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The Symphony Genre in Georgian Music: at the Crossroads of National Identity and Modern European Tendencies

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Abstract

In parallel with instability, origination of different compositional techniques within a short period of time, diversity of musical language, classical stable genres continue along their path of existence and development in 20th- and 21st-century music. Naturally, they reflect multiple changes and despite the fact that in some cases the innovations taken place in the system of thinking diminish the probability of using traditional genres, they do not stop their existence.

From the viewpoint of stability and long-term history among classical genres symphony is distinguished. On the one hand, it preserves its main paradigm features of genre but on the other hand, responses to the demands of its time and changes the external form.

As distinct from European, in Georgian music the genre of symphony has far less history not more than a century. At first sight in such short time period genre of symphony experienced interesting development in the creations of Georgian composers. Today the whole number of Georgian symphonies can be regarded in the context of modern European symphonies. They are the symphonies by S. Nasidze, G. Kancheli, R. Gabichvadze, N. Svanidze.

In this paper the above-mentioned symphonies are considered in the context of European trends. The analysis of synthesis of national identity and novelties of modern music is given.

Keywords: *Symphony, Georgia, Music, Genre, Tradition, Modernity*

Our paper deals with the development of the symphony genre in Georgian music, which has undergone interesting integration processes in its development: it attempts to analyze the modern state of symphony and its synthesis with national musical language. The incorporation of the west European and traditional features varies from a composer to composer.

It is known that the symphony has been distinguished among classical music genres by its long history and stability. In the 20th century, on the one hand it maintained its basic paradigmatic features, and on the other hand reflected the needs of the time, partly finding itself under the influence of innovations and changing external design.

Our study of the models of the symphony genre [1] revealed that in the 20th century music it maintained chief invariant-semantic characteristics, an essential parameter – generalized concept. The Symphony reflects a composer's own global world-view. The second significant parameter – structure varied from single- to multi-part in the 20th century. In the third parameter – instrumentation variation provokes many interesting diversities, such as synthesis within a genre, when symphony combines the features of another instrumental music genre (concerto, chamber-instrumental ensembles) and interpenetration, when the symphony and vocal music genres are synthesized.

In Georgian music the symphony genre emerged three centuries after its birth in Europe – in the 1930s. The first stage of its development saw the mastering of traditional schemes, musical language absorbed the national elements, which frequently was of a formal character. As Anton Tsulukidze writes: “The symphonies created in the 1930s were of a suite character; in these earlier symphonic

attempts composers were striving for combination and reconciliation of “essential norms”. But this fusion was superficial in character: these works resembled classical symphonies only on the schematic level (they looked fairly primitive in the 20th century music), and national features were only of external, ethnographic character” [2, 88].

From the viewpoint of understanding immanent features in Georgian music a significant period started in the 1960s; the advances involved the in-depth integration of the genre, as well as consideration of the genre’s modern state and its enrichment with new musical language on the basis of national elements and synthesis of modern compositional techniques.

From 1960s Georgian composers emerge with diverse solutions in regard with the symphony models. On the one hand these are symphonies, where the three basic genre parameters are invariably maintained. These symphonies are close to classical model on the level of concept, and other external signs and represent their original resolution (the symphonies of Tsintsadze, Nasidze, Svanidze and others).

As an example we bring here Natela Svanidze’s symphony (1967) – one of the first works where the author introduced innovations of the first half of the 20th century following her stylistic change.

The links with the genre’s traditional model are revealed on in the cyclic and internal structural levels: the first movement of the symphony is in sonata form, in it the essential principle of thesis-antithesis is preserved- synthesis. Contrasting characters are exposed in the introduction; according to the author the second theme resembles lamentation of East Georgian mountain regions and is a Khevsuretian wedding weeping-song. It is also noteworthy that serial fughetta is introduced as a result of the arrangement of this part. The second part of the symphony brings us to the atmosphere of meditation. It has the function of interlude – proceeds from part one and prepares the final with plenty of scherzo elements. Part three presents variations, fughetta and final conclusive fragments.

In the external three-part tissue of Svanidze’s symphony conceptual four-part character is revealed, which determines the existence of scherzo in finale: part one - *Homo Agens*, part two - *Homo Meditans*, part three unites two initials: *Homo Ludens* and *Homo Communius*. It should also be noted that the serial principles and elements of Georgian folk music are organically merged in the symphony.

The symphony structure – number of movements and their functions is the second general sign of the symphony paradigm. From the standpoint of structural change in Georgian music priority is given to single-part symphony; the latter developed in two directions in the 20th century, on the one hand this is single-movement nature, which internally contains cyclicality and is thus approximated to classical paradigm, and on the other hand this is non-cyclic single-movement nature, whose organizational principles sharply differ from non-traditional paradigm signs of the genre. In Georgian symphony music both types of single-part nature are represented. Here we would also like to mention that as a rule, in Georgian music single-movement symphonies have subtitles- basically indicating to the underlying program the generalized type.

