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SERGEI RACHMANINOFF'S "SYMPHONIC DANCES" AND MIKHAIL BULGAKOV'S "THE MASTER AND MARGARITA"

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Abstract

Rachmaninoff's "Symphonic Dances" and Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita", is a clear sign of parallel thoughts of two artists. Perceived as a 'dialogue' of kin souls, owing to the historical synchronic thinking, give nascence to genial paradigms of pertaining to the general mankind theme. Resemblances constitute similar motivations to write these opuses, preconditions of creation, their stage fate or painful road to readers/spectators, creative traumas and the tragedy of loneliness reflected in these works. The opuses also share:

- autobiographic character
- utmost emotionality emptied from sentimentality
- combination of lyrical-psychological, epical and mystical-fantastical lines
- Appeal to two temporal platforms: to the past and a modern world;
- The fight of the forces of light with the forces of evil ends with the apotheosis of the latter;
- The common feature- danceability, as a leading icon and symbol
- In "Symphonic Dances" the presence of leitmotifs, and in the novel, the presence of the main hero and his prophetic mission
- The tragic artistism and a symbolist way of thinking, characteristic for the decadence world outlook of the silver century of Russia.

Keywords: decadence, 'dialogue' of kin souls, paradigms, Dies irae, danceability, good-evil, Lucifer

Sergei Rachmaninoff's last work, "Symphonic Dances" (1940) and Mikhail Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita" (1938), written almost simultaneously, create paradigms of the eschatological, judgment day problem that pertain to the decadence. "Symphonic Dances" were written in Long Island (USA), and "The Master and Margarita," in Moscow, in Soviet reality. Despite these different places of creation, the authors had similar motivations to write these opuses. Preconditions for their creation, their stage fate or their durable and painful path to readers or spectators, creative traumas and the tragedy of loneliness were similar. These circumstances altogether conceive the wish to search parallels at ideal, semantic and artistic-contentual levels. The more so, that "The Master and Margarita" is recognized to be "music in the form of a novel" [1]. Certain numbers are distributed in the novel in the form of symbolic signs, as if we were facing a score with orientational numbers. The novel is full of musical terms, though its musicality is more conditioned by the scenes reflecting concrete voices, and the secret of their attractiveness lies in hidden acoustic effects. Needless to speak about that deep philosophical vision, which is revealed by the writer towards the romantic and baroque music. If Bulgakov connects romantic music with the infernal and illusory realms, meanwhile Bach's music confers communion with the truth for him. We must also mention here that Woland advises the master to listen to Schubert.

Bulgakov started writing this novel in 1928, and Rachmaninoff, too, conceived the idea of danceability in 1915, during his work on the ballet "The Scythians." Both authors kept working intensively under the conditions of poor health. The opuses, we deal with, were for their authors

their favourite ones. For Bulgakov, this novel was his confession. Despite criticism and negative feedback from the listeners, for Rachmaninoff, too, his "Symphonic Dances" were intimate and dear. None of the artists was alive for the moment when these opuses found their worldwide recognition; the full version of the novel was published as a book only in 1972, after there was issued a decree on the Russian literature previously classified under the mark "Secret." In his turn, Rachmaninoff, too, painfully suffered the fact that he was not able either to record or to stage as a ballet the piece of work which he had designed for the double stage life (as a concert and as a theatrical ballet). All of these parallels do not yet make the full grounds for the comparison of the opuses of our interest. Yet, even if the coincidences were merely occasional, they could certainly stir a sensitive spectators or readers.

