

On Conducting Experience of Festivals

Contests of Enlightening—Educational Programs on Piano Playing for Students of Various Specialties

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Abstract—Piano as an additional instrument for musicians of different specialties (winds, chorus, folk, strings, etc.) is the most important component of raising their level of education. The ability to play on such a versatile instrument as piano allows musicians to master variety of styles and genres of music from different eras. Teachers of this discipline are searching for intensive forms of mastering the instrument increasing students' interest in improving skills and knowledge. This article is an excursion into diversity of educational forms as the most effective ones.

Keywords—*Extensive and intensive forms of education; educational programs; playing music; mastering the instrument; knowledge; skills*

“Never can a word explain comprehensively the entire depth of music; on the other hand, without a word, it is impossible to connect with the spirit of this finest sphere of feelings cognition.”

V. Sukhomlinsky

I. EDUCATIONAL FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS INTEREST FORMING

A good tradition has come about to conduct festivals-contests of enlightening-educational programs “Music and word” within the walls of the Russian Academy of Music. The initiative of such out-of-beaten-track event conduct belongs to teachers of the inter-faculty piano training course embracing most part of students studying in the higher educational institution. Among participants of this contest, there are Russian and foreign students of various specialties of intermediary and higher musical educational institutions, for whom piano is not their main specialty. Along with this, in line with the contest requirements, namely piano is that instrument, to which a key role is given in each represented program.

Apart from our competitors' performing mastery, also, they are required being able to get the program across to an audience in a form of a literary-musical composition or a detailed verbal commentary. The main distinctive feature of the contest consisted in its enlightening-educational directional effect, while as for the contest name (“Music and word”), key words were taken defining tasks set for our competitors.

The idea of such event conducting was not coincidental. One may say, it matured up in the deepest subsurface of Gnesins' traditions laid down by its founders. The impulse being posed once by the family of the musicians-missionaries Gnesins promoted dedication to the idea of the enlightening-educational activities among the chair teachers over the whole period of the piano training course history in the higher educational institution. After the activities initiating by way of charitable concerts arrangement for diverse population strata, various forms of enlightening-educational events were put here to an evaluation: oral magazines, lectures-concerts, program cycles of concert teams, etc. Over the years, the work in this direction started gaining a systemic nature, in which beyond doubt, the major achievement is seen of one of chairholders Vera Dmytriyeвна Nyrkova. For more than forty years, she supervised the personnel. Finding her devotion in enlightening-educational activities, she contributed actively to introducing – into piano training course – of methods of studying basics of musical enlightening-educational work. Conducting of seminars-concerts and cathedral contests for the best performance of large opuses or polyphonic pieces with verbal annotations, conducting of literary-musical compositions in a format of business games and practicing of many other activities became the stable part of the educational practice.

II. FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF LEADING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The experience of the enlightening-educational work of our Gnesins' teachers has attracted an attention of colleagues and gained widespread in many intermediary and higher educational institutions of the country. A special contribution to this mission was done by the work of the piano training course Section attached to Scientific-Methodical Council of General Board of educational and scientific institutions of Culture Ministry of Russia, chairman of which was V.D. Nyrkova. It was exactly on one of meetings of this Section that the idea appeared to show achievements in this sphere, which became a trigger for conducting (in December 2000) of Ist All-Russian festival-audition of musical- enlightening-educational programs. Being confined to the 140-year jubilee of the Moscow's department of the Russian Musical Community, it was a great success and laid foundation to the

new musical-enlightening-educational festivals conducting tradition.

