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MUSICAL IDENTITY IN NEW GEORGIAN MUSIC: NATELA SVANIDZE – EKA CHABASHVILI

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Abstract

Musical identity is extremely important in contemporary global world, especially for multicultural countries such as Georgia. Social factors have crucial influence on the identity. One of such social mechanisms is music which is universal and at the same time socially differentiated in most cases. The subject of the study is the problem of detection/maintenance of the identity at different stages of new Georgian professional music, on the example of Natela Svanidze - a repressed artist and Eka Chabashvili - a young composer. Basing on the comparison of main stylistic features, composition techniques of these composers, the author tries to reveal features of national and European/non-European, individual and "all-Georgian" features in the works of these women-composers.

Key words: *musical identity, serial, sonoristic, nationalism, Svanidze, Chabashvili.*

The category of identity has wide spectrum of expression, it is known that the nature and essence of identity is social. Social or political factors and mechanisms including music have crucial impact on it. Study of the problem of musical identity is particularly interesting on the example of the creative works of the composers of different historical epochs in Georgia – located at the crossroad of various non-European cultures.

The object of my study is the issue of musical identity of the composers working in different historical-political environment. For this purpose selected were two at one glance, antinomic (in views, musical styles, specificity of artistic thinking and historical context of activity) composers. I will try to present some issues of musical identity of Georgian female composers of different generations – Natela Svanidze “a victim of political repression” (the 1950s-1990s) and Eka Chabashvili (1990 – the 2010s).

In the working process on the paper the following questions arose:

- How is the identity own (national) and others' (European, non-European) manifested by the composers?
- Is musical identity always related with nationality?
- Do these composers fit within the frame of basic tendencies in Georgian professional music of the time?

The afore-mentioned problems are discussed in the context of composition technique, musical form, space and time, relation with folklore, notation and peculiarities of the composer's style, in general.

Natela Svanidze started her creative activity in the 1940s; however she made her most valuable works in the second half of her creative life. Demolition of the Iron Curtain drastically changed her creation; from 1963 the composer's changed style bases on the new types of the 20th century composition technique, and, correspondingly, on the musical language, thematic, composition technique of lesser Soviet orientation; besides, her female-composer status was unusual for the

Georgian professional musical circle of the time. Due to this the composer was at certain extent 'repressed', lesser performed and published in that period.

One of the most distinguished representatives of the 1990s-EkaChabashvili started her career in the years of civil war and immediately attracted attention, as an original composer. Second stage of her creative activity starts with the understanding of the so-called "Multi-topophonic composition technique and research of atomal-nuclear musical system. However, unlike Svanidze, Chabashvili 'did not discover' for herself the already inculcated, approved in Europe technique (twelve-tone system) and adjusted it to her style. On the contrary, Chabashvili understood and in her dissertation work gave verbal interpretation to the technique which she had already applied in music-making.

Application of folk or old professional music is the approved means for expressing national musical identity in Georgian professional music. Moreover, also possible from this standpoint is certain periodization, in new Georgian music folklore is applied directly and then fairly generalized. Both composers use folklore in functionally different ways:

1. As quotes (e.g. in part I of Svanidze's oratorio "Georgian lamentations" chant is combined with twelve-tone tonality and in part III – serial technique is combined with Svan *zari* (dirge); the chant "Thou Art a Vineyard" in Chabashvili's "frescoes");
2. As stylization (e.g. Svanidze's Symphony I, where the composer unconventionally reconsiders the application of national folklore in Georgian professional music, combining East Georgian mountain folklore and serialism. Intonational starting-point of the entire symphony is the descending 7-sound motif of Khevsuretian wedding lamentation-singing, which lies in the foundation of the work's series is encountered as different modifications in all three parts of the work; E. Chabashvili's "Seven chants");
3. Is applied secretly, mediately (Svanidze's serial-sonorous composition "Circle"; Chabashvili's "Apocalypses").