Precondition for the interest of Rachmaninoff and Bulgakov in similar ideas was the epoch itself, which had already reached a turning landmark of social and political cataclysms. Their minds were suppressed by the results of the Russian revolution, and the totalitarian regime, which has become the precondition of formation of the tragic concepts in the consciousness of these two genial artists [2]. The theme of the homeland is a leitmotif for the art of these two patriotic artists. They despised the Soviet regime, which has destroyed the intellectual elite of Russia physically or morally both in the country and in emigration. The emphasis of the theme of psychiatric clinic is a clear message to say that the Soviet people are potentially crazy. The principal theme of Bulgakov's all writings was the fate of his homeland and his pains. Patriotic line is very strong in Rachmaninoff's art, too. "Till his last days he remained a Russian man not only with his origin, but also with the arrangement of his thoughts and feelings" [3]. Rachmaninoff sees the reliable spiritual support exactly in the loyalty to the traditions of Russian music. In the epic plane of the novel, too, there is shown forth the situation in author's contemporary Russia. Both patriots were formed in the same environment in terms of the world outlook, finding themselves submerged ever since their youth in the orbit of decadent ideas, pertaining to the art of the Russian silver age. This has been revealed in the description of pessimism objectified in the eschatological end of the Universe, in the victory of dark forces, in a tragic no escape situation and in the feeling of nostalgia. The main idea of the "Symphonic Dances" and of Bulgakov's novel, too _ the constant struggle of good and evil _ is conveyed exactly through the section of decadent ideas. Even though the Russian silver age includes only 1880-1922, due to the greatest forces of inertia of the aesthetics of this epoch, certain ideas and tendencies retained viability in Rachmaninoff's and Bulgakov's last works, too. It is not occasional that "Dies irae", shown forth in the range of the thinking and symbolic dominant, has conditioned intonational sphere of "Symphonic Dances," and demonology has determined the pathos of Bulgakov's corresponding novel. For instance, the method of the artistic thinking of the silver age, symbolism, has been reflected in motif-symbols with Rachmaninoff and in icon-symbols with Bulgakov. "Conveyance of the feelings has been assigned a super-personal character, which has a same limit with the symbols" [4]. It also must be taken into account that one of the sources of inspiration for "Symphonic Dances" was Rachmaninoff's first symphony, music of the ballet "The Scythians" and the first version of Bulgakov's novel coincide with the very epoch of the silver century chronologically.

By the end of the art of each of the artists, there has become prominent the feeling of physical and spiritual incapability, due to which, in both of the opuses, the pains common for the whole mankind as well as the thoughts about the fate of the mankind are intertwined with the tragedy of loneliness and with autobiographical elements. Bulgakov's novel has many autobiographic passages and the Master himself is one of Bulgakov's profiles either. Rachmaninoff has also "narrated about his loneliness, felt by him staying far away from his homeland, in a country alien to him" [5]. "From such a generalized point of view, the first part is autobiographical" [6]. Fragments of the themes lacerated in certain separate motifs remind us the last breaths of a lonely person, tired and broken from the inside; defeat of the forces of light in the finale is a hint to this very pessimism of such a lonely person.

In both opuses there have been reflected the creative traumas suffered in the past by the artists. Bulgakov was depressed by the critical letters written about his work. The precondition for creation of the scene of pillage of Latunsky's house was the pillage of his own house. The direct result of these events was the fact that the writer burned the first version of the novel. However, later the writer made the hero of the novel, Woland say: "Manuscripts do not burn" and this can serve as an example of psychological overcoming of the internal trauma. Rachmaninoff also suffered much pain due to the poor success of his first symphony. He forbade to perform it or to talk about it. The example of psychological overcoming of this intellectual failure was integration of a small portion from the first symphony into the "Symphonic Dances" which gave the composer a stimulus to renew his style as a mechanism expressing his internal logical and psychological state [7].

Rachmaninoff was accused as fallen out from the context of newest composing achievements and was referred to as an old-fashioned composer [8]. "I feel myself as a ghost who wanders alone in a Universe alien to it" [9]. And don't Bulgakov' heroes, detained in a psychiatric clinics, point us to the autobiographical syndrome of alienation?!

Both artists searched for a long time for the corresponding titles of their opuses, and they reflected artistic and symbolic quests and priorities. Bulgakov has changed many times the names of the novel as well as of the principal heroes. The composer also changed the initial title of his opus, he abolished the subtitles, too ("day," "dusk," "midnight"), though they still represent valuable messages for the researchers.

Both opuses can serve as comprehensive examples of suppression of lyrical and romantic bypasses. There is evidently noticeable furthering of the emotions at a distance, which is also connected with the invigoration of symbolic thinking. "Frank passions are bound in their revelation, they are deprived of naturalness" [10]. In "Symphonic Dances," domination of a fanfare, march-like origin as well as grotesque, as a method of artistic expression, prevent lyrical themes from development. "Slightly 'stringent' harmonies of the second part permanently block any manifestations of sentimentality" [11]. Rachmaninoff openly masks emotionality with skepticism, which turns into grimaces of torture. The grotesque character of symbols is emphasized by the mechanistic nature of the rhythm; the lyrical passages of Bulgakov's novel, too, are faded by the deficiency of poetic description, by grotesque and phantasmagorias.

