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Phenomenological Description of Classical Music as an Ethnos-Forming Element of Yakut Culture

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The classic professional musical art of Yakutia has become a clear distinctive artistic phenomenon since 1990's. This fact indicates that the professional musical art of Yakutia is a relatively young musical culture. In this paper a number of sources on the history of classical music serve as a material for the analysis and study of the current state of classical music art, revealing specific features of classical music as an ethnos-forming element of Yakut culture. Meanwhile, this area of knowledge at present time is ripe for a substantial research, according to scholars; the fundamental (analytical and synthetic) investigations on music culture are practically absent. To date, there is a number of essential requirements for strengthening and development of its own mechanisms of self-education and self-preservation of the core culture of the northern territories. In its final part the paper contains recommendations on governmental cultural policies, which assist in maintaining distinctive cultural traditions of the circumpolar area.

Keywords: musical culture of Yakutia, cultural studies, cultural studies, ethnicity.

Research area: culture studies, art history.

The History of Classical Music in Yakutia

According to the sources on the history of Yakut classical music in the 40-ies of 20th century there was made an extrapolation of the musical canons of European type on the musical stage circumpolar areas, which contributed to familiarizing national culture to musical professionalism. The process of organization of professional music education in Yakutsk region begins in 1944. The following objectives were selected as innovations: establishment of a school of composers, music educators and performing arts. Along with oral folk music, there was an

attempt to create professional composers and musicians. Moreover, a real opportunity to provide music education to the younger generation appeared. The need for this historic innovation likely was a result of the fact that in the first half of the 19th century survived a few details on pianos in Yakut houses and concert performances of individual numbers (“solo on the piano”) at the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, we have little data to judge about the quality and level of the performances. One should be very cautious when speaking about musical culture of Yakutia in the 19th – early 20th centuries. A need to bring Russian and European music emerged.

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The general picture of the musical culture of Yakutia of the first twenty years of the 20th century was the following: at the beginning of the century choir singing emerges, musical amateurs appear. In 1920 a Symphony Orchestra already exists, and in 1921 an educational and music studio was opened. The activity of the section of “Admirers of music and literature” contributed to promoting Russian European culture for a certain part of the indigenous population of the city. However the values of European and Russian music influenced only a small portion of the urban population, for the concerts were held only in Yakutsk. Most of the inhabitants of Yakutia continued to meet their aesthetic needs only by the means of traditional art. In 1929 a radio center appeared. It was used as an information center and a mechanism for mass notification of the northerners. In 1936 a choir at Yakutsk Theater (under the supervision of M.N. Zhirkov) was formed. *Thus, for the first three decades of the 20th century was created a minimal but necessary set of musical events and special institutions for teaching how “to listen” to choral singing and attempts to perform (training studio as an experimental platform), broadcast to the mass audience of the Far North.* Afterwards, according to the preserved data, in the 40s some Moscow professors were invited in order to create a number of musical works based on the Yakut folklore. In this connection, there was a need for masterful technical and performance skills of specialists for “processing” and new interpreting of the musical basis of Yakut culture. A number of national operas and ballet works were created (“Nyurgun Bootur”, “Wildflower”, “Crimson Scarf” et al.). The opening of a music school in 1949 revealed a desire to educate students who absorbed the tendency to preserve the unique music on the basis of professional classical art. The first teacher-pianist of the indigenous group

with higher education appeared only in 1960 (A.A. Popov), and the first professional Yakut composer in 1970s (Z.K. Stepanov).

Since the 1930s Yakutia has had a group of musicians who have come from the central cities of Russia and all this time have been working in the field of professional piano performance. It was this time when *the gradual process of inclusion of the national culture in the worldwide culture* started. However, national piano schools emerged much later, when in the mid-1960, the piano repertoire was formed and the first professional indigenous pianists appeared. The first concert pianist of the Sakha people was M.M. Sleptsov; he performed solo and symphony concerts. *Thus, in the period from the 1930s to the 60s in the field of classical music the emergence of a national music based on the synthesis of professional performing arts of the European level and folk music arts of the circumpolar areas took place.* Simultaneously *an active propaganda of the national music* was used and it contributed to the formation of future professional performance skills in the Yakut musical culture.

