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GENRE AND STYLISTIC FEATURES OF THE INCORPORATION OF FOLK ELEMENTS IN THE PIANO MUSIC OF UZBEK COMPOSERS

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Abstract

This article examines the genre and stylistic features of the incorporation of folk elements in the piano music of Uzbek composers. It explores various forms of using folk musical material in piano works – ranging from direct quotation of folk melodies to the indirect embodiment of national modal-intonational, rhythmic and textural features. Based on an analysis of sonatas, sonatinas, preludes, fugues, toccatas, rhapsodies and cycles of miniatures, the main trends in the development of Uzbek piano music are identified, reflecting the interplay between European compositional principles and the national monodic tradition. Particular attention is paid to the works of G. Mushchel, N. Zakirov, R. Abdullaev, A. Mansurov, H. Rakhimov and other composers who have made a significant contribution to the formation of the national piano repertoire. The conclusion is drawn that folklore is the most important source of artistic renewal and the preservation of the national identity of Uzbek piano music, whilst the ways in which it is incorporated demonstrate the evolution of compositional thinking from the arrangement of folk themes to their creative reinterpretation within the context of contemporary musical techniques.

Keywords: *Uzbek piano music, folklore, folkloric elements, national melos, genre and stylistic features, compositional creativity, piano genres, sonata, polyphony, toccata, rhapsody, musical folklore, national identity, monodic tradition, Uzbek composers*

The piano works of Uzbek composers, undergoing continuous and intensive development, are constantly enriched by new compositions that deserve the close attention of performers and listeners alike.

Contemporary composers draw upon the rich experience and legacy accumulated by their predecessors. The palette of musical ex-

pressive devices and intonational solutions is broad and varied, with a clear foundation in the inexhaustible folk tradition, national melodies, rhythms and timbres of Uzbek music (Mukhamedova, F., 2019, 48). Originally an oral tradition, passed down from generation to generation, 'by word of mouth', in some cases according to the principle

‘Ustoz-shogird’, in the case of music from the oral tradition (makoma), or folk songs, instrumental pieces or dance melodies prevalent in a particular local area, the melody itself was not recorded; only the lyrics, the so-called bayaz, songbooks, were recorded. Over time, with the arrival of specialists who came to the Turkestan region on the noble mission of establishing national schools of composition, Uzbek music, which is monodic by nature, formed the basis of works written for a particular musical instrument or for an orchestra in four-part arrangement, notated on a five-line stave using all types of musical notation.

The aim of this article is to outline the extent to which composers from Uzbekistan have utilised authentic folk melodies in solo piano repertoire. Thus, whilst in the very beginning the first piano works were composed by Russian composers who had travelled to and settled in the republics of Central Asia on the instructions and commission of the tsarist authorities, subsequently, having learnt musical notation and received their education at the Tashkent Conservatoire, as well as at the workers’ faculty of the Moscow Conservatoire, local Uzbek composers began to compose their very first works themselves.

Taking solo piano music as the basis for study, works based on folk material in various genres were examined and analysed, namely: sonatas, études, preludes, preludes and fugues, pieces, cycles of miniatures, rhapsodies, toccatas, etc.

Thus, whilst the earliest piano pieces were composed in a generalised manner, without distinguishing between traditional and folk melodies – as seen, for example, in V. Uspensky’s **Collection of Uzbek Pieces for Piano** (1879–1949), works subsequently began to appear that were written in a specific genre of the European musical tradition for a European instrument that had never before existed in the republic. Let us cite, by way of example, several collections of children’s pieces by B. Nadezhdin (1905–1961). The composer B. Zeidman composed *Variations on a theme from the Uzbek folk song ‘Bilak uzugim’* for piano, which represent ‘an example of the combination of Glinka’s principle of variation with polyphonic development’ (Parsegova, A., 2009, 55). There is also

