

Aesthetic Views of S. I. Taneyev in a Context of Philosophy of the 19th – Beginning of the 20th Century

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Abstract—The article is based on an analysis of records, letters, diaries of Taneyev invites to consider the composer's ideas about the future of Russian music in the context of the national philosophy of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century. Special attention is given to disclosing of the contents of the notion 'national' in Taneyev's views the sights which maintenance specifies in accord of its esthetics to Russian religious idealism.

Keywords—*Sergey Taneyev; Russian music; notion 'national'; Russian style; Orthodox Christianity*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1880's many Russian philosophers remarked that European people's minds were influenced by the 'progress', that the national diversity of human existence was neutralized, and the idea of nation is substituted by the so called 'society'. The ideas of Taneyev directed on development of Russian style and strengthening the national consciousness of musicians-compatriots are perceived by reaction to materialistic and positivistic esthetic representations, an esthetics style universalism. For him, similar to many Russian thinkers of that time, the root of the crisis that took place in European culture is the result of the pathological transformation of human intellectual values of 'the crisis of spirit'.

II. TANEYEV: WHAT IS A RUSSIAN COMPOSER SUPPOSED TO DO?

In Taneyev's opinion, 'the high human aspirations' in creative work and life give way to the cult of earthly comforts [1].

In this context, the pathos of Taneyev's words from his notes *What Should Russian Composers Do?*, dated back to 1879, becomes clear. He writes: 'Every Russian musician's task is to contribute to creation of the national music'. It's the reinforcement of the idea of nation that efforts of many Russian artists and philosophers of the 19th century were directed to.

However, it's important to differentiate between Taneyev's understanding of the national form, for example,

V. V. Stasov's vision of this notion. These are two conceptually different methodological positions on the way of creating the national.

Stasov considered that 'generally recognized authorities ... do not exist' [2] for the new Russian school; moreover – 'the artist has neither right nor possibility to represent centuries that he himself didn't see and didn't study from life' [3]. That's why, apart from the nationality, another major characteristic of Russian style according to Stasov's theory is realism based on 'denial of ideality'. Such understanding of realism is close to N. G. Chernyshevsky's teaching that sees the aim of art in reproducing reality, explaining and judging it. It should be noted that such influence of the ideology of positivism and materialism is not observed in the philosophy of Taneyev's music. Taneyev sees the aim of artistic creative work in augmenting spiritual existence, its creation, attachment to the eternal world. Taneyev promotes realism in its higher sense – spiritual realism, which speaks for the ontologism of the aesthetic ideas of the Russian musician.

Now then, let us distinguish the principal aspects of the contents of the notion 'national' in Taneyev's views.

Firstly, Taneyev doesn't intend to reproduce what is immediately seen in Russian life or to directly quote musical folk themes.

Taneyev considered that the Russian nationality gradually beings to grows within an artist; an artist acquires a national temperament, mentality, way of thinking under the natural influence of impressions of the whole, including the land, the people, and the world that surrounds them throughout the whole life. Here is an abstract from Taneyev's letter to Tchaikovsky from August 18, 1880: '...the fact that you were born in Russia, heard the songs, lived among the nature that influenced the temperament of the Russian people, – these and many other reasons make your music often have a special, different from European character'.

This brings to mind A. S. Khomyakov's words that are congenial with Taneyev's utterance: 'The artist doesn't create with by his own forces, but the spiritual power of the

nation creates in the artist' [4]. We find a similar statement in the writings of the Russian philosopher S. N. Bulgakov, Taneyev's contemporary: 'Nationality is identified in the intuitive experiencing or reality. <...> The national spirit is not limited to any of its demonstrations, doesn't fuse with them, doesn't stiffen in them' [5].

'*The high human aspirations*' is the principal indicator of the Russian national character for Taneyev. That's why as the basic reference criterion of Russian art he proposes above all the ethos, the focus on 'the inner man'.

CONCEPT "NATIONAL" OF ESTHETIC VIEWS OF TANEYEV

Secondly, the national for Taneyev is the principal dimension in the composer's identity. He is looking for the Russian idiom or the traces of what is implied in the phrase 'think Russian'.

