

UDC -78

Counterpoint of Imitation and Ostinato in Polyphonic Form (at the example of Georgian Music)

Maia Tabliashvili

PhD in Art studies, Associate Professor at Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire
8-10 Griboedov St. Tbilisi 0108 Georgia

Summary:

Musical compositions are based on the definite intellectual principles. They can be composed by activating one or several principles both in a homogenous and a diverse compositional environment. Among musical and intellectual categories, which have established through centuries, there are principles of imitation and ostinato. Both have gone through historical development, intersecting with each other. Those principles have been used in various epochs and styles, on local and large scales.

Two important forms and genres of professional European music – fugal and ostinato variation forms – are based on the abovementioned principles that serve as form building factors. Through integration of those principles on the level of polyphonic form a hybrid composition - a fugue-ostinato was formed. In the process of interaction of the basic parameters of those principles various variants are created by combination of texture and composition. Furthermore, there are so called mutual concessions: for example, imitation of interval in a fugue (fourths-fifths and prima-octaves) and the voice stability (migration) in ostinato variations. In the paper we consider the following interactions of fugal forms and ostinato variations – fugue-ostinato, fugato-ostinato, fugetta-ostinato, canon-fugetta-ostinato.

The paper is concentrated on the examples of a compositional hybrid formed in the European art music – fugue-ostinato, and its analogues in works by Georgian composers. The contrapuntal appearance of imitation and ostinato principles in form of a polyphonic form is a less widespread phenomenon. At the same time, it is a result of the interaction between fugal and variation forms on the way of their evolution.

Keywords: counterpoint, imitation, ostinato, fugal form, ostinato variation, hybridity, interaction, fugue-ostinato.

Generally speaking, any musical composition is based upon certain intellectual principles; it can be composed with the activation of one as well as several principles in a homogenous or diverse compositional environment. Amongst the musical-thinking categories, already established throughout several centuries, are the principles of “imitation” and “ostinato.” Each of them has a long-lasting historic past; its own way of development, as well as both of them have points of intersection. The spectrum of their employment is very wide in music of different epochs and styles, starting from the local scales, ending with very wide ones.

The principles mentioned above, as form-making factors, have been laid as fundamentals for two important form-genres of European professional music: fugue and ostinato variation forms. Integration of these principles has given origins to the formation of a hybrid composition in the form of a fugue-ostinato. Contrapuntal manifestation of the principles of imitation and ostinato in a joint form is a relatively less widespread phenomenon; at the same time, it represents the result of the interaction of fugue and variation forms along the road of their own evolution.

Throughout the process of interaction of the principles of imitation and ostinato, various patterns of textural-compositional blending are created. The hybrids of fugue and ostinato variations are: fugue-ostinato, fugato-ostinato, fugetta-ostinato, and canon-ostinato. In the present

article the attention is focused onto the samples of the compositional hybrid in the works of Georgian composers.

As already mentioned the action of concrete cognitive principles in a form of form making factors serves as the basis for various musical compositions. Nascence and establishment of the principles of ostinato and imitation are connected with the epochs of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. On one hand, there are built directly concrete forms upon these principles, and on the other hand, the area of their manifestation is quite diverse both at the textural and at the compositional levels.

The polyphonic forms, built upon the above-mentioned principles, are the fugue (fughetta, fugato, canon) and the ostinato variations. Their contrapuntal blending in compositions is the subject of discussion in the present article. Consequently, the following question arises: how such hybridity is created?

Both forms, fugue as well as ostinato variations, are built upon the variation principle; the leading method of development is contrapuntal variation. The “family” of the variational form is quite diverse; among others, basso-ostinato variations belong to the polyphonic group, because there the variation is achieved mainly by means of counterpointing with the theme of other voices/melodies. As for fugue, there the theme undergoes a constant contrapuntal and variational renewal.

