

UDC 78.441; 7.27

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**“SONATA-POEM” FOR VIOLA AND PIANO
BY ALEXANDER YAKOVCHUK:
SOME INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

Viola – the remarkable string-bowed instrument with the unique soft timbre was the permanent participant of various chamber ensembles since the Baroque time. Yet, as a concert solo instrument, viola was out of composer’s attention for a long period of time.

The first works for a concert viola solo were written by composers who themselves were excellent viola performers. Karel Stamits (1745-

1801), Czech by origin, conductor of the Mannheim orchestra, was a concert viola performer and well-known composer who laid the basics of viola repertoire. Antonin Stamits (1766-1831), the younger brother of Karel, also was a talented viola performer and composer.

W. A. Mozart started to play the viola at the age of 23 and soon, in 1779, composed the Concert symphony for violin, viola and symphony orchestra. This work is of exceptional value in the violin and viola art. Mozart forestalled his time: the viola part was written in virtuoso style which brought this instrument to the level of violin and (for the first time in the history of music) made viola an equivalent partner of violin. Also we have to mention another important Mozart composition in chamber genre – Trio for clarinet (violin), viola and piano in *Es-dur*.

At the golden age of music Romanticism (XIX century) viola fully declared itself as a concert solo instrument. We name some of new works, written at the time: Fantasy by I. Hummel (1822), Sonata *a-moll* for viola and piano by F. Mendelsohn (1824), two-movement Sonata by M. Glinka, named “Unfinished” (1825). In 1843 H. Berlioz composed symphony “Harold in Italy” where viola is a basic solo instrument and characterizes the protagonist. The cycle “Fairy pictures” for piano and viola (1851) was written by R. Schumann exactly for the ensemble of the two instruments of equal value. J. Brahms turned to the genre of viola sonata in 1894. Two Sonatas for clarinet or viola and piano were premiered by the author and clarinet player R. Miulfeld in January 1895. These Sonatas got in the viola concert repertoire soon, and were often performed as viola sonatas with both – piano and viola – equal value parties, that is why they are named viola sonatas.

XX century is notorious by impetuous development of performing-interpreting schools around the world. The appearance of such viola virtuoso-players as L. Tertis, W. Primrose (UK), P. Tsukerman (USA), L. Cherny (Czech), V. Borisovsky, F. Druzhinin, Yu. Bashmet (Russia) caused the great wave of composer’s interest in the viola as a concert solo instrument. Such prominent composers as P. Hindemith, B. Bartok, D. Shostakovich, D. Milhaud, A. Khachaturian, B. Martinů created compositions for viola of considerable value.

The developing of viola performing art is also observed in Ukraine, and a number of talented viola performers appeared: I. Waks, Z. Dashak, A. Venzhega, Yu. Kholodov, B. Shchutsky, S. Kulakov, D. Gavrylets, R. Denisiuk, O. Lagosha, I. Butriy, A. Tuchapets, Yu. Venger. They put up the problem of a new Ukrainian viola repertoire.

Borys Lyatoshinsky, a great Ukrainian composer, had special feelings

about this instrument. The central role in the development of dramaturgic line was given exactly to a viola in the “Ukrainian quintet” (1942–43), which for its unprecedented volume is called a chamber symphony. In 1965 the composer created two pieces for viola and piano: Nocturne and Skerzino. This mini-cycle, built on the principle of contrast, became the ponderable achievement of Ukrainian chamber music.

“One of the works that significantly changed the place of viola in Ukrainian music is Partita №1 d-moll by M. Skoryk (1965). Written for viola solo, its last movement (Recitative) was brilliantly performed by A. Venzhega” [7, p. 44]. The second composition, which gives viola the place of a solo concert instrument, becomes the Concert Divertissement for two violins, viola, cello, contrabass and piano by I. Karabyts (1975). The fifth movement of the Divertissement – Valse – is written for viola solo.

A number of compositions for viola were written by Yu. Ishchenko, namely: three Sonatas for viola and piano (1983, 1995, 2012), “Elegy” for viola and piano (1983), “Burlesca” for violin and viola (1993), Little partita №8 and “Legend” for viola solo (2003).

