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Franz Joseph Haydn. “The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross” Oratorio

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Crucifixion of Jesus “Calvary”

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The second half of the 18th century is the most significant epoch in the history of musical art. The flourishing of folk, professional composer, concert and opera musical culture paved the way for the Viennese Classical School.

Its formation is linked to the creative work of Ch.W. Gluck, F.J. Haydn, W.A. Mozart, young L. van Beethoven, Mannheim craftsmen, and musicians of the older generation. Relying on the achievements of their predecessors and contemporaries in the field of musical art, the composers rose to new heights and created works of unfading beauty and perfection.

In the era of classicism and gallant style the art also expressed the moralizing trends: it appealed to the human heart, cultivated spiritual nobility in people, and denounced evil. Having reinterpreted the church music genres "from within", the composers filled their works with bright musical images.

Franz Joseph Haydn is a great representative of the Viennese Classical School. The liveliness of emotions and absolute clarity are inseparable in his music. The contemporaries also mention the richness of content and emotions.

The master's great merit is in the development of the oratorio genre, in which he combined the elements of Handel's oratorios, opera, singspiel, church music and symphony and achieved simplicity and accessibility of perception herewith.

His works are valued for the development of a musical theme, discovery of contrasting possibilities in it and creation of a multifaceted chain of transformations on their basis.

This article deals with the oratorio "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross", a piece of music which is deep in content and revealing the themes of good and evil, love and hatred, faith and betrayal.

The relevance of this music is that the image of Jesus Christ – the Lover of Man and Martyr – is masterfully embodied in F.J. Haydn's music.

Keywords: oratorio, sonata, adagio, a cappella, lament, dissonance, unison, introduction, intermezzo.

Research area: culturology.

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Introduction

The second half of the 18th century is called one of the happiest in the history of music. At that time, it developed in an atmosphere of cheerfulness. This was the epoch of many outstanding musicians, Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) coming first among them. Some of his musical works are already a part of history, but there are those that cheer up and captivate to this day.

The composer's immense heritage (almost 800 pieces of music) includes the works of almost all musical genres of the era of classical music. The son of a wheelwright and a cook was, perhaps, the most famous composer of his time, though, at the end of his life. The master's most significant contribution is in the instrumental music creation.

These are symphonies, quartets, trios, piano sonatas, variations, and concerts. Many of his works have not survived until present: some pieces of music were not catalogued by the composer; a number of manuscripts were burned during a fire in the Esterhazy castle (1779) where Haydn was in the service.

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in March 31, 1732 in a large family in the village of Rohrau (Lower Austria) located between Hungary and Croatia. The future composer's father was engaged in a craft of wheelwrighting. He loved music (he played the harp when accompanying his wife's singing). His mother served as a cook.

The musical talent of the future composer was discovered in childhood. He showed his interest in folk art and later drew themes for his musical works from it.

At the age of eight, Franz Josef started singing in St. Stephen's Cathedral choir precented by Reutter, a Viennese Kapellmeister. From the 15th century there was a boarding school at the cathedral. F.J. Haydn got his general musical education there.

The boy also studied composition, basing on spiritual chants he sang in the church. His experience was gained when listening to symphonic and chamber music at private concerts in Vienna. His voice mutated, Reutter replaced Haydn with his younger brother Michael who later became a composer.

For a long time Franz Joseph lived in poverty. From the age of eighteen he gave private music lessons and accompanied Nicola Porpora, an Italian composer, singer and voice teacher. Later he got the position of a conductor at the private chapel of Count Morzin in Lukavice (the Count's castle in Czech Republic).

In 1760, the musician started the service in the chapel of the Hungarian Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy in Eisenstadt, where he spent 29 years of his life. One of the heirs of Esterhazy (Anton) later dismissed the chapel and the composer was relieved from his duties of a musician and granted a good pension.

