

17. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MELODIC INTONATION WITHIN THE TRAINING OF PIANIST STUDENTS IN THE MUSIC SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This article elucidates the principles and methods of developing melodic intonation for teaching piano students in the music school setting. The training of the student-pianist in the music school will be focused not only on the formation and development of technical musical-interpretive skills, but also on the perception and penetration of the intonation and semantic content of the performed music.*

Key words: *Melodic intonation, piano instruction, musical-interpretive skills, musical hearing, musical skills*

1. Introduction

If the starting point in human speech begins with the awareness of words, then musical thinking begins with the awareness of musical intonation. Sound as a physical-material element carries in itself a meaning, content and produces certain sensations. Musicologist I. Gagim states: "music is the high-intonation sound that, touching the soul of man, causes inner vibrations. The perception of music implies hearing the intonational meaning"¹⁴⁸ The genesis of musical thought lies in tone-intonation.

The basis of musical thinking is the feeling of musical intonation, which is the formula of B. Asafiev: "intonation is the guide that leads to the content of music, to the thinking/the artistic core. For B. Asafiev intonation is the basic exponent of the music content, being the carrier of the musical meaning, of the musical expression. The feeling of intonation, the penetration into its expressiveness, is the culmination of the development of musical-cognitive capacities."¹⁴⁹

Intonation in music has several meanings. In this respect, we will consider intonation not as the precision of the acoustic height of tones, as false or clean intonation, but as a complex of characteristics (melodic, rhythmic, dynamic, modal, tempo), which, assembled in a musical form, form an expression, an intonational meaning, an artistic image. In this sense, all elements of music - the rhythm, the meter, the tempo, the harmony, the dynamics, the stamp carry an intonational character.

As the question of musical intonation is current and relevant, it is addressed in the works of pedagogues-pianists and musicologists such as: F. Blumenfeld, H. Neuhaus, K. Igumnov, A. Nicolaev, G. Kogan, A. Goldenveizer, E. Orlova, A. Malincovscaia where the climax had B. Asafiev. According to the Russian musicologist, "music is the art of intonation, otherwise it cannot be heard."¹⁵⁰

Melodic intonation is the basis of the interpretative art of piano, where a

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¹⁴⁸ Gagim, I., *The psychological dimension of music*, Iasi: Timpul, 2003

¹⁴⁹ Granețcaia, L., *The imaging dimension of musical creation in piano studies*, "Lira" Publishing House, Chisinau, 2013

¹⁵⁰ Asafyev, B., *Musical form as a process*, L., 1971

significant importance is the student's awareness and reproduction of the interconnection of the intonation relationships of height, duration, intensity, tempo that form the means of expression and the semantic matter of music.

2. Discussions

Piano teachers, in the training process of the student pianist, prioritize the development of the technical side (motor skills), and diminish the intonation aspect of the music. It is considered that a pianist, unlike a violinist, does not intonate the performed sound, which is produced precisely by pressing the key. This invokes the fact that the student's hearing becomes passive and does not go through that phase of intonational cleanliness that student violinists go through.

Developing the flexibility of musical hearing is the main mission of the piano teacher, on which the musical-interpretative performance of the student will depend. Activation of melodic hearing will help to perceive the integrity of the melody line/musical syntax/intonational content, timbral coloring and artistic image.

A. Malincovskaya, a piano teacher, phd in pedagogical sciences, exposes the importance of internal hearing in that: "internal hearing or the ability to freely operate music without voice or instrument, is an important international criterion"¹⁵¹ Russian pianist F. Blumenfeld noted that: "the real musician hears music inside, with internal hearing, and his fingers only reproduce it. But there are pianists who 'chatter' with their 'deaf' fingers, previously not hearing the musical message that they will convey to the listener through his performance".¹⁵²

The development of polyphonic hearing and polyphonic thinking based on the study of polyphonic creations will significantly influence/develop the formation of melodic intonation skills. In the context of problems related to the intonational expressiveness of sound, pianist students, as a rule, are faced not only with melodic monody, but with polyphons on two or more voices, the appropriation of which requires a high degree of intelligence, good memory, auditory self-control and advanced technical-artistic skills. For the development of timbro-dynamic hearing, as one of the superior forms of musical hearing, it is recommended to listen to the symphonic orchestra, which with a multiple variety of musical instruments embodies a rich palette of sonorities.

