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ABOUT SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CHOIR SCENES IN THE OPERAS BY AZERBAIJANI COMPOSERS

Abstract: This article provides insight into the development of Azerbaijani national opera starting from mugham operas in the XIX century up until the XX century, including the review of some features in European and national context. Choir scenes' peculiarities, development principles and the tenderness of the musical languages specific to Azerbaijani national operas were also reviewed. The renovation principle of the dramatical content of the choir scenes of the Azerbaijani operas and musical languages was especially emphasized.

Key words: musical dramaturgy, musical and dramatical characteristics of choir scenes, mugham opera, lyrical and dramatical opera, Azerbaijani national opera.

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Introduction

First Azerbaijani opera was created in 1908. There was interesting fact, that alongside with mugham the religious performances called "shabih" would flow organically together in the opera. It's worth of noting that choir groups took active participation during shabih ceremonies. U. Hajibayov's "Sheykh Sanan", "Rustam and Sohrab", "Asli and Karam", "Shakh Abbas and Khurshudbanu" operas which were created after "Leyli and Mecnun", Z. Hajibayov's "Ashiq Garib", M. Magomayev's "Shakh Ismail" operas praise humanity, freedom, love and happiness and have been imprinted in the national opera history.

Thus, opera was the first genre of the professional musical art in Azerbaijan. This synthetic genre has provided the solution for the number of problems in the course of creation of Azerbaijani professional musical art.

Widely spread discussions on the ways of development of the national opera, and in general, Azerbaijani art were connected namely with the development of opera in the 20s of the XIX century. During this contradictory and complicated period of the national musical art, U. Hajibayli, M. Magomayev and very young A. Badalbeyli were pushing forward progressive thoughts on preservation of the national opera alongside with

learning classic inheritance of the European composers.

Materials and Methods

The article provides us with the research of musical and dramaturgical characteristics of the choir scenes in the Azerbaijani operas based on inheritance and traditions principle. In general, the studies about the musical and dramaturgical solutions in the choir scenes of the Azerbaijani national operas are carried out based on the historical and theoretical research methods with the implementation of the comparative and reciprocal analysis. Main defining process of the research was to take a look into the history of creation of the Azerbaijani national operas and the review of context of the musical and dramaturgical solution of the choir scenes in these operas. The solution of musical dramaturgy of the choir scenes in the Azerbaijani operas can be accepted as the continuation of inheritance principles. In its turn, the implementation of the traditions and inheritance principles have resulted in the conformity to the natural laws of the European musical system and musical genres combined with the enrichment of the national music. Thus, the application of the national musical elements including mugham to the opera genre and creation of the nugham opera by U. Hajibayli, were taken as the basis of the development of the national opera and used as a kind of



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inheritance. At the same time, referring to the scientific methods of the musical and dramaturgical characteristics of the choir scenes in the Azerbaijani operas, the national musical examples were studied as well for review of the important impact of this genre on the national music.

Two operas of “Nargiz” and “Koroglu” written in the 30s of the 20th century, the period which was characterised with the uplift of the Azerbaijani national music, became a huge achievement of the Azerbaijani musical art. “Nargiz” opera (1935) written by M. Magomayev was modern and revolutionary in its heart, and “Koroglu” opera by U. Hajibayli reflected heroic past of the Azerbaijani people. “Nargiz” which provided transition from the mugham opera to the modern classical opera, and “Koroglu” which manifested a turning point in the development of the Azerbaijani opera art were the result of long searches.

Azerbaijani opera has had long development process. J. Hajiyev’s and G. Garayev’s jointly written “Veten” (“Motherland”) (1945), J. Jahangirov’s “Azad” (“Free”) (1957), “The Fate of Khanende” (mugham singer), F. Amirov’s “Sevil” (1953), Z. Baghirov’s “Aygün” (1972), V. Adigozalov’s “The Dead” (1963) and “Natavan” (2001), R. Mustafayev’s “Vagif” (1962), Sh. Akhundova’s “The Bride’s Fortress” (1974), M. Guliyev’s “Deceived Stars” (1977), F. Adigozalov’s “Expectation” (2009) – each of those operas played a crucial role in the development of the Azerbaijani opera.

In general, when taking a look at the development process of the Azerbaijani national opera one can see a very interesting and unique development way. Thus, mugham opera genre combining in itself national peculiarities and being the first genre of its kind in the Azerbaijani music attracts attention by the originality and self-identity of the national operas written in the real European traditions and colourfulness of its content and innovative musical language. When taking a look at the operas written by the Azerbaijani composers by decades it is possible to see a number of interesting facts. As we can see, mugham operas prevailed strating from the creation of the Azerbaijani national opera at the beginning of the 20th century up until 1930-s. This period was characterised by the dominant influence of the operas written by U. Hajibayli, the first Azerbaijani opera creator, and M. Magomayev. Starting from the 1930-s the national opera genre began its development based on European traditions by evolvement of the first Azerbaijani operas. Thus, this period was characterised by the formation of the thinking unity in the national music being in the uplift period, and the influence of the naturalness of the national and all-European traditions. M. Magomayev’s “Nargiz” (1935) and U. Hacibayli’s “Koroglu” operas have

