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THE IDEOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONTENT OF THE QUARTETS OF THE VIENNESE CLASSICS (INTERPRETATION ISSUES)

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Abstract

In the era of Viennese classicism, the quartet became one of the leading genres of music making. The music of the quartets is distinguished by its sublimely spiritual content, where the deep expression of the flow of thoughts of the artists of that time was reflected not only in the form and content, but also in the technique and manner of performance.

The emerging style of new polyphony was established in quartets based on classical harmony and, thus, string quartets rose to the level of symphonic cycles. In short, the enrichment of expressive means, the deepening of the content and the complication of compositional structures is becoming a leading aspect in the evolution of musical art, which is ahead of the historical process.

Keywords: *string quartet, Viennese classics, performance, interpretation, performance technique*

The Viennese classics established the quartet as an extremely serious genre, with exalted spiritual content, capable of expressing a deep flow of thoughts with all their complex and unexpected aspects. Of course, genre and everyday images found a place in the classical quartet, but here they play far from the main role. In addition, these images are presented differently than in the symphony, either more subtly, or more sharply, characteristically, or more lyrically. In the quartet, there are much less tangible connections with opera than in the symphony, that is, with what causes the listener to have more or less specific associations.

The significance of the content, its departure from everyday lightness, is reflected in the

quartet, as in the symphony, by the appearance and approval of the development of the sonata allegro and the crystallization of the sonata cycle with a regular sequence of parts. This elevates the quartet above all kinds of household music, gives it a classic appearance. From the technical and musical side, the quartet consolidated the role of a new polyphony, which arose on the basis of the classical harmony that developed at that time. Such polyphony was based on harmonic patterns and this distinguished it from the ancient polyphony. The combination of individualized voices and the strict logic of classical harmony is a distinctive feature of the entire Viennese classical style, but it was especially clearly revealed in the quartet with its obligatory four-voice.

The quartets of the Viennese classics are very complex in their style, although they are very convenient to perform in texture and do not present technical difficulties compared to the works of composers of later times. The slightest inaccuracy of metrorhythm, tempo, intonation distorts the style and character of the music. Classical quartets require particularly careful, filigree finishing of all the smallest details of the musical text.

Just as in symphonies, the string quartets of the Viennese classics show a progressive evolution, enrichment of expressive means, deepening of content and complication of compositional structures.

There is also a tendency towards crystallization, an increase in the importance of each individual quartet in the composer's work. So, if Haydn has 83 string quartets, then Mozart has 23, and Beethoven has only 16.

If Haydn's work is dominated by quartets of a light, serene nature, which made it possible for the composer's biographer Stendhal to call them with good reason "the conversation of four pleasant people", then in Mozart's work the quartet is filled with complex psychological content, contradictory musical images, sophisticated polyphonic writing technique. In Beethoven's quartets, completely new features and new characters emerge – the passionate Schillerian natures of the era of "storm and onslaught", where conversations turn into sharp dramatic clashes. Beethoven's last quartets represent peculiar peaks of wise philosophical contemplation, in which violent outbursts of angry rebellious protests break out.

The great interpreter of Beethoven, Gustav Mahler, not without reason offered to perform works of such a gigantic scale as Beethoven's last quartets by a string orchestra. The symphonism of Beethoven's thinking has also been vividly embodied in string quartets, the concepts of which are characterized by a special scale and require an appropriate approach to their performance, the search for new expressive means, strokes and playing techniques, richer sound, timbre colors approaching the instruments of a symphony orchestra. Thus, the quartets of the Viennese classics are very diverse and, despite the commonality in their belonging to the same compositional field, they nevertheless

require a sensitive approach to understanding the content, style and choice of an interpretative solution, a performing concept, and a convincing artistic embodiment.

The founder of classical quartet art is Haydn, who owns over 80 string quartets. The composer wrote his first quartet in 1755, and the best mature works of this genre date back to the 1790s. Haydn wrote the last remaining unfinished string quartet Op. 103 – No. 83 according to the through numbering in 1803. For a period of a little more than forty years, the quartet in his work has gone from a purely domestic purpose of the genre to a professional one with only its inherent appearance and style.

Starting in 1772, a new series of his quartets appeared every few years, usually consisting of six works. The early quartets of the 1760s are only a quest. The number of parts in them is not stable. The four-part movement was established with quartet No. 17. The themes in Haydn's early quartets are little individualized, the texture is very simple, the movements of the voices are constrained, the first and second violins often sounded in an octave, there was almost no development.

At the same time, Haydn's much-loved surprises are manifested in them – dynamic, melodic, textured, buff, humor.

A significant shift occurs in the quartets Op. 17 and 20, written in 1771 and 1772, respectively, when the pathetic structure of feelings penetrates into Haydn's works. The melodies of the first and third movements are intensely excited, the minuets are vividly lyrical and unexpectedly tart. The finales are fervent, contrasting, full of cheerfulness. The quartets are dominated by the first violin, but the rest of the voices are already showing a desire for greater importance. Ensemble voices are most active in the finals, where soloing is minimized.

The next stage is the quartets Op. 33, the so-called "Russians", completed in 1781. They served as a model for Mozart, who soon created his famous six quartets, which he dedicated to Haydn. The quartets of Op. 33 are distinguished by a greater depth of thought, but the structure in them is calmer, more balanced than in Op. 17. A special feature of these quartets is the inclusion of a scherzo instead of a minuet. It is noteworthy that the rondo form is confirmed

in the finales, whereas before Haydn's quartet was often completed by a fugue.

In the quartets of the early 1790s – Op. 64, 71, 74, a developed quartet style is asserted, where all voices live their own lives, merging into a harmoniously organized whole. The classical type of cycle prevails with the sonata allegro in the first place, with the slow movement in the second and the minuet in the third. The quartet has remained an area of search for the composer even now. If there is a single type of symphony in the London Symphonies, then each quartet is primarily individual. Compared to symphonies, details are especially important, transitions from one mood to another are frequent, or to changes in their shades. The quartet does not always have that balance of contrasting images that distinguishes the symphony, the whole composition as a whole sometimes remains as if unclosed, unfinished. But along with this, there are quartets with a clearer,

more pronounced single line of development from the first to the last part of the cycle than in symphonies.

The imaginative world of quartets is extremely diverse. Among them there are quartets emotionally vivid, foreshadowing romantics, there are strict, melodically restrained and gallant patterned, and folklore, and motor, intonationally smoothed. Many of the quartets, like symphonies, began to receive names, such as the quartet Op. 33 – “Bird”, Op. 50 No. 6 – “Frog”, Op. 64 No. 5 – “Lark”, Op. 74 No. 3 – “Horseman” or “Cavalry”, Op. 76 No. 4 – “Sunrise”. These names should not pass by the performers of the quartets who comprehend the figurative content of Haydn's music. The musical world of Haydn's quartets is an area of creativity rich in thought and inventive finds, providing performers with exceptionally fertile material for the manifestation of their capabilities.

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