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MUSICAL AND POETIC MEANINGS IN THE REQUIEM "LUX AETERNA" BY M. SHUKH

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Abstract

The article analyzes the *Requiem* by M. Shukh which is studied in the context of the composer's spiritual music, from the position of interpretation of the genre, as well as the application and understanding of poetic texts. The essay reveals the traditional and individual features, examines in detail the poems of Russian poets included in "Lux aeterna", and also highlights the general character and features of the musical language in this opus.

Purpose: finding the place and significance of the requiem genre in the work of M. Shukh, illuminating the ways in which the genre is embodied, analyzing the poems of Russian poets and their place in the M. Shukh's *Requiem*.

Methods: complex musical analysis, analysis of poetic text.

Results: The traditional and individual features of M. Shukh's *Requiem* were identified, and the poetic meanings of the poetic texts included in this work were analyzed.

Scientific novelty: the work is analyzed for the first time in this vein.

Practical application: the main provisions of the article can be used in performing and teaching activities.

Keywords: choir, requiem, vocal-instrumental music, M. Shukh, compositional creativity of Ukraine, traditional and individual, poetry, symbolism

Introduction

Multifaceted and deep, the music of the composer Mikhail Shukh (1952–2018) is in line with the main modern trends associated with the desire of composers to revive and rethink the spiritual genres. M. Shukh is the author of more than ten major compositions with spiritual themes: These are the concerts "Revive me, establish me" (1993), "Revelations of Blessed Jerome" (2008), "Temptation of the Bright Angel" (2008), as well as the Liturgical doxologies of John Chrysostom

(2005), the musical and visual performance "Pilgrimage to the Land of Angels" (2016) and other works.

The requiem plays a special role in the creative work of M. Shukh: it became the first, and then the last, genre of sacred music created by the composer. The first Requiem – "Lux aeterna" – was written in 1988 and dedicated to the memory of the composer's father; The second – "Memento mori, memento vivere" ("Time to die, time to live", 2016) – is a choral symphony-requiem based

on the poetry of G. Falkovich. This composition was the last in the work of M. Shukh and was first performed in 2018 only after the death of the composer – at the concert dedicated to his memory.

Speaking about the direction of stylistics of M. Shukh's music, the researcher A. Kameneva states "the priority of spiritual themes in his work, which the author himself associates with meditateness, enlightenment, and allusions. In his work, he strived for unity and harmony through spirituality and prayer where "one of the basic principles of his composing method is the tendency towards a synthesis of Orthodox and Catholic traditions" (Kameneva, 2017, P. 88–89). Let's consider the features of the embodiment of sacred themes in the music of M. Shukh using the example of his famous, recognized (S. Prokofiev Prize, 1991) and repertoire work – the Requiem "Lux aeterna", written on the canonical Latin texts and poems by the Russian poets N. Minsky, V. Soloviev and K. Balmont.

Main Part

Requiem "Lux Aeterna" by M. Shukh is a six-part vocal and instrumental composition for choir, soloists, reader, organ and instrumental ensemble. Despite the monumentality of both the concept and its implementation, the overall character of the work tends to intimacy, sincerity, to a lyrical worldview and its reflection in music. This work organically combines the Catholic traditions and the Russian themes, and, in addition, there are elements of oriental meditation, "... especially in the final part, which the composer himself spoke of as an "almost Indian raga", as an "explosion of light" and a gradual ascent" (Komarovska, 2019, p. 19).

The researcher of the requiem genre and its implementation in Russian music S. Studennikova notes that "the 1970–1980s are characterized by the composers' interest in the genre canon of the requiem, the creation of diverse concepts, individual author's interpretations" (Studennikova, 2010, p. 13). It is in this vein that the work "Lux aeterna" by M. Shukh was written. Let us take a closer look at the reflection in this work of the canonical and individual features of the composer's style.

Characteristics that are canonical for the requiem genre are manifested:

- In the classical structure. The composer's Requiem consists of six parts generally accepted for Catholic funeral Mass of the parts: "I. Requiem aeternam", "II. Kyrie eleison", "III. Sanctus", "IV. Lacrimosa" "V. Libera me", "VI. Lux aeterna." It is worth noting that, for example, "Libera me" is not always included in requiems. At the same time, parts such as "Dies irae", "Tuba mirum", "Agnus dei" that are often found in composer's requiems are absent in M. Shukh's Requiem. The text of "Gloria", usually arranged in a separate part, was introduced by the composer in this work as a subsection in the part "Sanctus". All this speaks of a creative approach to the canons of constructing the genre, as well as the selectivity of the composer when building the structure of the composition.
- In the general sacred character, the correspondence of the musical mood of each part to the Catholic source. For example, this is the enlightened mood in "Sanctus" or the quiet sorrow in "Lacrimosa", where M. Shukh "seems that the melody is smoothly descending towards us and crying over every passerby, consoling our poor Universe" (Kuralekh, 2000).
- Available in Latin canonical text.

