
Work on a Small Polyphonic Cycle in the Class of Special Piano

(on the example of Prelude and Fugue No. 8 "In Memory of Navoi" by G.Mushel)

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the issues of the pianist's work on one of the brightest and most original samples of the polyphonic small cycle. Prelude and Fugue No. 8 in c-moll "In Memory of Navoi" from the Piano Polyphonic Cycle 24 Preludes and Fugues by the brilliant Uzbek composer and pianist George Muschel.

The study and subsequent performance of this creation contributes to the development of the pianist's creative thinking, professional improvement, artistic and intellectual growth of the individuality. It is open to the performer the world of Uzbek piano polyphony, which characterized by bright and original national imagery.

Keywords: prelude, fugue, polyphonic ear, imagination, personality, fantasy, artistic image, funeral procession, elegy, melody, national coloring, nuance, performer, intellect.

The piano polyphonic cycle 24 preludes and fugues (1975) by George Muschel (1909 - 1989), a remarkable composer and pianist, is a highly artistic example of the musical twentieth century. "The theme of twenty-two (out of 24) macrocycles is based on the intonations of Uzbek folk music".¹ Prelude and Fugue No. 8 c-moll "In Memory of Navoi" is one of the most inspired works by Muschel, where he expressed his love and respect for the great thinker of the East, whose genius he repeatedly turned to in his work. In 1941 - 1942, Muschel wrote the Second Symphony, dedicating it to the memory of Navoi, which is a four-movement cycle. "Strophes from different works of the poet, proposed as an epigraph to each part of the symphony, allow the author to convey a generalized program".² In a certain sense, the Prelude and Fugue "In Memory of Navoi" is a logical continuation of an important theme in Muschel's work, connected with the personality of the great poet.

Describing this microcycle, T. Gafurbekov emphasized: "This is perhaps one of the most profound, artistically convincing works of the cycle (apparently, it is no coincidence that it is also popular in the version for organ)".³ There is no doubt that in the repertoire of every Uzbek pianist, the cycle Prelude and Fugue No. 8 should take its rightful place.

It is advisable to start working on Prelude and Fugue No. 8 in c-moll with a general

¹ Вахидов А.А. Стилистические особенности прелюдий и фуг Г. Мушеля. – Ташкент: Ўқитувчи, 1982, с. 3.

² Каримова З. Г. Навои в музыке. – Т.: Издательство литературы и искусства памяти Г. Гуляма, 1988, с. 132.

³ Гафурбеков Т. Б. О национально-народных истоках узбекской камерно-инструментальной музыки // Музыкальная культура Узбекской ССР. – М.: Музыка, 1981, с. 231.

acquaintance with the work, its imaginative world, features of the musical language, and compositional structure. Cycle No. 8 is built on the principle of contrast between Prelude and Fugue. The sphere of images of the Prelude is sublime, lyrical, the Fugue is tense, dramatic.

The Andante prelude is a three-part form with a developing middle. The initial melody develops against the background of rhythmically moving chords, in the structure of which seconds and quarts occupy a significant place:



According to the insightful and deep observation of T. Gafurbekov: “In the Prelude - elegy, the features of a majestic procession, a funeral procession, as if seeing off the immortal son of the Uzbek people, the poet-humanist, clearly appear”.⁴ This observation of a musicologist is important for understanding the figurative world of the Prelude and choosing performing means.

The national coloring of the sound is given by the use of the fifth reduced degree of the mode in singing turns preceding the cadenzas. The middle section of the Prelude does not contain fundamentally significant changes in texture. At the same time, the intonationally developing initial melody here acquires a general register decrease. If the melody in the first section sounded mainly in the second octave, and the closely spaced harmony mostly in the first, then in the middle section the melody sounds mainly in the first octave, and the harmony in the small one. It is very important for a pianist to pay attention to these features of the texture, and to show all the timbre nuances in the performance.

In the last four bars of the middle section, the contemplative-song melody acquires the features of declamation. “In fact, the section ends with two “exclamations” that have a pathetic connotation”.⁵ This moment is the climax of the Prelude. At the same time, it can be seen as a forerunner of the tense dramatic figurative world of the Fugue. In the reprise, the opening melody varies. The composer sets out the final motives of the melody an octave lower, and then returns them to the previous pitch level, which logically and harmoniously affirms the main thesis of musical thought.

Comprehending the sound embodiment of the Prelude, the pianist needs to focus on the deep philosophical content of the music, which reveals a stylistic commonality with some of the preludes from D. Shostakovich's Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues, in particular, with the Prelude in C major, which opens this monumental cycle. The austere, majestic character of the Prelude in c-moll evokes associations with the old sarabandes from the clavier suites. In this sense, the Prelude provides the pianist with the richest source for the manifestation of his performing talent and thinking. “The ability to penetrate into the world of perfect sounds is not in an arbitrary reading of the text, not in the ostentatious emphasis on this or that contrapunctuating voice, not in doubling and additions. The true merits of interpretation depend on a heightened sense of counterpoint, on the ability to link the art of Bach's polyphony with the quality of the modern piano”.⁶ This wise reasoning by S. Feinberg regarding the interpretation of Bach's polyphony can rightly be attributed to the performance of G. Muschel's polyphonic works, especially the Prelude and Fugue in c-moll, which are

⁴ Гафурбеков Т. Б. О национально-народных истоках узбекской камерно-инструментальной музыки // Музыкальная культура Узбекской ССР, с.231.

