

UDC - 78

TRADITION AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGIAN PIANO PEDAGOGICAL SCHOOL

Vanda Shiukashvili's and Nodar Gabunia's teaching methods

Nino Kasradze

Tbilisi V. Sarajishvili State Conservatoire 8, Griboedov st.

***Abstract:** The paper deals with the teaching methods of two great Georgian musicians, pianist and teacher Vanda Shiukashvili and Nodar Gabunia. Considerations of these two brilliant musician-teachers is the stronghold for future pedagogical work. The study and analysis of V. Shiukashvili's unpublished scientific works allows to discuss her teaching methodology and make certain conclusions. Special attention should be paid to the methodology of working with beginners in special piano, as well as to the development of interest among pupils in the process of work, and its topicality. We have information about Nodar Gabunia's original pedagogical system primarily on the basis of live contact. Over the years, studying in his class enabled the author to directly experience his pedagogical system. Paper mainly deals with the issue of the work's structural integrity in the interpretation process.*

***Keywords:** Vanda Shiukashvili, Nodar Gabunia, interest, interpretation.*

It is known that the art of professional piano in Georgia was rooted in European traditions. The founders of the Georgian piano school – A. Tulashvili via the direct hereditary line and A. Virsaladze, a student of A. Esipova, who received education in Europe, were the bearers of European piano traditions. The efficiency of creative ideas and teaching methods of these great musicians has long been proven with the example of their pupils; it should suffice to mention the names of V. Shiukashvili, T. Amirejibi, E. Virsaladze and others. Despite the fact that for a long time in the 20th century, like all fine art, Georgian piano art was considered to be a part of Soviet art, the creative experience and learning tradition particular to Georgia emerged as what we refer to as the Georgian piano school in the early 1900s.

My long-term research aims to thoroughly discuss the traditions of national piano schools, but this paper is dedicated to the discussion of tendencies in teaching methodologies of V. Shiukashvili (1905-2001) and N. Gabunia (1933-2000) - two eminent representatives of the Georgian piano school.

Patriotic activities of the musicians who uphold the tenants of the piano school and who never left their homeland in the most difficult years and faithfully transmitted unique traditions to younger generations can be equated to heroism. We hope that the opportunities and choices of younger generations, most notable, the connections with the West, will have a positive impact on the Georgian piano school and will provide new possibilities for its further development.

The intangible origins of music performance as an art necessitate the transmission of knowledge through music alongside verbal and non-verbal skills. In this case musical experience is transmitted from generation to generation via tradition. This explains the unquenchable interest in the research of its forms and methods.

Where else, besides the public performance process are the traditions of the school observed?

How well-researched is the teaching process in renowned Georgian pedagogues' classes?

What kind of approach prompts us to consider the teaching methodology as a system?

In this paper we will try to answer these and other topical questions.

As we have mentioned, non-verbal communication is a feature of music education and it is for that reason that each verbal record, edited collection, etc, provides colossal material to discuss the author's (musician's) artistic ideas and approaches and follow them.

Fortunately, I have come across the handwritten scientific works of Vanda Shiukashvili – a distinguished representative of the Georgian piano school, a disciple of one of its founders Ana Tulashvili.

The works preserved in the archives of the Tbilisi State Conservatoire were created when she worked at the Special Piano Department in the 1950s. On the one hand, we will discuss Vanda Shiukashvili's methodical approaches, reflected in the work "Practical Application of Existing Literature about Methodical Issues on Piano Teaching", a critical analysis of "Deppe's Teaching" (1955), and on the other hand, we will also touch upon the topicality of arousing interest, to which V. Shiukashvili's work "Interest and its Development" (1954) is dedicated.

V. Shiukashvili was a teacher whose teaching methodology was intended for working with beginners to post-graduate students alike thus encompassing a wide range of age groups. She had effectively elaborated fundamentals of piano teaching, oriented on student's development in the first years.

Work on hand coordination starts at the very first lesson. At this time the most elementary feature is non-legato. This view is reinforced by Shiukashvili's recommendations, which suggest the exercises with non-legato features to be practiced with beginners for hand coordination.

Experience shows that teaching piano is known to be minimally subjected to the method of acceleration. It is unjustifiable to skip any stage intended for mastering the work.

V. Shiukashvili's recommendations help us to reasonably define different phases of the working process.

V. Shiukashvili writes: "the movements initially controlled by consciousness, later take place subconsciously".

Each new performance task and the necessity of mastering the movements related to it primarily require mind control on the part of the pianist.

Automatism of movements becomes possible only after proper training, when the muscles have learned the ability to 'select' necessary movements.

Alongside the basic issues of piano pedagogy, such as development of separate musical functions like inner hearing, rhythm, and memory development, Vanda Shiukashvili analyzes the most important issue – development of interest in the subject as a contributing factor in the process of arousing interest.