become the pearls of the Azerbaijani opera art of 1930-s. World War II in the 1940-s influenced the national opera genre and gave prevalence to enlivening of the people’s thoughts and actions, thinking and lifestyle. As a result of this influence, G. Garayev and J. Hajiyev had written the “Motherland” opera (1945), which reflected the tough laws of the war in its content and musical language. “Sevil” opera written in the 1950s by Fikret Amirov was the greatest example of the lyrical-psychological opera, which had shown the use of classical dramaturgical traditions and the synthesis of modernity with national style in its choir scenes. Other national operas also stand out from the dramaturgical point of view. First satirical opera, “The Dead”, is written by V. Adigozalov in 1960s. In general, this period is notable by the creation of interesting operas which defined the fate of the Azerbaijani opera. Operas written in 1970s are characterised by the creation of connection between classical traditions and modernity and the ability to use national peculiarities in their full colourfulness. M. Guliyev’s “Deceived Stars” and Z. Bagirov’s “Aygün” operas are the most interesting works of this period from the point of view of their choir scenes. The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century are notable by the evolvement of operas which carry heroic and patriotic meaning. V. Adigozalov’s “Natavan” and F. Alizade’s “Expectation” operas brilliantly express the integration of the tradition and modernity.

Taking a look at the classification of the Azerbaijani operas from the content point of view we can see that there are several opera types formed around various topics: lyrical-dramatical, satirical and patriotic, and the operas devoted to the historical figures. In general, the musical and dramaturgical development of choir scenes in Azerbaijani operas is directly connected with the content of the opera. The same can be said about the musical language. The characteristics defining the operas written by the Azerbaijani composers are the use of the Azerbaijani national musical elements, including the reference to mugham and folk music.

The role of choirs in the dramaturgy of the Azerbaijani operas and embodiment of mass was original and peculiar, and had specific function in the formation and expression of the characters. It is a known fact, that the characters are being revealed not only in individual roles, but also in mass scenes. In general, the development of the choir scenes in the national operas is characterized by various imagery. These traits which played a crucial role in the development of the opera can also be seen in various opera examples. It is possible to obtain information about choir scenes of various styles when taking a look at musical and dramaturgical solution of the choir scenes in various operas.

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This peculiarity can be seen in other operas too, including the example of the classical national opera “Koroglu”. But the main character of Z. Bagirov’s opera “Aygun” is disclosed in the environment far from the mass, in private mode. Choir scenes in this opera have only played a background role, the type of the commentator. The genre of mugham plays main role in opening up the character of Gulbahar, main figure of the “Fortress of the Bride” opera written by Sh. Akhundova. Every choir scene in the “Fortress of the Bride” opera combining melodious and mugham opera genres performs as the catalyzer of a specific type. “Catalyzer-choir scenes” expression can be used connected namely with this opera. The dramaturgical load of the choir scenes in V. Adigozalov’s “Natavan” opera is much bigger due to the mass being the leading imagery of the opera. Epic characteristics of dramaturgy in this opera are very vivid. Some of the choir scenes even remind of frescos and bring oratorios characteristics into the opera. The dramaturgical role of the choir scenes in this opera is very high, as the mass plays the crucial role here. Choir scenes perform as a commentator of all events, explain and reflect the main idea of the opera. Thus, the variety of the choir scenes in Azerbaijani opera with lyrical-dramatical content and devoted to the historical figures and revelation of musical and dramaturgical peculiarities attract specific attention.

Some basic theoretical and applied features of research

Satirical opera examples are few in the Azerbaijani opera, just as in the world classics. In the Azerbaijani opera, this genre is present in V. Adigozalov’s “The Dead” and M. Guliyev’s “Deceived Stars”. Alongside with these, there are some satirical elements in other operas as well. Satirical elements arrange the majority in the musical comedies of the founder of the of the professional Azerbaijani composers school, U. Hajibayli and even approach the line of lyrical-comical opera. The choir scenes in the Azerbaijani satirical operas look like they are created by the choir ensemble. Sometimes, the choir performs together with the speech of the scene participants or that of the main characters. Compared to a few classical Azerbaijani opera traditions preserved in V. Adigozalov’s “The Dead” opera, the “deceived Stars” of M. Guliyev demonstrate innovation and peculiarities of the folk square performances. Choir scenes in the Azerbaijani satirical operas are characterized by the modern musical language, “the theatre inside the theatre” feature, dynamic in the dramaturge, and the incarnation of the social-philosophical concept. People’s imagery is especially important in the Azerbaijani satirical operas. Choirs performing the commentator role express the psychology of the mass. It is interesting that a portion of choirs in the

Azerbaijani satirical operas is formed in the polyphonic style. Especially, this can be seen in V. Adigozalov’s “The Dead” opera, where the choirs in polyphonic style perform during the most tense moments thus commenting on the events taking place.

