestations of a form are not limited by the perfection of the sound body. The form is manifold; among its components there is the overwhelming virtuosity of a composer and a performer, the quality of artistic perception, the absoluteness of artistic communication, the essentiality of emotions of the participants involved, the conciseness and spirituality of life realities belonging to this artistic world, etc. A form as the image of an idea opens the prospect of a new, better life. Due to its manifoldness, in some points of applying its efforts the form can't but touch the genre as a type of correlation and integrity between the sounds and what lies behind the sounds. The genre is included in the system of a form from its material side and the corresponding, preferable, presumable ways of its transformation. Thus, the genre specifies the direction of musical form-making, with respect to its compositional structure, from inside the form itself. The genre aspect of a form also takes part in implementing its anagogical trend. In this respect the idea about hierarchical co-subordination of musical genres can serve as the basis for form-making. Being essential for classical music, it has not lost its significance up to the present moment: the genre stylistics of a tango is one thing, and the genre stylistics of a chorale – is quite a different one, etc.

At this point I would like to draw a conclusion. The problem is identified and needs overall investigation.

Thank you for your attention.