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Music for Wind Instruments Ensemble in Russia at the End of XVIII and in the 1-st Third of XIX Century (on the Example of A. Alyabjev's Oeuvre)

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In the given article, we have made an attempt to define the chronological frames of the period, when the wind instruments ensemble music, as a sphere of Russian professional composers' creative work, was being formed; to reveal the facts which had influenced on its becoming, and also to characterize the peculiarities of the wind instruments ensemble music in the oeuvre of A. Alyabjev.

Keywords: a wind instruments ensemble, harmonic music, classical wind quintet, quintet for flute, oboe, clarinet, basson and horn C-minor by A. Alyabjev, quartet for 4 flutes by A. Alyabjev, Concert Symphony by D. Bortnyansky.

In Russia, the ways of formation of professional composers' oeuvre for wind instruments ensemble differed from similar processes, which occurred in the Western-European music, which, in particular, accumulated a sufficient luggage for the period of XVII-XVIII centuries. Obviously, at that time in the West, a steady genre system had been already formed, typical wind casts were also defined (harmonic music¹, classical wind quintet), and a lot of compositions had been already written. In Russia, the situation was totally different.

First compositions for wind instruments ensemble, which belonged to the oeuvre of professional Russian composers, appeared at the end of XVIII century. Though, they were

rather singular. In 1790, Concert Symphony B-dur for 2 violins, viola da gamba, violoncello, basson, harp and piano organize² was written by D.S. Bortnyansky (Fig. 1).

He was also the arranger of 8 numbers of his Opera "Falcon" for wind sextet (2 clarinets, 2 horns and 2 bassons). Creation of such kind of an ensemble proves that the borrowed Western-European composing tradition was assimilated. Such a (paired) cast was most popular among the Western-European composers of XVIII century (Berezin, 1999:10-12).

And we may recollect a lot of such compositions. For example, the famous divertimentos by D. Paisiello (1740-1816) – the most popular composer at the Russian

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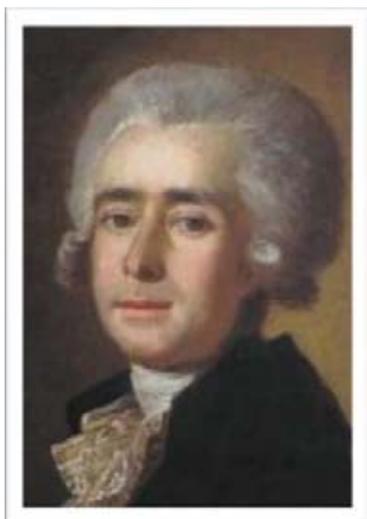


Fig. 1 D. Bortnaynsky

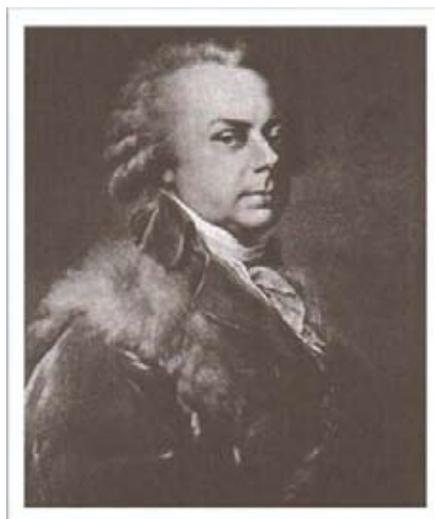


Fig. 2 N. Ysupov

court, were written precisely for such a cast.³ D.S. Bortnyansky was most probably familiar with the pieces of the Italian master, as far as after D. Paisiello's departure, precisely he occupied the position of the court composer.

The next Russian composition for wind instruments ensemble appeared only several decades afterwards – it was written by A. Alyabjev (Fig. 3). It was Nocturne C-dur for string quartet with horn and fortepiano, which was written in 1819, and, unfortunately, it was lost for us. The quartet for 4 flutes was written in 1827. Later, about 1830, he created the quintet for flute, oboe, clarinet, basson and horn. A lot of Russian composers of XIX century addressed to the music genre sphere for wind ensemble, following A. Alyabjev. Here, we recollect the pieces by M. Glinka – Septet for 2 violins, violoncello, contrabass, oboe, basson and horn (1823), the Serenade (septet) to the motives from the Opera “Anna Bolena” by G. Donizetti for fortepiano, harp, alt, violoncello, contrabass, basson and horn, «Pathetic Trio» for clarinet, basson and fortepiano (1832); A. Rubinstein – Octet for violin, alt, violoncello, contrabass, flute, clarinet, horn and fortepiano (1854), Quintet for

flute, clarinet, basson, horn and fortepiano (1855); M. Balakirjev – Octet for violin, alt, violoncello, contrabass, flute, oboe, horn and fortepiano (1856), S. Taneev – Andante for paired cast of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassons, and horns; N. Rimsky-Korsakov – Quintet for flute, clarinet, basson, horn and fortepiano (1876), and Nocturne for 4 horns (1888).