Considering interest as deliberately related to act, she ascertains the main possibility of this phenomenon: "It contains hidden possibility of reasonable action towards the object".

Shiukashvili's typology of interest is of note.

Types of interest:

- a) Interest – entertainment
- b) Interest – ardour
- c) Interest – influence of past experiences

d) The fourth category of interest is a type which we intentionally, deliberately set as objective and is linked to attention

The material related to past experiences easily attracts our attention. What is slightly old and slightly new is interesting.

The issue of interest dynamics

The act of doing homework arouses interest.

V. Shiukashvili characterizes primary interest as affective, by which she is most likely implying the instantaneous, emotional nature of how primary interest manifests. It is the primary, impulsive interest that contains the grain of further success. It is worth noting that daily exercise and practice might moderate these impressive impulses.

Primary emotional-impressive interest is subsequently enriched with intellectual perception and formed as another kind of interest. One of Shiukashvili's consideration on the subject is noteworthy: when a person has interest, he actively looks for ways to satisfy it. In the learning

process, when a feeling of importance and aspiration for the subject are formed, the subject itself becomes the interest.

In this case, interest shifts from the goal to the means. Meanwhile, work on technical material, scales, etudes, and overcoming difficulties is underway. Thus, it is obvious that in the phase of advanced interest an individual tries to find ways to accomplish his goals.

Shiukashvili presents methods for advancing interest and provides specific recommendations as to what is acceptable in this case:

The following is justified for the advancement of interest:

a) The method of praise-promotion, when the subject becomes interesting thanks to the achievement of a positive result.

b) Selection of surmountable repertoire, to make students more often enjoy the satisfaction obtained from success, from day one.

Advancement of interest in a student is directly linked with the policy on repertoire. The repertoire should be surmountable in order to imagine the possibility of achieving the expected result.

The author justly notes that in art and science, it is impossible to succeed without exerting special effort. In her view, the teacher should develop pupil's skills of making an effort. She comprehensively deals with the attention factor. It is noteworthy that in the discussion of attention she assigns the main role to the object of attention itself.

“Anything that is difficult and tiresome requires effort. Science and art are accessible only through effort. ‘Working’ to understand is accompanied by thinking about possible obstacles, which must be overcome” [3]. Finally, the author points out the teacher's main objective – to develop students' inner auditory skills; without solving this basic problem, interest cannot be advanced.

Nodar Gabunia's phenomenon is multilateral. He was a composer, pianist, pedagogue, and a public figure. We will touch upon Gabunia's teaching system, which I experienced first-hand as a student in his class.

Among other things, this paper mainly deals with the issue of the work's structural integrity in the interpretation process. Gabunia's teaching methods are not dry. They mainly consist of a multi-level creative working procedure, manifested in the original forms of the work that is only characteristic of his approach.

What makes us think of the methods as a system?

We hope that this paper will at the very least shed some light on why we consider Gabunia's teaching methods as a system.

There are two basic systems: on the one hand, a detailed, individual work, and on the other hand, work on the integrity of a composition, artistic concentration, skills of musical expression (presentation) in public.

Shiukashvili's idea to “strive to ‘understand’ the work is characterized by thinking about the possible obstacles that must be overcome”.

Initially Gabunia clearly outlined the main problem. In some cases this was an artistic, emotional, creative task, in other cases – a subordinate – technical one.

At first glance, he solved each of these problems logically via selection. From the artistic standpoint, he worked by means of public performance, via selection of a “critical” situation, for which he provided the imitation of such a situation. He systematically created the necessity of having contact with the public through class attendance. We were involved in such processes as both listeners and participants.

Indefatigable work resulted in class concerts, the titles of which, in the last years, indicated general perception of art.

He entitled one of the concerts an “Exhibition”, as if displaying the pieces. In this case, as a teacher, he was a painter. Ultimately, he also thought about the result, – the design of the parts of the concert. The dramaturgy of the concert was essential.

Gabunia’s vision of the performance concept of the composition was based on the form and the artistic design of a specific work.

The primary objective is to find real logical support for an artistic work (an exhibit), and determine the function of each proportional share of its parts. The very first lesson sets the problem of expressing the content of musical variety, and defines the character of the work. Gabunia demanded this, even superfluously; he insisted on expressing creative initiative.

According to L. Mazel, an artistic work, in general, should imply a creative discovery, an invention, a construction either on the theme selected by the author, or its interpretation and realization, which can contain a corresponding idea of expression typology. [1] To denote this we introduce the notion of artistic discovery.

This was precisely Nodar Gabunia’s persuasion; he always managed to find the composer’s artistic discovery and demonstrate it in the teaching process.