F.J. Haydn got his fame of a composer not only in Austria but also in Northern Germany, Holland, France, England, Spain, Italy, and Russia. He visited England by invitation twice. During his first trip to England in 1791–1792 he performed his six symphonies as a conductor and was awarded a doctorate from Oxford University (the Oxford Symphony was performed at that ceremony).

The second trip to England took place in 1794. The last two oratorios – "The Creation" (based on a plot from the Bible) and "The Seasons" (the Baron van Swieten's libretto) – brought the worldwide fame to the composer.

In May 17, 1809, during the siege of Vienna by the French, Clement Sulami, the hussars' captain who performed an aria from Haydn's oratorio "The Creation", visited

F.J. Haydn as a representative of the enemy side. The composer was shocked and totally convinced that wars do not take place between peoples, but between their rulers.... Two weeks later (May 31, 1809) the musician's path of life was over.

F.J. Haydn is mainly considered an instrumental composer. However, his German and Italian songs, harmonizations of Old Dutch songs, a large number of vocal canons and operas deserve no less attention. A significant place in the Austrian composer's creative heritage is taken by choral music: masses, cantatas, oratorios compare well with the master's instrumental works in beauty and perfection.

Friedrich Schiller's statement can be referred to the genre of oratorio: "Repose were therefore the dominant impression of this kind of poetry, but the repose of perfection, not of laziness; a repose which flows from the equilibrium, not from the standstill of powers, which flows from fullness, not from emptiness and is accompanied by the feeling of an infinite capacity" (Schiller F. "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry").

In his instrumental works and in some oratorios the composer expressed the spirit of the 18th century. Optimism, wit, joke, and cheerfulness sound in them. Yet, the happy side is not the only one that should be seen in his works. The great musician also created symphonies (for example, 44, 45, 83), masses, oratorios imbued with deep sorrow and tragedy.

Church music was the music F.J. Haydn composed over the entire period of his creative life. It was constantly a matter of reproach with a lack of ecclesiasticism. The composer was a deeply religious man. His faith was filled with a sense of joy about God. The master said: "When I think of God, my heart is filled with such joy that the notes run as if from a spindle. Having given me a cheerful heart, the God will forgive for serving him so joyfully" (Novak, 1973).

The composer was greatly impressed by G.F. Handel's works he heard. They partly influenced "The Creation" and "The Seasons" oratorios. Franz Josef also composed the oratorios "The Return of Tobias" and "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross". These also include the musical pieces of oratorical genre: allegorical cantata-oratorio "Applausus", cantata "Stabat Mater". When creating music, the composer always gave paramount importance to artistry and truthfulness of every particular episode.

Oratorio (from Latin 'I say, I pray') is a large musical composition for the chorus, soloists and orchestra, created on the basis of the biblical story. The genre emerged at the turn of the 16th-17th centuries in Italy. In the prayer halls of the Italian monasteries (the so-called oratorios) during the time free from church service there were religious

and moralizing conversations which were often accompanied by singing the ancient hymns and laudas. The first sample of the oratorio "Representation of Soul and Body" belongs to Emilio Cavaleri (1550–1602).

In the 17th century, oratorios were created by the Italian composers Giacomo Carissimi, Benedetto Ferrari, Alessandro Stradella, and Alessandro Scarlatti.

A new era in the development of the genre was opened by G.F. Handel's (1685–1759) monumental oratorios composed by him in the 30–40-s of the 18th century. The best of them are based on historical and biblical subjects: "Messiah", "Samson", and "Judas Maccabee". Regarding the structure, oratorio genre is close to mass, requiem, passion, as well as some vocal and choral compositions with a religious plot (Stabat Mater, Te Deum etc.). Outstanding samples were composed by Sebastian Bach.

