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THE SOLO VIOLIN SONATAS OF IVAN HANDOSHKIN IN THE CONTEXT OF CHAMBER AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIA

This article deals with the composer and violinist Ivan Khandoshkin. The famous Russian virtuoso had a considerable influence on the formation of a national instrumental style. The article presents a panorama of Russian music of the eighteenth century in its various forms. It defines the typical features of the nascent national style in a synthesis of European forms and genres with characteristic features of Russian music. Khandoshkin's three violin solo sonatas – the peak of his virtuoso instrumental style – are regarded as a cycle.

Keywords: 18th-century Russian music, Ivan Khandoshkin, Russian violin art, national instrumental style, sonata for solo violin.

Eighteenth-century Russian instrumental chamber music remained at the periphery of research in musical science for a long time. One reason for this is the increased attention that music historians have given to musical theater and choral concerts, which were prevalent at that time. Moreover, the very form of existence of chamber music as an applied genre, intended to amuse or beautify the home festivities of the aristocracy and enlightened townspeople, did not contribute to the emergence of artistically valuable creations. The music performed in everyday life primarily belonged to dance genres. The unpretentiousness of the “users” of the instrumental chamber genre had a certain influence on the simplicity of presentation and textured artlessness of instrumental plays of that time. Furthermore, Russian folk songs received great importance. Amateur musicians and composers, who mastered the canons of the European classical style and methods of developing melodic material to one degree or another, processed a variety of melodies of Russian folk songs and dances for an interested audience.

The public and performing musicians willingly included diverse instrumental variations on folk themes in their cultural life. Thus, the most crucial component of the national instrumental style was established. Over the decades of the 18th century, instrumental performance gradually developed; compositions by Russian musicians appeared consecutively in the instrumental chamber genre.

Russian musicians keenly studied the instruments of the European symphony orchestra and the specifics of performing them. They studied from well-known examples of Western music, mastered various musical forms, and joined the pan-European tradition. These musicians were, as a rule, people from the lower social classes of Russian society, since in the 18th century, secular music only served as entertainment or in the beautification of everyday life and was not perceived as something serious. Degtyarev originated from serfs, Fomin came from soldiers, and Khandoshkin descended from craftsmen [1, p. 137].

The practice of playing music at home and performing new music by Russian and

international masters gradually prepared the listener to perceive compositions of self-sufficient artistic value in the instrumental chamber genre. The slow and gradual entry into the European instrumental tradition is associated with another feature of Russian life. For several centuries, daily graft, everyday life, and holidays were accompanied by folk songs, solo or ensemble, and choral music for churches. Instrumental music, the sound of European orchestral instruments and Russian musicians, who sought to master the expressive and virtuoso capabilities of European instruments, were not perceived as important for a long time. Until the 1780s, the Russian aristocracy mainly favored the music of Italian composers. The first examples of Russian instrumental chamber music date back to the end of the century. This wonderful music is associated with the names of Dmitry Bortnyansky and Ivan Khandoshkin. Their work laid the foundations of Russian instrumental chamber music, which yielded rich fruits in the 19th and 20th centuries. With their art, Bortnyansky and Khandoshkin represent two poles of the national chamber style, namely, the courteous, migniard, refined art of Bortnyansky and the virtuosic concert style of Khandoshkin, democratic in its aspirations. Bortnyansky left behind a significant number of works in a variety of genres; Khandoshkin limited himself exclusively to the art of the violin but raised it to an almost unattainable height.

At the end of the 18th century, a rather intense concert life began in both Russian capitals. During the Lenten fast, when all theaters were closed, it was time for chamber music. An eyewitness reported about 1789 in his notes that "So many people have never before been consoled by all their music as at that time, the calmest and most pleasant time of the year. All of them had already been brought to sufficient perfection, and we could only console ourselves, which we did not fail to do and often brought the musicians and singers even to the point of fatigue.

It was a rare day when we did not deal with them" [2, p. 68]. Theaters opened their doors to musicians and chamber music listeners. Mostly, contemporary composers' works were performed. With the exception of the oratorios of Handel, Telemann, and other authors from the first half of the 18th century, the repertoire comprised new music, including Russian composers [*ibid.*, p. 71].

