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## "FROM DRAMA TO THE LIGHT" IN THE FIRST PIANO SONATA BY O. SITNIKOV

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the first sonata by the Uzbek composer Oskar Sitnikov, in which the strictness of form characteristic of neoclassicism is combined with a variety of theatrical images characteristic of romanticism. The figurative world is brightly contrasting, emotionally filled, while the texture of the presentation of the musical material corresponds to classicism.

**Keywords:** Oskar Sitnikov, sonata form, baroque neoclassicism, romanticism, theatricality of images

Contemporary classical music, influenced by trends and time, is often filled with dissonances and sometimes is very difficult for listeners to perceive. In society, even among a narrow layer of lovers of academic art, there is little interest in contemporary music (Borodin B. B., 2023).

Among contemporary composers of Uzbekistan, who set themselves the task of "returning the melodic essence to music", the very interesting and bright creative personality – Oskar Sitnikov is undeservedly kept in the shadows.

In his piano works, Oskar Sitnikov acts as a zealous supporter of the neoclassical trend. Today, the most relevant form, which gives composers the opportunity to express a various palette of their perception of the modern world, is the sonata form. At the moment, O. Sitnikov has created a number of works that gravitate towards this form. Among them, piano sonatas stand out for their emotional fullness.

The strictness of forms characteristic of neoclassicism is combined in O. Sitnikov's sonatas with a variety of theatrical images characteristic of romanticism. The figurative world of the sonatas is brightly contrasting, emotionally filled, while the texture of the presentation of the musical material corresponds to classicism. But, at the same time, the emotional saturation is expressed by such expressive means as a variety of chords, virtuoso passages, and the use of polyphonic techniques. A striking example of the combination of strictness of forms and a bright figurative world is the First Sonata, which was created over a long life path and was completed much later than the Third Sonata.

From the composer's own memoirs: "... The First sonata was written a long time ago. But I was dissatisfied with it. Too straightforward and constructive. At that time, I lacked compositional technique, and I abandoned it for many years. Later, the Second and Third

sonatas were created. I consider the third to be the most successful. By that time, I had become a different person than before. Much had changed in my life, I realized it. Then the time came to rework the First sonata, but here I rather composed anew. In the First Sonata, I did not adhere to any tonal plan. The musical flow itself carried me through the keys. And the last part is written under the “la Vie continue” motto, that is, life goes on, no matter what and, despite all the twists and turns of the previous parts...” (Interview with the composer, December 2024).

The First sonata is written in three-part form. The three-part form refers to the origins of the sonata form, in the Baroque era. Due to the fact that the composer returned to this sonata during a certain period of his life, it is the most thoughtful. In this sonata, the composer revealed his philosophical perception of the world, emphasizing that reflection and contemplation prevail over action.

The first part of the Sonata is written in the form of a sonata allegro, at the same time, in accordance with romantic images, the musical presentation of the material is built on

the principle of monothematic. The main figurative sphere of this part is the creation of the world. Thoughts about the role and place of man in this world, his mission in comparing the external and internal world.

Exposition. The sonata opens with an “introduction-epigraph”. It is the thematic core of the entire sonata. The melody is brightly instrumental, presented by alternating half and quarter chords. At the same time, the alternate movement of octaves in the lower and upper registers gives transparency to the sound of the introduction. This is the very imposition of the mission by higher powers on the fragile shoulders of man. The thought – “meditation” in the upper voice, interrupted by confirmation in the middle. The culmination is on the third phrase, a turning point on the subdominant-dominant and a deviation into a raised sixth degree-splash, an attempt to find an answer, with the absence of flats, hope appears but is immediately overshadowed by the return of the chord to the original key after two seconds and the sagging of the question on the dominant seventh chord.

**Sonata №1**  
in f-moll.  
Part 1.

Oscar C.

**Andante mosso pesante**

The main part, although built on the intonational material of the introduction, presents a bright figurative contrast to it. It is more dynamic rhythmically, and is presented in a duple meter, which gives it a certain dynamism. The movement in the sixteenths creates an exciting image, setting the pulsation of the entire movement of the main part. Energetic, with a constant striving upward, with many deviations into flat and sharp keys – this theme is full of doubts, which are expressed by the movements of the sixteenths. The theme of a person alone in a huge world, doubting his own strength, in solving the task set before him.

The main part is repeated twice, after each repetition a combination is heard that continues the development that began in the main part.

The connecting part is completely intonationally related to the main part. The peculiarity of the connecting part is the presence of elements of sequence, but instead of 8 bars of connecting construction between the two main parts, it takes 11, due to the overtone scale on the final chord. In the tonal plan, the connecting part hangs on a fermata in the dominant to d-moll.