One of the most distinguished examples of single-movement cyclic symphony in Georgian music is Sulkhan Nasidze’s symphony “Dalai” (1979). The title, which comes from Tushetian mourning custom (weeping-song performed at the anniversary of demise in Tusheti), is indicative of the work’s tragic concept. The symphony is not accompanied by certain program, the title only indicates to general disposition and not to specific program, which is the distinctive factor between symphony poem and single-part symphony.

A symphony can be divided into three large sections; however cyclicality is covert in it. According to N. Zhghenti “In a single-part symphony the composer ceases connection with traditional dramaturgy. Here purposeful dramaturgical process replaces the slowed activity characteristic of “Passions”. Here prevails the strained rhythm, sharp contrast of chiaroscuros. In symphony the contacts are presented together with adjacent images in new correlation: makes changes in cinematographic

principles – noteworthy is the introduction, which makes the impression of a catastrophe happened in front of our eyes” [5, 120], a parallel can also be drawn with cinematography when constructing the whole with the arrangement principle, which is one of the most important characteristic features of Nasidze’s style.

In terms of underlying program and theme-symbols the best example of the communication with listener is Nasidze’s single-movement symphony “Pirosmani” (1977). In the three movements of the symphony sonata- and rondo-type elements are incorporated. The timbral diversity is also noteworthy; the orchestra of “Pirosmani” consists of the instruments such as organ, celesta, and guitar. The symphony is distinguished by motley musical material, diverse theme-images, among which “Pechora March” and fragments from Donizetti’s “La Favorite” play symbolic role. From the standpoint of theme-symbol application parallel can be drawn between this symphony and Ives’ Symphonies IV or/and Shostakovich’ XV.

Different, non-cyclic type of symphony is encountered in Giya Kancheli’s creative work.

Giya Kancheli’s symphonies and the principles of their formation absolutely differ from the tradition. Polarity of the two musical ideas initials, contrasting duality is the starting point of his creative work. This is why the composer, as a rule, employs the principle of montage – which is the contrast, most effective method for the sudden juxtaposition of the conflicting musical characters. In Kancheli’s works the polarized ideas are presented as an alternation of distinct sounds and silences, which with the lapse of time turn into familiar” personages” of a familiar ‘game” for listener. It is also noteworthy that in Kancheli’s case – the national character is never revealed as specific secular or sacred piece music (one of the exceptions is in Symphony III the five-sound motive from Svan “Zari”). Despite this Kancheli’s music is “clearly Georgian”, because, as mentioned above, in it familiar “personages” of “game” substitute each other. From structural standpoint, this is almost always a meditation-act, their alternation frequently creates single-part tissue of continual-contrast type. Kancheli’s Symphony V is the clear example of this.

In the 5th Symphony Kancheli juxtaposes two ideas: “childhood”, expressed by celesta theme in C major and resembles the themes of Baroque Epoch and “fate” – descending short phrases of orchestral *tutti*. Their conflicting interrelation becomes obvious from the very first bar of the symphony.

Despite the fact, that four large fragments can be distinguished in the 5th Symphony, its essential formal principle is that of continuity and contrast

In conclusion, chamber symphony, as one of the forms of within -genre synthesis turned out to be the closest of the parameter changes for Georgian composers. It is known that chamber symphony as an independent genre is the 20th century occurrence. On the one hand it is a symphony, and on the other hand the result of the combination of chamber ensemble features, revealed on the level of intoning, organization of musical material.

One of the most distinguished examples of chamber symphony is Sulkhani Nasidze’s Chamber Symphony (#3, 1969) for string orchestra; in the symphony distinguished can be a single-part composition, where “strict cult-ritual initial (extreme parts of the composition) opposes the rhythmicity of the middle episode. The construction material of chamber symphony consists of two motives in the introduction. The first is intonationally related to Khevsuretian *Mtibluri*, the other is related to the song “*Shav luds, tsitel ghvinosa*” [5, 104] .

Nasidze’s single-part chamber symphony is divided into three sections: slow-quick-slow with introduction and conclusion. Certain connections with Schoenberg’s Chamber Symphony op.9 can be seen on the level of structure principles. Cyclicity in single-part tissue is meant in the first place. In Nasidze’s, chamber symphony, like Schoenberg, parallels can be drawn with paradigm parameters of the symphony.

Chamber symphony genre occupies significant place in Revaz Gabichvadze's creative work. Between 1964-1975 the composer created four chamber symphonies. First three out of these belong to chamber ensemble genre; they were created for a nonet. From the viewpoint of musical language national basis in them is revealed on the rhythmic level.

Thus, the symphony genre integrated into Georgian music from the 1960s. This process parallel to the proximity to general European traditional model implied the genre reincarnation with the consideration of contemporary situation. As we see, the two types of the symphony, that of single-movement and chamber, both of which emerged in the 20th century, turned out to be most organic for Georgian music. Traditional and reincarnated models of symphony were filled with new musical language by the composers of the 1960s, and represented the organic synthesis of the national elements and contemporary trends.

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