Important contribution to the development of viola repertoire was made by A. Gavrylets. She created Sonata for viola and piano (1988). The cycle “Three pieces” for viola and piano (Prelude, Arietta, Dance) by G. Lyashenko was finished in 1974 and is quite often performed now.

Ye. Stankovych, prominent Ukrainian composer, wrote a piece for viola and piano “Mountain Legend”. The work was created for the International viola players competition and named in honor of the outstanding musician, viola player Z. Dashak, which was performed in Kyiv in 2004. As a pearl of the Ukrainian chamber viola music this composition, is composed in Neo-Folklorism style. There are two versions of it: for viola-piano ensemble and for viola with symphony orchestra.

Still, the position of viola performer cannot be comparable to violinists or cello players. The most important reason is the repertoire shortage. Therefore appearance of a new viola work is a happy event for all performers and listeners. Chamber music also found its own valuable place in the works of modern Ukrainian composer Alexander Yakovchuk (born in 1952), the author of six symphonies, twenty two cantatas, oratorio “Skythian Pectoral”, Liturgy of Saint John Christosem,.

In 2010 the composer finished an important work – Sonata triad cycle, consisting of Sonata-poem for viola and piano, Sonata-fantasy for violin and piano, Sonata-rhapsody for cello and piano. The creation of such big cycle engulfed long period of time, as if describes the whole life

of an artist – from the youth happy dreams of the viola Sonata-poem through the refined elegance of the Sonata –fantasy for violin to high lofty tragedy of the cello Sonata-rhapsody.

Sonata-poem for viola and piano by A. Yakovchuk belongs to works of his early period of music composing. At this time there appeared “Tryptych” for mixed choir a cappella, “Folk scene” for wood instrument quartet – just to name a few. The composer interpreted folk melodies in his own original way and gave the second scenic life to them. Such kind of work with folklore sources was not unusual for the young musician, native of the region with great singing traditions – Podillia, folk music was his ordinary surrounding since the very childhood.

The genre of sonata-poem for strings is not typical for Ukrainian music. We may recall Sonata-poem for violin and piano by O. Kanerstein (1961) and Sonata-poem by V. Il'in (1972).

The idea of composing work for viola arose up in author's mind after reading an ancient poem “The Word about Igor's Regiment” (“Slovo o Polku Igorevim”). The great poetry emotionally influenced young composer and gave direction for creative search and fantasy.

Sonata-poem for viola and piano by A. Yakovchuk, one movement composition, full of youth energy, captivates listeners by picturesque romantic images, it was written at one breath, at almost lightning speed. The Sonata was premiered in 1974 at the Little Concert Hall in Kyiv Conservatory (now – the P. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine) at the young composer's concert. The performers were: Igor Gorsky – viola, IVth year student of the orchestral faculty, class of associate professor Ye. Loburenko and the author, IVth year student of the composition faculty, class of professor A. Kolomiyets. The Sonata was devoted to the first performer – Igor Gorsky.

The music begins with the epic entry of Moderato in the party of piano. These first chords of fourth-fifth structure with the composer's mark of pesante mf, in a low register, evoke the spirit of ancient times. A special timbre of piano sounding, which comes from the spatial effect from the chords location – two octave distance between them, – is very important for the image creation. As agitated echo of these chords, the viola (mf arco) enters in measure 5. Intervals of viola motion are interesting: jump on seventh down is balanced by seconds in the first octave. Piano continues this dialogue with the next retort, tenser rhythmically. Viola enters the detained piano chord with a melodious line saturated with double notes and persistent motion. This epic dialogue is perceived as epigraph of the composition.