The basic aim of Taneyev's creative and experimental work with folk songs [6] is not so much to accurately preserve the melody source in his interpretation as it is to obtain imaginative sensibility to the national stylistic features, national music language with its free, flowing constructs, asymmetrical metric, absence of express theme contrasts, long breath and freedom of melody development, melodious singing of words. These are features that are associated with a specific genre of Russian song, different from the archaic layer of folk culture: the long drawn lyrical song. Taneyev felt that the melodious long drawn, or chanting basis is a very distinctive feature of Russian thinking. In his letter to P. I. Tchaikovsky he writes: '*...I repeat, Russian melodies must be put on the basis of music education*' (dated September 18, 1880) [7]. Gradual implantation of national melodic material in the composers' musical conscience and formation of respective arrangement methods can, in Taneyev's opinion, contribute to the nascence of Russian style.

Thirdly, Taneyev, unlike Stasov, finds essential the Russian composers' receptivity to everything really valuable in European music. He declares the composers' attention to the treasures of European past to be '*the direct way forward*'.

In Taneyev's interpretation, the idiosyncratic quality of Russian style should be the harmonious combination of national Russian and European classical principles, possible in, for example, the form of 'the Russian fugue' or 'the orthodox cantata'.

In his day, M. I. Glinka strained after 'espousing the western fugue with the norms of our music' (from the letter to K. A. Bulgakov dated November, 1856) [8]. The same way Taneyev calls the countrymen to become familiar with '*the experience of the early contrapuntists*' (from the notebook, February, 1879) [9]. Taneyev considered himself to be as good as a successor of the work started by Glinka who put together a 'program' of creating national music in accordance with the rules, unique for different peoples.

After Taneyev's perspective, European forms perform the *function* of a kind of *source* in the process of development of Russian style. But their value is apparent only in case Russian art preserves the national rootedness. Being an adherer of Pochvennichestvo, Taneyev writes: '*It*

shouldn't be forgotten that only what's rooted in the nation is strong. <...> On this condition, acquaintance with European art will do us inestimable service, the same as it did to Pushkin, Turgenev' [10].

Such productive openness to the values of European culture was interpreted by V. F. Odoevsky and the Slavophiles as the 'all-encompassing' or 'all-embracing' 'multilaterality of Russian spirit', by Dostoyevsky as the Russian person's ability to 'understand people of all nations', the capability of 'universal responsiveness' [11]. I. S. Turgenev called it 'the force of specific appropriation' [12]. These expressions largely correspond to the framework of V. I. Solovyov's philosophy of vseidinstvo, or 'all-unity'.

It's the yearning of the creative ego to unite with the 'universal whole' that explains Taneyev's 'delving' into the depth of the history of European and Russian culture.

However, Taneyev leaves the leading role in the Russian synthesis for the proper, authentic basis: the experience of Russian music, mentality, and orthodox Christian devoutness. Taneyev gave special importance for the national culture to *the development of the style of Russian church music*. This is another distinctive feature of Taneyev's understanding of the national.

Searching for the ideal kind of national Russian music, Taneyev relies mostly on the choral genres that inherit the vocal choir tradition, in particular the tradition of Old Russian cult singing. It's natural that Taneyev's thoughts of the future of national music drive him to the idea of the genre of the orthodox cantata within the framework of Russian church singing.

III. CONCLUSION

In search of the ideal of national Russian music Taneyev primarily relies on choral genres, inheriting vocal and choral tradition, particularly the tradition of old Russian religious singing. Naturally, Taneyev's thoughts about the future of Russian music lead him to the idea of the cantata genre in the mainstream of Russian Church-singing art. In his letter to Ya. P. Polonsky from the 8th of January 1881, the composer writes: "As the basis I want to take <...> the cantatas of ancient melodies of our Church and therefore to write an Orthodox cantata. <...> I don't want <...> to write the cantata on the opening of the exhibition and on the anniversary of the Emperor, namely, on the opening of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior" (underlined by S. I. Taneyev) [15]. Cantata "John of Damascus", in its full meaning, was the realization of idea of the Orthodox cantatas. The idea of reconstruction of Old Russian singing, searching for the original national style of church music, systematically working at the creation of znamenny chants transcriptions, committing the implementation of the 'program' of developing melodic thinking in his educational work with the composers of Moscow school (the results of which are works by Taneyev's students S. V. Rakhmaninov, A. T. Grechaninov, A. D. Kastalsky and others), and participating in the events that took place in the sphere of orthodox choral singing – all this points out Taneyev's definite involvement into the process of formation of the so called 'New

Direction' in spiritual music of the turn of the 20th century and, on a broader scale, of the cultural movement known as the Russian Spiritual Renaissance.

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