⁵ Вахидов А. А. Стилистические особенности прелюдий и фуг Г. Мушеля, с. 24.

⁶ Фейнберг С. Е. Мастерство пианиста. – М.: Музыка, 1978, с. 55.

distinguished by the composer's bold approaches to the embodiment of the polyphonic idea.

The Moderato fugue is innovative both in general and in details. In terms of innovative methods of polyphonic writing and musical dramaturgy, it goes beyond the framework of classical fugues, which T. Gafurbekov notes: "Reliance on quarter-quint foundations, predominant ostinato texture, moreover, with a consistent mutual development of song-cantilena constructions with instrumental (dutar-tanbour) acting out, undoubtedly come from the nature of the Uzbek monody".⁷

According to the correct observation of A. Vakhidov, "the three-voice fugue is combined with the recitative, which occupies a significant place in the form".⁸ Unusual is the very beginning of the Fugue, which opens with a recitative that contrasts with the Prelude, translating the music into the realm of dramatic collisions. The low register of the instrument, octave unison conduction, *ff* nuance, sharp dissonant harmonies require special attention of the pianist:



The recitative, in which the influence of D. Shostakovich is noticeable, has its source not only in vocal, but also in instrumental recitation. "This is evidenced by his melodic and textural warehouse, a clear orientation towards organ sound (by the way, the author at the end of the fugue gives a remark about the existence of an organ edition)".⁹ It should be noted that Muschel uses here a three-line piano score notation of the musical text, for a more vivid display of the voices of a polyphonic polyphonic fabric.

After three pathos sounding of the recitative, the actual Fugue begins. The theme is exhibited in the nuance of *pp* in the middle voice after the completion of the recitative. This is one of the few extremely concise polyphonic themes. It occupies only two cycles. Her intonations are closely related to the melody of recitative. In the theme, attention is drawn to the presence of lowered second and fourth steps of the mode, which gives the melody a special expressiveness, deepens its lyric-philosophical character. The deep national soil of the Fugue is manifested in its commonality with maqom origins, in particular, with the Navo melody from Sarahbori, cited by O. Matyakubov in his book "Maqomot":¹⁰



Common features of the Fugue theme with maqom origins are found in Namuda Navo-rang from Sarahbori Navo, cited by O. Matyakubov in his book "Uzbek classical music":¹¹

⁷ Гафурбеков Т. Б. О национально-народных истоках узбекской камерно-инструментальной музыки // Музыкальная культура Узбекской ССР, с. 232.

⁸ Вахидов А. А. Стилистические особенности прелюдий и фуг Г. Мушеля, с. 25.

⁹ Там же, с. 25.

¹⁰ Матякубов О. Р. Мақомот. – Т., 2004;

¹¹ Матякубов О. Р. Узбекская классическая музыка. Книга 2. Теоретические основы. – Т., 2015, с. 39.



Throughout the Fugue, the interval composition of the theme varies, which enriches its emotional figurative world.

The fugue is characterized by the extreme concentration of musical material. There are almost no interludes in it. This is partly dictated by the properties of the topic itself - its brevity and at the same time the capacity, fullness of the content. On the other hand, the functions of the interludes are taken over by the recitative - being intonationally connected with the theme, it simultaneously creates the necessary contrast to it. The recitative is carried out in the Fugue three times, taking into account the exposition. It permeates the Fugue and acquires important dramatic significance as the climactic phases of development. On the one hand, recitative is a generalization of development, on the other hand, it is an impulse to continue development.

The aphorism of the musical statement in the Fugue is due to the composer's contact with Navoi's poetry, which is characterized by the mastery of oriental miniatures, such genres as ghazals, rubaiyat. Navoi's poetic miniatures comprise several thousand ghazals, which he liked to combine into cycles of beits. Therefore, the ratio of recitative and theme can be likened to bayts in the poetic miniatures of Navoi.

The reprise of the Fugue, like its previous section, is also innovative. The culmination of the theme in the bass after a long organ point on the dominant, against which three performances of the theme are given, although it establishes the main key of the fugue, but at the same time continues to develop. In the intensity of the development of thematism in this case, the combination of functions is manifested, the processuality of the form is activated. "The combination of functions, according to V. Bobrovsky, is the basis of all forms of movement (variability) of the musical form".¹² Thus, the accumulation of movement energy takes place, which is stabilized in the *Meno mosso* section, where a cadenza is given in three measures based on the material of the final construction of the Prelude. A miniature four-bar coda in the *pp* nuance reminisces the main motif common to the theme of the Fugue and recitative, which here sounds like an echo against the background of a sustained tonic bass.

Thus, Prelude and Fugue No. 8 "In Memory of Navoi", c-moll, provides the pianist with an interesting example of a small polyphonic cycle, the study of which contributes to the development of creative thinking, professional improvement, artistic and intellectual thesaurus of personality. It opens the world of Uzbek piano polyphony, which is characterized by bright and original national imagery, to the performing musician. The development of an individual performance concept for this work contributes to the development of the young pianist's professional competence and implies mastery of a wide range of historically established and innovative aspects of modern musical performance.

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¹² Бобровский В. П. Функциональные основы музыкальной формы. – М.: Музыка, 1978, с. 43.

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