

**VIOLA SONATA IN THE EARLY 19th CENTURY:
WAYS OF SETTING THE ROMANTIC IMAGE AND STILE**

Growing interest to sonata was a symptomatic tendency of the European chamber-ensemble music development at the beginning of the 19th century. “Rational” genre seemed to meet the irresistible desire of free artistic expression. Dozens of lyrical sonatas were composed because of the inner need for subjective intimate expression. Romantic esthetics that places in the center of the universe personality of the Actor – a composer, a performer, an actor, uniqueness of his talent and professional skills of the Author, peculiarity of his artistic-esthetical views, his aspiration to self-determination made a remarkable influence on the chamber-ensemble culture. Growing melancholy, longing, dreams and also the influence of vocal song and dance genre fields were among the main reasons of Vienna classics breaking up with objectivity and precision of musical thought.

In the chamber-ensemble literature for viola in the first part of 19th the two opposite directions were crystallized: lyrical- psychological and concerto-masterly. Each of them made the main manifestation of the romantic esthetics more vivid in its own way: predominance of the personal superiority, sincerity, honesty and at the same time brilliant technical skills, focus on the careful details of performance strategy. This primarily applies to works of Paganini - Grand Sonata author for viola and piano. Sonatas composed by Felix Mendelssohn- Bartholdi and Mikhail Glinka were inspired by the inner need of subjective expression.

The main aim of this article is to make a detailed overview of poetical traits of romantic sonatas mentioned above while basing on the analysis of several examples of sonatas from this period.

Unpublished Sonata for viola c-moll was written by F. Mendelssohn in 1824 when composer was only 15 years old. Although one could easily feel the influence of Beethoven on the style of this work, the individual style of the young composer is present as well. There are some similarities between this sonata and the melody of the First Symphony and “Serious variations”. The sonata consists of three parts. Each of them has interesting plan of tempo: first part - *Adagio-Allegro*, second is quick, and third – slow theme with variations.

The first part is a traditional form of sonata with a slow introduction.

Piano recitative is accompanied by pedal notes of viola. The main part comes in sharply and anxiously after fermata on the dominant and dynamic Allegro. The development of Allegro continues with unconstrained and light dancing subtheme, performed by the piano.

Further design of the theme is based on ascending passages of the main theme in both instruments one by one. This instrumental “discussion” is counterpointed with sharp peculiar elements of the subtheme. All of a sudden a quiet moment takes place, but piano part still depicts anxiety on the background of long doubled viola notes. Cadenza bundle of viola concludes with rather expanded dynamic reprise. Though *the second part* is named Minuet it differs quite a lot from the classical dance by its form and character. Two theme of the Minuet are contrasting: the first one – scherzo, the second one is more melodically and lightly composed in parallel *Es-Dur*. To highlight the deepness and harmony of the timbre, the composer deliberately draws the theme in the viola part only. In the second episode this theme brings us to the dramatic culmination. Trio (Allegro molto *C-Dur*) is written in 4/4 drum which doesn’t comply with classical Minuet style. The character of the music is changing as well. It has new sentimental contemplation. Despite scherzo character of the first and the last parts, Minuet still has its inner tension and dramatics. To convey this peculiarity a performer should master an accurate articulation and different stroke technique. It is important for the viola part to distribute a bow in lyrical moments optimally, and goof performing of *spiccato* which in this part has a dramatic style.

The third part is Andante con variazioni. Leading theme sounds similar to the dialogue of opera character. There are 8 variations and all of them except for the seventh are performed with dotted rhythm and dynamics *ff* that makes it pathetic and heroic and bear dreary character. In dramatic terms romantic emotion increases with each variation that leads to a climax in the seventh variation. The development in all variations is due to the texture and rhythmic changes in piano part, which is full of small notes and steep passages. Technical features of viola are being used quite modestly. The eighth variation is a light and calm melody with barcarole piano accompaniment in the key of *C-Dur* on the background. Suddenly tune “hangs” on the dominant, which gives a birth to cadence consisting of three phrases, each of which viola begins and piano takes over. Intonation of cadence transforms into a new tempo allegro molto, which restores the main tone, reminding introduction to the first part and the beginning of the main party. This section, while not clearly outlined part, completes the cycle. In general, the piano part dominates in Sonata. It has complex textures and virtuosity. Viola part lacks dynamics, and

capabilities of this instrument are revealed modestly, but it does not detract from the merits of the work. Romantic impulse of the youth combined with melodies gives this Sonata important place in the repertoire for viola.

