

VOCALIZES BY JĀNIS IVANOVŠ – AN APART PHENOMENON IN LATVIAN MUSIC

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Summary

The irony is that vocalizes for the choir by Jānis Ivanovs (1906–1983), not being solitary in the creative contribution of his own within the context of Latvian music as such still seem to be slightly alien and incongruous. They remain marginal even in the confines of choral singing owing to both the complicity of musical writing that is beyond the capacity of a considerable part of the choirs and the lack of the text, the latter being non-traditional and even embarrassing to the audience. The text of a choral song proves to be a force of tremendous power, consolidating the singers and the public in one common idea, attitude and poetics. However, the text also sets particular restrictions, directing imagery into a verbally determined expression, even being stylistically very unconfined.

For such a composer whose way of thinking manifests itself in purely musical categories, considerably devoid of fully or semi-programmatic denominations, explanations or commentary, the genre of vocalize has proved to be fascinating just because of its freedom, enabling communication with the scope and magic of choral singing, at the same time being dominant in the choice and development of the music of his own. As to the multiplicity of music genres Ivanovs with his range of thinking, generalization of imagery and intensity of development proves to be a marked symphonist. This refers to his vocalizes for the choir as well which in their nature belong to miniatures which may and should exist without the drama of conflict within epic collisions that are so typical for the big symphonies. However, even in these small compositions one can feel the touch of a symphonist, namely, a symphonic generalization, rising above the daily routine, a straightforward observation and a specific impression.

Early 20th century witnesses the appearance of choral vocalizes as independent pieces of music which still remain exceptional, meant only for a limited circle of admirers and like-minded professionals. Towards the end and the middle of the 20th century there is already a large amount of various vocalizes, written by such composers as Vytautas Barkauskas, Luciano Berio, Yury Falik, Morton Feldman, Jānis Kalniņš, Arvo Pärt, Folke Rabe, Alfred Schnittke, Mārgeris Zariņš and many others. However, these works for the most part have also originated as experiments, try-outs and concrete commissions familiar in the environment of music professionals, festivals and elitist sound recording studios. Vocalizes by Jānis Ivanovs on a like background stand out with their conceptual stability, consistency and longevity.

As vocalizes have rather little been considered in publications their concise and consecutive description according to the timeline is presented. The list of music pieces is the following:

1. *Autumn Song* (*Moderato*, 1964, I, in F-sharp minor)
2. *Birds of Passage* (*Moderato* [*Tempo rubato*], 1967, XI, in F minor)
3. *On a Rainy Day* (*Andante* [*rubato*], 1967, XI, in C minor)
4. *Cumuli* (*Andante*, 1970, X, in A-flat major)
5. *Drawing* (*Andante*, 1971, IV, in A-flat minor / major)
6. *Fog* (*Andante*, 1971, V, in G minor)
7. *A Vista of Homeland* (*Moderato*, 1972, II, in G minor)
8. *In Remembrance of Heros* (*Andante*, 1974, XII, in F minor)
9. *Prelude* (*Moderato*, 1976, in C minor)
10. *Cantus Monodicus. Gloria* (*Moderato*, 1979, VI, in H minor / major)
11. *Prelude* (*Moderato*, 1980, I, in E major / minor)
12. *Fugue* (*Moderato*, 1979, IX, in E minor / major)
13. *Winter Morning* (*Moderato. Interludio*, 1980, IX, in B-flat minor / major)
14. *Elegy* (*Andante ma non troppo*, 1981, XII, in F-sharp minor)
15. *Delight* (*Moderato*, 1982, II, in E-flat major)

It is rather easy to trace the common features of vocalizes. First of all, the music is tonal. The base of mode can be very diverse, ranging from multiform diatonic manifestations to diachromatic structures, yet always preserving some tonicality, kind of a uniting and organizing centre. Rather intriguing is the use of triads and their inversions. Expressing stability and harmony, they acquire almost the meaning of a symbol. However, it should be mentioned that the presence of abundant fourth-sixth chords or, in other words, second inversion of a triad is somewhat surprising and non-traditional, most of all appearing not as a constituent part of cadence but that of a continuous harmony. It is just the language of harmony that adds to the specific colouring and atmosphere of Ivanov's style in music, defying any concrete and ambient definitions with the exception of maybe such a technique as phonics, rather often exploited by the minor seventh chord. A unique colouring is achieved by a direct parallelism of triads (and pure fifths) predominantly as a consequent means of expressing a specific musical atmosphere. However, the chordism and the whole harmonious language of musical expression are certainly closely linked with melos. But the basic feature of the latter in its turn and its guarantee for musical expression proves to be its markedly linear nature, adding a feeling of finished horizontals in every single group of voices. It cannot be denied that sopranos in such a case come to the foreground, the more so, if the beginning is of one voice. The strong point and basis of the imagery of vocalizes seems to be the thematic material, which is always individualized, even when ready-made matrices such as an outline of triads, a smooth and gradual movement or a mode of entwining some particular sound have been used. The primary

exposition traditionally serves as a background for emphasizing the nature of intonation alongside with the melodious pattern.

The structure of a music composition is unconfined but at the same time also notably individualized. In most cases the structure used has been made up of three parts (namely, the principle of recapitulation, reprise) with a simultaneous and notably marked development of through-composition elements, with a momentum of advance or a feeling of perspective. Music pieces are characterized by a rather extended primary exposition which is often repeated.

The middle part is characterized by activation with a more boyant and brisk movement, with a more dynamic and diverse rhythm and a more impetuous pulsation of harmony which is rich in contrasts. Its typical feature is a gradual escalation of discord. Recapitulations, reprises are, as a rule, contracted, concentrated and laconic. Their part of counterbalancing becomes evident with the very first validation of thematic material. Another distinctive feature of it is the stabilizing of tonality and clear efflorescence of the central chord, central uniformity of sounding. However, a pronounced individualization and an essentially different development, comprising both a classical four-part triad with a basic tone (root) in the upper voice and a triad in the position of the third or the fifth, including the doubling of texture (such as five voices, six voices, seven voices) or just the opposite – a pure unison, an empty fifth or a compound and enriched tonic is observed in the middle part as well (III).

As to music piece denominations, they, certainly, facilitate understanding and perception. However, it would not be quite right to call them programmatic. To begin with, there are at least five cases when the meaning of the denomination exists only as a denomination of the genre (IX, X, XI, XII, XIV; V – *Drawing* stays aside; the same largely refers to VIII – *In Remembrance of Heros*). Secondly, the dominant denominations which are linked with the images and processes of nature are usually fairly extensive and abstract. This should by no means be regarded as a shortcoming, but sooner as an impulse for giving way to fantasy, the more so, because music material comprises numerous symbols, allusions and concealed messages. It testifies about a particular disposition, effected by means of genre associations (trumpets, chorale, lullaby, saraband, and Gregorian chant), traditional complexes (Phrygian cadence, passus duriusculus) or depicting strokes (songs of birds and bells). Owing to the above the pictorial layer is always a signpost of some psychologization, soul processes, and a purely musical priority of a verbally unexposable substance.

The symphonism of Jānis Ivanovs, regardless of its height and depth still proves to be *primus inter pares*: both intertwined with his predecessors and contemporaries and grounded in the world experience. Contrasting to vocalizes which to a great extent may be viewed as solitary, it is not

a thing apart. It blends together such elements as symphonic scope and generalization alongside with the subtlety, intimacy and detailed elaboration of chamber music. The miniature form itself is also important – just as a principle, as an aesthetic position. Considering the above, vocalizes prove to be a tear of spring water, reflecting the world and eternity.

Literatūra

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