The novel and "Symphonic Dances" have in common the vertiginous tempo of development of "musical or literary events," including its frequent changes and quick chronotope. The internal aspirational dynamics of "Symphonic Dances" are neutralized by "Russian themes." Though, neither tempo parameter is stable. The internal chronotope of the novel is only slowed down by descriptive moments. For instance, in Chapter 19 (Margarita) the writer's words, "follow me, reader" - temporarily hinder the head-turning tempo of development.

There is no uniform sequentially developed plot line in the novel. The writer, whose thinking is very much like a film director's, narrates about the events that take place in the present and in the past with the principle of movie-mounting. Neither in Rachmaninoff's "Symphonic Dances" can we meet melodies with wide breath, built upon a long-lasting emotional wave, typical for his early style. The latter is often presented not only in the form of motifs and phrases, but in that of intonations built upon the second or the third intervals too. This moment has a semantic importance, too, as due to the movement of voices throughout small diapasons the background for "Dies irae" (which is, in its turn, a sum of separate intonations) is already prepared in term of musical logic.

Stylistic similarities are also very interesting; we encounter in the novel a parody of the detective genre, songs of an adventure novel, satire, grotesque, and lyrical passages in connection with the love theme. In his description of the events of his contemporary Moscow, the writer uses jargons. The biblical chapters are retold using rhythmic prose with an elevated tone; what about the lexical store describing the mystical plane, it has some tint of buffonade. What we have just described, isn't it the same in terms of music as to pair the disparate and to match the incompatibles? These are exactly those things which Rachmaninoff combined together, such as the

lyrical melody of Saxophone, Russian melody "emigrated" from the first symphony, Znamenny Chant motif, "Dies irae" and grotesque intonations.

Both artists assign symbolic meaning to the idea of danceability connected with demonic forces. In the novel, danceability is a means of communication for the heroes and symbolizes proximity with dark forces. The axis of Margarita's behavioral system is the same very dance. The natural element of dance reaches its apogee during the ball full of nightmarish visions. The parallels between the novel and "Symphonic Dances" become even more evident against the background of the fact that both artists linked the symbol of smashing death to dance. Let us remember naiads' dance in the moonlight (Chapter 21) and dance of the moon itself in the epilogue. Presence of danceability as one of the leading symbols in Rachmaninoff's opus in interest is implied by the title itself, but "these are not merely dances" [12]. According to Bryantseva, it constitutes Rachmaninoff's style to perceive the rhythm of waltz as a psychological rhythmical aphorism possessing the potential of tension. Yet in the women's dance in "Aleko," he performed emancipation of iconic and dramaturgical functions of the rhythmic formula of waltz [13].

Here, the aim is not to inspire danceability, but to show its transformation into the witches' dance. The only hint to the genre specification of the dance can be found in the second part. The author himself made the subscript here: Tempo di valse. In the culmination of this "unreserved and immoderate" waltz there is created the impression that "this satanic leisure is joined by nameless creatures from other universes" [14]. In the finale (n. 72) glissandos of harps or wind instruments, the whole tone gammas (n. 26, bars. 3-6), chromatic movements in both directions, altogether with their horrible soundings, tell us the story of the disastrous power of music, and nothing can serve as a barrier to its flow. Music of the finale reminds us the cascade of the surrealistic horrors of the final ball in the novel, when the couples dance in the manner "as if they were threatening to smash anyone who happens to cross their way" [15].

It is remarkable that in both opuses there are present leitmotifs. In "Symphonic Dances" fanfare marsh-like calls (the fanfare chords anticipating the principal theme of the 1st part) or leitmotifs sounding in the introductions of the 2nd and 3rd parts themselves, periodically interrupt in the form of the preparation for the tragic finale. What about the novel, there, one of the principal heroes, Woland predicts Mikhail Berlioz's death, and periodic appearances of Fagott-Koroviev, Azazello, CatBehemoth and Hella serve as hints to the prophetical finale.

