

North German Organ School, Organic Composition as a Cultural Phenomenon

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Abstract:

The article "Northern German Organ School: Organic Composition as a Cultural Phenomenon" analyzes the significance of the school of organ composers of northern Germany in the context of the Baroque. The author proposes to abandon "Bach-centrism" and consider other Baroque masters, whose works are an important stage in the musical history of Western Europe. Particular attention is paid to the formation of the Nord-German style through the synthesis of old German traditions of organ playing with new phenomena of the Renaissance and Baroque. The importance of organists in the creation of new genres and forms of music is also emphasized. Using the example of the Nord-Germanic prelude, the author illustrates the transition to autonomous instrumental forms of music based on tonal thinking. The article highlights the fantasy style as an important element in the formation of a modern autonomous musical form in the Baroque, based on tonal harmony, different from vocal-oriented styles. Overall, the article offers new insights into Baroque music and the historical context of the formation of musical concepts in Europe, with an emphasis on the significance of the organ composers of northern Germany.

Keywords: North German organ school, organic composition, cultural phenomenon, modern culture, historicism, Bach-centrism, Baroque music, North German organ music, organists, Lutheran theology, concert style, fantasy style, tonal thinking, diversity, European musical work, Cosmos.

NORTH GERMAN ORGAN SCHOOL

One of the defining features of modern culture is its special, "flaming" historicism. The culture of our days finds itself in an "endless dialogue" with the entire cultural heritage of humanity. A well-known scientist figuratively characterizes the situation at the end of the 20th century as "the failure

of culture into the depths of itself” (A.V. Mikhailov). The object of culture becomes culture itself, the subject of art, its theme - art itself, its past and present.

And in musicological research there is an active tendency to go beyond the narrow framework of the few, recognized as classical, peak phenomena, from the point of view of which the rest of musical history was interpreted. Thus, Baroque music has long been thought of under the sign of “Bach-centrism.” Many stylistic manners and stable traditions, which in this era existed independently, were rooted in their own aesthetic principles, were given “aspiration” to the work of Bach, which, meanwhile, belongs to the “extreme”, limiting phenomena of Baroque music, standing, moreover, , at the very last boundaries of the era, and therefore cannot in any way serve as a measure for everything that exists in Baroque music before and beyond Bach.

Bach-centrism gave rise to the extrapolation of ideas about the most important types of composition and patterns of musical thinking, born of Bach's music, to the art of masters of previous generations, the consequence of which is in many cases an underestimation of the full extent of the originality of their creations. By abandoning the Bach-centric point of view on the music of the 17th century, we open up new artistic worlds for ourselves. One of these worlds is the North German organ school, the heritage of whose masters is known very little in our organ composition of the North German school (the concept came into use at the end of the 19th century; Max Seifert originally applied this expression in relation to the galaxy of German students of Sweelinck, who came mainly from northern Germany).

The work of the leading masters of the school - Jacob, Pretorius (1586 - 1651), Heinrich Scheidemann (c.1596 - 1663), Franz Tunder (1614 - 1667), Matthias Weckmann (1621 - 1674), Jan Adam Reincken (1623 - 1722), Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 - 1707), Vincent Lübeck (1656 - 1640), Georg Böhm (1661 - 1723), Nikolaus Bruns (1665 -1697) - one of the pinnacles of European musical art. The organ compositions of the school, which developed a distinctive style and a unique language, constitute an entire independent and important stage in the history of Western European music, in the evolution of musical thinking and the formation of musical forms of the New Age. The creations of the masters of the school are one of the most striking phenomena of the musical Baroque, the focus of the essential features of Baroque culture, concentrated here, perhaps to the maximum extent.

Considering the organ composition of the North German school as a cultural phenomenon, we thereby consider how culture appears to us in the work. It seems to us that it is clearly insufficient to limit the study of an organ composition to its musical text alone. After all, thereby one loses sight of its non-self-identity and lack of self-sufficiency. North German organ music retains an improvisational status in its everyday existence; preserved exclusively in handwritten form (the first editions appeared only in the 19th century), musical texts are nothing more than recorded improvisations - one or more options from a countless number of possibilities for their implementation. The instability of the text and the preservation (in indirect form) of the applied function of organ music necessitate the distinction between North German organ composition and the modern “absolute” opus and result in the impossibility of adequately applying research categories to this music. The instrument cannot remain out of sight: North German compositions are primarily compositions for organ, and their most important characteristic properties are generated exclusively by the instrument and the functional context in which it existed.

Consideration of a musical phenomenon from the position of modern historical science requires delving into that hidden layer of the content of music, which reveals it as a manifestation of a certain type of culture and the corresponding picture of the world - the concept of being and the universe.