Scope of ensemble music played a significant role in the life and works of M. Glinka (1804 - 1857). Being a musician of Field school, he did not take the gloss and superficiality, – the semantics for a chamber music was crucial for him. According to B. Asafiev, “struggle for chamber mastery” was topical through the life of the great composer [1, p. 17]. The main result of this struggle was the formation of specific personal and creative world, largely based on aesthetics of chamber. Another dominant of instrumental culture at Glinka time was, in our view, the category of chamber by which we mean a special property of coordinated interaction and harmony. The world of the composer – both external and internal – is unthinkable without artistic evenings at brothers N.V. and P.V. Kukolnik, V.P. Engelhardt, G. Tarnowsky. Glinka himself, as he confesses, started to “passionately love music” because of the influence of the chamber ensemble (quartet with Kruzel clarinet) [2, p. 10] made on him. Chamber music ensemble in the small circle which had, according to A. Stupel, “the meaning of the center where classical Russian music evolved - its creative principles, performing style, critical thought”, played a huge role in the ensemble culture development in Russia [6, p. 74]. Chamber and vocal music as well as instrumental ensembles prevailed in Glinka environment. The ensemble works by Glinka reflect the features of both main trends of romantic music – concert virtuoso and lyrical chamber, synthesizing them very much. Virtuoso core in ensembles composed by Glinka is underlined with subtle elegance and grace, combined with the warmth and deep lyricism.

It is hard to imagine that such a popular piece of Glinka as Unfinished sonata for viola and piano d-moll had been unknown for musicologists and performers for over 100 years even though there was evidence of this Sonata existence written in the "Notes" and in the records of the Imperial Public Library, as well as in N. Findeyzen catalogue . Thanks to Professor V. Borisov this masterpiece was restored, reconstructed and published. Glinka wrote only two parts – the first in 1825, and the second in 1828. In 1852 the composer returned to the Sonata for viola and edited it. Apparently, at that time the composer was separated from his Sonata greatly: the timing and creativity that prevented completion of the opus.

Sonata is peculiar because of its romantic emotion, melody, intonation of urban romance. It has a penetrating beauty and intimacy. Because of this open feelings Sonata is close to public salon music,

however, its melody already contains the elegance that will be revealed in the writings of mature period (e.g., “Waltz - fantasy “). Composer refers to viola as to a solo instrument which was rather rare experience at that time. However this could be explained by the fact that the rich, thick, and at the same time frosted and initiate viola tone was the best choice for the dreamy and melancholy image of Sonata.

The first part – *Allegro moderato* – is written in sonata form. At the beginning the main theme is initially held in piano part and later on it is supported by viola dense and juicy tone which brings the expression. Slowly and continuously it unfolds this beautiful melody, covering a large range of viola sound. Although the intonation of adverse party is close to the main theme, its mood is imbued with a more relaxed restraint and dream. This theme as well as the whole sonata melody is in cantilena style. Even figurations in the piano and viola part are marked by intonation and smooth melody. L. Raaben said: “The first part is a new form of melodious song and sonata allegro at that time. In it Glinka significantly departs from the intonation and techniques of classical style” [3, p .96].

The second part – *Larghetto* – is closer to classical slow parts; it traces some of the intonation relationships with Vienna melody, despite the fact that national Russian roots of Glinka's melodies are obvious here. The theme of the first section of a three-part form sounds calm and enchanted. It is the same songful as the melodies at the first part, but at the same time it is more contemplative and simple. The second section of the piece becomes more animated and exciting. Some elements of pathos get into it. However, the likeness of songful – recitative intonation of Russian city romance is evident here.

“Unfinished Sonata” by M.Glinka is a pearl of Russian viola literature. Purity and nobility of composer’s artistic world that were revealed in his Viola Sonata, left their mark on Russian culture chamber ensemble of his era, giving it a special “flavor” of purity and intimacy inherent on the one hand, in lyrical and romantic intimacy, and on the other – brilliance and perfection of forms, proportions and craftsmanship typical for classicism. Ensemble activity of Glinka and his heritage in this area gave a powerful impetus to the future development of Russian and Western European ensemble culture of the first half of the XIX century as well as to the level of development of the texts at the image-semantic level.