In Svanidze's opinion her style was significantly influenced by the polyphonic thinking characteristic of West Georgian folklore¹. In her music synthesized are European and Georgian polyphonic peculiarities, as far as 'Georgian man's polyphonic nature corresponds to serial polyphonic thinking' [2:39]. She applies non-orthodox twelve-tone technique, mixed with sonority, controlled aleatory and polystylism. Here twelve-tone technique has diffuse connection with modal/tonal systems. In Svanidze's creation the series represent construction axes of the entire work and often grow from the intonations with certain semantics. The composer's original attitude to serial technique is manifested in the merge of the series and interval construction of folk intonations.

The forms and means characteristic of European polyphony are frequently encountered in Svanidze's scores (e.g. serial fugues and passacaglia from Symphony 1). Noteworthy is imitation polyphony less typical for Georgian folklore, which the author basically applies as imitation ostinato in sonorous structure (e.g. symphony-ballet 5-,6- and 12- tone canons in tonic).

Similar sonorous imitation ostinato is encountered in Chabashvili's "Noosphere" too. Imitation and poly melodious polyphonic textures are encountered with both composers. Interesting is Chabashvili's "Kopala" (a neofolk example) middle part of which is constructed according to Georgian polyphonic rule, heterophony is present in extreme parts.

Chabashvili is more free in the application of polyphonic forms (e.g. fugue and passacaglia from "Polyphonic Verses"), which is determined by the synthetical nature of her creative work. She shares polyphony on micro level more. I mean the polyphonic idea of branches, the support of her

¹For years the composer participated in expeditions (Siberia, North Caucasus), studying the Caucasian style of polyphonic thinking, Georgian –Basque musical connections.

compositional technique and basis of the multimedia of music. From her student years Chabashvili's interest was focused on painting and literature, alongside music,² manifested in the synthetical character of her music.³ From this viewpoint Chabashvili can, on the one hand, be considered a successor of the ideas of her teacher, composer-experimentalist Nodar Mamisashvili and, at the same time, a continuer of Skriabin's creative directions.

Folkloric nature, as a stylistic feature, is also manifested in Chabashvili's construction principles. The form of her work is improvisational; the composer gives inner freedom to performer, which in her opinion is characteristic of national folklore.

The two composers have different attitude to form construction; this can be explained by the difference in their space-time perception. Svanidze's each new creation is a new form,⁴ which explains small number of the composer's works. Here encountered is European-type macro composition, dramaturgically locked forms based on the concept of effective, vector musical time. Characteristic of Svanidze's style is dynamic, procedural development where time factor⁵ is crucial in the composition dramaturgy. Continuing the traditions of Bartok and Stravinsky, in form creation she attributes significance to rhythm. Naturally, under these conditions spatial development is given less priority.

Eka Chabashvili's creations are basically static, lesser developed in time and at the same time surprisingly dynamic in space; unlike Svanidze significant here is not the effective development of musical idea (theme, motive), but the play of sonorous spaces. Chabashvili's melody is minimalistic (and similar to archaic melodies, at the same time). K. Stockhausen noted that Chabashvili's "Music is intuitive and bases on the repetition and variation principle". Mostly non-European type microcomposition, improvisational open forms with meditation dramaturgy dominate in Chabashvili's creation, which is expressed by static modal system (e.g. meditation cycle "Seven Wonders of the World"). It is noteworthy that with Chabashvili static dramaturgy is not often determined by the sudden change in non-European musical traditions. Oriental music traditions are manifested in her "Meditation Improvisations", "Meditation song", "Salomea's Dance"; in "Frescoes" similar dramaturgy is determined by European-Christian roots, genre of the work (static time, less emotionality, being in one state, imitation is characteristic of vocal polyphony of Middle Ages, and Renaissance epoch).

The texture of Chabashvili's compositions consists of different spatial layers, each with its own time; correspondingly the statics is achieved by the simultaneous existence of much time. Regardless of the fact, that her music is visual, this is not the visuality of act, which narrates the story, thus activating time category. With this feature Chabashvili is the successor of Debussy's aesthetics.

So where is the musical identity of the two Georgian composers residing at the crossroad of European and non-European cultures? The analysis has shown that common and controversial features are revealed in the musical identity of both composers, as in the notion of style. This coincides with the feature of the general notion category – to include different, internally dissimilar forms in it, reflected in the discrepancy between the only and diverse, controversy between objective and subjective.