In 1960s the trend of piano playing continued to grow, as in 1964 the Urban Youth Philharmonic was established; its activity constituted an important reservoir of musical life in Yakutsk. Dramatic art was based on the activities of Yakut theater; the theater made productions that promoted *uniqueness of the historical and cultural themes of the northern territories* (“Lookut and Nyurgusun”, “Flower of the North”, etc.). Themes of the National Ballets contributed to this tendency (“Stone of Happiness”, “Joy of Altan”, “Northern Lights” and others.). The basis of the symphonic music is formed by *program music works*: cantatas, poems, symphonies, and suites. Yakut national holidays and tools form the plot basis: Symphonic Rhapsody “Ysyakh. Yakut holiday” (1964 G.I. Litinsky), “Concert improvisation for the khoomei and Orchestra”

(1972, N.S. Berastov, featuring the khoomei performer I.E. Alekseev).

70-90 years of 20th century were the time when the professional classical music Yakut art was established: honored artists and artists of the RSFSR worked on the territories; there were conductors, choirmasters, composers of melodies. *Evenings of Yakut music in other cities of Russia* were particularly beloved (since 1974); its participants were popular honored artists and singers of ASSR of the RSFSR. A whole range of musical institutions operated on the territory of Yakutia: Musical Theatre (1982), the symphony orchestra and the choir of the Committee for Television and Radio, Philharmonic, a folk dance company, the House of Folk Art, Union of Composers, eighty four music schools. History of folklore in Yakutia can be traced by the exhibits of unique musical instruments in the museum of music and folklore of the peoples of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), as well as in the international center of khoomei and Jew's harp. *The concert activity of piano music* became more detailed in comparison with the previous years, at times the number of solo concerts increased – the result of education of students in the depths of music schools and colleges of the Yakut ASSR, the purpose of which was the promotion of classical music. A special role was played by professional educators of Sakha people in piano music, who had been educated in Russia's central institutions and now were involved in the formation of the national piano art. The main purpose of the teachers became to get the folklore traditions embodied in musical performance as a special contribution to the multinational Russian culture.

According to the study of A.V. Varlamova the basic ethnos-forming elements of classical music of Yakutia are the following:

These elements are the basis for the creation of national samples of music; and for them

European musical traditions remain to be a “tuning fork”.

The Current State of Classical Music in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

This part describes the institutions and events representing the classical music of Yakutia at modern times. The main concentration of educational and performing arts and music today can be found in *the Higher School of Music of the Sakha Republic*, which was opened in 1992 and which continues to operate as an integrated multi-level university, created by a *unique project “Canadian Village”* (students living in comfortable cottages on the territory of a suburban campus).

In its structure, the Higher School of Music is a music and a secondary school, a college and a higher musical institution. According to the concept, the Higher School of Music functions as a center of musical education Sakha Sire, consistent with current trends in higher education in Russia. These five levels of special training of musicians: beginner, intermediate, two higher and highest (Higher School of Excellence) provide consistent training according to criteria for higher educational achievements of modern musical performing arts.

The concept of the Higher School of Music implies the following main objectives:

The ongoing project in the Far North conditions is unique because in addition to the understanding that only through classical music the Yakut ethnic education in contemporary culture may be preserved, the Higher School of Music maintains the historical and contemporary practice of education of artists with exceptional musical talents.

The structure of the teaching staff is organized in a hierarchical manner, whereby the leading professors of faculties (four professors working in shifts) select teachers on a contract



Fig. 1. Photo by Nikolay Filippov

basis from musical institutions of Russia and the CIS (12-15 people) and assistants (about twenty young musicians of the Republic). The following subjects are studied:

The basic principle for teachers living with their children is the development of the personality of the child, the maximum disclosure of creativity and preparation for entry into the life of society. The patterns of education are implemented in accordance with the global experience of educating the younger generation. The main system-forming factors of the educational system are the following: a cognitive component, club activities and a component of socio-cultural development. Thus, the strategy chosen for the education of the younger generation is similar to the processes of incubator nurturing of gifted children who can not only focus on achieving heights in the field of classical music, but also can be prepared for the process of socialization

within the Yakut society. It is noteworthy that the musical and educational project implemented at the Higher School of Music becomes an effective ethnos-forming technology. The goals and objectives of the Higher School of Music reflect not a desire to become a part of a multinational state (a strategy of assimilation into the culture of the dominant society), but a desire to preserve itself as a unique ethnic formation on the territory of the Far North. On the one hand, the classical music becomes an ethnos-forming element, since it is based on the concept of preservation of folk traditions in the world adopted to the forms of classical music. On the other hand, constructing the whole process of education on the traditions of classical music the people of Yakutia use this common basis in order to represent themselves to the surrounding world. The classical music is chosen as a method of self-representing as an autonomous and fully independent culture. This

fact is clearly stated in the objectives of school:

- 1) Development of the needs of children in knowledge;
- 2) The development of self-awareness;
- 3) An introduction to the leading spiritual values of the people, citizenship education;
- 4) The development of needs in a healthy lifestyle;
- 5) The harmonization of relations in the school-wide collective;
- 6) Formation of the public opinion on important issues of life, society and human relations.