Chamber music, reflected in manuscript collections from the 18th century, is represented primarily by piano score music. Similar to Europe, the family of keyboard instruments was becoming commonplace in Russian household music. By the end of the century, the hammer piano replaced the clavichord. Dmitry Bortnyansky's piano score sonatas were composed for a new instrument. The melodious sound of the piano fit perfectly into the national instrumental style, which initially gravitated toward Russian song. The sound of the violin turned out to be even more natural, capable of conveying the spirit of a folk song with its characteristic warmth. At that time, the violin was included in various chamber ensembles. The great Russian symphonic tradition had its beginnings in 18th-century instrumental chamber music. Its prototype was music composed and performed by ensembles that included European orchestral instruments, among which the violin, as a rule, played a leading part.

Italian musicians—Giovanni Veronai, Luigi Madonis, Domenico Daloglio, Antonio Lolli, Giuseppe Viotti, and Giuseppe Tartini—were of great importance to the development of Russian violin performance. Tartini had a notable influence on the outstanding composer of the era, Ivan Khandoshkin. Thus, M.R. Gabdullin noted the most significant aspects of the influence of the Italian violinist and composer on the art of his Russian colleague. This included the "inclination towards the Italian *concitato* style (in particular, the use of dissonant intervals); reliance

on the features of operatic recitative; embodiment of the specifics of the *lamento* opera style; conveying the vocal nature of folk melody; balancing between a clear structural organization (with deep contrasts of sections) and end-to-end development; expansion of the technical capabilities of the right hand (enrichment of strokes)" [3, p. 97].

Ivan Khandoshkin, called "Our Orpheus" by his contemporaries, devoted himself entirely to the instrumental chamber genre. Similar to other composers of his time, he composed music mainly in the form of variations, and his interpretation of the genre goes far beyond the boundaries of home music playing. The largest composition in the form of variations includes 40 variations on the theme of the song "Kalinushka." In terms of scale, this work can be compared only with Tartini's "The Art of the Bow." G.F. Fesechko, the author of a monographic essay on Khandoshkin, calls the composer's variation cycle "an encyclopedia of various techniques for variation development of Russian folk songs" [4, p. 62]. The author's technical ingenuity never contradicts the spirit of the Russian song on which the variations are based. According to V.A. Zuckerman, "Khandoshkin as a composer of variations is distinguished, first of all, by the art of preserving the spirit of the theme in any, even the most developed and lively of its transformations; the intonations of the theme almost always come through the fabric of the variations. The freedom of designing, liveliness, and variety of rhythms are amazing. In Khandoshkin's variations, figuration serves the composer, and not he serves it" [5, p. 237].

His perfect command of the violin became the pillar of his large-scale virtuoso style, in many variations on Russian themes, several duets for string instruments, and in three solo violin sonatas. Furthermore, the texture of these works is not just complex; it is sophisticated. It is replete with various virtuoso techniques and touches, full of

chord technique and an abundance of double notes. The genre of solo violin sonata reached its peak in the Baroque era, especially in the creative work of J.S. Bach. However, Khandoshkin, who knew the European tradition well, primarily through the music of the Italians, created his works in this genre on completely different grounds than the European masters. Whether Khandoshkin was familiar with Bach's solo violin sonatas is unknown. Of the German composers, Wilhelm Friedrich Rust, who is rarely performed today but was quite famous at that time, is the closest to Khandoshkin. The violin solo sonatas of both German and Russian composers are based on an ancient sonata; however, in some features, they approach the sonata form of the Viennese classics. Yu.V. Keldysh believes that Khandoshkin "cultivated the form of the solo violin sonata in the last decades of the 18th century, when in the West, it was almost forgotten and was out of the creative use of composers" [6, p. 107]. Khandoshkin's sonatas use the form of the ancient sonata-suite from the Italians. However, in his work, he goes further and develops melody and texture. Khandoshkin almost did not resort to the use of polyphonic techniques. The texture of his violin sonatas, with rare exceptions, is homophonic. I. Yampolsky considers this as a fundamental difference from Bach's violin works: "...using chords and double notes, achieving diversity and fullness of sound, Khandoshkin remains within the framework of a purely homophonic style. This is the difference between his sonatas and J. S. Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo violin" [7]. The development and reprise of the sonata allegro in the sonata in G minor brings the form closer to the classical canon of the sonata. Moreover, the harmonious architectonics of Khandoshkin's violin sonatas is one of their undeniable advantages. According to G.F. Fesechko, "Khandoshkin reveals not only composer's mastery in terms of thematic transformation and thematic

development, but also a remarkable sense of musical form as a whole" [4, p. 64].