Franz Joseph Haydn created not only complicated pieces of music; he also composed music to order. The oratorio "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" is one of the most unusual in the composer's creative work. In the middle of the 20th century, Anthony van Hoboken, a Dutch musicologist, compiled a catalogue of the master's works and divided it into two volumes: those of instrumental and vocal works. He mentioned this oratorio at the end of the first volume and at the beginning of the second one. It is quite a rare case when the same musical work exists in two variants: with the text and without it.

In 1785, the fifty-three-year-old composer, who was already a European celebrity and still in the service of the Esterhazy princes, received an order from the Spanish city of Cadiz to write an orchestral work for Good Friday of Lent.

In the preface to the score, published in 1801, F.J. Haydn wrote: "Some fifteen years ago I was requested by a canon of Cadiz to compose instrumental music on the Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross. It was customary at the Cathedral in Cadiz to produce an oratorio every year during Lent, the effect of the performance being not a little enhanced to the following circumstances. The walls, windows, and pillars of the church were hung with black cloth, and only one lamp hanging from the center of the roof broke the solemn darkness.

At midday, the doors were closed and the ceremony began. After a short service the bishop ascended the pulpit, pronounced the first of the seven words (or sentences) and delivered a discourse thereon. When he finished, he went down from the pulpit and knelt before the altar. The interval was filled with music. The bishop then in like manner pronounced the second word, then the third and so on, the orchestra following on the conclusion of each discourse. My composition was subject to these conditions,

and it was no easy task to compose seven adagios lasting ten minutes each, and to succeed one another without fatiguing the listeners; indeed, I found it quite impossible to confine myself to the appointed limits" (Novak, 1973).

The name of the priest, who made an unusual order to F.J. Haydn, was Don José Saenz de Santa Maria. He was a rector of the Church of Santa Cueva. The Church was built shortly before the first performance of the musical work. There were two tiers in it: the upper and the lower. It is in the lower tier of the church where this religious rite, which the composer recalled, was held (Alfeev, 2017).

First "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" was composed for a small orchestra. In the last musical piece ("The Earthquake") the kettledrums were added to the orchestra. The composer fulfilled all the wishes of the priest from Cadiz.

The first edition of this musical work appeared in 1787. In 1794, Franz Joseph Haydn returned from his second London trip and stayed in Passau. "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" was performed there but with the voice parts. Joseph Friebert, a local conductor, used the fragments from the poet Ramler's poem "The Death of Jesus". In this text certain biblical events were described. Haydn liked the idea of composing a musical piece on its basis.

Back in Vienna, he began revising his composition. Baron van Swieten, a friend of the Austrian master, a music lover and an amateur writer, introduced a number of changes to Friebert's text (recitatives). Franz Josef composed new voice parts. Instead of recitatives, preceding each sonata, the composer introduced a four-voice chorus, singing the words of Jesus Christ.

There are four versions of "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross". The first orchestral version was published in 1787. It was followed by the arrangements for the quartet and for the piano. In 1795–1796, on the basis of the available musical material, the composer created an oratorio, having added the vocal parts and another orchestral part. F.J. Haydn's latest version made a strong impression in his time, the composer called his work the most successful.

"The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" oratorio for the chorus and orchestra soloists

"The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" oratorio is F.J. Haydn's most famous and frequently performed work. It goes beyond the music "for a certain occasion", or "applied" music. This piece of music is an adaptation of the seven stringed instrumental adagios (slow tempo). It consists of an introduction, seven sonatas

(instrumental pieces of music in the old meaning of the word), an intermezzo and a symphonic sonata "The Earthquake".

As in "The London symphonies", the oratorio has a double orchestra (two wind instruments each): two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and a string quintet. In the last version the composer introduced two clarinets and two trombones to the orchestra. Its first performance took place on Good Friday of Lent in 1786. In 1801, the score of the oratorio was printed in Leipzig after revision.

All parts, except the last one, are in a slow tempo. Yet, they are melodically rich in musical themes, diverse in forms, instrumentation, and tonalities. Each of the Savior's words is enriched with new musical moods and emotions that embody the content.