Therefore, at present time a targeted construction of the new culture is taking place, through the powerful motivation of young people and providing full comprehensive education (including financial, economic, logistical, scientific and methodological, etc.). Invitations to teach and conduct workshops sent to world-famous classical musicians, folk artists and soloists are considered an effective way of training. The purpose of this form of education is to demonstrate the highest achievements in the field of classical music. Another form of learning is to organize creative schools on the basis of the Higher School of Music, in which the teachers of the organization “New Times” conduct master classes.

The structure of musical institutions of the Republic of Yakutia is the following: Yakutsk College of Culture and Arts (opened in 1937), Orchestra and Chorus of the Yakutsk State Opera and Ballet named after Suorun Omolloon, Yakutsk College of Music named after M.N. Zhirkov (opened in 1949), Arctic State Institute of Art (established on 17 January 2000), the State Philharmonic of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), opened January 01, 2011. The musical groups of the Republic of Yakutia include: Composers’ Union (founded in 1979), State vocal group “Tuymaada” (established in 1987), the State ensemble of violinists of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) “Virtuosos of Yakutia” (1994). The main charity funds, contributing

to the development of classical music in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) are: International Charitable Foundation “New Names” (established in 1989), the International Fund “Children of Sakha – Asia”. One of significant cultural institutions is a museum of music and folklore of the peoples of Yakutia (opened in 1990, and in 1991 it was converted into a republican museum; in 1999 it entered into the Register of public cultural institutions). Important composers in the history of classical music of Yakutia are: M.N. Zhirkov, G.A. Grigoryan, G.N. Komrakov, E.E. Alekseev, G.I. Litinsky, N.S. Berestov, Zh.A. Batuev, V.G. Katz, V.M. Bocharov, V.V. Ksenofontov, N.I. Peyko, N.I. Bazhov, L.V. Vishkarev, Z.K. Stepanov, Z.P. Vinokurov, Kh.T. Maximova, S.F. Pavlova, G.M. Nikiforova, O.P. Ivanova. Significant musical events now are the following: a) “Rainbow of the North” – Interregional Competition of instrumentalists of M.N. Zhirkov, under accompanied by the State Concert Orchestra of Yakutia; b) “Northern Lights” – an international festival of music dedicated to the International Day of Music and Public Forum “Society’s Spiritual Potential in the Innovative Development of Yakutia”; c) “Musical Yakutsk” – concerts of United Republic musical groups (State Opera and Ballet Theatre of Sakha (Yakutia) named after D.K. Sivtsev, State Philharmonic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Higher School of Music of Sakha (Yakutia), Arctic State Institute of Art and Culture, Yakutsk College of Music named after M.N. Zhirkov); d) Symphony Concert Orchestras of the Higher School, under the baton of the leading conductors of Moscow, Japan, Italy etc. The professional journal “Yakutia music serves as a means of information notification about musical events in the Republic. The journal provides coverage of major music events in the country. The founders of the journal are the High School of Music and the Office of the educational institutions of the

Ministry of Culture and Spiritual Development of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

Conclusion

Over the past two decades, the field of classical music and culture resumed its functioning as a social mechanism of cultural self-organization of the Yakut ethnic group. This shows, on one hand, a marked influence of the external pressure of the civilizational processes on the reproduction of culture of the peoples of the circumpolar area. On the other hand, it refers to the process of preserving the identity of the Yakut culture in modern times; it tries to attach its unique existence to the world cultural space. In the 1920's to the 90's the classical music in Yakutia was formed in accordance with the strategy of "melting pot" in which the specificity of the northern regional music had to be mastered and reinforced by the traditions of the European level of performance. In 1920-40-ies a trend of merging the national folk music of Yakutia and European traditions of performing appeared; it was an attempt to preserve the core part with the help of classical instruments (piano, wind instruments, classical choral singing). In 1940-60-ies there was a reflection of the features of the Yakut folklore by professional performers of classical art in Moscow material ballet and opera repertoire. In 1960-80-ies there are national performers of folk music in classical programming genres, the main theme was the history and identity of the people of specificity of the northern life in the circumpolar territories. The main events that were broadcasted outwardly were Yakut evenings of music and piano concerts. Inside the territory musical and cultural museums and facilities were created; they were used as one of conservation technologies for song and music. The established musical institutions became "responsible" for comprehensive education and nurturing of Yakut professionals who, in turn, became responsible

for maintaining songs and instrumental folk music of Yakutia as a ethnos-forming element of the culture. Schools of Russian music composers, piano, string, bow, and other schools provided assistance in training and education of artists, composers and teachers, who helped to create the identity and integrity of the modern musical art that can be titled "Yakut professional music".