The individual author's interpretation is expressed, first of all, through the introduction of poems by the Russian poets, which are spoken by the reader on the background of the sound of a choir and instrumental accompaniment. The following poems are included in the Requiem, giving additional semantic shades to all parts of the work:

- In the Part I, "The deeds and thoughts of people will pass like a dream" (1887) by the famous poet and philosopher N. Minsky, where he talks about the meaning of human life. Speaking about the transitory significance of heroism, wisdom, love, knowledge, N. Minsky comes to the conclusion that immortality is ultimately possessed only by a creator human who goes towards his

goal, outlined in the form of a “new world”, “non-existent and eternal”. With its mystery, depth and certain understatement, this poem anticipates the poetry of the Symbolists.

- N. Minsky is also known as a religious thinker – he is the author of the work “In the Light of Conscience”, where he outlined his own religious concept of “Meonism” (literally from the Greek “non-existent”), the basis which serves the idea of the paramount importance of human non-existence. That is why M. Shukh’s appeal to the work of this poet to convey the mood of the sacred genre seems to us to be by no means accidental – discussions about the frailty of life and the theory of “meonism” have deep semantic connections with the general concept of the part “Requiem aeternam” (“Eternal Peace”).
- In the parts II and III of his requiem, M. Shukh turned to the poetry of V. Solovyov. “Kyrie eleison” uses the verse “In the morning mist with unsteady steps” (1884). The poem talks about a long journey that passes through the past, present and future – it can be compared to the personification of a person’s life path. The main idea here, according to researcher E. Cherkasova, is “... the mystical (of the author and the involved reader) transition to a new life, to a new, perfect world” (Cherkasova, 2012, p. 91), taking place as if against the background and with the help nature.

In the “Sanctus” part, the reader performs the poem “The Wingless Spiritcaptivated with the Earth” (1883) by V. Solovyov, which reveals the theme of the unearthly world from which the human soul came, and to which it constantly strives. The poem is given with the most transparent accompaniment – it sounds against the background of the image of “seashore” (the “seashore” mark in the synthesizer part) in the middle of the movement and is, as it were, a link between the sections “Sanctus” and “Gloria”.

- In the Part IV, the composer limited himself to only the Latin text. The Part V contains excerpts from the poem “Will Pass Like Dream” by

N. Minsky, used in the Part I of the Requiem. Thus, certain verbal-semantic arcs are carried out. It is interesting that the Russian text in the Part V is for the first time heard not by the reader, but by the choir, interspersed with Latin prayers – thus synthesizing two traditions, clearly separated and compared in the previous parts. In this one can see a sign that the soul, freeing itself from earthly incarnation, moves away from the conventional boundaries of language and religion, moving into a world where everything exists in unity and harmony.

- In the Part VI, which is a sort of the culmination of the entire cycle, the poem “I caught the fading shadows with a dream” (1894) by K. Balmont was used. In this work by the famous symbolist poet, in the traditional interpretation, the hero ascends to a dream and gradually reaches the heights of creative mastery. M. Shukh rethought the idea of K. Balmont – in the Requiem, climbing the stairs already symbolizes the achievement by a person of eternal light after death as the personification of truth.

The separation from the canonical embodiment of the requiem genre is also felt in the musical language of M. Shukh’s composition, manifesting itself, in particular, in the introduction of modern timbres (for example, a synthesizer which plays one of the leading roles throughout the entire cycle); composition techniques (for example, aleatorics, which is most clearly expressed in the use of aleatoric squares in part VI); the modern texture and harmony with a large number of chord complexes of non-tertian structure, creating a coloristic effect.

In the composition “Lux aeterna” by M. Shukh, the principle of freedom acquires great importance – from metrics, from tonality, from thirds, and also partially from pitch (in aleatoric episodes) and from melody (recitation by the reader). We see a certain symbol in this – in this way the composer shows the liberation of the soul from earthly shackles and rules, which correlates with the religious ideas of N. Minsky: “... the limited space torments and, like the lid of a coffin,

crushes us with its limitations... We rush forward, We are tending forward inspired by the hope that somewhere out there, among the constellations, there will not be found that space that alone is desirable and sacred and would calm the soul... There may be no infinity, but the soul's desire to break out of the shackles of the finite is an endless desire" (Minsky, 1890. P. 181–182).

Conclusions

Thus, "Lux aeterna" by M. Shukh is one of the highly spiritual works that shows the requiem through an individual and deeply

personal vision. Being in line with the canonical traditions of writing the genre, the work goes beyond the scope of Catholic worship due to the modernity of the musical language, timbres, as well as the introduction of Russian-language poetic text, which gives the cycle the new poetic and semantic shades. Written more than a third of a century ago, the M. Shukh's Requiem in many ways anticipated the attitude towards sacred genres in the context of modern composers' creativity, which consists in the revival of spirituality, its deeply personal understanding and reflection in music.

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