The Holy Scripture tells about the last hours and even minutes of Jesus Christ's earthly life. Four evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – saved the last seven words, which the Savior said on the Cross, for all of us.

The tragic introduction is based on two themes. The first one is harsh and majestic. The second evokes associations with sad, heavy "sighs". Short musical phrases are interrupted by pauses, and then they repeat and develop further. They are dynamically contrasting: forte – piano (loud – quiet). The themes alternately sound with the orchestra and its individual groups (string and wind instruments).



Fig. 1. G. Dore. Nailing Christ to the Cross

When Roman soldiers nailed the Savior's hands to the cross, he responded to the crying injustice and cruelty with GREAT LOVE (Fig. 1). The Savior prayed to Heavenly Father: *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke, 23:34). Jesus Christ prayed not only for those who were faithful to him, but also for the enemies, those who crucified them, and all sinners. These are his first words.

The first sonata opens with the chorus's 'recitative' akin to a canon. Then follows the main theme of the song texture pierced with "lamentoso" intonation (lament is a mournful sad music). In the middle (in development) it (the theme) varies, "dusk paints" get dramatized. Jesus Christ's words expressed sorrow for the sinfulness of mankind and love for all the people.

On both sides of Christ, there were crucified robbers (Fig. 2). One of them accused him, but the other changed his mind and appealed to him: *"Remember me, lord, when thou mayest come in thy reign"* (Luke, 23: 42). And Jesus replied: *"Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke, 23: 43). This was the second word that the Lord said on the cross. What the Savior said was true of both the prudent robber and those who, even at the last minute of their earthly lives, are convinced of their sins. God's mercy is boundless.

In the second sonata, after the initial recitative of the chorus a capella (without instrumental accompaniment) the main, full of sadness, lyrical and melodious tune sounds four times. Twice in the exposition but in different keys (minor and major)



Fig. 2. A. Mantegna. Crucifixion

the music develops into minor, and in the recapitulation – into major. In the music, notwithstanding the general minor tone, one may hear joy. The part (sonata) culminates with confirming major.

It is followed by two words of the Savior: one is addressed to his Mother, and the other – to his beloved disciple John... *“at the Cross of Jesus stood his mother ... Jesus then, seeing the (his) mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, saith to the (his) mother: Woman, behold thy son! ...Then saith he to the disciple: Behold Thy Mother! ...from that hour... took her to his own home”* (John, 19: 25-27) (Fig. 3).

It was very difficult for the Savior to pronounce every word, he even cried out in pain and lack of air. In his words he expressed his filial love and care for his mother, who, standing at the cross, suffered with him. God commanded all people to honor the father and mother, and he himself fulfilled this commandment till the last hour of his life.

The third sonata is a sample of Haydn’s calm and sublime lyrics. Like the previous two, it opens with a “choral prologue”. In accordance with the text, the musical theme is based on short phrases (soloists, chorus, and orchestra). The composer reflected Christ’s physical pain in the “dissonance” (the sound is more intense, unstable) screams. The



Fig. 3. L. Josse. Crucifixion

finest major-minor chiaroscuros make the sonata beautiful and expressive. Elegancy and sincerity in it are replaced with dramatic tension.

The Savior combines two natures: those of God and Man. While on the Cross, he cried to his Heavenly Father: "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mark, 15: 34; Matthew, 27: 46) (the fourth word).

The fourth word is the Savior's greatest sufferings: his tortures of being abandoned by God (this is what what an ordinary person feels when he/she thinks that he/she has been abandoned by God and the God does not hear him/her). The son of God was not for a moment abandoned by his Heavenly Father.

In the sonata, the feelings (pain and bitterness) are expressed by the composer in close-up; they are more powerful in their dynamics and purposefulness of development. The range of emotions is also very wide – from excitement to tragedy.

