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Stable and Mobile Elements of the Author's Style of A.K. Glazunov (by the Example of Scherzos of the Early Symphonies)

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Thanks to A. Ossovskiy, Glazunov acquired the role of the one who ended the traditions of the "Mighty Handful", which is of no doubt. However, it is clear that the composer's creative work is not limited only by the "Procrustean bed" of the epic symphonic style. This is confirmed by a significant re-evaluation of his work carried out in a number of studies in recent decades. On the material of scherzos of the early symphonies of Glazunov this article identifies components of the author's style that, on the one hand, firmly linked the composer's creative work with the traditions of the Russian symphonic school and, on the other hand, determined the extreme mobility of the author's style, his aspiration for the future. The methodology of this study is based on the conjugation of scientific and analytical apparatus of the humanities disciplines related to the musicology.

Keywords: Glazunov, symphony, scherzo, miriskusniki.



Portrait of A.K. Glazunov by V. Serov

Yu. Keldysh was the one who noticed the special significance of the symphony genre in the creative evolution of the outstanding composer of the turn of the 19th-20th centuries – A.K. Glazunov. He noted that “Glazunov’s eight monumental symphonies occupy a privileged position among all <...> works: they accumulate the most important and characteristic aspects of his style and are a kind of milestones or massive boulders on the way of the composer that mark the main stages of his artistic development” (Glazunov, 1959:116). Indeed, for Glazunov’s symphony was for a conceptual genre bringing into focus not only the style, but also the ideological preferences of the composer. According to B. Asafyev, “the

style of Glazunov's symphonies is the style of Glazunov's music" (Glazunov, 1959:115).

A number of works of the author of this article (Vinokurova, 2011) proved a classicism-like orientation of the creative work of Glazunov and considered his role in the history of Russian music as a direct ancestor of neoclassicism. As noted by M. Lobanova, "during the critical time in the transition period, the style tends to non-closure" (Lobanova, 1990:125), openness. It is such a potential openness that marks the era of the turn of the 19th-20th centuries in Russia. The extraversion typical of Glazunov's thinking, which is the ability to capture and creatively develop different stylistic phenomena in the art of the composer's era, predetermined distinct originality of the author's style of Glazunov (for example, private observations of this kind are presented in the works of Bochkareva, 1992; Siniavskaia, 2000). At the same time the stylistic elements of a certain system mastered by the composer are not so much declared as adapted becoming almost imperceptible.

It would seem that the obvious heterogeneity of the style (that is polysynthesis, multi-elementness and a plurality of diverse, heterogeneous, different stylistic components) should have led to the eclecticism of the author's style, but it did not happen thanks to the composer's universal creative method, namely to the method of an artistic synthesis gravitating to a certain syncretism. Actualization of this method is determined by the peculiarities of the composer's world view, ethical and aesthetic directions of a creative individual. It should be noted that the early works of the composer were already marked by the synthetism of the creative thinking. These include the second and third symphonies of Glazunov written at a four-year interval – in 1886 and 1890, in which the composer appears as a quite mature and accomplished master. The

object of this article's analysis is the scherzos of these symphonies.

In a symphonic cycle a scherzo represents one of the aspects of a man, namely a playing man (*Homo Ludens*). The scherzo of a specific figurative plan – a heroic prowess-play, is fixed as standard in the play elements of an epic symphony. The element of the epic scherzo is revealed as an element of a generalized folk dance.

While in the epic symphony the playing start is a creative and constructive element of existence, in the scherzo of the lyric and dramatic symphony the playing at times becomes a source of the destructive, as it was in the symphonies of Tchaikovsky. Dramatization of the scherzo images ultimately leads to their degeneration and fusion with a fatal element.

The scherzos of the Glazunov symphonies are characterized by the interaction of 2 types of the scherzo-ness.