The focus will basically be on the student's imagination while imitating the sound of the instruments in the symphony orchestra (violin, contrabass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trombone). Exploring the various registers of the piano keyboard can add complexity and depth to the performance, and the pianist can adjust the force of their attack to create subtle variations in timbre.

The Italian composer and pianist F. Busoni mentioned: "the piano is a splendid actor destined to imitate the voice of any musical instrument and any sound", and the Russian composer L. Oborin remarked: „it is important for the performer to hear the timbre of the piano, whose sound may be warm or cold, soft or sharp, bright or gloomy, bright or pale”.

Sound is a means of expression for a pianist, like watercolor and light for a painter. A real pianist fascinates you not only with his technique, but also with the

¹⁵¹ Malincovskaya A., *Piano performance intonation*, M., 1990

¹⁵² Ibidem

intonational expressiveness of the performed sound. The Russian pianist N. Perelman talks about sound, like an object: "dense, solid, soft, rounded, deep, heavy, light, long, short", even attributing to it ethical qualities such as: sound "noble, fine, graceful, supple".

Melodic intonation, like intonation in speech, follows a certain rhythm. Rhythm – a means of artistic expressiveness, alive, which reflects the intonational content of the music. A fast tempo can convey energy and excitement, while a slow tempo can create a more calm and contemplative atmosphere. In the opinion of the Russian musicologist E. Orlova: "intonation is the 'soul of rhythm', rhythm and intonation are inseparable like the beating of the pulse and blood circulation". Pianists know the term *rubato*, which means the freedom of musical-rhythmic movements. *Rubato* is a characteristic term for free meter, it is also called intonable, subjective, internally experienced rhythm.

Dynamic nuance is an essential component of musical interpretation on the piano that contributes to the expression of emotions, to the creation of a variety of sound colors adding variability, subtlety and interest to the piano art. Intonation in these cases can help convey a variety of emotions, from tender and delicate to strong and passionate. It is known that the *forte* tone exhibited in musical works of different character will have a different intensity. Exploring the piano's sonority with a semantic emotional coloring will provide the student with opportunities for varied and multisonic sound gradation, and the end being a deep, velvety and expressive sound emission.

The song is certainly a powerful means of expressiveness in music. Through the combination of rhythm, tonality, harmony and dynamics, the song can convey a wide range of emotions and messages. The Greek-language song translates as 'melos' - song and 'ode' - intonation. According to B. Asafiev, the concept of melodic embodies all forms of melody and melodicity.

Melos includes in itself the essence of melodicity: cantability, dynamism, character, tempo, rhythm, timbre, the integrity of the form, from which the image of the horizontal, what we call melodic intonation, emerged. B. Asafiev mentioned: "the melody was and remains a superior expression of music and its most expressive-intelligible element".¹⁵³

The Russian pianist F. Blumenfeld stated that: "a cantabile interpretation implies the penetration of the principle of vocal art into piano art, which implies the attempt to imitate and transpose the expressive qualities of the human voice in the piano interpretation".¹⁵⁴ The sustain pedal can be compared to the way a singer breathes, the use of which can add vocal quality to the performance and create a wide and rich sound.

3. Results

The suppleness of the piano sound is achieved over time, by implementing various procedures:

- the free and elastic fall of the hands by adjusting the weight, starting from a light touch, up to the energetic action of the entire piano apparatus;

¹⁵³ Orlova E., *Asafiev's intonation theory as a doctrine of the specifics of music*. Moscow: Music, 1998

¹⁵⁴ Malinkovskaya A., op. cit.

- the principle of horizontal thinking by highlighting intonation points;
- breathing of the hands, of the wrist, body movement.

The development of melodic intonation in the training of the pianist student will proceed through the implementation of some development technologies and methods:

- The method of vocalizing the melodic line;
- The method of perceiving the horizontal sense of music,
- The method of revealing intonation points;
- The method of changing the means of expression;
- The method of plastic intonation;
- The method of sensing the voltage between intervals.