Research method. The basis of this study is the method of historicism, which in the current cultural situation seems to be the only possible one for art historical research addressed to the artistic phenomena of the past.

Such research requires “reverse translation,” that is, returning to phenomena that have become an integral part of modern culture their original, original meaning, “cleansing” them of later semantic layers. The concrete implementation of this method occurs in two complementary directions. On the one hand, this is a cultural-typological study, on the other, a consideration of cultural phenomena in the context of the real socio-historical conditions of their existence.

As a result of studying the operating conditions of North German organ composition, a new concept of mediated functionality is proposed, characterizing the special status of music, which is not reducible to either autonomy or applied functionality.

The single phenomenon of human activity can be considered in three aspects: temporary, recording changes and transformations (history), the aspect of focus on the objective world and its transformation (civilization) and the aspect of focus of activity on the person himself - his spiritual self-development (culture). Culture is the activity of introducing human order into the world—that is, human meaning. The non-discrete flow of culture, developing over time, as the human meaning of history, goes through a number of stages in its formation, which can be considered in the form of “historical sections” - types of culture. The world order visible and comprehended by a culture is a product of this culture - a set of structural ideas about the world characteristic of a given type of culture, often denoted in modern research by the concept “model of the world”. The model of the world is indirectly reflected in the structure (syntax) of artistic texts - works of art.

The concept of the Baroque as a cultural and historical era in scientific thought is closely related to the concept of the New Age and is usually associated with its initial period. Radical changes in the foundations of European culture, which marked the end of the ancient-medieval cultural tradition, occurred much later - only at the end of the 18th - beginning of the 19th centuries. Only in the 19th century is the transition to the culture of the New Age completely carried out, in which a person becomes a “subject” - a point of reference, and the world turns into a picture that appears before a person. A change in the essence of the relationship between a person and the world causes profound changes in all areas of human life, including in art. The most important property of modern music is its focus on human nature, the universal intelligibility of musical language. Music now seeks support not in the field of metaphysical essences, but in the “physical nature of sound.”

This radical change occurs only thanks to the “critical mass” of essence gradually accumulated in the depths of traditional ancient-medieval culture: features of the New Time, which, until a certain time, were not able to change the old system as a whole. The transition from ancient-medieval culture to modern culture, due to its significance and depth, occupies a historical space of several centuries. In foreign historiography, the term “early modern time” is used to describe this cultural and historical turn. Early modern times include several cultural and historical eras (from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment). The Baroque era occupies a special position among them: it is marked by exceptional tension in the relationship between the medieval system of worldviews as a whole, which retains its strength, and the signs of modern culture, which are already visible with sufficient certainty, but do not yet mean the formation of a new culture-system.

Baroque is closely connected with the Renaissance, continuing the cultural turn it began. The Renaissance directed the subsequent development of art along the path of gaining autonomy. However, the presence of an organizing center within a work, a creation of “human hands,” presupposed by the autonomous status of art means at the same time no less than the loss of the world’s divine centrality, calling into question the very unity of the ancient-medieval cosmos: the possibility of autonomous artistic creativity is a sign that man claims to what is God's prerogative. Ancient-medieval culture sees its limit here. Hence the special tension of the existence of tradition

in the Baroque era, its reflection on itself: culture strives with all its might to maintain the integral state of tradition.

The modern concept of a musical work is limited by historical and cultural frameworks, and therefore the natural question is about the boundaries of this concept and, within these boundaries, about its features in relation to different stylistic eras. The concept of a musical work is rightly associated with the culture of modern times. In a baroque musical work there is no “internal”, organic integrity of a modern work, based on the presentation and development of thought, on the “movement of feelings.” A baroque work maintains its unity in other ways. This may be evidence of an external plan: thus, a decisive argument in favor of the unity of Bach’s collection known as the “Mass in B minor,” which is a collection of parts of the liturgy written at different times, turns out to be a through pagination of the final Bach manuscript. Or vice versa: the unity of a musical work can be ensured by something “too internal”, belonging to the “secret poetics” of the Baroque. This may be a rhetorical scheme that is not perceptible to the ear, underlying the composition of the work, or the symbolism of a number, behind which there are alchemy, astrology, and natural magic. Finally, secret poetics can turn into explicit ones, and numerical symbolism turns into sound architectonics. However, the number underlying the Baroque work only once again emphasizes the different nature of the Baroque opus in comparison with a genuine modern opus. The audible architectonic harmony of such a work makes noticeable in it the absence of any internal consistent development, the “power ambitus” of which would extend to the entire whole - the baroque form is always composed of small wholes. Built on the principle of proportionality, a baroque composition can be a subject of contemplation, but not empathy or “aesthetic identification” of the work and the listener. The whole of a baroque work constructs itself as a configuration of correlated and diversely reflected parts. Baroque as a type of culture represents the true quintessence of the essential features of early modern times, a unique crossroads where behind the universal, applicable to any time, concepts of “old” and “new” there are cultural and historical realities of enormous scale.

