

Stylistic allusions in the composition "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" by Victor Kosenko

Polina Rud

Postgraduate at Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I.P. Kotlyarevsky, Ukraine

ABSTRACT: The article is devoted to the theme of stylistic allusions in the piano composition called "Eleven Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" created by Viktor Kosenko – the Ukrainian composer of the first half of the 20th century. An overview of musicological research devoted to this cycle has been given. The emphasis is placed on V. Kosenko's pianism and the uniqueness of the composition in the history of Ukrainian piano music. We have presented the structure and dramaturgy analysis of the cycle "Eleven Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" which is based on an ancient dance suite of the Baroque period. Stylistic allusions in each etude-dance, embodied through texture, tonality, melodic-harmonic inversions, have been revealed. The connection of V. Kosenko's composition with the traditions of Ukrainian music of the 19th century, neoclassical tendencies of Western European art of the 20s-30s of the 20th century and the situation of postmodernism at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries is emphasized.

Keywords: piano cycle, pianism, stylistic allusions, ancient dance suite.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ukrainian art, in particular music and creativity of composers of the Soviet period, needs rethinking, and a new analytical view of the musical processes of the 20th century in Ukraine. In this article, an attempt has been made to present the famous piano cycle by Viktor Stepanovych Kosenko "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" as an example of the transformation of other styles in the form of stylistic allusions. Owing to the unusual combination of dance and etude, this cycle is unique in the history of piano music. Its originality is also stipulated by the numerous historical and stylistic parallels which, on the one hand, represent European neoclassical tendencies; on the other hand, working with other people's styles in the 1920s of the 20th century is a bold step towards postmodernism of the beginning of the 21st century.

II. HEADINGS

1. Historical and biographical information about V.S. Kosenko

Viktor Stepanovych Kosenko (1896-1938) is a Ukrainian composer, pianist, and pedagogue. His life and work fell on the difficult 20s and 30s in the history of Ukraine (which was a part of the Soviet Union at that time). Kosenko is the author of chamber and instrumental, piano and vocal compositions. Among the most famous there are "24 Children's Plays", "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" for the piano. V. Kosenko graduated from St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1918 where he studied the piano at I. Miklashevskaya's class and the composition at M. Sokolov's class. For some time he lived in Zhytomyr, where he was the organizer and active participant in musical life. He created a trio (consisting of the violin (V. Skorokhod), the cello (V. Kolomoitsev), and the piano (V. Kosenko)), whose numerous concerts were held with great success in Zhytomyr. There he began to write his own compositions. During the difficult 20s, as a pianist, Kosenko toured the cities of the Left Bank of Ukraine; in particular, he gave concerts in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, at the Donbass region. In 1929 he moved to Kyiv after the invitation from the Music and Drama Institute named after M. Lysenko (in 1934 the institution was divided into a conservatory and an institute of theatrical art), where he taught the piano, chamber ensemble, and the course on the analysis of musical forms. In 1935 the composer's last author's concert took place, and it was broadcast directly from his apartment. He died in Kyiv; was buried in the Baykovo Cemetery. V. Kosenko is considered to be a classic of Ukrainian music together with D. Revutsky

and B. Lyatoshynsky. In his creative work he relied on the traditions of European romanticism. His music is characterized by lyricism, soft expression and at the same time textural richness.

2. "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" – the stylistic aspect

Today, contemporary Ukrainian art critics face the urgent task of rethinking the national composer's heritage both from the standpoint of national identity and the formation of traditions, and in the wider European context. In our opinion, the creative work of Viktor Kosenko deserves an objective study without any exaggerated emphasis on its national folk-song connections; because it overshadows and narrows the range of essential technical and compositional elements. The piano cycle "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" op. 19 is a unique example of genre, style, and technical and performing synthesis of a new level for Ukrainian music of the first half of the 20th century. The most interesting and little-studied is the stylistic side of the composition, namely, its large palette of different-style allusions.

Certain scientific investigations made by Ukrainian musicologists – B. Filts, O. Oliynyk, V. Klyn – cover the main aspects of V.S. Kosenko's piano creativity: the significant pianistic technique, the lyrical-romantic imagery, the connection with Ukrainian song traditions, the predominance of classical-romantic piano music genres, the continuity with the traditions established by M. Lysenko, the transformation of the influences of Russian music (O. Scriabin, S. Rachmaninoff). "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" are interpreted as an updated ancient dance cycle, in which dances-etudes are full of "music which is Ukrainian by nature"¹; an interesting stylistic characteristic of the cycle – "romantic neoclassicism" – can be found in V. Klyn's work². In the works of modern scholars, for example, L. Sviridovska, there is a development of analytical principles of previous authors ("refined" romantic orientation of the music by V. Kosenko, one more time it is stated about "saturation of the cycle with national imagery and stylistic features of Ukrainian music"³).