Let us refer to the scherzo of the Glazunov's Second Symphony. The composer gives the playing part of this symphony that is clearly gravitating to the epos, a dramatic character, which is not typical of it. In a letter to Stasov dated January 2, 1885, Glazunov calls the Third part of the Second Symphony a "demonic Scherzo". Even though later this scherzo was described as something "Mendelssohnianly attractive" (see letter of A. Glazunov to N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov dated August 4, 1886), the key to understanding the scherzo and its dramaturgic functions in the symphony should be sought in its "program" title given by the composer himself. The semantics of the playing part of the cycle is significantly reconsidered by Glazunov. This is not a play of free forces, as it is in Borodin's works, and not a genre picture of national entertainment like in Balakirev's works. The playing start in this context is the source of the destructive element of existence. In this respect, the Glazunov's interpretation of the playing approaches to the

interpretation of Tchaikovsky. However, while the dramatization of scherzo images of Tchaikovsky, starting with the First Symphony, leads ultimately to their merger with a fatal force, the Glazunov's dramatic elements are localized within the scherzo, in which it eliminates itself. Thus, the dramatic of Glazunov is one of the essential, but not the main component in the re-establishment of a coherent picture of the world (being).

For Glazunov the play as an intense, but fruitless and vectorless, sustainable motion is something exactly opposite of contemplation. This idea of opposition of the contemplative and the effective is implemented both at the level of the structure of the symphonic cycle (through the contrast between the Andante and Scherzo) and at the level of extreme and middle sections of the scherzo.

The extreme dramatic parts of the form are opposed by a lyrical middle part, where one of the leitmotifs of the symphony can be heard. This time, waltz becomes its genre basis (as it is known, a genre is extremely relevant for the symphonic style of Tchaikovsky). A typical waltz rhythm-formula is missing here, which, however, is compensated by other attributes of the genre (e.g., prevalence of the rhythm-formula in the melody emerging from a half and quarter beat, as well as a downbeat slightly exaggerated by the pizzicato contrabasses, etc.). The occurrence of this bright, cheerful image in the middle of the negative scherzo element opens a temporary, transient nature of evil.

The atmosphere of anxiety and concern in the extreme sections of the scherzo primarily creates an intonation structure of the theme. It consists of two complexes of intonation, which enter into a roll-call dialogue. The rapid half-measure rise of the first measure is immediately extinguished by a downward motion of the melodic line for three and a half measures. Moreover, the structure-forming units in it are, at first, a descending

second and then a tertian and quart tones giving the theme the nature of an agitated, feverish tongue-twister. The creation of such an image is significantly contributed to by a solo French horn that is mainly meant for a cantilena, rather than to create scherzo images.

The basis of the second intonation complex of the scherzo's theme – a kind of a response – again is a descending, but tritonic (as if distorted in a false mirror) intonation in the rhythm-formula of two eighths and a quarter repeated three times by staccato woodwinds in different layers of the texture. In addition, the dynamization of the form of the extreme sections of the scherzo is carried out by means of long dynamic amplifications (crescendo, textured compaction of a melodic line, dominant pedal points and tense closing zones). The waltz version of the leitmotif is presented in the scherzo coda in a dramatic way. If the intonation contour of the initial four-measure remains, the starting point of the theme is not V, but the III degree of the mode. A minor mode, an ascending line of sequencing, an ostinato figure in the bass (I – VII[↑] – I) in a swing by quarters with a slowdown and a stop in the last measures of the scherzo give the theme a mournful character. The emergence of such a distorted version of a light lyrical image in the scherzo coda is not perceived as a certain result, the outcome of previous development, but a little differently because of the fact that one of the functions of the coda is a function of supplement, i.e., an epilogue (*post scriptum*). Therefore dramatization of the image is not a result of something accomplished (especially since there was no collision, the images in the scherzo were vividly compared), but is just a reminder of the possibility of enhancing the dramatic component of being (a kind of a call to be on the watch, *memento mori*).

The scherzo in the Glazunov's Third Symphony is built like a bizarre play by the initial intonation models that have the theme of the main

part as a single source, and this part is subjected to the most significant changes – perhaps, because of the greatest potencies for the development in it. Its energy “splashed out” in the form of multiple chromatic “ups” “charges” and sets a soundscape of the scherzo in motion in general. Hence is the figurative and semantic unity of a subject-matter and, accordingly, the emotional tone of the scherzo.

The constant transformation of the initial thematic complexes activates a process-dynamic factor in the deployment of the form. Because of this, a playing logic inherent in scherzo is enriched by the other senses coming into contact with different ways of shaping and aligning them to a common constructive “denominator”.