The method of thematic transformation with Rachmaninoff as well as cause and effect links in the novel, both deserve much attention. Due to intonational transformation, a motif or a theme in "Symphony Dances" conveys the idea of the opposite symbolic meaning. For instance, the Znamenny Chant motif, after having passed the process of intonational modification, symbolizes the mess of the modern world (n. 96, b. 3). In the novel, too, everything is intertwined with the causative links: chapters of the events occurring in the past and in present are interconnected with common phrases, Margarita is influenced by the devilish origin, and, as the Master describes, she becomes looking like a witch. On Woland's visit card there is imprinted **W** and its mirror image -**M** is found on the Master's hat.

One more analogy. Bulgakov connected together the layers of being that were apart in terms of time distance as well as the plot lines which were totally different, and this reminds us Rachmaninoff as he operates with the materials having various thematic geneses. The spirit of present, or else, the spirit of the 20th century America is introduced into the "Symphonic Dances" by the application to jazz harmonies. Rachmaninoff actively uses the saxophone of alto, a visitor from Big Bang Jazz. In General, the influence of jazz on the second part is evident [16].

Let's remind ourselves the synthetic genre nature of the finale, too: Latin American traditions united by the common title "Rumba" and welded with the tradition of swift European dances (Tarantella, Jiga, etc), with their typical polymetria and total syncopization. At the level of style citations and allusions, Rachmaninoff uses certain methods of the entertainment music, especially in the finale: swinging syncope, this "trademark of jazz" in the recapitulation of the finale, hidden polymetria, and in the sphere of harmony, rhythmic formulae of jazz and elevated 4th and 6th steps

of minor typical for sweet style in the middle episode of the 2nd part [17]. In the novel, the mess of the modern world is symbolized by the events that occurred in Russia of the 20th century. Bringing forth the jazz band of monkeys and the role of the colored people in the scene of the ball, Bulgakov pays tribute to the century of jazz, too.

Both artists oppose defensive mechanisms to traumas, caused by the cataclysms of the Universe _ finding shelter in the past, and in this past there is implied not only the factor of the homeland, but also Christianity as a reliable spiritual support. Another genius of the silver age, Nikolai Berdyaev has formed the same idea in such a phrase: "Now the aim of Christianity is to defend a human being, his/her completeness from demonology that still tortures him" [18]. This support was revealed in "Symphonic Dances" in the loyalty towards the traditions of Russian classical and ecclesiastic music, and in the novel, in the Biblical layer.

In the novel, it is still the mystical and surrealistic plane, which serves as an organizing phenomenon between the mystical, biblical and modern Moscow parallel realities. In "Symphonic Dances," too, the symbolic world of the mystical-satanical rock, the universe of ancient Russia and of the modern megapolis, narrated in three genre-stylistic layers, shape out the organizing importance of the mystical reality [19].

In both opuses, there can be distinguished lyrical-psychological, epical and fantastic planes. In "Symphony Dances," the lyrical and psychological plane is revealed in the lyrics of the second part (the unison waltz melody of violin solo prior to waltz theme, the waltz theme, lyrical episode of development of the third part, Des Dur, n. 73, b. 7). What about the lyrical and psychological passages of the novel, they are linked with the emotions of the loving couple, with Margarita's transformation and with the patients of the clinics, who are at the verge of hallucinations. The fact that the writer have turned his heroes into the patients despite the fact whether they were receiving the treatment in the clinics or not, points to the depth of the understanding of psychology. Indeed, hallucinations are common for every one of them. The epical plane with Rachmaninoff is represented with the Russian set of themes: in the first part, this is the main theme _ the signal with a call (n.2), the source of inspiration for which is the phrase of the calling character, sounding in the introduction of Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Golden Cockerel." "The embryo of this symbolic cock-adoodle-doo is based upon the major triad" [20]. Rachmaninoff's "Symphonic Dances," too, begins with the fanfare motif built upon the sounds of triad. The Russian atmosphere is created also by: the saxophone solo from the 1st part (n. 11), the theme of code, a fragment from his first symphony (n. 27), an auxiliary theme of the finale (n. 66, b. 5), the basis for which is the theme of the theme of the Znamenny Chant of Rachmaninoff' choral chef-d'oeuvre, "The prayer of night vigil" (#9, "Blessed are"), and the lyrical episode of development of the third part (n. 73, b. 7). The ethnic/national (Russian) atmosphere is created by the application to the bell sounding in the finale (n. 57). The composer himself did make parallels with his own "Bells". What about the fantastic plane, this is the largest one in both opuses. Rachmaninoff did give the title "Fantastic Dances" to the cycle, there is used exactly the genre of phantasy in it and the largest thematic material pertains to the fantastic-mystical plane. This layer connected with dark mystical forces is presented by the following themes: chords conveying fantastic symbolism in the first part till the main theme, chromatic ascending and descending movements during the development of the main theme, the whole tone gamma in coda till the first symphony theme, and the morose leitmotif of the second part. In order to create fantastic symbols, Rachmaninoff uses multiples and polyrhythmia. One of the titles of the second edition of the novel is also "The Fantastic Novel," and today it might be considered probably as a genre of fantasy, too. In the novel, the fantastic plane also serves to show forth the evil force, which has made the heroes captive due to their lack of faith. The ends of the opuses are similar, too: triumph of the demonic forces against the background of the night darkness. The novel ends with the nocturnal atmosphere of the moonlight. The initial subtitles of Rachmaninoff's work also point to the idea of movement from the light to darkness, which is symbolized with night demonology. Bryantseva indicates that the second part narrates about the "tantalizing dusk" precipitated into the soul due to nostalgia, and the third part, the night, is