Proceeding from the mentioned above, we may come to the conclusion that the initial stage of formation of the genre sphere of wind ensemble music in the oeuvre of professional composers of Russia falls on the end of XVIII and on the 1-st third of XIX century.

In the conscious of most admirers of music, the name of A. Alyabjev is first of all associated with his famous romance “Nightingale”. Today only few people are acquainted with his operas, ballets, and vaudevilles; while the music, which was created by A. Alyabjev for wind instruments ensembles, is practically unknown at all. Though, it was not at all by chance that the composer addressed to the casts of such kind.

Since his early childhood, A. Alyabjev had an opportunity to hear the sounds of wind instruments. His father (like most noblemen of



Fig. 3 A. Alabjev

that time) had his own home orchestra, which consisted of bond musicians⁴. Judging by some of the orchestra's musical scores, one can form the notion of its repertoire. Mainly, we meet adaptations of Russian folk songs. In comparison with other contemporary composers, A. Alyabjev not only knew well the wind instruments, but he also studied their peculiarities and masterfully used his knowledge in practice in his orchestra and ensemble music pieces. Moreover, he wrote two theoretical works, concerning the specifics of music pieces performance on the wind instruments. It was a table of trills, made on flute, and also tables of diapasons for brass instruments (Dobrokhotov 1966).

Probably, these very circumstances caused the specifics of wind instrument use in the oeuvre of the composer. What concerns the wood wind instruments, A. Alyabjev used them mainly as the carriers of melodic beginning (flute in the overture to "Morning and evening", clarinet in "Fast March", the overture to the opera "The Fisherman and the Mermaid", and basson solo in the same piece). In some cases, brass instruments could also perform a melodic function. For example, the trombone solo ("The Fisherman and

the Mermaid" and "The Madwoman") or the horn solo ("The Wonderful Drum"). In Symphony Es-dur (1850), the concertizing instruments were 4 horns. Sometimes, A. Alyabjev used old instruments, such as ophicleide⁵ and serpent⁶, as a bass of the brass group. We should also remind that these instruments were rather often used in orchestras, until tuba replaced them (in 1840-s).

It is also important that A. Alyabjev's wind instruments ensembles are referred to one of the first examples of the genre pieces in Russian music, which did not have any applied meaning. One can find examples of the wind music pieces, written by E. Fomin, D. Bortnjansky, S. Davydova and other composers – the foregoer of A. Alyabjev, which were intended for military ceremonies or for the theatre purposes. As a rule, such music accompanied drama performances (in the intermissions or before the performances). "They played "horns, "flutes" or "clavichord", then there was a performance of a violin player with a concert or an orchestra with a symphony (overture)" (Steinpress, 1956:33). In most cases, harmonic music, i.e. the pieces, written for paired casts of wind instruments, was also in addition.

A. Alyabjev became the first Russian composer, who created a composition in the genre of classic wind quintet. The first examples of a wind quintet in Western-European Music appeared at the end of 18 century. There is an opinion that the founders of the classic wind quintet genre are F. Danzi (1763 – 1826) and A. Reiche (1770 – 1836). And in this respect, the following biographical fact seems to be rather interesting: musical critic V. Odoevsky supplied A. Alyabjev with various musical scores and musical-pedagogical education books, also including the A. Reiche's compositions (Dobrokhotov, 1966:36). Consequently, it is possible to suppose that the Russian composer was familiar with the pieces of a similar genre of his Western-European colleagues.

The A. Alyabjev's Quintet for flute, oboe, clarinet and horn C-moll is referred to the composer's early period of creative work and its precise creation date is unknown. It was presumably written round about 1830, in Tobolsk. Precisely there, A. Alyabjev got for the first time acquainted with chromatic brass instruments, which he began to use widely in practice (in comparison with most other composers of that time). For that purpose, he made a special mark "mechanic" in his sheet music. Though, apparently, A. Alyabjev under-studied the possibilities of new Russian instruments and that was why he used to make mistakes in transport (for example, in the parts of horns in orchestra sheet music). And probably that was why all the parts in the Quintet (including the horns) were written without transposition.

