

## EKA CHABASHVILI'S WORKS THROUGH SOME ASPECTS OF MUSICAL IDENTITY

Nana Sharikadze, PhD

V.Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Griboedov str 8-10, 0108, Tbilisi, Georgia

### Abstract

*The present article deals with the compositional thinking of Eka Chabashvili through some problems concerning national identity, cultural dialogue and multiculturalism seem to be of great importance for Georgia especially after Soviet Union has collapsed. The topic about interrelation between national and multicultural, individual and global has raised with a new strength; at some point it was a natural process, since even a hint on national ideology was prohibited by the soviets as well as processes taking place in Western European (in another political block) Music had been also kept beyond the iron curtain; E,Chabashvili's works are not only about identifying oneself with the national culture but more about the interrelation between individual and global.*

*The article presents a number of key themes relating to the concept of musical identities. It provides a definition of identity, with a discussion of*

- *What does musical identity mean for composer herself;*
- *How the traditional musical markers have been considered/reconsidered by the composer;*
- *What the individual musical identity looks like through the contemporary musical processes in Eka Chabashvili's works;*

*The semi-structured interview method was considered to be the appropriate approach in order to help understand how professional musicians construct their identities in relation to both their national roots as well as wider cultural issues.*

**Keywords:** *Identity, individual – national, individual – global, national markers, compositional thinking*

Interest of Georgian musicologists towards the musical identity - mainly considering the role of the national roots in Georgian compositional school - has always been very constant (L.Donadze, G.Orjonikidze, A.Tsulukidze, L.Gogua, R.Tsurtsunia, M.Kavtaradze and others). During the soviet times nearly all Georgian musicologists have been examining the different forms of “national language” in professional compositional school. However, problems concerning national identity, cultural dialogue and multiculturalism have been discussed openly and become essential for Georgia particularly after Soviet Union has collapsed; the topic about interrelation between national and multicultural, individual and global has raised with a new strength; at some point it was a natural process, since even a hint on national ideology was prohibited by the soviets as well as processes taking place in Western European (in another political block) Music had been also kept beyond the iron curtain; the more, problem of identity, has become one of the most sensitive subjects in the contemporary Georgian art science; consequently it has been reflected by the recent works of Georgian musicologists.

The contemporary Georgian music after 90<sup>th</sup> of the XX century is an example of preservation and reconsideration of musical identity. Process of reconsideration was not only about identifying oneself with the national culture but more about the interrelation between individual and global. Due to that the problem about dialogue between national and global turned out to be topical. The Georgian music of Post - Soviet era has gone through different stages and created various musical-linguistic, as well as genre models.

Eka Chabashvili is one of the most interesting representatives of the generation of 90<sup>th</sup><sup>1</sup>. Due to the following reasons I got interested with the problem of musical identity in E.Chabashvili's works:

- E.Chabashvili is a representative of the generation of the post Soviet Georgian composers and the question about what has been changed and to what extent in terms of musical identity seems to be topical
  - Problem of musical identity has become crucial for her as well: open lectures, articles and composer's writings have been dedicated to the problems of musical genetics and identity [1].

Obviously it's impossible to cover all problems related to musical identity in E.Chabashvili's works, but the present article will deal with the following key issues:

- What it is to be 'part of the world and at the same time maintain emphases on roots' on the example of E.Chabashvili's works;
- What does musical identity mean for composer herself;
- How the traditional musical markers have been considered/reconsidered by the composer;
- What the individual musical identity looks like through the contemporary musical processes in Eka Chabashvili's works;

The semi-structured interview method was considered to be the appropriate approach in order to help understand how professional musicians construct their identities in relation to both their national roots as well as wider cultural issues. Therefore the main problem will be examined through the interrelation of both individual – national as well as individual – global.

The three main senses are peculiar when we are talking about identity in general:

- first of all identity is linked to the sense of belongingness to certain group
- therefore it raises the sense of difference
- and consequently awareness of "WE" and "THEY"

Above mentioned "definition of Identity" is actually proved by Anthony D.Smith: "Many see identity, including national identity, in psychological terms as "an awareness of difference" - "a feeling and recognition of 'we' and 'they'" [2].

The difference between "WE" and "They" are expressed through multiple layers; and generally resulted directly from the presence of elements from the "common points" that are at the

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<sup>1</sup> Eka Chabashvili -representative of New Georgian Music. She is an author of "panorama", 7 novels - 7 wonders of the world , , opera exhibition "ramble souls", Chants of regret, chorale, spheres – the idea of god simphony – apocalifs, mozaics, noisy and fury – for hologra theatre

certain point closely linked with the different - social, political, everyday, cultural and etc - factors"; such as national symbols, language, history, national conscious, culture, music... These elements determine the belongingness to the "WE" and "THEY".