In the course of revision F.J. Haydn placed an intermezzo (a small independent instrumental piece performed between separate parts) between the fourth and the fifth sonatas. It was composed for the wind instruments only. It is due to this "inserted" piece that the oratorio got its balance, a kind of resting point, "respite".

Haydn was a master of instrumentation. In the intermezzo, he added a counter-bassoon, which was a rare thing at the time. The orchestra in this part is "transparent", almost a chamber one. A small (four times) musical theme, full of sadness, is repeated several times in different versions. The music, probably, reflects the composer's subjective thoughts about bygone events.

The Lord, crucified on the cross, said: "*I thirst*" (John, 19: 28). He was dying slowly of blood loss and thirst. The Savior longed not only for water as such, being a human, but also for the salvation of all of us (people), being God. His great love is immense. And that is why he deliberately went up on the cross to open the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven to us as well as to any prudent robber (Fig. 4).

The fifth sonata consists of two contrasting musical themes (as in the classical sonata). Emotional contrasts are emphasized by the comparison of the declamation phrases and dramatically tense melody, the manner of presentation, and rapid dynamic ups and downs.

Against the background of a light transparent pizzicato accompaniment of the strings (a manner of performance), evoking the image of drops of water, the first and full of sadness melody is "led" by tenor (solo). The peculiar features of the second theme (the chorus and the orchestra) are dramatic tension, sudden clear rhythms, and stiffness. In the middle of the part (a short one) the second theme is developed. In the



Fig. 4. G. Ferrari. Crucifixion

last section of the sonata, the first theme is “performed” by all the soloists, male and female members of the chorus, the orchestra finishing the whole part.

The sixth word of Christ is “*It is finished*” (John, 19: 30). The hour of the Lord’s death was coming, and he said, “It is finished”. The Holy Scripture says that Jesus Christ will be crucified. The word “It is finished” meant that the earthly sufferings, redemption and salvation of the human race were finished by the blood and the act of the Divine Messiah. He conquered death, its sting. Then followed his Resurrection and Heavenly Glory. The Savior’s word means that our salvation was accomplished (Alfeev, 2001).

The sonata opens with the unison (monophony, the simultaneous sounding of two or more voices of the same height) of the chorus a cappella. This is the saddest part of the whole oratorio. The chorus and the orchestra continue a singing melody of mezzo soprano (solo).

The anxious and tense state is intensified in the middle of the part (a short development). The song theme is for the soloists and the chorus, whereas the dance character of the accompaniment is achieved by the orchestra and the solo of wind instruments.

In the third section of the part, the order of themes is changed. Similar initial and final melodies frame the sonata. The beauty of music does not overshadow the text (verbal) content.

The Savior’s last words on the cross were the following: “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he expired*” (Luke, 23: 46). The son resigned his soul into the hands of his father, Heavenly Father. He came to the sinful earth from him. There was confidence and boundless love of the Father in his words. Jesus Christ died as a human, but then rose again (Alfeev, 2001).

After the choral introduction, associated with a child’s voice timbre, the main theme is “led” by the quartet of the soloists. Then, in the “last story”, the chorus as if sums up the Savior’s earthly life. The music is filled with solemnity and is perceived as a hymn to the Great Sufferer who took all human sins upon himself.

In the last sonata, F. Haydn showed the change of emotional states: inexplicable pain, sadness, triumph and power of spirit. Messiah’s last gasps, his words (solo of the bass) go into Eternity...

After gradually fading sounds of music, illustrating the death of Jesus Christ, there follows the “Earthquake” symphonic play at a fast tempo on the attacca principle (to proceed to the next part of the musical piece without interruption) (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. G. Dore. The Earthquake

The music is permeated with the intonations of the authentic medieval "Dies irae" (The Day of Anger). The "waves" of symphonic development heave and fall, culminating in an incredible power. In a small but capacious fragment the composer expressed anger and mercy, fear, joy of repentance, and love of God.

"And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised..." (Matthew, 27: 51-52).