The author's manuscript of the Quintet scores is kept in the State Central Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow. It represents draft and very often disconnected sketches. In the manuscript, there is only one unfinished part of the Quintet, having been written in the form of sonata allegro, which notation finishes at the end of its development. On the basis of the material of the Quintet introduction and exposition, B. Dobrokhotov, who wrote its ending (1953), supposed that the given Quintet was also of one-part according to the author's plan, as far as there were known several one-part symphonic and chamber-instrumental compositions in the oeuvre of A. Alyabjev.

If we compare it with multiple western compositions of those times, then we see that this Quintet is the most valuable example of Russian music of the beginning of XIX century on the poor background of chamber literature for wind instruments ensemble. We should underline that it is characteristic of the Russian composers of the XVIII century on one hand – their tendency to rely on Russian folk song traditions and,

on the other hand – the perception of musical achievements of other European countries. One can note that Aliabiev, a composer of the 1-st third of the XIX century, has already some dawning features of the Russian national culture (in the melody of the entrance themes – the city romance and the Russian folk song (the second theme reminds us of the intonation of the song "That's not the evening"). However, it is not by chance: "Being on a higher stage of development, the society is typical of increased attention to self-identification and protection of cultural and national uniqueness" (Bozhchenko, 2012:59).

We shall address to one more composition for wind instruments ensemble belonging to the A. Alyabjev's early oeuvre – *Quartet for 4 flutes (1827)*. Flute quartet originally appeared as a genre of applied music, but at the beginning of XIX century it became an equal participant of the concert life and acquired its own classic form in the oeuvre of F. Kuhlau (Dania), L. Gianella (Italy), A. Reiche (Czechia), E. Walkiers, and J. Cardon (France). M. Stabinger⁷ and H. Soussmann⁸ – famous flute players of the end of XVIII and XIX centuries, whose creative works were related to Russia, also made their contribution to increase of the flute quartets' repertoire. In Russia, the genre of quartet has had a complicated fate. A. Alyabjev, the creator of the first quartet for 4 flutes and of the first wind ensemble, prepared the basis for development of this genre in Russia. Though, "the response" to A. Alyabjev's creation appeared only in a century. Only in 1939, in China, Russian composer A. Cherepnin wrote a quartet for an analogical cast of instruments.

The manuscript of A. Alyabjev's quartet has been found in the archive of the Moscow Conservatory Library. It is mainly a draft; though, some lists of the final variant have been also preserved. The score has only first two parts – Allegro and Adagio. In 1950, the first part of the quartet was corrected, finished and published by

the Professor of the Moscow Conservatory, flutist N. Platonov.

It was quite an interesting fact that A. Alyabjev also introduced the group, consisting of 4 flutes, into the score of his ballet “The Wonderful Drum, or the Investigation of the Wonderful Flute”, which was also written at the same time as the Quartet, in 1827. Why did A. Alyabjev write a composition for such a cast and include the flute quartet into his ballet? Let us remind you that D. Bortnjansky also wrote his symphony for quite an original⁹ cast of instruments. In this connection, we may suppose that the given compositions were meant for a certain cast of more or less famous at that time musicians-performers. We should also note that at that time flute was a rather famous instrument due to coming foreign musicians, who dominated at those times at the concert stage.

In his quartet, A. Alyabjev used expressiveness of the wind instruments in combination with the specifics of the quartet style, which was chosen by the composer in the process of string quartets composition (1820, 1827). B. Dobrokhotov mentions about this fact (Dobrokhotov 1948). Though, in comparison with the considered flute quartet, the functions of the string ensemble instruments are usually strictly defined. It is related to the timbre differentiation, which predefines interpretation of each part (it is analogical in the classic wind quintet, which consists of various-tessitura instruments). For example, 1-st violin is the carrier of the melodic beginning, 2-d violin and alto whether repeat it or perform harmonic voices, and violoncello plays the bass line. What concerns the wind quartet, instruments functions of the homogeneous cast are more variable and in the A. Alyabjev’s case, their parts are rather finely detailed. The part of the first flute has an expressive virtuosic character and a lot of melodic decorations¹⁰. The function of the bass line, which supports the harmony, is

mainly performed by the fourth flute. Moreover, it renders the main thematic material along with the first flute. Thus, the part of the fourth flute is bi-functional. The second and the third flutes chiefly play the part of accompaniment, being the parts of the cords structure. They are not given to perform any independent melodies: it is whether repetition or imitation of the motives of the first flute.

In spite of that fact, that the ensemble consists of the similar tessitura wind instruments, the composer has managed to achieve full and at the same time exquisite sounding.