B. Gienko’s ‘Improvisation’ on a theme from a Pamir folk melody.

A striking example is G. Muschel’s (1909–1989) ‘Pink Sonatina’ and his cycle ‘24 Preludes and Fugues’ for piano. G. Muschel’s ‘Pink Sonatina’ is a prime example of the use of the sonata principle of development. The first movement of the ‘Pink Sonatina’ opens with the exposition of the main theme in A minor (Dorian mode), featuring characteristic variations on the Dorian sixth; dance-like in character and based on the intonations of the Uzbek folk song ‘Ramazan’, it is juxtaposed with a secondary theme of song-like structure that is intonationally similar. According to T. Gafurbekov, ‘a short ritual chant – or, more precisely, a well-chosen variant of the “Ramazan” melody, flexible in its origins – has acquired qualitatively new, hitherto uncharacteristic semantic facets in the “Pink Sonatina” (Vakhidov, A. G., 1989, 230). As an original artist with a keen sense of the interplay of light and shadow, G. Mushel, a painter, embodies a colourful image in sound – ‘a blossoming garden in a variety of colour schemes: the first movement in soft pink, the second in blue, and the third in orange tones’ (Vakhidov, A. G., 1989, 36). This is reflected, first and foremost, in the rich chromatic diversity of the sound, which requires the use of the pedal as a means of expressing timbral effects. It should be noted that the ‘Pink Sonatina’ has firmly established itself in the educational and pedagogical repertoire of young pianists and concert performers. The music of the sonatina is deeply meaningful, revealing connections with both national and global traditions. Alongside sonatinas in which composers actively explore new sonic possibilities, many sonatinas are being composed that serve a pedagogical and instructional purpose.

Among such works are the sonatinas by H. Azimov, S. Varelas, F. Alimov and M. Atadjanov, written specifically for children and young people. Of particular interest from an educational perspective are the sonatinas by F. Yanov-Yanovsky, M. Bafoev and H. Khasanova. As a tribute to tradition, D. Saydaminova’s Sonatina was composed, in which the classical structure of the genre and form is masterfully rendered. Incidentally, it should be noted that these compositions contain no specific folk melodies; their national

character is conveyed indirectly. Of particular note is the sonatina by H. Rakhimov, which captivates the performer with its subtle musical texture, expressive colours and the elegance of its texture. It is a compact, three-movement cycle with a distinctive interpretation, in which traditions stemming from Uzbek instrumental music played on folk instruments – such as the *dutar* – interact organically with traditions derived from French Impressionism, in particular Ravel's *Sonatina*. In the first movement – *Allegro* – the composer, whilst adhering to the general principles of the classical sonata form, revitalises it through compositional techniques that evoke associations with the performance traditions of Uzbek folk musicians. Both themes – the main and secondary – should be performed with the melodious tone characteristic of the *nay*'s playing. This cantilevous quality is also evident in the second movement of the *Sonatina*, which presents a colourful sketch of an Eastern landscape. The finale of the *Sonatina* is in the style of a *toccata*, so characteristic of Uzbek piano music. This genre sketch – a scene from folk life – is marked by a variety of textural forms and various piano techniques, but without the use of folk elements.

It should be noted that the composers, who had initially arrived from Russia at the insistence of the tsarist authorities to study local ethnography – namely, customs, rituals, costumes, national dishes and folk art – carried out the mission entrusted to them by the state with distinction. They took folk melodies as their basis and adapted them to the forms and genres of the European tradition. They succeeded in this. Subsequently, Uzbek composers – that is, local musicians who had been specially trained at the conservatoire in the finest traditions of European culture, whilst taking national characteristics into account – began to create their own compositions, both original works and those based on folk material (or on *makom* melodies, which are not discussed in this article). Thus, the first Uzbek composers emerged: M. Ashrafiy, M. Burkhanov, M. Leviev and others, who began to compose, amongst other things, for the piano. For instance, M. Ashrafiy composed 'Song Without Words' – based on an original melody of his own, but using nation-

al intonational and rhythmic material. His piece is written in a complex three-part form with a trio and a static recapitulation, that is, an unaltered repetition of the first section.

The composer Abdullaev, a native of Khorezm, celebrated the Khorezm folk dance 'lyazgi' – which has been included in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage – in his solo piano works. For example, his piano cycle 'Fairy Tales', composed in 2008, consists of five pieces, 'thematically linked in a chain of fairy-tale stories told by the Storyteller throughout the night' (Mirzakamalova, E., 2). The narrative begins in the evening, when the Storyteller starts recounting tales as a sort of journey in the form of fantastical dreams, and concludes them in the morning, at the moment of awakening and the start of a new day. Each piece has a programmatic title: 1) 'The Storyteller's Tale', 2) 'The Dance of the Flowers', 3) 'The Caravan', 'The Flight of the Eagles', 4) 'The Morning Breeze'.