The most important feature of the culture of northern Germany at the turn of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries - its perceptive character. The originality of the North German style is formed as a result of the synthesis of the old German organ tradition of “fundamental practice” of improvisation over the Cantus Firmus with the diverse newest phenomena of late Renaissance and Baroque music that came through Dutch, Italian and English connections and contacts. It is noteworthy that new genres and new forms of music-making arise and are mastered in North German music precisely thanks to the activities of organists. The organist is here at the center of his musical life, gathering all its forms around himself. The reason for this is the specific sociocultural situation in the north of Germany, where the focus of musical (as well as cultural) life in general are large cities, the true musical center of which is the main city cathedral. A powerful factor in bringing organ music to the forefront of the musical life of northern Germany is the attitude towards it in Lutheran theology. Luther's reform leads to a rethinking of the status of the church organist, as well as the status of the clergy in general. The semantic center of Lutheran worship is not the rite of transubstantiation of gifts, as in the Catholic liturgy, but preaching - the planting of the Word of God in the souls of parishioners. The priest becomes a “preacher, and those who assist him in worship, including musicians, assist him in bringing the Word of God to the community.

In Lutheranism, organ music fell under the theological category of *adiaphora* (Greek: “indifferent”), that is, it was not necessary for the very essence of the church, the liturgy, it was not important for their decoration and in order to evoke reverence in the flock. The essence of *adiaphora* is that it is good or bad not in itself, but from the point of view of the appropriateness of its application. This status gave music greater freedom in specific ways of its implementation, without regulating, in contrast to Catholic worship, specific means and forms of music-making, which in the conditions of northern Germany became one of the prerequisites for the unprecedented flowering of organ art. It is the organists in the North German region who become bearers of a new concert style, which,

through their mediation, penetrates into the liturgy, giving birth to new vocal and instrumental forms (concert, aria - solo cantata). From the middle of the century, the place of the choral motet performed on church holidays was gradually replaced by “music with the organ” (“Musik auf die Orgel”) - performance in the organ gallery under the direction of the organist of solo vocal concerts with a general bass; the spiritual concert “with the organ” also replaces the traditional intabulation of the motet, performed by the organist during communion.

By the middle of the 17th century, when the style system of Baroque music was taking shape, the general rhetorical concept of exordium was replaced by the category of fantasy style, which covered all types of prelude on keyboard instruments. The difference between the fantasy style - as the "freest" (- from all other baroque styles - is in its disconnection from the verbal text; the author's fantasy reveals here the "natural properties and hidden foundations of harmony." In this purely instrumental style, the specifically instrumental quality of keyboard music is realized, undermining the foundations of counterpoint designed for vocal polyphony - the toccata playful movement of “black notes” throughout the high-pitched register space and the freedom of modulation deployment in the space of the mode are not limited here by the framework of repercussion and the tessitura limits of vocal voices. The fantasy style has a dual compositional and improvisational nature in it, genres exist as recorded improvisations, which are “played impromptu,” but “for the most part, they are written down, according to order, on paper.” Possessing the status of recorded improvisation and being located on the value scale of baroque music after “word-related” vocal styles, genres. Fantasy style play, however, a crucial role in the formation of new trends aimed at the emergence of a modern autonomous musical form based on tonal thinking. Thus, the large North German prelude becomes one of the earliest examples of a large-scale unified (non-cyclic) autonomous instrumental form of European music. Due to the already clearly audible tonal centralization of the entire composition, it belongs to the category of large tonal forms, it represents not only the pre-classical, but also the pre-Bach type of their embodiment.

Consideration of North German organ composition as a phenomenon of Baroque culture leads to a statement of the originality of the aesthetics of the North German style as an "aesthetics of harmony of diversity, different from the new ideal of unity that came with the Bach-Silbermann generation. The difference between North German composition and modern European musical work is also stated. If the latter is organically unified and is fundamentally indissoluble, the prototype of its structure is rooted in the new European concept of “nature”, then the unity of the first is achieved through highly artificial combinatorics and the correlation of parts of the configuration, the composition in principle (and in real existence) can be dismantled or recombined, its prototype follows look for in the ancient idea of the universe as a hierarchy of the Cosmos, which retains its relevance even in the Baroque era.

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