Jesus Christ is the greatest personality in the history of human civilization, with no equal. Love for God and people were integral in the Savior. His love is boundless, benevolent and all-embracing.

"He died for all people, so that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but for the one who died and rose for them" (2 Corinthians, 5: 15).

Conclusion

F.J. Haydn's contribution to the creation of vocal and symphonic works is very significant and valuable. The composer continued and developed the line of lyrical-epic oratorios, outlined by G.F. Handel, the acquaintance with whom was one of the strongest impressions from Haydn's trips to London.

Most parts of the oratorio "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" are composed in an old-fashioned form (early type). The themes development (the development, transformation of musical themes) was very short, yet. The composer used this form in the oratorio music in various ways. Its main principle is contrast, its subsequent softening and bringing to unity. The composition, which is classical in style, contains the baroque features.

Apart from the "Earthquake" symphonic part, the whole musical piece is composed at a slow tempo. Almost all sonatas start with the a'cappella chorus except for the fifth one. Sound contrasts (forte – piano) of the chorus are peculiar for them, the role of the orchestra is significant, which was never assigned to it before F.J. Haydn.

The distinguishing features of "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" oratorio are inexhaustible melody, the use of folklore, great flexibility and diversity of sound, as well as the depth of the transmitted emotions.

The musical work manifests F.J. Haydn's subtle psychological feeling in the disclosure of each word of Christ, reflects the composer's sublime philosophical and concentrated thoughts and his deepest conviction in the victory of humanistic ideals.

Interest in Franz Joseph Haydn's creative work got revived from the mid of the 20th century and continues to the present time. The biblical text in his musical work enables the listener to perceive its depth even better and is, inherently, a musical sermon in sounds. "The Seven Last Words of Our Savior on the Cross" oratorio did not become a "museum relic" and is still the master's most modern creation.

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Франц Йозеф Гайдн. Оратория «Семь изречений (слов) Спасителя на Кресте»

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Вторая половина XVIII века – важнейшая эпоха в истории музыкального искусства. Расцвет народно-бытовой, профессионально-композиторской, концертной и оперной музыкальной культуры стал почвой для появления венской классической школы.

Ее формирование связано с творчеством К.В. Глюка, Ф.Й. Гайдна, В.А. Моцарта, молодого Л. ван Бетховена, мангеймских мастеров, музыкантов старшего поколения. Композиторы, опираясь на достижения своих предшественников, современников в области музыкального искусства, поднялись к новым высотам и создали сочинения неувядаемой красоты и совершенства.

В эпоху классицизма и галантного стиля искусство выражало и морализующие тенденции: обращалось к человеческому сердцу, воспитывало в людях душевное благородство и обличало зло. Композиторы, переосмыслив «изнутри» жанры церковной музыки, наполняли свои произведения яркими музыкальными образами.

Франц Йозеф Гайдн – великий представитель венской классической школы. В его музыке неразрывно сочетаются живость эмоций и полнейшая ясность, а также отмеченные современниками содержательность и взволнованность.

Велика заслуга мастера в развитии жанра оратории, в котором он объединил элементы генделевских ораторий, оперы, зингшпиля, церковной музыки и симфонии, достигнув при этом простоты и доступности восприятия.

Ценность его произведений заключается в разработке музыкальной темы, обнаружение в ней контрастных возможностей и создание на их основе многогранной цепи преобразований.

В данной статье рассмотрена оратория «Семь изречений (слов) Спасителя на Кресте» – глубокое по содержанию сочинение, в котором раскрываются темы добра и зла, любви и ненависти, верности и предательства.

Актуальность произведения в том, что образ Иисуса Христа – Человеколюбца и Страстотерпца – мастерски воплощен в музыке Ф.Й. Гайдна.

Ключевые слова: оратория, соната, adagio, a'cappella, lamento, диссонанс, унисон, интродукция, интермеццо.

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.