The secondary part also grows out of the intonation material of the Introduction theme, but it is a contrast to both the Main part and the Introduction theme. With intonational kinship, all means of expression are transformed: melody, harmony, rhythm, meter. The rhythm changes from duple to quadruple. The melody changes from stormy, excited, striving upwards to descending, melodious, unhurried. The lyrical, melodious, dreamy melody is complemented on long notes in the upper register by triplets in the left hand. Cantabile moderato is a kind of contemplation, reflection, “an internal dialogue-reasoning with oneself.”

The composer presents the secondary part in his own special manner: initially the main idea of the part sounds, and then its first variation immediately appears in a different key with a different accompaniment, then the second version of the theme in inversion sounds, the general direction of movement changes. The part hangs on the dominant second chord to C minor.

The final part is short and represents a period intonationally similar to the Sec-

ondary Part. It consists of four repeated passages, in which the composer moves through such keys as: c-B-es-C. The music of the part is filled with heartfelt, enchanting melodic turns. Unhurried passages in the left hand gradually rise higher, making the part “immaterial”, airy, almost imperceptible. Here the confessional nature of the narrative is combined with classical forms of presentation. All this eventually hangs on D7 to C-Dur on crescendo. Suddenly, “as if shuddering”, the music returns the listener to reality.

Then the theme of the introduction sounds again, but in a completely different character: *resoluto a tempo, secco*. The melody is abrupt in sound, modulates into very distant keys (C-Des, B-As). The final episode in *dolce sostenuto* is unifying and ultimately resolves in C-dur on fermata.

The development consists of two sections. The first section begins with the main part, set out in the address, using polyphonic techniques. In the main part, new intonations appear, which are similar to the theme of the cross – the turn “F C As H” (symbolism in the music of J. S. Bach). The composer himself defines the form of this section as a fugato (Interview with the composer, December 2024). Using this technique, the composer turns to higher powers for help and guidance on the true path with the help of prayer. The first section of the development is filled with tonal search (possibly a search for answers to a million questions asked to oneself).

The allusion to the Baroque era gives the first section of the development a philosophical coloring (the rhythmic pair – rehearsals in eighths and quarters in the middle and upper registers together form a semblance of a theme, against the background of which the counter-substitution in the lower voice sounds). During the first performance of the main theme, the image of the main part underwent changes.

The character of the secondary part does not change as a whole. The only difference is that the Secondary Part begins immediately with the first variation of the main theme of the secondary part. Then the theme sounds, fragmented, in a modified version – in an imprecise treatment.

After the first performance of the main and secondary parts, a prediction follows.

The first section ends with a dominant seventh chord to the main key.

The second part of the development, in turn, can be divided into four even smaller sections according to pace and character:

The first section (the coda will be built on its intonations later) is a modified theme of the Main Part. The theme is compressed here into two bars. Then, the second half of the main part is presented in the same compressed manner. It occurs three times, each time reaching a higher note (des, es, f). The section does not end intonationally, it hangs on a diminished introductory seventh chord to the key to g-moll.

The second section is, in a way, a development of the idea of the first section, representing a short dialogue: the first is a questioning part, consisting of two motives, sounding in different registers, presented in triplets, and the second, unifying part (in a two-beat rhythm).

The third section is diametrically different from the previous sections in tempo (sudden slowing down to *pesante*). It has a distant resemblance to the character and intonations of the secondary part.

The fourth section simultaneously performs the function of a prediction and at the same time sums up the material sounded above. This section begins with a ragged melody, covering all the registers of the instrument (the melody sounds in the upper registers against the background of low octaves in the left hand and supporting voices in the middle register). The emotional outburst that arose in the second half of the fourth section with each repetition of this motive subsides to nothing, dying out on a diminished introduction to the tonality of the dominant.

The reprise is again opened by the "introduction-epigraph". But, after the results of the emotional and stormy development, it is slightly smoothed out, it is not an order, it is a hope. One of the main differences from the introduction to the exposition is that the melody of each sentence sounds a semitone higher than the previous performance. In general, everything is short, compressed.

The reprise is also compressed and comes in a single burst. The main part comes once, but a second version of the main part is heard.

The connecting part is played in D minor. There is no doubt in one's own strength. There is confidence that everything is within one's power.

Secondary part. Sixteenth notes in the lower voice and the emerging undertones in a dotted rhythm give it some impetuosity, radically changing its character.

The secondary part does not find its continuation in the Final Part (as it did in the exposition). Instead, at the end of the reprise, a modified version of the connecting element appears (the version in circulation) (From the exposition).