The method of vocalizing the melodic line: imitating the human voice, timbre, breathing, ascending and descending movement of the melody will determine the aesthetic value of the melodic intonation. It is worth noting B. Asafiev's conception of the penetration of the *bel canto* style into instrumental art, of the emotional and expressive warmth specific to the human voice. Following the speech syntax: diction, phrasing, punctuation, breathing, the principles of melodic intonation will be established.

The methodology for the development of melodic intonation will be based on the study of the piano cantilena, with the emphasis being placed on the ability to sense the depth of the performed key. Therefore, with time the student will interpret with his 'smart' and 'audible' fingers that sense the pitch of the executed sound and the interval correlation.

The method of perceiving the horizontal sense of music: revealing the musical image requires horizontal intonation thinking, which includes certain sound sequences (motives, phrases, sentences). A. Malincovscaia stated: "musical sounds are not static bricks from which music is formed, but a living, dynamic, narrative process, in continuous expressive - intonational movement".¹⁵⁵

The development of the horizontal sense of musical discourse is due to 'pianistic breathing' as a quality of intonational thinking. The concept of 'pianist breath' refers to the use of spaces and pauses between musical phrases to create an expressive and natural performance on the piano.

This term does not literally imply physical breathing, but suggests the creation of coherent phrases with a respiratory structure in its interpretation. Pianistic breathing is performed in the form of imagination, accompanied by elastic movements of the *poignet*. Russian pianist and musicologist G. Kogan states: "the pianist's hands must 'breathe' during the performance, which is synonymous with the truthfulness of the *legato* articulation".¹⁵⁶

Piano instruction requires the student's education and attention to musical pauses, which will not be perceived as meaningless stops. The pause participates equally with the sound in the creation of the musical image, being a powerful means of expressiveness bringing depth and subtlety to the artistic interpretation. A well-placed break can have a dramatic impact on the listener by enhancing the intonation expressiveness of the music. The pause serves as a moment of respite before an

¹⁵⁵ Malinkovskaya A., op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ Kogan G., *Work of a pianist*, Moscow, Music, 1969

emotional development or can create suspense before a significant change.

The method of perceiving interval tension: refers to the intervals between sounds and how they follow each other in a melody forming a distinct melodic outline. Ascending melodic lines can suggest optimism or hope, while descending melodic lines can suggest sadness or reflection. Melodic intonation elucidates the hearing of the bond/tension created between intervals, by sounding the space between intervals as something alive and elastic.

G. Kogan remarked: "the pianist must penetrate with his hearing between sounds and intervals, give each phrase the respective intonation; a skilled pianist 'vocalizes' the intervals and executes them with an inner effort imitating the peculiarities of the human voice, like a swimmer facing the power of water".¹⁵⁷

The development of melodic intonation in the training process of the pianist student will be implemented through:

- correct posture in relation to the instrument: free and natural movements, breathing of the hands and wrist;
- the suppleness of the piano sound: as a means of realizing the musical image aimed at expressive sound emission, coordination with hearing, phrasing, character and style of the musical work;
- the correlation of the technical and intonational aspects through the flexibility of sound links;
- the formation of various interpretation techniques by having the modes of attack: *legato, non legato, staccato, portamento*.
- diversifying the selection of the musical-artistic repertoire: (era, genre, style).

4. Conclusions

Melodic intonation is the core of musical imagery, an important means of musical language that directly reflects the content/idea/tonal expression of musical creation. The veracity of B. Asafiev's conception directly aims at the perception of music as an intonational art: "thought, intonation, musical form are indissoluble: thought as sound expression, becomes intonation, reflected in a musical form constitutes the integrity of the artistic image".¹⁵⁸

The piano teacher builds his pedagogical path based on the sequence of specific musical-pianistic methods, advocating for the valorization of the individual musical potential, the diversification of the artistic repertoire, the perception of music as an expressive-intonational art, the formation of the student's musical culture with the possibility of reaching a high level of interpretive performance.

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