Proceeding from the classification, there are many similarities between the fugue and the ostinato variations. For instance, both fugues and ostinato variations are distinguished according to the quantity of themes (one, two, three themes) and to the belonging of the themes (original or borrowed).

The fugue and the ostinato variations have also in common so called secondary forms which are utterly important. The secondary form is the additional integrating factor for the compositional stability (quite often, it is integrable in three movements).

In the mentioned forms, often the theme is not so long. Similar to the fugue, in the ostinato variations there occur retained counterpoints, too. It is also remarkable that in variation cycles one of the variations is usually given in the fugal form.

The beginning of variations takes two forms: either simultaneous accumulation of voices, or their consequential and “avalanche-like” growth just like the fugue exposition. In the mentioned forms, during the process of development there is revealed the similar wavelike dramaturgy, phase development, textural-dynamical refill and discharge.

Manifestation of these principles at the level of polyphonic form creates such compositions as fugue-ostinato - unity of imitational and variational forms. In general, hybridity of forms, their mixing and synthesis can be perceived as one of the manifestations of their evolution; accordingly, fugue-ostinato, too, is the result of evolution of the forms of ostinato variation and fugue. Actually, both forms take their classical, crystallized shape in the epoch of Baroque. As for their mutual penetration, it is already catalyzed by the post-baroque epochs, especially, by the 20th century. It must also be mentioned here that the issue is not discussed from the point of view of advantage of any of the two forms, i.e. whether there is fugue in ostinato or ostinato in fugue. There is present the evolution of both forms as well as the result of their interaction. In fact, the counterpoint of principles leads us to the counterpoint of forms.

It is obvious – along with so many similarities, during the parallel action of imitation and ostinato principles there can be noticed certain mutual influences in the structure of compositions. It is indeed interesting, what kind of changes do we encounter here?

Here we deal with some sort of “mutual concessions,” the “play” of certain principles. Ostinato and imitation exert mutually blending actions. In fugue-ostinato there occurs an interesting equating between the ostinato repetition and imitation. This is actually an imitated ostinato. As for the interval of imitation, fourth-fifth imitation, typical for the fugue, is substituted by the prima-octave interval and stability of the theme voice, typical for ostinato variations, is substituted by the migration caused by the imitation of the theme (this phenomenon also occurs in ostinato variations,

though as an exception). Thus, due to not such a large length of the theme, ostinato type repetition-migration transforms into the imitation of the theme. [1-8]

The following samples of European professional music could serve as examples of imitation-ostinato blending at the compositional level: the quartet “What a magic moment” (“Kakoe chudnoe mgnovenye”) (canon-ostinato) from the 1st act of M. Glinka’s opera “Ruslan and Lyudmila” (canon-ostinato), finale of P. Hindemith’s symphony “The Harmony of the World” (fugue-ostinato), 12th fugue from A. Pirumov’s piano cycle “Polyphonic Notebook” (fugue-ostinato), 1st movement-prologue of W. Lutoslawski’s orchestral cycle “Funeral Music” (canon-fugue-ostinato), G. Ligeti’s “Passacaglia Ungherese” for harpsichord (canon-ostinato).

In Georgian music, the contrapuntal manifestation of these two principles represents the continuation of the European tradition at the level of polyphonic form. Counterpoint of imitation and ostinato in the polyphonic form is used in the works of Georgian composers, too. There occur various examples of blending of fugue and ostinato in the oeuvres of Z. Paliashvili, A. Balanchivadze, A. Matchavariani, N. Gudiashvili, A. Shaverzashvili, N. Gabunia, N. Mamisashvili, S. Shilakadze and I. Tsintsadze.

Examples of the imitation-variation form - fugato-ostinato are presented in Z. Paliashvili’s operas; namely, the orchestra introduction of the “Wedding Walk” from “Abesalom and Eteri” and exposition of the introduction of “Daisi”.