He had studied all kinds of music. Following the functional dissociation of texture, he could dedicate an entire lesson to the essence of one parameter.

Here is a well-known phrase from his working process on melody: “Melody cannot be created by a simple sound sequence. There is no democracy in music. A performer should be able to ascertain the hierarchy of sounds and group them accordingly. I’m trying to achieve total melody, and melody is not only in polyphony. The Arthur Nikisch orchestra was particularly notable for this – everyone in the orchestra played the melody. The melody is not what is beautiful. Grand masters’ have no texture without melody. There are many ‘undertones’ in music and a performer should be able to find what will transform them into melody”. [2, 93,197-198].

He writes the following about chord consonances:

“On piano a chord should be constructed the same way as it is in the orchestra. Aimless distribution of chord sounds is inadmissible, as, there will be no accord if a lower sound is played by a flute and an upper – by a trumpet; the chord should be constructed so that it sounds as we like, as needed. But to determine this, of course, one should know what he wants [2, 89].

It is very close to me, when Bartók finds beauty in dirty dissonances, as dissonance is an argument of sounds, and it is well known that “the Truth is born in Argument “ [2, 160].

He worked on intoning, on the ascertainment of sound attraction and sound resolution, on discharge.....

As we have mentioned, Gabunia proposed different ways to overcome both technical and emotional obstacles. From the standpoint of grouping and regrouping sounds, he was a follower of Ferruccio Busoni and managed to overcome technical complexities via logical semantic grouping of sounds.

For the solution of technical problems he used an original application, wherein the main construct was to make intonational logic and technical adroitness coincide. One of the examples of simplifying technical complexity is the fragment of *décimas* from Liszt’s “Spanish Rhapsody”, where he suggests applying the method of grouping ninths. (example: Liszt – “Spanish Rhapsody”)



Nodar Gabunia was a wonderful composer; this may explain his perception of a work as an indivisible whole. Focusing on the hierarchy of culminations, the expression and influence of sound mass had to be most impressive at culmination.

As he mentioned in one of the interviews he researched undertows in the sound texture of a composition. He would discover a new sound which would further develop in its own way. A small contrasting wave could become a turning point in the composition dramaturgy.

Delivering emotional content of the composition to listener is a mysterious process. He always thought about form balance in the composition and moderate use of sudden sound effects.

“Effect should not be frequently repeated within one work, otherwise it loses credibility” – he would tell us again and again. These secrets refer to the dramaturgy of a work, its compositional vision. This principle should by all means be used by a performer too.... Structure can also be found by intuition..... for instance findings of performance form. Form is substantially the same as content.....” . [2]

In his interview Nodar Gabunia refers to an interesting example from the second part of Chopin’s Sonata in C Minor:

Repetition of the theme in the reprise made him imagine that a lullaby was sung to a deceased. This finding gave some momentum to the topic, redistributed the sections and added focus to the entire form.

“In terms of balance between the proportions of form-constructions, caesuras acquire particular importance. Their character and duration determines the fate of previous and subsequent objects. It is sufficient to deprive the listener of the opportunity to enjoy caesuras, and the structure of the work will collapse and be destroyed.”

In order to facilitate the unification of a composition, we should not be distracted by the demonstration of the performer’s technique during performance, attracting the listeners’ attention only by leading and developing the emotional idea. It is at this time that the composition will unite. In the musical texture of a monolithic work, modulation, harmony, and caesura may coordinate the unity.

Finally, I would like to end with Nodar Gabunia’s opinion about traditions: “tradition plays a more important role in our development than we can imagine. Sometimes we play the role of incompatible people, but in reality, we are children of time and place more than we realize. The same thing happens in music. We are taught the accepted clichés, which of course affect us.

Tradition is not to be condemned, but what is accepted should be combined with what is desired.....

I was lucky with my teachers. I received a vast amount of knowledge from Golderweiser, but his pedagogy seemed schematic to me. This is why I often attended various training classes, the two taught by Feinberg and Neuhaus being my favorites”. [2]

References:

1. Mazel L., On The Nature and Means of Music. Theoretical Essay on the Fundamentals of Music Art and it's Evolution. Moscow, Muzika 1991 (in Russian)
2. Asatiani L., Nodar Gabunia's Pedagogical System. Tbilisi, Sani, 2003 (in Georgian)
3. Shiukashvili V. N., Interest and its Development. Deposited in TSC library. Tbilisi, 1954 (62 p.)(in Russian)
4. Shiukashvili V. N., Practical Application of Existing Literature about Methodical Issues of Piano Teaching”. Critical analysis of “Deppe's teaching”. Deposited in TSC library.Tbilisi, 1955 (85 p.)(in Russian)

Article received: 2017-05-10