The coda is built on the theme of the main part and was first encountered in the main section of the development. It contains only the supporting melodic notes of the Main Part. It is conventionally divided into three sentences. Each sentence sounds higher than the previous one (As<sup>1</sup>, G<sup>2</sup>, B<sup>2</sup>). At the end, against the background of triplets, intervals from a major second to a fourth sound in a row, then a dominant seventh chord and a tonic, which is confirmed by the repetition of the tonic tone in octaves and an additional note in a major octave. This is the Hymn of Life. Despite the minor tonality, due to the constant striving of the melody upwards (towards freedom), syncopated presentation, the coda does not sound minor.

Here is triumph. The desire to live in spite of everything.

In this part the composer combined the characteristics of neoclassicism – the square period in most themes, the contrast of themes, the appeal to the form of sonata allegro with the characteristic features of romanticism – monothematicism, theatricality of images, emotional saturation. The tonal plan of the sonata as a whole is classical, but at the same time it abounds in numerous internal modulations in the nearest keys, without violating the classical canons of harmony.

The second part of the Sonata is lyrical, filled with philosophical reflections, written in a complex three-part form, with a compressed reprise and a short coda built on the intonations of the first part.

The first section of this movement is written in a simple two-part form, where the second part is a varied presentation of the first

part. The melody is serene, enlightened in nature, begins with the imposition of a parallel major-minor, presented in the form of triads on arpeggiator and adds serenity. Then, the melody turns into a continuous dialogue

between registers, smoothly flowing from one register, picked up by the next (the composer uses the technique of coloristic here – highlights the melody with different colors, comparing registers).

## Andante - son №1 in f-moll

### Part 2.



The second part of the first act is more dynamic both in harmonic content and in texture (chords and octaves prevail). Gradually gaining momentum, the melody becomes more exciting: excited triplets are added here, laid out by sixteenth notes in the upper register. Then all the reflection returns to its course, gradually fading. The general key of the section is C-dur. The section ends with a reduced introduction – uncertainty and a question.

The middle section is contrasting and consists of two clearly delimited episodes (e-moll, c-moll). The first episode begins in e-moll with a tonic chord in the upper voice against the background of sixteenth-note passages in the lower voice. Here, everything is contrasting with the first part: the presentation in sixteenth notes, the abundance of syncopated rhythm, the tonality. The composer's request "poco piu mosso", then "allargando" – such rubato in tempo evokes doubts: a desire to do something or to take his time and enjoy the peace? The composer gives a new meaning to the intonations of the theme from the first section by

changing tempos. The thoughts in this section are unspoken, the hanging on the tonic fourth-sixth chord does not give an incompleteness.

In allegro, the second episode of the middle section suddenly burst into C minor, intonationally similar to the first theme of the Main Part of the First Part. In this section, the idea is revealed by using a polyphonic form of presentation (fugato). The theme, beginning with a weak beat in C minor, appears four times: now in the upper, now in the lower voice (keys: c-f-f-b). The theme, aspiring and rhythmic, flows into a dispute between the voices: the upper one stubbornly strives upward, and the lower one pulls back, not giving in at all. Against the background of the theme, there is a counter-position of chords and octaves, presented in quarter and eighth notes.

After the theme is presented, there follows an episode with the development of this musical material. First, a modified melody is heard twice, built on the intonations of the fughetta theme, with the addition of a syncopated backing voice, intonationally similar



to the very beginning of the Second Part. The melody begins the same way both times, but due to the subsequent shift by a semitone, the color of the presented material changes (it sounds duller, more intimate). Then the material is presented in steps of diminished seventh chords with a shift by a diminished fourth upwards, which, on the contrary, gives desperation to the sounding melody. This episode is saturated with augmented and diminished intervals, passing chromaticisms. Having reached its apogee in *es-moll*, the melody gradually descends from the note *b* (*b-a-ges-es-d*). The melody is presented in diminished introductory seventh chords. In the bass, the diminished seventh chords are laid out in a reverse manner, rising towards each other (*es-f-c*).

After this, a link is heard, built on the material of the beginning of the Second Part, filled with passing flats. On a sudden *subito sostenuto*, the part returns to a mirror reprise, in which the second sentence is heard in address.

The reprise is also two-part in structure, mirroring the First Part. The reprise opens with the second variation of the first section (the first variation was the second part of the first section). The composer changes the rhythm from duple (in the first part the lower voice is presented in eighth durations) to triple (the lower voice is presented in triplets, it is this that changes the character of the theme). The melody here is not so lyrical and carefree, it is full of determination and some kind of inner triumph.

Only in the first theme presented in the reverse (from the end to the beginning) does calm and peace gradually return.