In general, the music of the A. Alyabjev’s Quartet for 4 flutes has a light and cheerful character. Let us draw your attention to an obvious resemblance of the Quartet with *compositions of the Viennese classics*. First of all, it is seen in the composition: the Quartet for 4 flutes has been conceived as a cyclic composition of sonata type (1-st part is made in the form of sonata allegro). The following peculiarities of the theme are also rather important: the theme of the main melody of the I part consists of two elements: the first element – “fanfare”, which is typical for heroic intonation sphere of classicism (wide steps by triad tones with acciaccaturas)¹¹ (Konen 1968; Shaymukhametova 1998) ; the second element – leading-tone trills, which add light and jolly character to the music, and this also has associative connections with the typical melodic idioms of *the Viennese classics*.

The theme of the Quartet subsidiary part resembles Mozart’s one (for example, the theme of his subsidiary part from the Quartet D-dur) – the exquisite, virtuosic, ornamented melody is performed by the 1-st flute.

Similarity can also be observed in the structure-forming principals of sonata Allegro, which typical for the Viennese classical symphony, and which have been revealed in the book of V.D. Konen (1968), precisely in the

principle of *structural division*, which is shown in caesuras, which divide separate, more or less accomplished constructions.

This way, one can observe significant influence of the Western-European musical traditions on the music, written by A. Alyabjev for wind instruments ensemble. It is revealed in use of certain types of casts, in addressing to the

Quartet and Quintet genres, and in peculiarities of structure- and theme-forming. Thus, we may assert with good reason that assimilating the experience of the Western-European practice and synthesizing it with the national peculiarities, precisely A. Alyabjev has made the foundation of the Russian tradition of the wind ensemble music.

¹ A paired cast ensemble consisted of 6 – 8 wind instruments. Traditionally, harmonic music was performed by 2-3 pairs of wood wind instruments and 2 horns. The cast could be varied and omit some of the wood instruments – flutes, clarinets or oboes. Though, beside horns, practically all the casts had bassons. Sometimes, ensembles of paired casts could include tubes, timbales, serpents and trombones. Doctor of history of art V.V. Berezin writes in every detail about harmonic music in his article, which has been published in the journal “Ancient Music” (1999). In the process of writing of this article, we have studied sheet music material from the archives of the Russian National Library. It is the Yusupov’s musical collection (Fig. 2)

² A sort of fortepiano with organ registers.

³ D.S. Bortnyansky occupied the post of the court composer after D. Paisiello

⁴ In Russia and in Europe of XVIII and of the beginning of XIX century there were singled out two main spheres of the music existence. There was amateur or home music-making and professional creative work.

⁵ Ophicleide is a bass mouthpiece instrument, which form resembles basson, made by master Alary in 1785.

⁶ Serpent is a bass mouthpiece instrument of a serpent form, which was constructed by E.Giyom in 1590.

⁷ Matthias Stabinger (approx. 1750-1815) was a German composer, conductor and a flutist, who lived several years in Moscow. He was a conductor in the Peter’s Theatre and organized concerts. In 1787, he founded a music school in Moscow.

⁸ Heinrich (Andrey Andreevich) Soussmann (Susman) (1796-1848) was a German flutist, composer, whose talent was specially noticed by M. Glinka and V. Odoevsky.

⁹ In the given case it is true not only for Russia, but for Western Europe as well.

¹⁰ It was a rather typical phenomenon for the music of the Western-European composers of that time, but it was rather brave for the work of a Russian composer of the same epoch; though, it is quite possible that this peculiarity has appeared in the result of editorial work of the professor, a famous musician – flutist N.I. Platonov.

¹¹ There are a lot of examples of the usage of intonation stereotypes of fanfares given in the research work by V.D. Konen “Theatre and Symphony”. Moscow. 1968, and in the research work by L.N. Shaymukhametova “Semantic Analysis of the Musical Theme”. Moscow. 1998.

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Музыка для ансамбля духовых инструментов в России в конце XVIII и в 1-й трети XIX века (на примере творчества А. Алябьева)

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В рамках данной статьи предпринята попытка определить хронологические границы периода, когда происходит формирование музыки для ансамбля духовых инструментов как сферы профессионального композиторского творчества в России, а также охарактеризовать особенности музыки для ансамбля духовых инструментов в творчестве А. Алябьева (A. Alyabjeva).

Ключевые слова: ансамбль духовых инструментов, гармоническая музыка, классический духовой квинтет, Квинтет для флейты, гобоя, кларнета, фагота и валторны до минор А. Алябьева (A. Alyabjeva), Квартет для 4-х флейт А. Алябьева (A. Alyabjeva), Концертная симфония Д. Бортнянского (D. Bortnyanskogo).