associated with being assimilated with evil forces. "The fact that the terrible dance opens at midnight, is attested by the concrete detail: in the whole score of "Symphonic Dances" the special instrument, bells is used just once and that to strike exactly those 12 ominous strikes.

It is considerable that the evil force presented in the fantastic plane dominates in both opuses. In "Symphonic Dances" this symbolism penetrates themes of other spheres, too. Neither the part of the saxophone (1st part), nor lyrical sections of the 2nd part, nor the theme of the Znamenny Chant can be dominating, as they either get suppressed by the symbolizing thematism of the evil or take a grotesque tint due to transformation. For instance, the subtle solo of the saxophone is limited by the themes of 'militaristic' tint of the first part. The auxiliary theme of the third part acquires an air of phantasmagoria in the recapitulation and narrates about the insolence of evil forces (n. 96, b. 3). Assignment of the grotesque tint to the artistic symbol containing this divine origin is maintained by the rhythmic factor. This very mechanistic nature of the rhythm amplifies the feeling of grotesque. "The melodic beauty is likely to be poisoned by bitter, tantalizing thoughts, by tragic premonitions" [21]. The lyrical episode of the third part becomes scherzose, too (n. 91). Thus, the lyrical themes themselves get transformed and, in their turn, condition the atmosphere of madness. Against the background of above-described, the reflex of conveyance of the Orthodox Easter is lost; there are no hints to the posthumous restitution of the soul, to the catharsis. If Rachmaninoff's "Bells" end with the great ascension of the spirits, in "Symphonic Dances" the symbol of death is the last to sound. Just like Berlioz's "Fantastic Symphony" or Tchaikovsky's "Manfred," _ "Symphonic Dances," too, end with the witches' dance. In "Symphonic Dances," this atmosphere is created by the sequence of "Dies irae" shown forth in the rank of the artistic and conceptional dominant, which has conditioned the intonational sphere of the opus as well as its pathos. Rachmaninoff was haunted by the motif of "Dies irae" during his whole life. In composer's mind, it was associated with the terrible judgment day of the spirits, when demons become masters of the souls, casting them into the flames of fire. It was not occasional that Bryantseva perceived the first appearance of this motif in the high register as "the dance solo of death itself" [22]. The principal conductor in the novel is the satanic force, which blocks the opportunities of humans to achieve the divine light and is associated with the infernal fire, here as well. Let us remind ourselves how Margarita damns the fire ignited by one of the members of Satan's retinue, Azazelo. The multitude of the synonyms of devil in the novel is also horrible (Satan is referred to as many as 60 times with various names). Dominance of Satan suppresses the functions of Matthew Levi and Yeshua and they remain passive. Margarita, too, sells her soul to Satan, but neither this act of self-sacrifice can stop the evil. The novel represents a complete negligence of the mystery of resurrection of the savior. The deeply pessimistic idea of the finale of the opuses in interest is evident: "there will come the time, when there be no tyranny and no despotism, when a human being will be able reveal his/her spiritual purity, but so far, Satan is ruling"[23].

Thus, parallel thoughts of these two artists, perceived as a 'dialogue' of kin souls, owing to the historical synchronic thinking, give nascence to genial paradigms, pertaining to the general mankind theme.

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