In a short six-bar coda, the melody first sounds in the upper register, presented in a rhythmic pair: a quarter-half note with a dot against the background of an arpeggio in the left hand. Then the arpeggio from the lower voice rises to the middle and upper register. The part dissolves in the upper registers, finding peace and serenity in a transparent *C-dur* ( $C^4-C^k$ ).

This part also combines emotional intensity, theatricality of images in combination with classical form, an appeal to polyphony and a large number of tonal deviations characteristic of modern composers, but at the same time remaining within the boundaries of the classical relationship of tonalities in this part.

The third part of the Sonata is written in the form of a *sonata allegro*. The part begins with an introduction on *andante* – a kind of epigraph, which takes its thematic origin from the Secondary Part of the First Part. The third part begins with an upbeat on a weak beat. The motive is repeated three times, each time higher and more desperate (*c-f-b*). The third passage of the theme simultaneously unites the first two performances and ends on the dominant – one of the composer's favorite techniques is to leave everything unsaid on the dominant. As was said above, the third part is written under the motto ("Keep living no matter what" 2024). In this part, from the very beginning of the introduction, there is firm confidence in the decision taken.

## Son in f-moll.

### Part III.



The exposition is repeated, written in the tempo *allegretto non troppo*. The main part is light, striving forward despite the minor key. The theme consists of four phrases, where the first is the presentation of the mood, then two short phrases in the form of a diatonic non-identical sequence; and the final, summing up phrase is the culmination of the part. The main supporting notes of the melody are intonationally similar in their movement to the Main Part of the First Part. The melody of the theme is swift, light, filled with slight sadness.

The secondary part is slightly contrasting in presentation. Intonationally similar to the theme of the introduction and to the Side part of the First part. The melody here is melodious, despite the high register – some kind of instrumental presentation. The composer shows this through the melody, written in half notes against the background of the supporting voices in the middle voice and the accompaniment in the lower voice in the form of arpeggios. The theme is characterized by lyricism and dreaminess. The theme does not end – here a prediction and a dominant appear, thrown on a pause extended by fermato. And, on the octave passages, the Main Part bursts in again.

The main part is changed in phrasing. Here the first phrase is repeated twice, but from different keys, the composer modulates from the main key to the key of the melodic seventh degree. In the new key the melody sounds a little more subdued and chamber-like. Two short sequences disappear. Instead of them there is a culminating section, which, unlike the first passage (As-dur), ends in the key to Es-dur.

The secondary part is similar. Here the mini culmination, expressed in descending double thirds, no longer has a predicate link.

The final part is large in size, modulates into a major key. It also serves as a connecting link with the major middle.

The middle of this part is an episode, small, contrasting with the exposition, related to the theme of the Introduction and the Side part, but begins in D major. Initially, the melody of the episode is filled with calm, contemplation and modulates to G major.

Next, the material is broken down and presented in the form of tonal searches; here, such keys as e/E, G, fis, A appear. Then, with

the help of the enharmonic, a change occurs from sharp to flat keys.

Reprise. The Introduction Theme does not sound in the main presentation, but plays the role of a link with the middle, from which, by means of comparing keys, the Introduction Theme gradually grows, but it sounds not from its beginning, but from the second half. The Reprise almost exactly repeats the Exposition, thereby affirming the main message of this part: the same double performance of the main-secondary part pair, but unlike the exposition, in the second performance of the main part there is no deviation into another key.

The absence of the Final Part leads to increased dynamics and an increase in the value of the Coda.

The coda is exactly the same as the coda of the first movement, thereby further uniting the sonata and expressing the thirst for life even more strongly.

The composer devoted most of his time to the First Sonata, as he returned to work on it several times. The fact that the sonata is written in three-part form is a prerequisite for the composer's inclination toward the origins of this form, rather than its classical variants. The bright contrast of images, the juxtaposition of images, enhances this attraction. The simplicity of the presentation of the themes contributes to their democratic nature. All the themes of the sonata are intonationally related: the Main Part of the First Part grows from the theme of the introduction to the First Part, and the Introduction to the Third Part of the sonata grows from the secondary part of the first part. In the third part of the sonata, as in a reprise, both themes from the First Part are presented, having undergone changes. All parts of the sonata are in turn three-part. The main idea of the contrast in the sonata lies in the juxtaposition of the extreme parts and the middle. The figurative world of the sonata as a whole is philosophical and contemplative lyricism. A certain drama contained in the main part of the first movement gradually dissolves in the process of presentation towards the end of the sonata. In general, the figurative development can be called "from the drama to the light".

It was in this sonata that the composer conveyed his attitude to life, "*la Vie continue*".

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