The playing logic interacts with the generativity (development of two sonata forms that constitute the extreme parts of the scherzo), the principle of contrast (a metacontrast on the border of the extreme and middle parts and a contrast within the parts, for example, the emergence of a new thematic formation in the early developments of sonata forms).

In other words, the playing logic only directs the visible course of the form, which, at first glance, looks mosaic and ornamental, but inside it is tightly knit by the technique of some sort of hidden ostinato-ness (that is the fundamental meaning of the theme of the main part for the intonation form of the scherzo in general) that expresses here a certain constant, a stable regularity of being that is always perceived only gradually.

Indeed, behind a kaleidoscopic change of fragments of this mosaic resembling a masquerade or a carnival procession of masks that is a certain theatrical act (as indicated by the fanfare sounds of an oboe, clarinet, French horn as if imitating an invitation to the play) hides the real life.

A theatrical curtain hanging over it slightly opens up in the middle section of the scherzo that

has a three-part form. In the first part (c.13, m. 5) the sound space gains stability and balance for the first time in the scherzo. This is due to several factors. First of all, the intonation frame of the melodic archetype – a tetrachord in a quint – is one of the tokens most typical of songs of the lyric-epic genre. We should also note the symmetry in the sound material organization characteristic of Glazunov, which also helps to create balance. In the archetype of the melody, first, there is a quint ambitus, and then – motion to its centre, a quint tone. In the following version of the melody first a tertian tone stands out, and then – a quint base of the tetrachord.

Another way to create balance of the sound space is a composition division into equal syntactic units – 4-measures – keeping their intonation variance.

The first part of the middle section of the scherzo is also characterized by the classical tonal and harmonic logic: in the tone plan a model of motion from the keynote to the dominant with the return to the keynote is implemented.

A non-stop motion – rotation dominates in the second part of the middle section of the scherzo, which is also based on the principle of equivalence (four-measure development of similar two-measure structures). A musical equivalent of rapidly running time is an ostinato rhythm-formula that permeates and unites the middle part and the reprise of the middle section of the scherzo. A new version of the melodic archetype opening the reprise (c. 17) synthesizes intonations of the introductory fanfare and archaic tetrachord. An image transformation of the theme (carnival continues) continues in the reprise of the scherzo.

While in the exposition of the sonata form the theme of the main part has a fantastic character, in the reprise (in an initial development) it turns into a duple, heavy dance, the *un poco pesante* section. Making a “trampling” effect is contributed to by

a duple meter, alternation of a textured bottom and top, an articulation accent on each beat of the measure and a heavy chord vertical. Although the “dance” episode is small, its energy spreads to subsequent sections of the form. The theme of the main part (from c. 28) loses wide breath and its syntactic units cut down. A secondary part is also shortened and reduced to varying repetition of the initial four-measure. Themes or their “fragments” from different sections of the scherzo are passing in a rapid pace (*vivacissimo*) in the coda.

A problem of an image-semantic unity of the intonation form is solved in the scherzo in a very peculiar way. The unifying plan is the connection of temporary plans of the “plot”: the past acquiring its real shape in the middle of archaic lexicon of the middle section of the scherzo, and the present represented by the whimsical, rhythmic organization and the fast tempo becoming a sort of an equivalent of rapidly running time, the whirl of modern life. Conjunction of the past and the present activates the category of memory as an attribute of an epic work in general. As is known, the category of memory or rather the historical memory has also become central in the creative work of the “*Mir iskusstva*” organization (World of Art) – Glazunov’s contemporaries. Most works of the *miriskusniki* bears the stamp of retrospectiveness (see Sidneva, 2011:31), meaning it is drawn to the past, which indicates the indirect, but organic connection with the epic tradition of culture, with the epos.

Notably, the historical memory in the canvases of the *miriskusniki* is not only a means of connecting time, providing “ontological resistance to the power of time” (Berdiaev, 1994:289) and acquainting us with eternity (i.e. performing the function of epic work, but meaning certain value systems). The past of the *miriskusniki* is multidimensional and always ethically coloured. It can be a symbol of harmony, stability and order, but it can also teach

the present a lesson if interpreted in an ironic or grotesque manner. The high ethos of the creative work of the *miriskusniki* questions the myth of aestheticism as a fundamental and sustainable creative set of artists of this movement.