Patriotic theme has always been the most topical and of continuous interest in the history of the Azerbaijani music. This topic adapting to the historical heroic topic has found its incarnation in various genres, including the opera. The patriotic content was especially important in the course of various historical events, transition periods, showcasing the spiritual uplifting of the people and freedom movements. Creative works with the patriotic content cover a large period starting from U. Hajibayli’s “Koroglu” opera and up until the “Expectation” opera written by F. Alizade in the 21st century. Although the operas are united by the common idea, they are expressed in different styles. Choir scenes in the operas praising patriotism and heroism have their own style by puffing out the mass incarnation. This can be vividly seen in “Koroglu” opera with its epic character coming out of folk saga. The role of choirs which transmit the epic genre of this opera into the crucial component is the main peculiarity of the dramaturgy of choir scenes. Namely, the patriotic traditions of the “Koroglu” opera had influenced other operas with patriotic content. The role of choir scenes in the operas devoted to the incarnation of patriotic topic, plenty of mass scenes give the operas the grandeur. The role of the choirs in the patriotic operas are characterised by the slogan styles, appealing intonations and march genre. Choirs take active part in and interfere into the course of events, thus taking active position in the dramaturgy. Another very important factor is that the choir scenes are shown in different situations with various emotional reactions, thus creating splendour stage performance by combining the ensemble scenes with the choir ones. Such scenes attract attention by their scale. For example, the grandeur of the choir scenes in the “Motherland” opera jointly written by G. Garayev and J. Hajiyev (1945) provide the opera with the oratorios peculiarity. In general, this is a defining characteristic of the operas with patriotic content. Another peculiarity of the patriotic operas is their epic character. The phased progress of events contributes to the gradual disclosure of the events in the choir scenes and culminational ending. At the same time, dynamic development of the people’s imagery combined with the epic character is adapted to the dramaturgy of the choir scenes. Yet another defining characteristics of the operas with patriotic content is the revelation of people’s imagery in multifaceted way. The mass shown in these operas are at the same time of sad and optimistic, proud character. In general, the mass incarnation is at the forefront at the operas combined under the same



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idea: U. Hajibayli's "Koroglu", G. Garayev's and J. Hajiyev's "Motherland", J. Jahangirov's "Free", and F. Alizade's "Expectation" operas. Choir scenes have great dramaturgical role. The leading position of the choir, monumentalism of the choir scenes, direct support of the choir scenes for the other scenes in the performance result with the consideration of choir's oratorios characteristics in the operas with the patriotic content. "Koroglu" and "Motherland" operas have a more vivid epic character, "Free" opera is characterised with lyrical beginning, and these facts influence the style of the choir scenes in the patriotic operas. Tragical content is the one which takes a vivid position in the "Expectation" opera. It is natural that the modern writing technique of the choir scenes is clearly seen in this opera written in the modern style. Verbal choirs in the "Expectation" opera is the greatest example of this. Polyphonic style is widely spread in the patriotic operas. In general, male choirs are more prevalent in the patriotic operas, than the female ones, which is directly connected with its content. Female choirs are static, while male choirs are active in this kind of operas. Thus, choir scenes in the patriotic operas increase the dramaturgical load, play crucial role in the progress of events and push the development of the opera choir music.

Conclusion

Research of the musical and dramaturgical characteristics of the choir scenes in the operas written by the Azerbaijani composers have revealed a number of interesting and essential traits. It needs to be noted that even if the choir scenes were not characteristic for the Azerbaijani national music, there were folk musical performances resembling the choir singing during the square performances and various ceremonies. First choir scene in the history of the national dramaturgy was used in U. Hajibayli's "Leyli and Majnun" opera in 1908 and by this had started the development of the choir music in the

professional Azerbaijani stage. If the choir in the first Azerbaijani operas was two-voiced, further sharp increase in the development can be vividly seen. This development is clearly observed in U. Hajibayli's "Koroglu" opera which was written 30 years later from the moment of the first Azerbaijani opera. "Koroglu" opera being the peak of the Azerbaijani opera, combines in itself the Azerbaijani and world classical experience and is the first Azerbaijani opera which has reached the level of the world art. Organic combination of the classical opera in the musical dramaturgy of "Koroglu" and dramaturgic characteristics of the modern 20th century opera have created the musical dramaturgy of new type directly expressed in the dramaturgy of the choir scenes.

In general, the variety of the choir scenes is very characteristic for the Azerbaijani operas. Just as in the best examples of the world opera, the choirs in the national opera art serve as the participant of the events and ensure the revelation of the dramaturgical knots. However, there are in the national operas sometimes passive choirs which serve as an examples of the traditionalism and inheritance. There is a vivid innovative musical language in the dramaturgy of the choir scenes in the national operas which is the result of use of mugham traditions. Sometimes, the development of the dramaturgy of the choir scenes is based on the national peculiarities. It needs to get noted again that the most vivid characteristic of the national opera genre is its innovation in the musical language and content which is reflected in the dramaturgy of the choir scenes. The classification of the Azerbaijani operas according to their content: lyrical, devoted to the historical figures, satirical and patriotic – had influenced the enrichment of the dramaturgy of the choir scenes with the national music's rhythm and elements.

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