The piano cycle *Five Children's Miniatures*, imbued with a sense of dance, was composed by R. Abdullaev with due regard for the characteristics of Khorezm folk dances, the plasticity of body movements, and the rhythmic nature of the movements and poses; one can sense a genre-specific foundation characterised by vivid national imagery, firmly rooted in the traditions of Khorezm dance. The influence of Khorezm dance is also reflected in the virtuoso piece 'Humoresque'. A sense of dance permeates the entire piece with energetic rhythms imitating the *doira* and *kayrak*. The musical structure of the piece is modelled on a festive dance, during the performance of which all participants in the festival are drawn into the choreographic action, and the dance culminates, amidst dynamic movement, in a general jubilation – an apotheosis symbolising a life-affirming, humanistic principle and the triumph of light and goodness. In the *Rhapsodies*, also composed by the composer for piano, Khorezm folk dance music is heard in a more indirect manner. R. Abdullaev has succeeded in finding his own innovative and individual approach to the compositional interpretation of the genre, drawing on the principles of the intonational, modal and rhythmic structure of Uzbek music. It is worth noting that the first *Rhapsody*,

No. 1, bears the programmatic title 'Frescoes of Navruz' and is dedicated to the composer's wife, Ra'nokhon, whilst Rhapsody No. 2 is dedicated to his son, Bekzod Abdullaev, a talented pianist and prize-winner at international competitions. In the Rhapsodies, the thematic elements of Khorezm dance manifest themselves in the form of micro-motifs. R. Abdullaev has also composed a Toccata, which exudes a vivid national flavour, yet does not draw upon any specific folk theme.

Among the achievements of the sonata genre, the five piano sonatas by N. Zakirov (1942–2003), composed in the 1970s and 1980s, stand out. These works, which are innovative in both content and form, reflect many trends and compositional techniques – the innovations of contemporary piano music (expressionism, sonorism, aleatoricism, pointillism, clusters, etc.). 'All these explorations were undertaken by the composer in conjunction with the national element, which is embodied in his music in various ways: in thematic material based on national melody; in the toccata-like quality characteristic of the Uzbek rhythm (*usul*); and in the monodic principle of thought characteristic of Uzbek folk music' (Mukhamedova, F., 2003, 13). N. Zakirov's sonatas are predominantly cyclical, with a predominance of three-movement structures and, by contrast, composite forms. Thus, Sonata No. 3 is written in three-movement form, with the first movement in the form of a sonata allegro. From the perspective of the use of folklore, the second movement is particularly interesting. The *Intermezzo*, a lyrical, contemplative piece rich in national melody, acts as an interlude, serving as a connecting bridge between the outer movements of the work. The sonata's finale begins with an *Andante* introduction. Following the *fermatas*, the third movement – written in rondo-sonata form, with the theme of the first movement's main part serving as the refrain – begins with a rapid run of sixteenth notes in the right- and left-hand parts. To summarise, we note that N. Zakirov is written in a free form, in which the composer adheres to the stylistic features of the European genre whilst at the same time making extensive use of improvisational principles of exposition and development, allowing for a fairly free interpretation of

the sonata, which bears the alternative title 'Sonata-Fantasy'. The composer does not use specific folk material, employing only generalised national intonational and rhythmic elements in the middle section. The sonata is interesting in that it combines classical and contemporary compositional styles.

Sonata No. 2 forms a two-movement cycle. The first movement is based on the alternation of thematic material, accompanied by corresponding changes in dynamics, tempo and harmonic texture, which define its contrasting dramatic structure. The first movement is written in sonata form. The introduction, marked '*Piu mosso*', is performed with a powerful sound, vividly and evocatively; this is followed by chord clusters, which gradually bring the musical movement to a halt. The main theme, marked '*meno mosso*', has a distinctly national character, is based on a stepwise progression and is set against a background of the '*usul*' of Ufa, which is characteristic of traditional Uzbek music. There are no folk themes. In the '*Andante*', a familiar '*usul*' is heard, and the main theme begins to emerge from the distance. In the second movement of the sonata, N. Zakirov employs stylistic features of the traditional sonata alongside improvisational techniques. Textural and aleatoric thematic elements play an important role here. The *Allegro* is written as an introduction, in chordal texture, followed by the thematic section (*Andante*, *Allegro*), based on a repetitive technique reminiscent of the sound produced by the Uzbek folk instrument, the *chang*. The musical language of this section conjures up in the listener's imagination the image of a *bakhshi* narrating *dastans*, whose voice is interrupted by the roar of the wind and the sounds of nature. The next thematic section (a secondary theme) is written using a technique from modern composition – aleatoric music. The musical notation here consists merely of a series of hints – symbols – the interpretation of which is left to the performer's discretion (in accordance with the specified movement scheme). The second movement concludes with a cluster chord that resounds for four bars. The second movement is thus framed by an introduction and a conclusion, both of which share a similar style of presentation.