Not only the perception of time, but also the similarity of composition techniques brings together Glazunov and the *miriskusniki*. In particular, the composition rhythm of the scherzo has techniques for organizing a picturesque aspect in the works of artists of the “*Mir iskusstva*”. That is a certain directorial technique – “an invitation to the play” used by Glazunov in the scherzo of the Third Symphony, and certainly having analogues in the paintings of artists of this movement.

As it is known, theatricalization of the action in the painting works may be manifested in a deliberately exaggerated conventionality of the composition and spatial solution. A painting in this case acts as a kind of staging played out by the actors. Hence are the deliberate “posing” of characters (think of colourful portrait of F. Shalyapin masterfully painted by B. Kustodiev), the creation of an appropriate background, a certain composition of the painting (for example, an oval frame in “Rest after a walk” by K. Somov, theatrical stage in the painting by A.N. Benua “The Italian Comedy”).

Glazunov also uses the similar technique in the scherzo of the Third Symphony. The playing logic serving as a dominant in the deployment of the intonation form of the scherzo of this symphony, in the end, became a style-forming foundation of the creative work of Glazunov.

The features of the *miriskusniki* are obvious in the orchestration of the Glazunov symphonies. A mixed orchestral “palette” of Glazunov can be likened to a beautiful palette of the *miriskusniki* prone to mix, combine different colours, for example, watercolour and gouache, gouache and coloured pencils, pastel, gouache, graphite and charcoal, etc.



B. Kustodiev. Portrait of F. Shalyapin



K. Somov. Rest after a walk



A. Benua. The Italian Comedy

Thus, from the analysis of the scherzo of the Second and Third symphonies, we can state that the foundation of the Glazunov's style system is the stable elements of the symphonic style of epic and dramatic types. Those are the typological features of the scherzo, namely: a fast tempo, prevalence of expositiveness over generativity, a leading role of the rhythm, predominance of large structures, relative constancy of the thematic material, texture, motion types and the base ternary form. In addition, the playing logic, as an immanent property of the scherzo, is provided by so-called play figures. However, from the moment of crystallization of the author's style of the composer to its full realization, such elements in the works of Glazunov were subjected to transformation and reinterpretation in a varying degree. As a result of synthesizing orientation and extraversion of the creative thinking of Glazunov,

the composer's tendency to the playing logic, his author's style takes on the extreme mobility. The elements of styles and stylistic trends of the turn of the 19-20th centuries that turned out to be in tune with the composer act as mobile. In relation to the scherzo of the Third Symphony such consonances were found in the works of the miriskusniki.

To summarize it should be emphasized that the style of Glazunov was initially focused on the balance of all the components and internal integrity. This led to the selectiveness in the stylistic sphere: the music composition assimilates to the process of "polishing", "adjustment" of the necessary details forced to "fit" in the originally specified integrity. Nevertheless, the Glazunov's stylistic synthesis is not a sum of certain stylistic components, but their organic alloy (let us denote this alloy by the stylistic heterogeneity), which is

due to the composer's view of the world that, if an "organic view of the world" suggesting that using the N. Losskiy's definition, we defined as "the whole is more primary than the elements".

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Стабильные и мобильные элементы авторского стиля А.К. Глазунова (на примере скерцо ранних симфоний)

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С легкой руки А. Оссовского за Глазуновым закрепилась роль завершителя традиций «Могучей кучки», что ни в коей мере не может подвергаться сомнению. Тем не менее совершенно очевидно, что творчество композитора отнюдь не укладывается «в прокрустово ложе» эпического симфонизма и только. Подтверждением тому является существенная переоценка его творчества, предпринятая в ряде исследований последних десятилетий. В данной статье на материале скерцо ранних симфоний Глазунова выявлены составляющие авторского стиля, которые, с одной стороны, прочно связали творчество композитора с традициями русской симфонической школы, с другой – предопределили чрезвычайную мобильность авторского стиля, его устремленность в будущее. Методология данного исследования основывается на сопряжении научно-аналитического аппарата смежных с музыковедением гуманитарных дисциплин.

Ключевые слова: Глазунов, симфония, скерцо, мирискусники.