In his violin sonatas, Khandoshkin reveals a rare ingenuity in using techniques from various previous, modern, and emerging styles. S.I. Nesterov described this peculiarity of the composer Khandoshkin as follows. "He never repeats himself in the structure of the cycle; he freely combines parts of classical sonatas and suites, church sonatas and baroque partitas, variations. All three sonatas for solo violin represent a metacycle of three cyclic formations, which is confirmed by the direct thematic connections of the sonatas 1 and 3. The sonata 3 is compositionally unstable. And the balance of the form is maintained only by its 'recapitulation' in relation to the sonata 1. All sonatas have variations that use ornamental classical patterns. The composer uses virtuoso violin playing techniques, coming mainly from Mozart and Tartini. This provides a synthesis of baroque and classical trends in his work. A dialogue of styles arises..." [8, p. 9].

We can reveal both the technical skill of the author and the violin performance of that time using the plurality of technical techniques and difficulties in the sonatas for solo violin. Even before the great Niccolò Paganini appeared on the European stage, Ivan Khandoshkin amazed his listeners with his skill as a concert violinist. An eyewitness wrote, "with indescribably courageous leaps and passages that he performed on his violin with truly Russian prowess, the legs of the men and women listeners began to jump involuntarily" [9, p. 33]. Khandoshkin played on both one string and a rebuilt instrument. The text of the announcement in the St. Petersburg Gazette regarding the concert in which the Russian virtuoso was to play is noteworthy. "On Thursday, the 12th of this month, a musical concert will be given at the local German theater, where Mr. Khandoshkin will play a solo on an out-of-tune violin" [*Ibid.*]. According to I. Yampolsky, "Khandoshkin's widespread use of the scordatura technique is

characteristic of the connections between his performing art and the art of folk violinists. Scordatura is a technique common to a folk violinist constantly changing the tuning of the violin in accordance with the tonality of the song being performed. Thanks to this technique, the violinist gets the opportunity, without passing beyond the first position, to extract combinations of sounds from his instrument that are impossible to extract in normal tuning" [7]. The master's playing was dizzyingly virtuosic and extremely soulful in the melodious music. "Listening to Khandoshkin's Adagio, no one could help crying," testified the listener [9, p. 34]. Furthermore, Khandoshkin did not shy away from going out onto the square on a fair day and playing in front of ordinary people. Perhaps this is also why his style is called concert style; consequently, it became, as it were, a premonition of the broad democratization of musical art and the time when the music of a high tradition came out of palaces and aristocratic drawing rooms, becoming the property of many people.

Each of the solo violin sonatas represents a small masterpiece. They form a type of cycle united by thematic or motive connections. Moreover, their structure is identical to some examples of the Early Classical style, which includes a slow first part, a minuet with a trio or a sonata allegro in the second part, and a fast finale with some features of a very mobile characteristic dance.

Researchers consider the first sonata in G minor as an undisputed masterpiece of national instrumental chamber art. Along with the abundance of the brightest manifestations of the concert virtuoso style, we can note the monumentality of the form, intensity of the pathetic expression, and subtlety of the lyrical themes in it. Its beginning is a funeral march, rare in the genre of solo violin sonata. It is sometimes called an epitaph march for its striking and recitative expressiveness of intonation. The music here imitates the

pathetic speech recitation almost literally. There are various contrasting loudness dynamics, small motivic divisions of the phrase, a variety of strokes, numerous short expressive intensifications, and passive attenuations of sound. Furthermore, it includes some features of dialogue and manifests itself in both the parallel movement of the lower voice and the responses of the "bass" to the pathetic exclamations of the theme.



The fast-paced part 2 is composed in the form of a sonata allegro. Here, we can discern a connection with both the ancient sonata form and the early classical sonata, and elements of dual-subjectness are noticeable. The recitative reminiscences and cadences, intended by the author to be improvisations by the soloist, interrupt the incessant movement of eighth notes at an extremely fast tempo.



The sonata finale represents variations on a sad and elegiac song theme. The theme music of the finale is related to the funeral march theme of part 1. The six subsequent variations represent the theme dynamization. Moreover, each new variation, along with thematic development, introduces new textural solutions accompanied by a complication of violin playing techniques. The finale of

Khandoshkin's first violin sonata is considered one of the most difficult opuses to perform in all of violin literature.