Romantic composers’ sonata heritage was directly related to the classic tradition and at the same time is distinct from it. It gave the impetus to the formation of early romantic virtuoso sonatas. In the projection of the personality of the musician-instrumentalist this led to the cultivation of transcendent technical skills focusing on careful detailing

performance strategy. First of all it concerns the works of N. Paganini (1782–1840). Being amazed by the beauty of viola timbre sound, the genius violinist performed a lot playing an instrument that was able to convey the whole spectrum of the human voice richness. In 1833, Paganini purchased Antonio Stradivari viola with a lovely velvet timbre. It had 5 strings (mi- la -re- sol -do), and surprisingly seamlessly combined the advantages of violin and viola.

When this great Italian heard "Symphonie Fantastique", he ordered Berlioz a great symphonic piece for solo viola and orchestra (the fate of "Harold in Italy" is commonly known). Afterwards, the desire to perform with the viola and orchestra remains with the artist, and he composes a sonata for a large viola and orchestra.

The fate of this work was complex. After Paganini died the manuscript became the property of his son. At the beginning of 20th century the manuscript goes to the V. Heyer Museum of Music History in the Colonna. After it was closed in 1927, the collection of manuscripts written by Paganini (including Sonata) buys Mannheim industrialist F.Reyter. It was only in 1972 when this collection appears in the Roman library, making it possible to publish the work in 1974.

N. Paganini Sonata is not a sonata in the full sense of the word. To the mind of the maestro the term "sonata" was associated with instrumental piece, which reveals virtuoso and expressional possibilities of viola. In fact this is a three-part concert piece (Introduzione Recitativo a Piacere – Cantabile Andante Sostenuto – Post Con variazioni, Coda), parts of which are performed attacca. If it was not for the Introduction and Recitative as the first part, one would assume that the form of the work are the traditional Prelude and Theme with Variations which were common for Baroque and Classicism. Both the first and second parts are not much conceptually loaded and serve as a thematic skeleton for cadenzas that are self-sustaining.

The image of the third part is fast like a toy march. The author offers ultra-high register that is easily accessible for a five-string instrument; however some episodes cannot be performed with viola. That is why editors usually indicate performance in the high register ad libitum or replace natural notes with artificial flageolets; some especially difficult episodes are permitted to be performed one octave lower. The style of variations reminds capriccios for solo violin. The orchestra (actually clavier) has purely rhythmic and harmonic function, while all the attention is focused on the soloist. Each variation is united by a certain rhythm or line technique. The first one has the movement of triplets, the third uses flying staccato and sottie. All possible arsenals for virtuoso

performance can be found here: fast passages of double notes, virtuosic cadenza, pizzicato and tremolo in the left hand, and a variety of stroke combinations.

Sonata for Grand viola is rarely performed nowadays. First of all, this is probably due to the difficulty of its performance, which could have been avoided playing the five-string instrument. Although artistic qualities of this Sonata are poorer than the best Paganini opuses for violin, yet it is the only virtuosic piece, written for viola in the first half of the nineteenth century.

All sonatas analyzed above have great historical and artistic value, and allow us to feel variety of colors, diversity and fertility of the European musical life in the early nineteenth century that cannot be reduced to a limited number of universally recognized masterpieces. Composers of Romanticism immeasurably enrich the semantic field of chamber ensemble genres where the subjective and personal play leading role and relate to public display of personality, intelligence, and human emotions. In the Russian music of Glinka period ensemble communication gets unique outlook, increasing to the level of a high spiritual ritual, special mentality of warm-hearted communication. Rule of intimacy, according to E. Sorokina, is especially manifested in Russian music of the first half of the XIX century, while the concert music was popular in the western European countries and it gradually becomes even more popular in the second half of the century [5, p. 221]. Yet, in our opinion, it is the chamber music that is a cultural and esthetic dominant of music culture of the romantic period.

Keywords: *viola, genre, style, sonata, chamber band, Romanticism.*

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