In the “Wedding Walk” the theme is imitated in the paired form in stretto type, but against the background of the tonic pedal point which pulsates in ostinato mode. Instead of counterpoints, there sounds the chord accompaniment. This fragment is characterized by tonal stability during the whole introduction; the dramatic development is directed towards a gradual planned timber-register and dynamic widening of the diapason and towards the culmination. There are present the timber-texture variations, as the introduction part for the chorus (“Haralalo”). Just like the recently mentioned example, in the exposition of the orchestra introduction of the opera “Daisi,” the main theme of a pastoral character is exposed consequentially at the prima-octave, in the group of woodwind instruments. Sonata exposition is characterized by timber-dynamic, texture-register and mood-intonational variance development. It proceeds from the composer’s programme concept in order to describe the picturesque image of the dawn and nature awakening.

In the middle of the 3rd movement of the Symphony №1 by A. Balanchivadze, there is presented a polyphonic hybrid in the form of fughetta-ostinato (number: 87). A lyrical theme built upon the musical materials of “Megrelian Lullaby,” temporarily discharges the heroic march. Its expositions are blended with various layer-counterpoints. The texturally and timber-dynamically contrasted episodes are interchanging with imitations of the theme, which adds some rondeau-like elements to this polyphonic “island”. On the whole, in the wavelike fughetta-ostinato, there is formed the homophonic-polyphonic texture.

The principles of imitation and ostinato are blended in the 2nd movement of A. Matchavariani’s Symphony № 2 (number:49), where prima-octave imitation of the ostinato motif creates a compact form of canon-ostinato. As a result, the compositional fragment, built upon polyphonic methods, grows into the doubling of musical material.

In the 1st movement (number:4) of N. Gudiashvili’s Symphony №3 (“Heroes of Texel”), in order to show the invocative character of the main personage and for the active development, there is used a double fugato-ostinato with polyphonic wavelike dramaturgy. Imitative expositions of the first theme are followed by the second theme as a counterpoint, which develops the idea of ostinato; it undergoes constant variance renewals, just like the variation of growing out type; the nucleus of the theme is stable and its continuation is made in the form of variance. The composition develops with the timber-textural polyphonic variations.

A double fugue-ostinato, represented in the 3rd movement of Piano Quintet №2, is quite interesting. From its vast themes, the first is mourning and choral, and the second has a sad, lyrical character. If their repetition at the same pitch level points to ostinato variations, the migration and imitation of themes implies the principle of fugue. A dynamic crescendo revealed at the culmination

is fast vanished, replaced by the “silent” coda. A fugue-ostinato composed for the ensemble, is characterized by a complex contrapuntal-imitational development.

In the finale of A. Shaverzashvili’s Quintet №1 there are blended the features of rondo-sonata and fugato-ostinato; namely, fugato-ostinato is presented in the first subject group of the exposition as well as in the central episode (instead of development). The prima-octave imitation-repetition of the themes assigns the features of fugato-ostinato to these vast fragments of the piece. Exposition of the scherzo theme forms fugato-ostinato. Due to its crescent dynamics, there is achieved the intensiveness of development. As for the episode, it represents a double fugato-ostinato with simultaneous exposition of themes, and with crescent dynamics; an active double fugato-ostinato grows into the culmination of the finale. In both compositional fragments the musical material grows out of the themes of the introduction of the Quintet, though it is considerably transformed in the finale. The mentioned forms represent important factors of development of the musical material.

Composer N. Gabunia’s dramatic and expressive Symphony №2 represents a cycle, which is built upon the principle of monothematism. It has to be mentioned that due to active polyphonization of the texture, there is formed a double fugue-ostinato (fugue-passacaglia) in the 1st movement of the symphony (number:9), and a fugato-ostinato in the 4th movement (number:112). In the first movement there is found a very interesting blending of passacaglia and a fugated layer. This expressive composition of a dramatic character is built by means of ostinato development of the first theme and imitational development of the second theme, with a march-episode in the middle. Thus, in this case we have the counterpoint of forms of ostinato variations and fugue. In the postlude of the finale of the symphony there is given a thoughtful, internally tensed up, slow and quiet fugato-ostinato. This is the ending stage of the development of musical material. Unlike the above-mentioned hybrid form of the symphony, where polyphonic features are clearly revealed, imitiational origin in the finale looks rather modest in compare with the principle of ostinato.