In conclusion I will try to answer the questions set in the beginning of the paper:

I. If we try to answer the question about the manifestation of own (national) and other's (European, non-European) cultural identity with these authors, the answer will be dissimilar. 1) Close

²She has created brilliant paintings, pop-art and literary works.

³The composer says: 'I would like to draw music and vice versa make my painting sound in music....my music cannot be imagined as a story. Here other branches coming from visual art lose their visual forms and are approximated to music. Color is also shapeless' [1:24].

⁴The composer says: "Creation is mystical, constructed on intuition, but intellect – is perception of form. Art is form isn't it?..." [2:46]

⁵"I count everything, of course. If there is no meter, music will drop off the form. Music is the art which develops in time, if one does not define time, there will be nothing left of form. Time is principal in music' [ibid.].

relation with own/national unites the musical identity of both composers. Moreover, all three aforementioned forms of manifestation of the national in Svanidze's creation are also presented in Chabashvili's creative work after years. Nowadays, multicultural stylistic relation is also revealed as "self-identification crisis" of global tendency. E. Chabashvili – as a composer of globalized, mixed-style and postmodern epoch, strives to apply national supports mostly in deeper, lesser noticeable layers (as she says on genetic level). Like her Senior colleague, with Chabashvili the national, as the feature of style, is in deep layers and is manifested in the application of thinking system, fourth-fifth chords, modal system and are not heard, if not determined by the plot.

II. Different is the relation with the issue of "other's". With Svanidze "other" is the layer of European culture, which coincides with Georgian polyphonic thinking, also "European" is the sense of musical time and form-composition, composition technique. One of the supports of Svanidze's musical identity is her musical language different from Soviet musical style, which was a kind of protest to the Regime. Prevalent in her creation is closed composition developing in European-type time, notated in traditional way, where "painting dominates over graphic arts", music is not visualized.

Chabashvili expresses "other" with non-European musical features, presented by static time, microcomposition, type of melodics, aleatoricism of improvisation (aleatoricism).

- Visualisation and multimediality of music.

- Specific distribution of time and space achieved by the composer's "multi-topophonic composition technique". From this proceeds the transparency of common sounding (despite the multilayered, often polyphonic texture), primacy of Oriental-type free meditation composition.

Both afore-mentioned features determine Chabashvili's particular interest to the "external side" of music – notation. The composer widely applies different forms of non-determined: fluctuational or proportional ("Frescoes"), zonal ("Echo"), mobile ("Prism"), graphic ("Spiral of Wisdom") and verbal (fugue "From Polyphonic Verses") notation. Interesting is the so-called **chart, table notation** created by her for depicting multimedia, where the sound is denoted by a letter, 'selection of place and arrangement of musical sound-letters in the chart regulates tempo-rhythm; also indicated here is the trajectory of sound movement. In spatial layers intensity of the same color denotes the power of sound alongside instrumental arrangement, which also indicates to the movement direction of light' [3: 72].

Correspondingly, with the consideration of this, musical identity always coincides with nationality and this is manifested in these two composers' creative work. I *tried* to distinguish European and non-European tendencies in their creation; with N. Svanidze and E.Chabashvili nationality is nourished by the symbiotic Georgian culture at the crossroad. From this standpoint the musical identity of both composers turns out to be deeply national;

IV. In her interview 13 years ago Chabashvili told me: "In Georgia a Georgian composer lives in the spot, where space and time collide, conditionally saying, time factor is important in Europe, whilst space factor is significant in Asia. Here these two moments are blended" [1:23]. It can be said that N.Svanidze and E. Chabashvili – the composers at the crossroads have, at certain extent, 'dropped out' of the basic direction in the development of their contemporary Georgian professional music, which determines the similarity of these different musical identities. All the more, the study has shown that despite the different sounding of their works, I believe, that in Georgian music the phenomenon of female-composer originated in Svanidze's creation and represented decades later by composers M.Adamia, E.Chabashvili, M.Virsaladze and others, with E. Chabashvili as one of its creative heirs.

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