N. Zakirov's Sonata No. 4 was composed in 1982. It consists of eight short movements, linked together tonally according to the principle of monodic development. Despite its contrasting, composite structure, the composition is united by a profound internal unity of thematic material, which is polyphonic in nature. Nor does this sonata draw on folk sources; only in the second movement, the Andante, against a backdrop of an ostinato-repeated *usul*, does a melody unfold with melismas reminiscent of sighs and weeping. Techniques of polyphonic development play a major role here. To summarise, we might say that in N. Zakirov's sonatas do not employ folk themes, but rather intonational and rhythmic elements close to national music (mainly in the second movements of the sonatas), whilst also utilising a variety of classical and contemporary compositional techniques such as polyphonic development of material, monothematicism, clusters, aleatoric techniques, and others.

A. Mansurov is the most prominent representative of Uzbek music, an expert in the application of national compositional techniques, such as rhythm (*usul*) and the stylisation of the sound of folk instruments such as the *doira*, *dutar* or *karnai*. His works convey the full power and beauty of national melodicism and national instruments. He is a consummate master of both piano and orchestral composition techniques. It is also worth noting that he has written a great many unique, lively works, including arrangements of folk music, for the 'Bulbulcha' choir.

A. Mansurov's Sonata for Piano is written in the traditional three-movement form, with a noticeable influence from national roots. This national distinctiveness is evident in both the thematic and modal organisation, in the incorporation into the musical fabric of international turns characteristic of Uzbek music, in the melismatics, the variational principle of development, and, most importantly, in the imitation of the timbre of Uzbek folk instruments through a staccato-percussive texture. There are no folklore themes in this work; the entire thematic material is original, based on the national roots of Uzbek music.

Composers such as G. Mushchel, H. Azimov, R. Abdullaev, H. Rakhimov, A. Khashimov, M. Atadjanov and D. Yanov-Yanovsky all

turned their hand to polyphonic genres for the piano in their day. Thus, if we examine these works from the perspective that interests us – namely, the presence of folk themes – we note that when creating his polyphonic cycle, G. Mushchel, drawing on the experience of composers from previous generations, such as J.S. Bach, D. Shostakovich, R. Shchedrin, incorporated Uzbek folk melodies and the works of the *bastakor* into his compositions; he succeeded in enriching these inherently monodic melodies with polyphonic principles of development through the prism of his own compositional thinking. The beauty and uniqueness of folk melodies and rhythms, and the richness of musical imagery, continue to this day to be of genuine interest both in our country and far beyond its borders. 'Drawing on Uzbek folk melodies, G. Mushchel creates works that organically combine national characteristics with elements borrowed from the Russian professional tradition in their style. ... Mushchel draws constantly on Uzbek folklore' (Vakhidov, A., 1988, 44).

The 'Polyphonic Pieces', a collection of twelve miniatures by the pianist and composer Kholmira Azimov, can be described as 'micro-preludes' in the style of Uzbek monody. The pieces are written in a strictly polyphonic style, with a predominance of two-part writing, and an emphasis on national timbral colour derived from traditional instrumental music based on fourth-and-fifth chords. His pieces are easy to perform. 'As an expert on the specific characteristics of the piano, H. Azimov utilised the instrument's acoustic and timbral resources; he succeeded in capturing national colours and revealing the monodic structure through a polyphonic prism.'

The composer R. Abdullaev devotes considerable attention to polyphonic forms.

He has composed around thirty three- and four-part fugues for piano. These are lyrical-philosophical, genre-colouristic, song-like and dance-like fugues, in which the rhythms and modes of Uzbek folk music are employed with great ingenuity. In them, the composer experiments boldly, revitalising polyphonic forms with original creative solutions.

R. Abdullaev's piano cycle 'Prelude and Toccata', which is a favourite with pianists, represents a qualitatively new interpretation of the cycle, in which the combination of two

closely related improvisational genres – the prelude and the toccata – is presented for the first time. The prelude unfolds in a free, improvisational form, revealing the composer's metrical and rhythmic inventiveness. Ostinato becomes a key element in the piece's development. The repetition of the note h1 in the upper register throughout the piece lends it a unique character and evokes associations with the figure of the storyteller – the bakhshi. 'Throughout the Toccata, modern compositional techniques are employed – extended tonal techniques, such as the use of bitonality (the piece features the superimposition of tonal layers, with the right-hand part written in C-sharp minor and the left-hand part in C minor)' (Mukhamedova, F., 2003, 27). Through his creative thinking and ingenuity, the composer draws the performer's attention to the vivid dynamics and harmonic innovations throughout the cycle.