In N. Mamisashvili’s piano cycle “Prelude, Chorale and Fugue” there is found a very interesting and original case of blending of the principles of imitation and ostinato, namely, in the fugue of the three-part composition with the retained counterpoint. A metrically variable toccata-like dancing theme in the exposition develops with the crescent architectonics, and in the development of the fugue - with a stretto imitation. There must specially be noted the fact that in 5 out of 6 expositions of the theme, the counterpoint sounds only in the original principle key; in one case (the fourth exposition) the counterpoint is exposed even without the theme. The tonal autonomy of retained counterpoint creates the ostinato line and, consequently, this counterpoint takes the role of the second theme, determining the originality of the presented fugue-ostinato.

Within the context of the discussed theme we can also consider the epilogue (number:11) of S. Shilakadze’s Symphony №2, “The Epitaph”. The work is characterized with the stretta-canon development, which is directed mainly towards the creation of sonoric sounding. As for the epilogue, there the principles of ostinato and imitation are blended in the form of canon-ostinato. Actually, there is presented a polyphonic infinite canon, which carries the function of ending the symphony in terms of dramaturgy.

For I. Tsintsadze’s symphonic works, it is characteristic to blend variation ostinato, canonic imitation and fugated development of themes. One of the episodes (measure:164) of the symphonic poem “Based upon the Georgian Folk Music” represents a vast polyphonic section in the form of 10-voice sequence and an infinite canon-ostinato. The melody of “Mze shina” (Georgian folk song, the title literally means: “The Sun Inside”) is consequentially exposed by the whole-tone scale, and at the culmination it achieves a timber-register and dynamic crescendo. Monophony of diatonic origin transforms itself into the contrapuntal dissonance sonority of chromatic type. The similar fragments, organized with canon-ostinato principles, are used by this composer also in his symphonies (№1-4). [9-19].

Lastly, taking into consideration the presented samples, there must be noted that the counterpoint of the principles of imitation and ostinato is revealed in various genres of the works of

Georgian composers at the level of polyphonic form, namely, in opera, symphony, ensemble or piano music. As a result of analytical observations, the following variants of blending of fugal and ostinato variation forms were revealed: fugue-ostinato, fugato-ostinato, fughetta-ostinato, canon-ostinato (including double ones).

Each sample of hybrids in Georgian music stands out with its distinct aspect. In the relationship with the theme and answer there must be noted that imitation is mainly given at the interval of prima-octave; in certain cases there can occur a different interval, too, but it is presented against the background of ostinato. In most cases episodes and retained counterpoints are seldom present. As for the texture, it has mostly not a polyphonic, rather a homophonic-polyphonic nature. In certain cases the principle of fugation is blended with the ostinato, created by the counterpoint; and in some cases, there is presented the counterpoint of forms. The above-mentioned works are united by more or less similar dramaturgy, namely, the crescent timber-dynamic, texturally growing wavelike development.

Independent existence of distinct phenomena in the Universe always admits the possibility for them to coexist in a blended form, too. This very general philosophical principle is attested in our case with the counterpoint of imitation and ostinato in musical compositions.