The piano solo *Piu mosso* gives the feeling of energetic motion, achieved by gradual rhythmic dividing of the piano motives. A contrast is brought in by the Main theme in viola party, it is written in short jamb directed tunes, sounds high at the range of the second octave, this is bright triumphant *f*. The viola mood is so strong that it gets inside the piano party and starts a dialogue with it. At this time the tune expounds as basso ostinato in the left hand of piano party. A little four measured piano interlude results in repeating of the Main theme, which is based on principle of canonic imitation in both viola and piano parties. Interestingly, a Relating theme that sounds in viola party comes from the Sonata Main theme. Its character is decisive and naturally united by the ascending motion with basso ostinato in piano low register. Freedom-loving heroic image is thus created. Technically, the party of viola in this episode is very difficult: double notes, fast motion. This is the climax of the development of the theme.

Piano solo (three measures) brings us to the appearance of the tender melody of the Secondary theme, the lyrical centre of the composition. Melodious romantic theme of *Meno mosso* in *f*-moll sounds for the first time in the piano middle register, but did not assimilate with minor key and sadness. It gives the perception of light penetrating melody. The pulsating ostinato rhythm in the left hand party provides the feeling of a living breathing theme. In m. 79 the Secondary theme passes to the viola which is even more sublime by own soft peculiar timbre. It sounds in a high register in the key of *Des-dur* with a little variant development; short agitated tunes give it specific expressiveness. The Final theme, based on the principle of line layers, is a rigorous contrast to the previous music substance and is related to the epigraph theme.

The development surprises with inner fight dynamics: the entry theme, both the Main and the Secondary themes are synthesized in it. This section begins with the Main theme, modified in rhythm, harmony and intonation. Piano chords in low register sound secco, reminding the entry epic chords, but they exist now in short values – they are written by eighth notes in refined and difficult rhythms. The development of music substance is accomplished by the principle of fugato with viola as the leader. From m. 111 the counterpoint appears in viola party and from m. 119 the principal development passes to a piano party. Viola has rhythmical accompaniment which goes by fifths and sixths. As a new development stage, the Main theme sounds enlarged in piano party and it passes to viola from m. 135, which is also enlarged. In the left hand of piano party the enlarged theme of basso ostinato appears. It looks as if the

Final theme of Reprise sounds very unusual. In fact, after big climax in the development and four measured piano solo, the viola theme which is exposed by pizzicato will never be sonorous enough. However, it sounds quiet voluminous. It is one of composer's technique secrets of the author. The Relating theme has a wide exposition: in viola party there are pizzicato, sul ponticello, ordinario – the palette of performing means is very diverse and, together with crescendo through in both parties, the impression of incessant development-motion is gained. The crescendo results in the climax of the Sonata – the victorious Secondary theme appearance.

The Reprise is based on the Secondary theme and this is absolutely logical. The theme sounds in piano party in the main key of the composition (A-dur) and expounded with majestic octaves in f. It passes to viola and the dialogue between piano (Main theme in octaves) and viola (Secondary theme) begins. The Final theme remained invariable structurally, however dynamically rose to the level of the triumph of the Secondary theme and leads to coda.

The last twelve measures of the Sonata-poem rhythmically are related to the epic entry, but harmonically are more saturated, sound ff, viola party continues the general line of crescendo together with piano. The Sonata ends with a major victory chord ff at both parties of ensemble and this symbolizes the great image of the glorious past of our history and our people.

The creative ideas of this Sonata-poem were reflected and developed in some next composer works, particularly in symphony poem "The Golden Gates" (epic character of themes), partly in the piano cycle "Twelve preludes and fugues", Concert fantasy "Tsar Attila" for clarinet and piano (music structure complementary), Concert for viola and symphony orchestra.

Sonata-poem for viola and piano was published in Canada in 2010, - before, it circulated as a copy; it appears in the musicological circulation for the first time. The Sonata-poem is included to the repertoire of Chamber music chair of the NMAU named after P. Tchaikovsky.

Yakovchuk N. «Sonata-poem» for viola and piano by Alexander Yakovchuk: some interpretation questions

The article deals with interpretation questions of «Sonata-poem» for viola and piano by Alexander Yakovchuk.

Keywords: *Ukrainian music, sonata-poem, A. Yakovchuk, chamber ensemble, interpretation.*

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