H. Rakhimov's polyphonic cycle *'Prelude and Fugue'* also arouses considerable interest among both performers and listeners. This work is characterised by a profound internal unity and a monothematic structure, as evidenced by the common thematic elements shared by the prelude and the fugue. The Prelude is a classic example of Uzbek monody set within a polyphonic framework. Against the backdrop of a deep octave pedal ostinato in the lower register, a melody resounds, as if emerging from cosmic vibrations. The Prelude leads seamlessly into the fugue. In the exposition, the fugue theme is presented across three voices. Further active development reveals the polyphonic possibilities inherent in the theme, leading to an intense dynamic build-up and then to the conclusion of the fugue on a high emotional crescendo.

Composer A. Khashimov's polyphonic collection deserves attention in light of composers' return to folk roots. The cycle is based on Uyghur musical material, which lends it a sense of freshness and novelty. The cycle consists of three parts: 'Mukambeshi Azham', 'Passacaglia', and 'Toccata'. This short polyphonic piano work is notable for its original treatment of ostinato forms of movement, which organise the logical development of the compositional structure, stimulating the performers' thinking, energy and temperament.

M. Atadjanov's 'Toccata and Fugue' is particularly accessible to performers, characterised by a clear compositional structure and a well-balanced tonal scheme. The Toccata, with its vivid character, is written in a chordal texture with subsequent octave doubling in a three-line exposition, and is performed in a continuous, impetuous movement. Its theme is based on a diatonic sequence, which, in the development section, evolves on a chromatic basis and creates an impression of 'impatience'. The dynamic build-up leads to a recapitulation in the main key. Polyphonic forms, like others, are characterised in Uzbekistan by the interplay of two principles: the national – that is, monodic – and the European – polyphonic – as described by the musicologist N. Yanov-Yanovskaya in her work *'One Culture, Two Traditions'* (Yanov – Yanovskaya, N., 1999, 1). In this regard, D. Yanov-Yanovskaya's piano cycle *'Improvisation and Toccata'* is noteworthy. This composition is one of the most striking examples of 20th-century piano music, characterised by the use of monodic principles of national musical thought in synthesis with the techniques of modern piano playing. 'Improvisation and Toccata' is written in three-movement form.

The outer movements are based on a brief, narrowly-ranging theme (within a fourth), in which the national character of Uzbek melos is clearly evident. The main principle of the material's development is repetition, combined with variation, which involves the synthesis of various elements. The Toccata, characterised by an aggressive, uninterrupted movement utilising a varied dynamic palette ranging from pp to fff, serves as the contrasting middle section of the cycle, presenting the performer with the challenge of carefully planning the build-up of sound and evenly calculating the impressive crescendo. The composition possesses '... great expressive power, a distinctive sense of depth and a stereophonic effect' (Gumarov, M., 2007, 55). When interpreting the cycle, it is advisable to heed the composer's instructions and recommendations, and to carefully study the dynamic and rhythmic nuances that point the way to artistic and musical expressiveness.

To summarise the polyphonic works by Uzbek composers discussed here, we note

that they clearly demonstrate a distinctly national character and a foundation in Uzbek folk art. Having analysed examples of polyphonic piano music, one may conclude that polyphonic forms are widely used by contemporary composers in their music, and that polyphonic compositional techniques are an important means of thematic development.

The incorporation of folk elements into the piano music of Uzbek composers has taken various forms: ranging from the direct quotation of folk melodies and their genre-specific arrangements to the indirect use of modal-intonational, rhythmic and textural features of the national musical tradition. An analysis of works by composers from differ-

ent generations reveals a gradual transition from the assimilation and adaptation of folk material to its creative reinterpretation within the context of contemporary compositional techniques.

The interaction between European principles of genre and form and the national monodic tradition has given rise to a distinctive body of Uzbek piano music, characterised by a wealth of imagery, a diversity of compositional approaches and a strong connection to its folk roots. This allows us to regard folklore as one of the most important factors in the development of the national art of piano performance and the preservation of its artistic identity in the present day.

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