By the first festival-audition, the Second one followed (2002.) and then Third one (2005). Starting from the Fourth Festival (2007), the event format changed a bit. With the introduction of the form of a contest, it was transformed into a festival-contest. From then, for preparing best programs, diplomas of five levels got be awarded as well as special diplomas for idea originality, best piano performance, scenic realization, etc. However on the subsequent festivals-contests – Fifth one (2009) and Sixth one (2011), – the project authors refused from prize-winning places distribution but instead, they introduced nominations, in accordance with which winners were determined for the best musical-enlightening-educational program, the best piano performance, the ensemble mastery, the best announcer, the best scenario, the theme originality, etc. This way, the project authors tried attracting attention to creative-enlightening-educational component of this project –

Along with this, this initiative did not collect a unanimous support. By some colleagues – chair members, an opinion was spoken out about an excessive devotion to the enlightening-educational activities, which allegedly diverts attention from high-priority performance tasks. There were heard also that in other regional centers, more and more contests were conducted of namely piano-performance direction for students of diverse specialties. In this connection, the question sounded very sharply, whether the chair would recede from its positions in the musical-performing direction of the piano training course or not – with due consideration of the fact of devoting so much of time and efforts to the enlightening-educational activities notwithstanding that, of course, the latter was considered as a very noble occupation.

The selection of winners on nominations instead of the ordinary prize-winning places distribution caused a great deal of fair objections, too. As it turned out on the practice, choosing only one winner in each nomination was a not simple task at all. In cases that indeed someone distinguished him/herself among participants, it seemed not quite fair to leave merits of others unnoticed, even if the latter were inferior to the winner, all the more so because it was a matter of a contest among students. After all, the results disappointed some participants and their tutors. Also, teachers paid attention to the fact that diplomas of contest winners with the wording “For the best –” did not fit in the traditional format with specifying of laureate’s grade. Besides, unfortunately, such wording aroused questions at officials of higher ranks at reports submitting about pedagogical achievements. Alas, such was the time spirit.

After long discussions, already the Seventh All-Russian festival-contest (2014) was conducted in the traditional format with conferment of the titles of laureates of I, II, III grades and award winners. Not only the enlightening-educational inclination of the event was not refused but instead this idea was fixed as an underlying one, which was expressed in calling the festival-contest “Music and Word”.

Also, there was developed the own emblem of the event with the picture of lyre and pen.

In the “Statement on Contest”, nominations were defined in all most popular performing genres: piano solo, piano ensemble, instrumental group, vocal and piano, a teacher and a student (piano ensemble), collective literary-musical programs. Along with it, the main requirement was as follows: a performance in any nomination should consist of a performance of a musical program and an artistic commentary to it or showing of author’s plot-line composition with musical illustrations.

It was fine that this festival-contest collected a considerable quantity of participants showing not only a good level of solo and ensemble performance but also representing interesting ideas of enlightening-educational content. The next Eighth festival-contest taking place in 2016 not only fixed the organizational and content-related criteria of the event but also increased its status up to international one owing to the broadened geography of participants.

The three busy days became a bright demonstration of creative ideas in solo/ensemble/larger group-based programs. In general, the repertoire of the competitive program was diversified and interesting: there were performed both classical and little-known piano, vocal and instrumental opuses of various styles and epochs. Not limited in the topics selection of the musical enlightening-educational programs, the young contest participants represented a lot of plots and versions of their composition realization, among which there were programs laid on a poetic or prosaic literary text, detailed verbal comments to the performed opuses as well as author’s compositions on a special written scenario.

It should be noted that acquiring the experience of the enlightening-educational work, more and more often, while creating their programs, the students started coming to the synthesis of music, word and graphic arts. Using of a conceptually thought-out video-line in some compositions promoted better perception and listeners’ interestedness growth.

This time, a nice surprise became compositions, in which the students used some elements of acting techniques. So, for example, in the collective literary-musical program “Alexander Glazunov. Dialogues”, by students of Nizhny-Novgorod’s conservatory, a tale about the composer’s important stages of life and creativity was represented in the form of the staged action on behalf of Glazunov himself and his contemporaries. A bright impression was also the performance of students of Gnesins’ Russian Academy of Music, who made their literary-musical composition based on the A.N. Ostrovsky’s piece “Thunderstorm”. As a plot basis, monologues of the main heroine Catherine and “Three Russian folk songs” by S.V. Rakhmaninov were taken. Passionately with a deep psychological heart-feelings, the students-girls made listeners feeling the entire dramatic nature of both literary and musical texts.