Music as a language might be considered as a mighty tool for emphasizing the difference and belongingness, and at the same time it might be understood as an identity marker as well[3].

What are the main peculiarities of E. Chabashvil's musical identity? Has the concept of WE and THEY been expressed in a traditional way?

In order to answer above mentioned questions I would like to refer to the interview with the composer: "While talking about musical identity national source might be used directly through citing folk music material... but at the same time any type of non musical national source might be also considered as a tool for identifying oneself with the roots; for instance well known pieces from literature, that have been associated with the certain values of the nation" [4]. Composer is aware that musical identity is closely linked with the use of any type of national material.

In that regard following approach towards folk music should be pointed out in E.Chabashvili's creative works:

1. **Using Folk music through**

a) **Quoting of folk melodies** – e.g. "Poet" written in 1996, for accapela mixed choir; Fresco 2001, for piano, clarinet, flute, marimba, tam-tam, violin, cello. It's natural that in the beginning of the way composer declared its identity through emphasizing belongingness to the national roots.

b) **Quoting of Folk instruments** – e.g. Diffusion. The piece is written in 2006 for Georgian folk instruments (Salamuri, Duduki, Doli, Panduri – Chonguri, Chianuri. Composer herself disagrees with the definition of folk quotation in this certain piece, since no direct folk material has been quoted in the piece; however folk music instruments might be considered as an example of quotation.

2. **allusion** on traditional Georgan music – the declaration about the distancing from the Folk music has come out later on and the Chorale is an evident example of such approach; the piece was written in 2006 for accapela mixed choir (text by G.Tabidze). It's evident that composer rather prefers to use allusions on national language, then the quoting of folk music. "I m not interested in reconstruction of folk music. Folk might be used as a possibility to build my own individual style towards the national" – said E.Chabashvili [4].

If "WE" is a general expression of belongingness to the certain group, through using folk music Eka Chabashvili identifies her musical language with the certain national roots and therefore having no demarcation between "Individual" and "WE", while allusion approach in later works serves to form individual approach towards national. Consequently the relation between "I=WE" changes in favor to "I" – "National".

We should also keep in mind that identity in music is going beyond the "declared markers". Markers are mainly characterized with the procesuality even in one culture; that's why they are not fixed and stabile [5]. In that regard it seems to me not less important to expand more on the idea of "Genetics of Thinking" [6].

"In Georgia, a Georgian composer lives at a point where space and time collide. Relatively speaking, time factor is important in Europe, while space in Asia. We are in the middle here these two momentums are mingled" - Eka Chabashvili - "I prefer to walk in space rather in time [7]

Belongingness and difference of oneself simultaneously with the controversial origins **builds** what Chabashvili calls “**The Georgian sense of musical time and space**”. Space is as important as time and this controversy is not about “We” and “They” but more about two sides of the whole. Being in the process, gradual changing, in progress approach are the main characteristics for E.Chabashvili’s musical language – e.g. “Chorale” for mixed choir (Text G.Tabidze, 2006), Chants of regret (2003, text by D.Builder).

Taking into consideration that E.Chabashvili represents the post soviet generation of Georgian composers she emphasizes the genetical – immanent/inherent features; therefore reconsidering the feeling of the “WE” in a new political reality. This reality differs from previous Soviet experience, where the use of NATIONAL musical language aimed “to prove belongingness” to “WE” and difference from “THEY”; It should be said that exactly this approach has been reconsidered and changed by the composer;

Post Soviet Georgian music has faced new challenges. Problem about interrelation of individual and the global musical processes has become crucial and seems to be topical especially in the epoch of globalization. In other words it’s important to understand what the feeling of being part of the world means in new globalized time and at the same time how the link with the roots might be maintained and expressed. As I mentioned in the beginning it’s not about the difference, it’s about finding one’s place within the Globe and enriching it with the individual approach.

E.Chabashvili’s works reflect the interrelation between the global and individual; This is a language which is easily associated with the Georgian roots and at the same time reflecting the experiments in the field of musical language, compositional technique (sonorism, minimalism) and etc.

The problem about musical identity could not be solved explicitly and definitely; especially it’s impossible to do on the example of composer whose carrier is still in progress.

Instead of conclusion I would say with confidence that more integrated one gets in global musical processes, more self identified he/she becomes. E.Chabashvili is an evident example of that.

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