In G. Nikolayi's article⁴ the composer's piano creativity is inscribed into the general evolution of the development of Ukrainian piano music of the 20th century, which is characterized by the movement from the romantic tendencies of the beginning of the 20th century owing to the influence of modernism and expressionism of the 1920s, socialist realism of the 1930s-1950s to the Ukrainian avant-garde, neo-styles and poly-stylism of the turn of the 20th-21st centuries. The influence of the national mentality (and its correspondence to the aesthetics of postmodernism) on the development of musical language, creative individuality of the composer and genre-style dynamics of Ukrainian piano music has been also emphasized. The purpose of the present article is to present the piano cycle by V. Kosenko as a qualitatively new composition from the standpoint of transformation of various stylistic elements through the "mechanism" of stylistic allusions.

The creative work of Viktor Kosenko, an outstanding composer, is impossible to imagine without the performing aspect of his activities, which, unfortunately, is rarely taken into account by researchers. The talented musician had an absolute ear and a great memory, which was repeatedly pointed out by his students, colleagues and friends. If we analyse the number of concerts played by Kosenko during his tour time, we shall get the idea of the huge amount of piano repertoire mastered by the Ukrainian pianist – from the Baroque to the 20th century. This fact could not but be reflected in the specifics of the master's compositional work. Moreover, the composition "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" was created in 1928-1930, immediately after the concert period and became the culmination of the development and rethinking of European piano traditions. The convergence of the plays of the cycle with Ukrainian folklore (about which so much has been said since the "opportunistic" Soviet period) is very indirect; on the contrary: each etude-dance is a dedication-tribute (a kind of homage) to a certain composer, a whole school, an epoch, as well as a separate demonstrative-symbolic piano composition. With this, each play of the cycle is dedicated to the relatives or close people of the composer.

Kosenko's appeal to the genre of ancient dance suite reflects the common European neoclassical tendency to idealize the past. Let us recall M. Ravel's piano cycle "Le Tombeau de Couperin" (1914-1917), which is the most typical example of the connection with tradition and the modernization of ancient genres.

Comparing "11 Etudes" with "Ukrainian Suite in the Form of Ancient Dances" by Ukrainian classic M. Lysenko, let us pay attention to a freer romantic interpretation of the latter's suite, the folk-song (quotation) basis of the thematism "inscribed" through classical methods of development into the European forms (a tradition that has become an integral part of Ukrainian symphonic music). V. Kosenko also uses the basis of an

¹ B. Filts, *Piano creativity of V.S. Kosenko* (K.: Art, 1965) 36.

² V. Klyn, *Piano creativity / History of Ukrainian music in 6 volumes* (K.: Scientific thought, 1992, V. 4) 337.

³ L. Sviridovska, Evolution of genres of the piano music by V. Kosenko, *Bulletin of Zaporizhia National University. Pedagogical sciences.1*(24) 2015, 25.

⁴ G. Nikolayi, *Ukrainian piano music as a cultural phenomenon of the 20th century* (Ars inter Culturas, 2010, 1) 121-132.

ancient baroque suite of four dances: allemande, courante, sarabande, and jig. But this "skeleton" is overgrown and supplemented by additional and inserted dances between sarabande and jig: gavotte-*allemande*-minuet-*courante*-sarabande-bourree-gavotte-rigaudon-minuet-passacaglia-jig. Among the inserted dances-etudes, the passacaglia (theme with variations) stands out; it forms a self-sufficient "cycle within a cycle." The introduction of this great polyphonic form testifies to the special attention of composers of the 20th century to the use of the passacaglia as a part of the composition.

In each of the 11 plays of the cycle, in addition to the external metrorhythmic and tempo genre dance features, there are technical tasks, to some extent stipulated by the stated stylistic references. The first name in the cycle "etudes" is embodied through all known techniques; 11 etudes is a kind of an encyclopaedia of the piano technique.

What elements become semantically important in each etude-dance and which elements create certain stylistic allusions? They are texture, melodic and harmonic inversions, and the tone system.

Gavotte (No. 1) *Des-dur* – the introduction to the cycle – is an allusion to the Preamble from R. Schumann's "Carnival". This is evidenced by the flat range of tonalities in the extreme sections, chord texture, and the octave imitations.