III. INTEREST TO REGIONAL CULTURES

With interest, programs were perceived promulgating the culture of students' native territory and local composers' creative works. The attractiveness of those compositions consisted not only in the material novelty but also in the special spirit of patriotism and the sincerity of the insight of the enlightening-educational idea. Examples of this were the program by students of the Byelorussian State Music Academy about the musical and poetic heritage of Belarus of XIX century and the composition "Theatrical kaleidoscope" representing piano opuses by the Byelorussian author Galina Gorelova. In common with the Byelorussian musicians, already not for the first time, students of Saratov's State Conservatory represented creative works of their local composers in the course of this enlightening-educational contest. From the part of the jury and the audience, their program was bestowed a high appreciation; it was called "Where is such tenderness from?" and it was devoted to the vocal creative works by Helena Gophman.

Speaking about the positive aspects of the conducted contest, in general, the following ought to be noted: the increased level of piano playing of students of diverse specialties, the forethought of enlightening-educational directivity in repertoire selection as well as the persuasiveness of the performed opuses interpretation. Certainly, all this speaks for both professional growth & performing successes of the most part of the contest participants and the positive results of the dynamic development of the piano training course in general.

Along with this, it should be said that so far in the mastery of speaking, not everyone showed good results. Paying attention to the content-related part of the literary-musical compositions, let us notice that less attractive turned out to be programs, a verbal part of which consisted of a set of important and yet publically available facts taken – as a rule – from Internet. With due consideration of the enlightening-educational genre, one should understand that kindling of listeners' interest can be achieved only with aid of a bright and exciting text composed on a basis of a material scrupulously chosen and formed into a scenario. Not less important is a vivid representation of this material. An ability of own thoughts expressing and not reading a text from a paper in front of an audience is what every participant should try working out regardless of the audience's age and professional preparation.

Definitely, for these problems solution, a practical experience is needed. However, at a serious enough relation to young musicians' performing mastery development, in the pedagogical practice, not so much attention is paid to forming of their verbal professional culture including ability of cogitating aloud, writing and speaking about music. Meanwhile, this problem matured not today. More than thirty years ago, also, our colleagues mourned that "in the triad of the professional properties, which must be possessed by any graduate-performer – the performing mastery, the preparedness to educational activities and the ability of speaking/writing on professional topics, – the latter is not a subject of special care in the educational process" [2, 56].

Probably, it would be useful to introduce the following lessons not only for musicologists but also for students of performing faculties: ones for studying basics of lecturer's practice, scenic speech, enlightening-educational activities, etc. Nevertheless so far, one can cherish only a hope that one day in future everything will be realized. Unfortunately, at the moment, the changes affected the piano training course, in frame of which a certain experience of teaching to enlightening work basics has been worked out, rather disappoints. So, for example, a systematic reduction of class hours amount on this discipline limits a possibility of occupation with this important kind of activities.

IV. CONCLUSION

At the same time, musing of prospects of this direction development, we should express the hope that the inexhaustible personal interestedness in the enlightening-educational activities from the part of teachers-enthusiasts and their sincere desire to share this with their students would not let the enlightening traditions fading. It is fine that despite of emerging difficulties, the enlightening work is spread more and more widely. And today, the practice of students' public performances is introduced already not only in higher educational institutions but also in colleges and music schools. Also, optimism is built up on the growing popularity of our festival-contest "Music and word". It is important that the idea of the Gnesin's teachers is developed and even has got a continuation. For example, recently, in initiative of the piano chair of the Academy of Choral Art named after V.S. Popov, already for the sixth time, the similar contest was conducted called "Music of duet", in which pupils of childish music schools, colleges and higher educational institutions represented ensemble music in the form of enlightening-educational programs.

Hope that the musical enlightening-educational activities will be widened and developed also in future attracting new generations of musicians.

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