In modern times we can clearly see the Yakut tendency of ethnos-forming through comprehensive holistic musical education of the young generation, who are supposed (ideally) be virtuoso performers of folk music; connoisseurs of ethnic music of the North Asia; translators of ideals of the unique continental northern musical culture adapted to the generally accepted traditions of musical genres in the civilized world. Meanwhile, the conditions for preventing the young Yakut specialists from migration outside the Northern Territory were created. Firstly, the absence of migration is due to the organized system of educational institutions for targeted high-quality training of musicians. Second, actively supported international cooperation with Western European countries (the organization of competitions and master classes interchange), created an opportunity to study in schools in leading Russian universities and then return and work in the musical institutions of the Republic. In connection with these facts, the Yakut classical music from the turn of 20th – 21st centuries and currently acts as the most effective mechanism of ethnos-forming culture of the northern peoples.

Modern Music and performing arts, built on the basis of a classical system of music education and the current through the close relationship between Yakutsk leading music institutions created as a single ethnos-preserving cultural space. A vivid example of this is the experiment of the Higher School of Music (Canadian Village), which helps to create an intense, individual-oriented vocational training for musically

gifted children, who become raised with the knowledge of themselves as an integral part of the multinational northern region of the country. The patterns of providing education for teachers make students in particular to be culturally plunged into the unique space of the circumpolar area and, at the same time, prepare them for the process of national socialization. Thus, the Yakut classical music builds relationships to the world and European civilization by high achievements in the field of professional performing arts in the future and the expected new wave of creative activity in this area. The role of a “bridge” (or “conductor”) here is played by the Russian culture, because since the 60s of the 20th century, many composers and performers have contributed into broadcasting the achievements of Yakut musicians to the cultural space of the world civilization. To date, there is a number of essential needs for enhancing the production of its own mechanisms of self-education and self-keeping of the core culture of the northern territories. One of them is the lack of music (or archive fund of theoretical and performing editions) for the preservation of cultural values. The second is the need to strengthen the participation of national leaders of culture

in the process of preservation, revival and development of new ways of traditional musical culture, keeping the foundations of folk songs, intonation and national melodies. The third need is the appearance of its own experimental school workshops of unique personalities of the Northern Territories for pupils and students of the Higher School of Music, as in the main workshops of the European and Russian experts translate the cultural traditions of the civilized world, and it minimize the ethnos-preserving and ethnos-forming processes. In turn, the cultural exchange with the indigenous peoples of the north by a professional classical music art contributes to the “likeness” and the integration of cultures. The state cultural policy assists in maintaining the traditional cultural identity of the peoples of the circumpolar area; it is necessary to change the focus of creating cultural and educational conditions for creation of basic conditions for the preservation of the national culture of the northern region. This is possible through the formation of professional musical art based on national traditions; video and audio preservation of Yakut professional performance; improving the work of musical institutions at local and regional levels.

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Феноменологическое описание классической музыки как этнообразующего элемента якутской культуры

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Классическое профессиональное музыкальное искусство Якутии стало ярким самобытным художественным явлением с 1990-х годов. Данный факт указывает, что профессиональное музыкальное искусство Якутии является сравнительно молодой музыкальной культурой. В данной статье на материале анализа источников по истории классической музыки и исследования современного состояния классического музыкального искусства выявлены специфические черты классической музыки как этнообразующего элемента якутской культуры. Между тем назрела существенная необходимость исследования данной области в настоящее время, по мнению ученых, фундаментальных (аналитических и обобщающих) исследований по музыкальной культуре почти не существует. На сегодняшний день имеется ряд существенных потребностей в усилении выработки собственных механизмов самообразования и самосохранения ядра культуры северных территорий. В заключение даны рекомендации в области государственной культурной политики, осуществляющей помощь в сохранении самобытных культурных традиций народов циркумполярных территорий.

Ключевые слова: музыкальная культура Якутии, культурные исследования, культурология, этнос.

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология, 17.00.00 – искусствоведение.