References:

1. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D. Polifoniis teoriis da istoriis kursi. Leqciebi. / Arutinov-Jincharadze D. Theory and history of polyphony. Lectures. Tbilisi, 2010. (in Georgian).
2. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D., Nadareishvili M. Musikaluri nawarmoebebis analizi. Leqciebi. / Arutinov-Jincharadze D., Nadareishvili M. Analysis of musical compositions. Lectures. Tbilisi, 2012. (in Georgian).
3. Nadareishvili M. Ostinatos formebi evropul profesiul musikashi / Nadareishvili M. Ostinato forms in European professional music. PhD thesis. Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 1997. (in Georgian).
4. Krupina L., Evolyutsiya fugi / Krupina L., Evolution of the fugue. Moscow, 2001. (in Russian).
5. Kuznetsov I., Teoreticheskie osnovyi polifonii XX veka / Kuznetsov I., Theoretical bases of polyphony of the 20th century. Moscow, 1994. (in Russian).
6. Protopopov V. Istoriya polifonii / Protopopov V. History of Polyphony. Moscow. Muzika. 1985-1987. edition 3-5. (in Russian).
7. Stoyanov P. Vzaimodeystvie muzykalnyih form / Stoyanov P. Interaction of musical forms. Moscow, 1985. (in Russian).
8. Tsukkerman V. Analiz muzykalnyih proizvedeniy. Variatsionnaya forma / Zukkerman V. Analysis of musical compositions. Variation form. Moscow, 1974. (in Russian).
9. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D. Polifoniis roli Z.Faliashvilis shemoqmedebashi / Arutinov-Jincharadze D. The role of polyphony in Z.Paliashvili's works. Collection of scientific works. Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 1994. pp.145-174. (in Georgian).
10. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D. Polifoniuri da polifonizebuli formebi Z.Faliashvilis operebshi / Arutinov-Jincharadze D. Polyphonic forms in Z.Paliashvili's operas. Collection of scientific works. Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 1994. pp.175-196. (in Georgian).
11. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D. Polifonia. Programa-konspekti umaglesi musikaluri saswavleblebis studentebisatvis / Arutinov-Jincharadze D. Polyphony. Program-outline for high musical university students. Tbilisi. Tbilis State Conservatoire. 1998. (in Georgian).
12. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D., Tabliashvili M. Polifonia qartvel kompozitorta shemoqmedebashi / Arutinov-Jincharadze D., Tabliashvili M. Counterpoint in works of Georgian composers (Lectures). Tbilisi, 2016. (in Georgian).

13. Arutinovi-Jincharadze D., Tabliashvili M. Polifonia qartul musikashi / Arutinov-Jincharadze D., Tabliashvili M. Counterpoint in Georgian music (three-volume chrestomathy). Tbilisi, 2017. (in Georgian).
14. Gordeziani T. Polifoniuri formebi qartvel kompozitorta operebshi / Gordezian T., Polyphonic forms in operas of Georgian composers. Bachelor Thesis. Tbilisi State Conservatoire., 2010. (in Georgian).
15. Kiknadze M. Fugirebuli formebi qartvel kompozitorta simfoniebshi / Kiknadze M., Fugal forms in symphonies of Georgian composers. Bachelor Thesis. Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 2006. (in Georgian).
16. Kiknadze M. Polifoniuri formebi, faqturis da kontrapunqtuli teknikis sakitxebi qartvel kompozitorta simfoniebshi / Kiknadze M., Polyphonic forms, texture and contrapuntal techniques in symphonies of Georgian composers. Master thesis. Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 2008. (in Georgian).
17. Nadareishvili M. Ostinato qartveli kompozitorebis shemoqmedebashi / Nadareishvili M., Ostinato in works of Georgian composers. Collection of scientific works. Tbilisi: Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 1999. (in Georgian).
18. Tabliashvili M. Polifoniis roli qartul kamerul-instrumentul saansamblo musikashi / Tabliashvili M. The role of polyphony in the Georgian chamber-instrumental ensemble music. PhD thesis. Tbilisi State Conservatoire. 2005. (in Georgian).
19. Tabliashvili M. The principle of interrelation in hybrid forms (at the example of fugue-sonata by Georgian composers). <http://gesj.internet-academy.org.ge>. Musicology and Cultural Science, 2015, N1 (11), pp.3-7.

Article received: 2017-07-07