The second sonata in E-flat major is composed in the Mozartian spirit. The author, as in his other works, puts the characteristic melodiousness of Russian folk songs into the European classical form. The sophistication of the melodic pattern, which is slightly decorated with whimsical ornamentation of gruppitos, mordents, and grace notes, and the gallant completion of the motives do not at all interfere with the manifestation of Russian melodies.



The minuet of part 2 contains the features of a gallant court dance, a pathetic recitative statement, and a pervasive song beginning.



The minuet trio brings with it the "shadow" of the minor mode. The author

follows different keys, invariably following the minor shade in harmony, and completes the minuet in the same main parallel key of C minor.



The motor final rondo, according to I. Yampolsky, uniquely refracts the idea of "perpetual mobility" [7]. Echoes of folk dancing are clearly heard here. Some of Kamarinskaya's "figures" also come to mind.



The remark Maestoso, which precedes part 1 of the sonata 3, takes us to the funeral march of Sonata No. 1 in G minor. However, the major scale and the overall light coloring of this music indicate a completely opposite image. There are, however, some similarities in a rather notable conversation seemingly between two characters, one of whom is speaking at length and another who accompanies him. Similar to the funeral march, a certain "interlocutor," responds with short remarks. The beginning of the theme from the dominant sound to the tonic in its own way opposes the similar intro to the march of the sonata 1, where the sad question is "asked" from the tonic sound to the dominant.



Part 1 ends with an episode in the style of an organ toccata in the minor scale of the same name. At this point, the author, marking two places with fermata, suggests the cadences of the soloist. We can only imagine the skill used by Khandoshkin to improvise in these places.



Without an attacca break, the graceful minuet of the sonata part 2 begins. Similar to the minuet in E-flat major of the sonata, gallantry is combined with melodiousness, so typical for many folk themes.



The whole cycle is crowned with a laconic finale. He is distinguished by brave virtuosity, an abundance of various techniques at such a short "distance," energetic chords and puzzling passages that use both staccato and legato, and the grace of small motifs collected by a "singing" line of phrase. The role of the second "violinist" in the duet is more noticeable than before.



Furthermore, before the final performance of the theme, Khandoshkin puts the fermata on the "A" of the small octave, as if inviting the virtuoso violinist to speak out in a cadenza, to improvise to express his attitude to this beautiful; bright; and, simultaneously, subtle and extremely charming music.

In sonatas for solo violin, Ivan Khandoshkin proved to be an outstanding composer of the era, with his own

recognizable face. Moreover, he revealed himself to be a remarkable and rare type of virtuoso performer. In both his professional activities, he enriched Russian music in his works. In the performing arts, he discovered the richest possibilities of Russian folk song, revealed the universal possibilities of European musical forms and methods of developing the material in the field of Russian national melodic music, and introduced some features of folk singing art (such as subvocal

polyphony) into the texture of his compositions. The great Russian symphonism and instrumental chamber music of subsequent eras are based on excellent examples of the chamber genre of the late 18th century. This genre laid the foundations of the Russian national style on the works of masters who have retained their originality and freshness of musical thought to this day. Thus, Ivan Khandoshkin is one of the most important and honorable among the musicians of that time.

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СОЛЬНЫЕ СКРИПИЧНЫЕ СОНАТЫ ИВАНА ХАНДОШКИНА В КОНТЕКСТЕ КАМЕРНО-ИНСТРУМЕНТАЛЬНОЙ МУЗЫКИ РОССИИ XVIII ВЕКА

Статья посвящена композитору и исполнителю Ивану Хандошкину. Знаменитый российский скрипач-виртуоз оказал заметное влияние на формирование национального инструментального стиля. В статье представлена панорама русской музыки XVIII в. в различных формах ее бытования. Определены характерные черты нарождающегося национального стиля в синтезе европейских форм, жанров

и характерных особенностей русской музыки. Три скрипичные сольные сонаты – вершина виртуозного инструментального стиля Ивана Хандошкина – рассматриваются как единый микроцикл.

Ключевые слова: русская музыка XVIII в., Иван Хандошкин, русское скрипичное искусство, национальный инструментальный стиль, соната для скрипки соло.

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