Allemande (No. 2) *b-moll* refers to organ music of the German tradition, in particular, in the style of M. Reger: duplication of voices, organ "pedals", and the counterpoint rearrangement of voices in the middle section.

Minuet (No. 3) *G-dur* is an allusion to the style of J. Brahms: a combination of lyricism with *quasi* by Hungarian dotted rhythms, square nature of the constructions, organ points, in the reprise – the complication of the texture by undertones.

Courante (No. 4) *e-moll* is a kind of tribute to the style of P. Tchaikovsky: the hidden two-part in the main theme on the tonic organ point, a chain of harmonic inversions and deviations in the middle part, thematic repetition, Tchaikovsky's harmony (altered S, as in the play "Baba Yaga" in the same key of *e-moll*) in the reprise in the theme of the middle part, coda on T-D of bass. In the Courante, there are also associations with the compositions by E. Grieg (let us recall the Sonata *e-moll*, "The Poetic Pictures").

Sarabande (No. 5) *a-moll* reproduces the style of the German organ-clavier school (Bach, Beethoven, Brahms): rich texture based on chorality, harmony with reduced seventh chords, typical rhythmic figures with anticipations. The sarabande in this cycle has a dramatic and majestic character (and is not the lyrical centre of the suite, as in J.S. Bach's compositions).

Bourree (No. 6) *A-dur* is an allusion to the style of harpsichord music, in particular, by D. Scarlatti, J.F. Rameau, F. Couperin: transparent texture with a two-part basis, short motifs and their repetitions, "Albertian" bass, the form of *Da Capo* characteristic of ancient music.

Gavotte (No. 7) *h-moll* is a stylistic "portrait" of the author himself – V. Kosenko. The movement of double thirds, sixths, the complication of the texture with undertones, the typical sequences create a general soft lyrical mood. This play has a lot in common with the special melody that is inherent in Ukrainian music in general.

Rigaudon (No. 8) *C-dur* refers to the Rigaudon from M. Ravel's "Le Tombeau de Couperin", primarily because of the *C-dur* key, metrorhythmic clarity. But Kosenko's dance acquires a larger scale, scope, as if continuing the idea of the French composer.

Minuet (No. 9) *Es-dur* is an allusion to the style of F. Chopin, in particular, to his most popular composition – Nocturne *Es-dur*. Not only the tonality, but also the melodic top on the third tone "g" and the tenth "es-g" in the extreme voices immediately tune in to Chopin's "mode". Bright common stylistic elements are polyrhythm, melismatics, a wave-like movement and expressiveness of the melodic line; even the virtuoso *Cadenza* at the end of Section 1 is similar to the cadence of Chopin's nocturne.

Passacaglia (No. 10) *g-moll* is the culmination of the etude-dance suite. This is a grand cycle of 38 variations, which has its own dramaturgy and is full of stylistic "excursions". Tonality, sequential main theme – they are a tribute to the famous Passacaglia *g-moll* by G.F. Handel. Technical and textural approaches that represent all known virtuoso styles of pianism come to the fore in the Passacaglia: F. Liszt, R. Schumann, F. Chopin, J. Brahms, S. Rachmaninoff, and P. Tchaikovsky, as well as the toccata nature as a distinctive feature of pianism of the 20th century. The middle section of the Passacaglia (*G-dur*) – variations XIX-XXIV – represents an enlightened chorality in the Beethoven spirit. In this etude V. Kosenko collected an "encyclopaedia" of all kinds of the piano (more broadly – organ-clavier) technique.

Jig (No. 11) *d-moll-D-dur* is written in the style of S. Rachmaninoff. The energy and purposefulness of the movement, the breadth of the texture, the "bell-ringing", the sublime major solemnity of the final section evoke associations with the etudes-paintings and musical moments of the legendary pianist and composer.

III. CONCLUSION

The composition "11 Etudes in the Form of Ancient Dances" by V. Kosenko is an unsurpassed example of stylistic synthesis of a new level in the first half of the 20th century. The lyricist-composer, a follower of Romanticism, in a "virtuoso" way rethinks European traditions in the context of Ukrainian piano

music, while continuing its development in the neoclassical direction. Stylistic reminiscences and allusions of dances-etudes create a prototype of the postmodern situation in Ukrainian music at the turn of the 20-21st centuries with a typical play with styles, the use of "foreign" elements, and intertextuality.

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